

THIỆN PHÚC

**ESSENTIAL SUMMARIES OF
FAITH-PRACTICE-VOW
IN BUDDHIST CULTIVATION**

**(YẾU LƯỢC VỀ TÍN HẠNH NGUYỆN
TRONG TU TẬP PHẬT GIÁO)**

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Preface

According to Buddhism, “Faith” regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. In Buddhist cultivation, faith always plays an important role in Buddhist cultivation. Without a firm faith on Buddhist True Faith, practitioners will easily fall into the wrong views of Externalists (Outsiders). Faith is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharma (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. The question is to what place, faith is placed in Buddhism? Faith in Buddhism is totally different from faith in other religions. While other religions confirm that to believe means to be saved. Faith in Buddhism, in the contrary, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge, and there is nothing to do with “to believe means to be saved” in Buddhism. In Buddhism, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge that taking the three refuges and cultivating in accordance with the Buddha’s Teachings. Sincere Buddhists do not only believe in the Buddha as the noblest of Teachers, in the Buddhist Doctrines preached by Him, and in His Sangha Order, but practice His precepts in daily life. In Buddhism, there exists no “blind faith.” In no circumstances the term “believe or be damned” survives in Buddhism. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Nothing should be accepted merely on the grounds of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. We must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumors; nor writings by sages, merely because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a Deva; nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our own teachers or masters. We are to believe when the writing doctrine or saying is corroborated

by our own reason and consciousness. In other words, everything should be carefully weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one's convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected immediately, but left for further consideration."

Conduct or behavior means practice. Conduct or practice plays an extremely important role in Buddhism for conduct or behavior means practice. In Buddhism, the function of mental factor intention is to move our mind toward an object, to perceive and realize it. Thus mental factor's intention is the basis for all our wishes (wishing in body, speech and mind). Practice also means to cultivate or to start out for bodhi-mind to act out one's vows to save all living beings (all beings possess Tathagata-garbha nature and can become a Buddha; therefore, vow to save them all). According to Buddhism, everywhere and at all time, Buddhist cultivators should always keep the firm conduct in cultivation, our actions must be in accordance with "Prajna" at all time. In Buddhist cultivation, cultivation of Bodhisattvas' practices can help practitioners who cultivate in accordance with the Bodhisattva Path to be in line with the patient endurance of the uncreated (anupattika-dharma-ksanti). They were able to turn the wheel of the Law that never turns back. Being able to interpret the (underlying nature of) phenomena, they knew very well the roots (propensities) of all living beings; they surpassed them all and realized fearlessness. They had cultivated their minds by means of merits and wisdom with which they embellished their physical features which were unsurpassable, thus giving up all earthly adornments. Their towering reputation exceeded the height of Mount Sumeru.

Resolve or aspiration refers to the fulfillment of religious vows. A Bodhisattva vow, which is the first step on the way to enlightenment. A vow to oneself as self-dedication, usually Bodhisattva vows above to seek Bodhi and below to save beings or to save all beings before benefiting from his own enlightenment or entering into nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism, "Pranidhana" is the seventh in the tenfold list of Paramitas that a Bodhisattva cultivates during the path to Buddhahood. Vow is something that comes from the heart and soul, a deep rooted promise, swearing to be unrelenting in seeking to attain a goal. This is having a certain mind-set or something one wishes to achieve and never give up until the objective is realized. Thus, there should be absolutely no reason whatsoever that should cause one to regress or

give up that vow or promise. Sincere Buddhists should vow to follow the teachings to cultivate to become Buddhas, then to use the magnificent Dharma of enlightenment of the Buddhas and vow to give them to all sentient beings to abandon their ignorance to cross over to enlightenment, to abandon delusion to follow truths. Devoted Buddhists should always vow: “Awaken mind with a longing for Bodhicitta, deeply believe in the law of Cause and Effect, recite Mahayana sutras, encourage other cultivators and save other sentient beings.” Vow plays an important role in Buddhist cultivation for resolve or aspiration refers to the fulfillment of religious vows and developing a correct attitude toward religious practice. The power of vows eradicates heavy karma, wipes away all illnesses of mind and body at their karmic source, subdues demons and can move gods and humans to respect. Thus, devoted Buddhists should be issued from the realm of the Buddha-teaching, always accomplish the preservation of the Buddha-teaching, vow to sustain the lineage of Buddhas, be oriented toward rebirth in the family of Buddhas, and seek omniscient knowledge. All Buddhists want to cross the sea of sufferings and afflictions while vows are like a boat which can carry them across the sea of birth and death to the other shore of Nirvana.

Later, after the Pure Land School was formed, they considered Faith-Practice-Vows as the cornerstone of the school. They affirmatively confirmed that if these three conditions are fulfilled, rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss will be achieved. Practitioners should pay particular attention to Faith and Vows, and wish wholeheartedly to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land, and not as a celestial being or Dharma Master, however awakened, as these are still within the realm of Birth and Death. Only then will practitioners' Faith and Vows reach Amitabha Buddha so His Compassionate Vow may embrace you. Generally speaking, the tenets of the Pure Land method are Faith, Vows, and Practice. Only with true Faith and earnest Vows can Practice be assiduous and pure. However, the most common problem of ordinary people is to be diligent and earnest when catastrophe strikes but lax and remiss in normal times. According to Great Master Yin-Kuang, the Thirteenth Patriarch of Chinese Pure Land School, this is a truth as solid as steel, even if a thousand Buddhas were to appear on earth, it would not change. Only by firmly believing in this truth will you have a destiny in the Western Pure Land. In “Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,” the Pure Land method embraces

people of all capacities, gathering in those of high as well as low capacities. It is the great Dharma of the Tathagata, whereby He provides an expedient enabling both sages and ordinary beings to achieve liberation from Birth and Death and reach the stage of non-retrogression in this very lifetime. Not to believe in and practice this sublime, special Dharma is truly regrettable, a great pity indeed! The main tenets of Pure Land are Faith, Vows and Practice.

Buddhist practitioners should always remember that cultivation in Buddhism is to put the Buddha's teachings into practice on a continued and regular basis with complete Faith, Practice and Vows. 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!

This little book titled "Essential Summaries of Faith Practice Vow In Buddhist Cultivation" is not a professional nor a profound philosophical study of Buddhist teachings, but a book that simply points out the Buddha's summaries of teachings on Faith, Practice and Vow and their roles in daily cultivation that Buddhist practitioners should

always have in their life and cultivation in Buddhist point of view. Truly speaking, Faith Practice and Vow always play extremely important roles in cultivation in Buddhism. Devout Buddhists should always remember that cultivation is only effective when we actually have a complete firm Faith Practice and Vow, and apply the Buddha's teachings into practicing well-being exercises that are linked to established daily life patterns, makes our lives more peaceful, mindful, and happier. The journey advancing from Humans to Buddhas still demands continuous efforts with right faith and practices. Presently even with so many books on Buddhism available, I venture to compose this booklet titled “Essential Summaries of Faith Practice Vow In Buddhist Cultivation” in Vietnamese and English to spread basic teachings 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.

Thiền Phúc

1

Part One
Summaries of Buddhism &
Cultivation and Practices
In Buddhist Point of View
(Phần Một: Sơ Lược Về Đạo Phật & Sự Tu Hành
Theo Quan Điểm Phật Giáo)

Chapter One

A Summary of Buddhism

I. The Birth of a Religion:

According to Buddhist history, some twenty-five centuries ago a great man took up the life of a wandering ascetic in what is today Northern India. This in itself was not a unique event: many others also sought spiritual liberation walking in the deep forests and high mountains. However, this man's quest resulted in answer that have been handed down to successive generations and, in the process, have been elaborated, interpreted and reinterpreted to form one of the greatest living religious traditions. In fact, Buddhism is much more than a religion: its cultural and philosophical impact has for centuries reverberated throughout South and Southeast Asia and, more recently, in the West. The tradition has become so vast and diverse that a superficial glance seems to reveal more disparity than continuity. Nevertheless, behind the many incongruities there is a recognizable common thread. All forms of Buddhism share the same roots and all are motivated by the quest to attain a long-lasting state of contentment through mental, spiritual and moral development. All relate in some way to the enlightenment experience of one man, who is known as the "Buddha." Buddhism began in India in the 5th century B.C. and all its variants can be traced to these origins. According to ancient Indian history, the precise historical beginning of the tradition is somewhat obscure, for at that time there were so many small kingdoms all over India. However, there is no question that around the 5th century B.C., an exceptionally charismatic teacher, probably a member of the Sakya clan in Kapilavastu, in present day Nepal, began to preach a new approach to the age-old problem of salvation. It has been suggested that his teaching was a reaction to the dominant "Brahmanical" culture of his time, which centered on the Vedas and on the sacrificial practices that were carried out by the priestly class. As a matter of fact, Buddhism is very simple. This religion is a demonstration of kindness towards other human beings. The most important thing in Buddhism is a good mind and warm feelings. The Buddha believes that each individual has an opportunity to change his own life and enlightenment

is the utmost achievement of everybody. However, Buddhism exerted an enormous influence on the intellectual, religious and cultural life of India for more than sixteen centuries. It played a formative part in defining Hindu culture and, during its first centuries, was so enmeshed in Indian society (together with other spiritual teachings of the subcontinent) that it is misleading to think of it as a self-conscious reformist movement. Buddhism became established as a monastic religion, enjoying spells of royal patronage, but around the 8th century it came under pressure from a resurgent Hinduism. Its decline was precipitated by Muslim invasions from the North, which began in the 7th century and gradually intensify during the following eight centuries. With the ruthless sacking of the great Buddhist universities at the end of the 12th century, Buddhism all but disappeared from India. The teachings of Buddhism have never been exclusive to one class or limited to one geographical area. The Buddha and his monks spent the dry months wandering in what is today northern India and, long before Buddhism's disappearance from India, their beliefs were carried by monks and travelers all over Asia, to Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Tibet and Vietnam, to name but few of the places where the tradition has taken root. Buddhism is particularly amenable to expansion because of the universality of the Buddha's teaching. His Dharma (Truth) is designed to appeal to every individual, regardless of rank or class, inviting him or her to follow the path leading to enlightenment and the cessation of suffering. Being linked to neither a specific place nor a single society, Buddhism has generally managed to incorporate the local customs and beliefs that it has encountered in its expansion, especially that are traditionally associated with the social life. This has opened up Buddhism to a host of influence and has resulted in a greatly varied tradition, which nevertheless manages to preserve the core of its teaching.

II. An Overview of Buddhism:

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 name Buddhism comes from the word “budhi” which means ‘to wake 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.

The word philosophy comes from two words ‘philo’ which means ‘love’ and ‘sophia’ which means ‘wisdom’. So philosophy is the love of wisdom or love and wisdom, both meanings describing Buddhism perfectly. Buddhism teaches that we should try to develop our intellectual capacity to the fullest so that we can understand clearly. It also teaches us to develop loving kindness and compassion so that we can become (be like) a true friend to all beings. So Buddhism is a

philosophy but not just a philosophy. It is the supreme philosophy. In the year 563 B.C. a baby was born into a royal family in northern India. He grew up in wealth and luxury but soon found that worldly comfort and security do not guarantee real happiness. He was deeply moved by the suffering he saw all around, so He resolved to find the key to human happiness. 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.

The Buddha taught us to try to recognize truth, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. Furthermore, Buddhists do not believe in god because there does not seem to be any concrete evidence to support this idea. Who can answer questions on god? Who is god? Is god masculine or feminine or neuter? Who can provide ample evidence with real, concrete, substantial or irrefutable facts to prove the existence of god? So far, no one can. Buddhists suspend judgment until such evidence is forthcoming. Besides, such belief in god is not necessary for a really meaningful and happy life. If you

believe that god make your life meaningful and happy, so be it. But remember, more than two-thirds of the world do not believe in god and who can say that they don't have a meaningful and happy life? And who dare to say that those who believe in god, all have a meaningful and happy life? If you believe that god help you overcome disabilities and difficulties, so be it. But Buddhists do not accept the theological concept of salvation. In the contrary, based on the Buddha's own experience, he showed us that each human being had the capacity to purify the body and the mind, develop infinitive love and compassion and perfect understanding. He shifted the gods and heavens to the self-heart and encouraged us to find solution to our problems through self-understanding. Finally, such myths of god and creation concept has been superseded by scientific facts. Science has explained the origin of the universe completely without recourse to the god-idea.

Buddhism is a philosophy that teaches people to live a happy life. It's also a religion that teaches people to end the cycle of birth and death. The main teachings of the Buddha focus on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path. They are called "Noble" because they enoble one who understand them and they are called "Truths" because they correspond with reality. Buddhists neither believe in negative thoughts nor do they believe in pessimistic ideas. In the contrary, Buddhists believe in facts, irrefutable facts, facts that all know, that all have aimed to experience and that all are striving to reach. Those who believe in god or gods usually claim that before an individual is created, he does not exist, then he comes into being through the will of a god. He lives his life and then according to what he believes during his life, he either goes to eternal heaven or eternal hell. Some believe that they come into being at conception due to natural causes, live and then die or cease to exist, that's it! Buddhism does not accept either of these concepts. According to the first explanation, if there exists a so-called almighty god who creates all beings with all his loving kindness and compassion, it is difficult to explain why so many people are born with the most dreadful deformities, or why so many people are born in poverty and hunger. It is nonsense and unjust for those who must fall into eternal hells because they do not believe and submit themselves to such a so-called almighty god. The second explanation is more reasonable, but it still leaves several unanswered questions. Yes, conception due to natural causes, but how can a phenomenon so amazingly complex as

consciousness develop from the simple meeting of two cells, the egg and the sperm? Buddhism agrees on natural causes; however, it offers more satisfactory explanation of where man came from and where he is going after his death. When we die, the mind, with all the tendencies, preferences, abilities and characteristics that have been developed and conditioned in this life, re-establishes itself in a fertilized egg. Thus the individual grows, is reborn and develops a personality conditioned by the mental characteristics that have been carried over by the new environment. The personality will change and be modified by conscious effort and conditioning factors like education, parental influence and society and once again at death, re-establish itself in a new fertilized egg. This process of dying and being reborn will continue until the conditions that cause it, craving and ignorance, cease. When they do, instead of being reborn, the mind attains a state called Nirvana and this is the ultimate goal of Buddhism.

III. 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.

IV. 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 undescrivable happiness. And finally, the Noble Truth of the Path. The Path that helps us reach the ultimate wisdom.” The path leading to the end (extinction) of suffering, the fourth of the four axioms, i.e. the eightfold noble path. The truth of the PATH that leads to the cessation of suffering (the way of cure). To practice the Eight-fold Noble Truths. The Buddha taught: “Whoever accepts the four dogmas, and practises the Eightfold Noble Path will put an end to births and deaths. In short, finally, the Buddha already discovered supportive conditions leading to bodhi or Buddhahood. The Noble Truth of the Right Way includes the following Noble Paths: The Eightfold Noble Truth, Seven Bodhi Shares, Four Right Efforts, Four Sufficiencies, Five Faculties, Five Powers, Four Elements of Popularity, Four Immeasurable Minds, and Four Kinds of Mindfulness.

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

Buddhist monks and nuns from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan, China and other Buddhist countries in Asia have come to the West, particularly over the last seventy years. Many of these teachers have kept to their original customs while others have adapted to some extent to meet the demands of living in a western society. In recent years, there has been a marked growth of interest in Buddhism in Europe. The membership of existing societies has increased and many new Buddhist centers have been established. Their members include large numbers of professionals and scholars. Today, Britain alone has over 140 Buddhist centers found in most major cities.

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

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

Chapter Two

Cultivation & Practices In Buddhist Point of View

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

To lead a religious life. Cultivation in Buddhism is to put the Buddha's teachings into practice on a continued and regular basis. Cultivation in Buddhism also means to nourish the seeds of Bodhi by practicing and developing precepts, dhyana, and wisdom. Thus, cultivation in Buddhism is not 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 fortell what is coming upon me. I will submit myself willingly and patiently to all the ills that befall me, and I will never bemoan or complain. In the sutra it is said not to worry over ills that may happen to you, because I thoroughly understand the law of cause and effect. This is called the conduct of making the best use of hatred and turned it into the service in one’s advance towards the Path.

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

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

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

the five continents in a day and a night, this is not due to his own power, but, rather, to the power of the monarch. Some people, reasoning according to ‘noumenon,’ or principle may say that common beings, being conditioned, cannot be reborn in the Pure Land or see the Buddha’s body. The answer is that the virtues of Buddha Recitation are ‘unconditioned’ good roots. Ordinary, impure persons who develop the Bodhi Mind, seek rebirth and constantly practice Buddha Recitation can subdue and destroy afflictions, achieve rebirth and, depending on their level of cultivation, obtain vision of the rudimentary aspects of the Buddha (the thirty-two marks of greatness, for example). Bodhisattvas, naturally, can achieve rebirth and see the subtle, loftier aspects of the Buddha, i.e., the Dharma body. There can be no doubt about this. Thus the Avatamsaka Sutra states: “All the various Buddha lands are equally purely adorned. Because the karmic practices of sentient beings differ, their perceptions of these lands are different.”

In Buddhism, cultivation does not barely mean to shave one’s head or to wear the yellow robe; nor does it mean outer practices of the body. Diligent cultivation does not only include meditation, correct sitting and controlling the breath; or that we must not be lazy, letting days and months slip by neglectfully, we should also know how to feel satisfied with few possessions and eventually cease looking for joy in desires and passions completely. Diligent cultivation also means that we must use our time to meditate on the four truths of permanence, suffering, selflessness, and impurity. We must also penetrate deeply into the profound meaning of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness to see that all things as well as our bodies are constantly changing from becoming, to maturing, transformation, and destruction. Diligent cultivation also means to obtain correct understanding and concentration so that we can destroy narrow-mindedness. Among the basic desires and passions, narrow-mindedness has the deepest roots. Thus, when these roots are loosened, all other desires, passions, greed, anger, ignorance, and doubt are also uprooted. According to the Sutra In Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 40, the Buddha said: “A Sramana who practices the Way should not be like an ox turning a millstone because an ox is like one who practices the way with his body but his mind is not on the Way. If the mind is concentrated on the Way, one does not need the outer practices of the body.” Sincere Buddhists should select a single Dharma Door and then practice according to the teachings of that Dharma Door for the remainder of the cultivator’s life without

changing and mixing in other practices. For example, once a person chooses to practice Pureland Buddhism, then for the entire life, he should always and often focus his energy into reciting the Buddha's virtuous name and pray to gain rebirth. If he or she chooses to practice meditation, he or she should always focus on meditation and contemplation. Thus, the wrong thing to do is to practice one Dharma Door one day and switch to another the next.

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

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of diligent practices of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supreme practice of great knowledge and wisdom of Buddhas. First, diligent practice of giving, relinquishing all without seeking reward. Second, diligent practice of self-control, practicing austerities, having few desires, and being content. Third, diligent practice of forbearance,

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

II. Two Modes of Practices:

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 Thiện 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.

III. Three Kinds of Cultivation:

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-Samdhi-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.

IV. Cultivation on Three Things With Body-Four Things With Mouth & Three Things With Mind:

With the body, there are three things that need be brought into submission or three commandments dealing with the body. First, not to kill or prohibiting taking of life. We do not free trapped animals; but, in contrast, we continue to kill and murder innocent creatures, such as fishing, hunting, etc. Second, not to steal or prohibiting stealing. We do not give, donate, or make offerings; but, in contrast, we continue to be selfish, stingy, and stealing from others. Third, not to commit adultery or prohibiting committing adultery. We do not behave properly and honorably; but, in contrast, we continue to commit sexual misconduct or sexual promiscuity.

With the mouth, there are four things that need be brought into submission or four commandments dealing with the mouth. First, not to

lie. We do not speak the truth; but, in contrast, we continue to lie and speak falsely. Second, not to exaggerate. We do not speak soothingly and comfortably; but, in contrast, we continue to speak wickedly and use a double-tongue manner to cause other harm and disadvantages. Third, not to abuse. We do not speak kind and wholesome words; but, in contrast, we continue to speak wicked and unwholesome words, i.e., insulting or cursing others. Fourth, not to have ambiguous talk. We do not speak words that are in accordance with the dharma; but, in contrast, we continue to speak ambiguous talks.

With the mind, there are three things that need be brought into submission or three commandments dealing with the mind. Not to be covetous. We do not know how to desire less and when is enough; but we continue to be greedy and covetous. Second, not to be malicious. We do not have peace and tolerance toward others; but, in contrast, we continue to be malicious and to have hatred. Third, not to be unbelief. We do not believe in the Law of Causes and Effects, but in contrast we continue to attach to our ignorance, and refuse to be near good knowledgeable advisors in order to learn and cultivate the proper dharma.

However, discipline the Mind in Buddhism is extremely important. Usually the word “mind” is understood for both heart and brain. However, in Buddhism, mind does not mean just the brain or the intellect; mind also means consciousness or the knowing faculty that which knows an object, along with all of the mental and emotional feeling states associated with that knowing. Thus, cultivating the mind means practicing the “four great efforts” in the Buddha’s teachings: We try to diminish the unwholesome mental states that have already arisen and to prevent those that have not yet arisen from arising. At the same time, we make effort to strengthen those wholesome mental states that are already developed, and to cultivate and develop the wholesome states that have not yet arisen. Control of the self or of one’s own mind is the key to happiness. It is the force behind all true achievement. The movement of a man void of control are purposeless. It is owing to lack of control that conflicts of diverse kinds arise in man’s mind. And if conflicts are to be controlled, if not eliminated, man must give less rein to his longings and inclinations and endeavor to live a life self-governed and pure. Everyone is aware of the benefits of physical training. However, we should always remember that we are not merely bodies, we also possess a mind which needs training. Mind training or

meditation is the key to self-mastery and to that contentment which finally brings happiness. The Buddha once said: “Though one conquers in battle thousand times thousand men, yet he is the greatest conqueror who conquers himself.” This is nothing other than “training of your own monkey mind,” or “self-mastery,” or “control your own mind.” In other words, it means mastering our own mental contents, our emotions, likes and dislikes, and so forth. Thus, “self-mastery” is the greatest kingdom a man can aspire unto, and to be subject to one’s own passions is the most grievous slavery.

According to Most Venerable Piyadassi in “The Buddha’s Ancient Path,” control of the mind is the key to happiness. It is the king of virtues and the force behind all true achievement. It is owing to lack of control that various conflicts arise in man’s mind. If we want to control them we must learn to give free rein to our longings and inclinations and should try to live self-governed, pure and calm. It is only when the mind is controlled that it becomes useful for its possessor and for others. All the havoc happened in the world is caused by men who have not learned the way of mind control.

V. Ten Methods of Cultivation:

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, there are ten kinds of cultivation of Great Enlightening Beings: Enlightening beings who abide by these can achieve the supreme cultivation and practice all truths. These ten methods of cultivation include cultivation of the ways of transcendence, learning, wisdom, purpose, righteousness, emancipation, manifestation, diligence, accomplishment of true awakening, and operation of right teaching. Besides, according to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 21, there are ten kinds of practices, which are expounded by the Buddhas of past, present and future. They are the practice of giving joy, beneficial practice, practice of nonopposition, practice of indomitability, practice of nonconfusion, practice of good manifestation, practice of nonattachment, practice of that which is difficult to attain, practice of good teachings, and practice of truth. According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten ways of getting rid of demons’ actions of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can escape all demonic ways. First, associating with the wise and honoring and serving them. Second, not elevating themselves or praising themselves.

Third, believing in the profound teaching of Buddha without repudiating it. Fourth, never ever forgetting the determination for omniscience. Fifth, diligently cultivating refined practices, never being lax. Sixth, always seeking all the teachings for enlightening beings. Seventh, always expounding the truth tirelessly. The eighth way of getting rid of demons' actions includes taking refuge with all the Buddhas in the ten directions and thinking of them as saviors and protectors. Ninth, faithfully accepting and remembering the support of the spiritual power of the Buddhas. Tenth, equally planting the same roots of goodness with all enlightening beings.

Furthermore, according to the Buddha in The Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, *Great Enlightening Beings have ten kinds of practice which help them attain the practice of the unexcelled knowledge and wisdom of Buddhas*: First, the practice dealing with all sentient beings, to develop them all to maturity. Second, the practice seeking all truths, to learn them all. Third, the practice of all roots of goodness, to cause them all to grow. Fourth, the practice of all concentration, to be single-minded, without distraction. Fifth, the practice of all knowledge, to know everything. Sixth, the practice of all cultivations, to be able to cultivate them all. Seventh, the practice dealing with all Buddha-lands, to adorn them all. Eighth, the practice dealing with all good companions, respecting and supporting them. Ninth, the practice dealing with all Buddhas, honoring and serving them. Tenth, the practice all supernatural powers, to be able to transform anywhere, anytime to help sentient beings.

Also according to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of rules of behavior of great enlightening beings: Enlightening beings who abide by these can attain the supreme discipline of great knowledge. First, Bodhisattvas should not slander any enlightening teachings. Second, Bodhisattvas' faith in the Buddhas should be indestructible. Third, Bodhisattvas should honor and respect all enlightening beings. Fourth, Bodhisattvas should never give up their friendship with wise people. Fifth, Bodhisattvas should not think of those who seek individual salvation. Sixth, Bodhisattvas should avoid all regression on the path of enlightening beings. Seventh, Bodhisattvas should not give rise to any malice toward sentient beings. Eighth, Bodhisattvas should cultivate all roots of goodness to perfection. Ninth, Bodhisattvas should be able to conquer all demons. Tenth, Bodhisattvas should fulfill all the ways of transcendence. *Also*

according to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten norms of practice of Great Enlightening Beings: Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the Buddhas' supreme method of practice. First, honoring the wise. Second, always being alerted by the celestial spirits. Third, always having shame and conscience before the Buddhas. The fourth norm of practice includes having pity for sentient beings and not abandoning birth and death. Fifth, carrying tasks through consummation without change of mind. The sixth norm of practice includes single-mindedly following the enlightening beings, aspiring to universal enlightenment, and diligently learning. The seventh norm of practice includes getting rid of wrong views and earnestly seeking the right Path. Eighth, destroying demons and the actions of afflictions. The ninth norm of practice includes knowing the different faculties and temperaments of sentient beings and teaching them and enable them to live in the state of Buddhahood. The tenth norm of practice includes abiding in the infinitely vast cosmos of reality and removing the afflictions and purifying the body.

VI.Preparation for Developing the Noble Paths in Buddhism:

In the Connected Discourses of the Buddha, Chapter Esanavaggo (Searches), the Buddha taught that in order to develop the Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhist cultivators should cultivate many kinds of dharma from searches, arrogances, existence, sufferings, to barrenness, stains, troubles, feelings, cravings, floods, yokes, clinging, knots, desires, hindrances, aggregate of grasping, and so on. *There are three kinds of searches:* First, the search for sensual pleasure. Second, the search for existence. Third, the search for a holy life. To cultivate these three searches, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of the three searches, full understanding of the three searches, the utter destruction of the three searches, and the abandoning of the three searches. *There are also three kinds of "Arrogance":* First, the arrogance of 'I am superior. Second, the arrogance of 'I am equal.' Third, the arrogance of 'I am inferior.' To cultivate these three arrogances, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of all three kinds of arrogance, full understanding of all three kinds of arrogance, the utter destruction of all three kinds of arrogance, and the abandoning of all three kinds of

arrogance. *There are also three kinds of "Taints"*: First, the intoxicant of worldly desires or sensual pleasures. Second, the love of existence in one of the conditioned realms. Third, the defilements of ignorance in mind. To cultivate these three taints, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of all three kinds of taints, full understanding of all three kinds of taints, the utter destruction of all three kinds of taints, and the abandoning of all three kinds of taints.

There are three kinds of existence or three states of mortal existence in the trailikya: First, the qualities (good, bad, length, shortness). Second, the phenomenal things. Third, the noumenal or imaginary, understood as facts and not as illusions. There are also three other kinds of existence or three states of mortal existence in the trailikya. First, the existence in the realm of desire (sense-sphere existence). Second, the existence in the realm of form (form-sphere existence). Third, the existence in the realm of formlessness or the immaterial realm (formless-sphere existence).

There are also three other kinds of existence or three states of mortal existence in the trailikya: First, the present existence or the present body and mind. Second, the intermediate state of existence. Third, the existence in the future state. To cultivate these three kinds of existence, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of these three kinds of existence, full understanding of the three searches, the utter destruction of these three kinds of existence, and the abandoning of these three kinds of existence.

There are three kinds of suffering: First, "suffering due to pain" (dukkha as ordinary suffering, or suffering that produce by direct causes or suffering of misery, Including physical sufferings such as pain, old age, death; as well as mental anxieties). Second, "suffering due to change" (dukkha as produced by change, or suffering by loss or deprivation or change). Third, "suffering due to formations" (dukkha as conditioned states, or suffering by the passing or impermanency of all things, body and mind are impermanent). To cultivate these three sufferings, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of all three kinds of suffering, full understanding of all three kinds of suffering, the utter destruction of all three kinds of suffering, and the abandoning of all three kinds of suffering.

There are three kinds of barrenness: First, the barrenness of lust. Second, the barrenness of hatred. Third, the barrenness of delusion. To cultivate these three kinds of barrenness, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of all three kinds of barrenness, full understanding of all

three kinds of barrenness, the utter destruction of all three kinds of barrenness, and the abandoning of all three kinds of barrenness. *There are three kinds of stain*: First, the stain of lust (desire or greed). Second, the stain of hatred (anger). Third, the stain of delusion (stupidity or ignorance). To cultivate these three stains, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of all three stains, full understanding of all three stains, the utter destruction of all three stains, and the abandoning of all three stains. *There are three kinds of troubles*: First, the trouble of lust. Second, the trouble of hatred. Third, the trouble of delusion. To cultivate these three troubles, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of three kinds of troubles, full understanding of three kinds of troubles, the utter destruction of three kinds of troubles, and the abandoning of three kinds of troubles. *There are three kinds of feelings*: First, the painful (suffering). Second, the pleasurable (happy or joyful). Third, the freedom from both suffering and joyfull. To cultivate these three feelings, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of three kinds of feelings, full understanding of three kinds of feelings, the utter destruction of three kinds of feelings, and the abandoning of three kinds of feelings. *There are three kinds of craving*: First, the craving (thirst) for sensual pleasures. Second, the craving (thirst) for existence. Third, the craving (thirst) for extermination. To cultivate these three kinds of craving, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of three kinds of craving, full understanding of three kinds of craving, the utter destruction of three kinds of craving, and the abandoning of three kinds of craving. *There are four floods*: First, the flood of sensuality. Second, the flood of becoming or existence. Third, the flood of wrong views. Fourth, the flood of ignorance. To cultivate these four kinds of floods, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of four floods, full understanding of four floods, the utter destruction of four floods, and the abandoning of four floods. *There are four yokes (bonds)*: First, the yoke of desire or sensuality. Second, the yoke of possession or existence. Third, the yoke of unenlightened or non-Buddhist views or wrong views. Fourth, the yoke of ignorance. To cultivate these four kinds of yokes, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of four yokes, full understanding of four yokes, the utter destruction of four yokes, and the abandoning of four yokes. *There are four kinds of clinging*: First, clinging to sensual pleasure. Second, clinging to views. Third, clinging to rules and vows. Fourth, clinging to

a doctrine of self. To cultivate these four kinds of clinging, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of four kinds of clinging, full understanding of four kinds of clinging, the utter destruction of four kinds of clinging, and the abandoning of four kinds of clinging. *There are four kinds of knot:* First, the bodily knot of covetousness. Second, the bodily knot of ill-will. Third, the bodily knot of distorted grasp of rules and vows. Fourth, the bodily knot of adherence to dogmatic assertion of truth. To cultivate these four kinds of knot, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of four knots, full understanding of four knots, the utter destruction of four knots, and the abandoning of four knots. *There are five cords of sensual pleasure or five desires:* First, the desire of wealth, power, money, and talent. Second, the desire of sex or beauty. Third, the desire of fame, influence and praises. Fourth, the desire of food and drink or eating. Fifth, the desire of sleep and rest. To cultivate these five kinds of desire, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of five cords of sensual pleasure, full understanding of five cords of sensual pleasure, the utter destruction of five cords of sensual pleasure, and the abandoning of five cords of sensual pleasure. *There are five hindrances:* First, the hindrance of sensuality (sensual desire). Second, the hindrance of ill-will. Third, the hindrance of sloth and torpor. Fourth, the hindrance of worry and flurry, also called restlessness and remorse. Fifth, the hindrance of sceptical doubt or uncertainty. To cultivate these five hindrances, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of five hindrances, full understanding of five hindrances, the utter destruction of five hindrances, and the abandoning of five hindrances. *There are five kinds of aggregate of grasping:* First, the aggregate of grasping of body (the form aggregate subject to clinging). Second, the aggregate of grasping of feelings (the feeling aggregate subject to clinging). Third, the aggregate of grasping of perceptions (the perception aggregate subject to clinging). Fourth, aggregate of grasping of mental formations (the volition aggregate subject to clinging). Fifth, the aggregate of grasping of consciousness (the consciousness aggregate subject to clinging). To cultivate these five kinds of aggregate of grasping, devout Buddhists should do the followings: direct knowledge of five kinds of aggregate of grasping, full understanding of five kinds of aggregate of grasping, the utter destruction of five kinds of aggregate of grasping, and the abandoning of five kinds of aggregate of grasping. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha taught that in order to develop the Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhist cultivators should cultivate many kinds of dhammas from the five lower fetters, five higher fetters, to the seven underlying tendencies, and so on. *There are five lower fetters:* First, the sensual desire or sensuality.

Second, the resentment or dislike. Third, the wrong view on Personality-belief, self, identity view, or egoism. Fourth, heretical ideals (false tenets) or attachment to rite and ritual, or distorted grasp of rules and vows. Fifth, doubt about the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha and the cultivation on the three studies of discipline, concentration and wisdom. However, according to Abhidharma, these five lower fetters include desire, dislike, pride, envy, and stinginess. To cultivate these five lower fetters, devout Buddhists should do the followings: the direct knowledge of five lower fetters, full understanding of five lower fetters, the utter destruction of five lower fetters, and the abandoning of five lower fetters. Also according to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha and Kosa Sastra, there are five higher bonds of desire still exist in the upper realms of form and formlessness, for they fetter beings to aggregates, etc., produced in the higher forms of becoming. *There are five higher fetters:* First, the lust or desire for form (attachment to the world of forms, or greed for the fine-material, or love in the realm of form, or craving for the world of form). Second, the lust or desire for formlessness (attachment to the formless world, or greed for the immaterial, or love in the realm of formlessness, or craving for the formless world). Third, the restlessness. Fourth, pride or conceit. Fifth, ignorance. To cultivate these five higher fetters, devout Buddhists should do the followings: the direct knowledge of five higher fetters, full understanding of five higher fetters, the utter destruction of five higher fetters, and the abandoning of five higher fetters. Also according to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, *there are seven latent proclivities or underlying tendencies, or inherent tendencies:* For it is owing to their inveteracy that they are called inherent tendencies (anusaya) since they inhere (anusenti) as cause for the arising of greed for sense desire, etc., again and again. First, the sensuous greed (the underlying tendency to sensual lust, or the inherent tendency to greed for sense desire). Second, the resentment (the underlying tendency to aversion, or the inherent tendency to resentment). Third, the wrong views (the underlying tendency to views, or the inherent tendency to false view). Fourth, doubt (the underlying tendency to doubt or the uncertainty). Fifth, conceit (the underlying tendency to conceit or pride). Sixth, craving for becoming (the underlying tendency to lust for existence or becoming). Seventh, ignorance (the underlying tendency to ignorance). To cultivate these seven underlying tendencies, devout Buddhists should do the followings: the direct knowledge of these seven underlying tendencies, full understanding of these seven underlying tendencies, the utter destruction of these seven underlying tendencies, and the abandoning of these seven underlying tendencies.

VII. 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.”

VIII. Cultivation Means Changing the Karma:

Although the supreme goal of Buddhism is the supreme Enlightenment and liberation, the Buddha also taught that Buddhist practice is the source of happiness. It can lead to the end of human suffering and miseries. The Buddha was also a man like all other men, but why could he become a Great Enlightened One? The Buddha never declared that He was a Deity. He only said that all living beings have a Buddha-Nature that is the seed of Enlightenment. He attained it by renouncing his princely position, wealth, prestige and power for the search of Truth that no one had found before. As Buddhist followers, we practice Buddhist tenets, not for entreating favors but for following the Buddha’s example by changing bad karmas to good ones or no karma at all. Since people are different from one another, some are rich and intelligent, some are poor and stupid. It can be said that this is due to their individual karma, each person has his own circumstances. Buddhists believe that we reap what we have sown. This is called the law of causality or karma, which is a process, action, energy or force. Karmas of deeds, words and thoughts all produce an effect, either happiness or miseries, wealth or poverty. Karma does not mean “determinism,” because if everything is predetermined, then there would be no free will and no moral or spiritual advancement. Karma is not fixed, but can be changed. It cannot shut us in its surroundings indefinitely. On the contrary, we all have the ability and energy to change it.

Our fate depends entirely on our deeds; in other words, we are the architects of our karma. Cultivating in accordance with the Buddha's Teachings means we change the karma of ourselves; changing our karmas by not only giving up our bad actions or misdeeds, but also forgiving offences directed against us by others. We cannot blame anyone else for our miseries and misfortunes. We have to face life as it is and not run away from it, because there is no place on earth to hide from karma. Performing good deeds is indispensable for our own happiness; there is no need of imploring favors from deities or simply showing repentance. Changing karma also means remembrance of karma and using wisdom to distinguish virtue from evil and freedom from constraint so that we are able to avoid evil deeds, to do meritorious deeds, or not to create any deeds at all. Changing karma also means to purify our minds rather than praying, performing rites, or torturing our bodies. Changing karma also means to change your narrow-minded heart into a heart full of love and compassion and accomplish the four boundless hearts, especially the hearts of loving-kindness and compassion. True Buddhists should always remember that sooner or later everyone has to die once. After death, what can we bring with us? We cannot bring with us any worldly possessions; only our bad or good karma will follow us like a shadow of our own.

According to Buddhism, our fate depends entirely on our deeds; in other words, we are the architects of our karma. Cultivating in accordance with the Buddha's Teachings means we change the karma of ourselves; changing our karmas by not only giving up our bad actions or misdeeds, but also forgiving offences directed against us by others. We cannot blame anyone else for our miseries and misfortunes. We have to face life as it is and not run away from it, because there is no place on earth to hide from karma. Performing good deeds is indispensable for our own happiness; there is no need of imploring favors from deities or simply showing repentance. Changing karma also means remembrance of karma and using wisdom to distinguish virtue from evil and freedom from constraint so that we are able to avoid evil deeds, to do meritorious deeds, or not to create any deeds at all. Changing karma also means to purify our minds rather than praying, performing rites, or torturing our bodies. Changing karma also means to change your narrow-minded heart into a heart full of love and compassion and accomplish the four boundless hearts, especially the hearts of loving-kindness and compassion. True Buddhists should always remember that sooner or later everyone has to die once. After death, what can we bring with us? We cannot bring with us any worldly possessions; only our bad or good karma will follow us like a shadow of our own. Pure Land practitioners should always remember that to cultivate to gather merits also means to transfer karma. It includes various practices for a Buddhist such as practicing charity, distributing free sutras, building temples and stupas, keeping vegetarian diet and precepts, etc. However, the mind is

not able to focus on a single individual practice and it is difficult to achieve one-pointedness of mind. To see this, Pure Land practitioners should try their best to cultivate in any free time they have. And because of this, in 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang said: "Outside of regular sessions of cultivation, you should also constantly recite the Buddha's name while walking, standing, sitting, reclining or engaging in other actions that do not require intense intellectual activity. When resting, you should recite, uttering only these words 'Amitabha Buddha' to facilitate concentration. You should also recite silently when not properly dressed or when doing household chores, bathing, urinating or defecating, or when walking to and from unclean places. This silent recitation also brings the same benefits as reciting aloud. In the latter circumstances, loud recitation is improper and could reflect disrespect. Whether reciting loudly or softly or engaging in 'diamond recitation' or silent recitation, you should be attentive and keep each utterance clearly and distinctly in mind, the mouth reciting clearly and distinctly and the ears hearing clearly and distinctly. When you recite in this way, the mind is no longer chasing after external realms, deluded thoughts cease and recitation gradually becomes pure and focussed, the virtues accrued are thus immense!"

IX. 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.

X. Cultivate More Good Deeds:

Good deeds can be going to a temple to do good deeds there, but good deeds can be what we do to make others happier or moraler so that they can come closer to enlightenment and emancipation. Devout zen practitioners should always remember that before entering meditation practices, we should do a lot of good deeds, for the level of mind stillness depends not only on methods of zen, but also greatly depends the good deeds that we accomplished. If we are not completely emancipated, our happiness in meditation also synonymous with the happiness that we did for others. Therefore, a zen practitioner must be the one who always gives the happiness, peace, and mindfulness to others all his life. In other words, beside the effort for meditation, zen practitioners should always try to do many good deeds, for good deeds will support meditation result very well.

XI. Easy to See the Fault of Others:

Easy seen are others' faults; hard indeed to see one's own faults. The Buddha taught that we should not evade self-responsibility for our own actions by blaming them on circumstances or unluckiness. Usually when a man is forced to see his own weakness, he avoids it and instead gives it to self-deceit. He will search his brain for an excuse, even the lamest one will do, to justify his actions. He may succeed in doing this. Sometimes he succeeds so well in trying to fool others, he even manages to fool himself with the very ghost

created by his mind. However, you may fool some of the people for some of the time, but not all the people all the time. According to the Buddha, the fool who does not admit he is a fool is a real fool. And the fool who admits he is a fool is wise to that extent. If you have made a mistake, then admit it. You need courage, of course admission of your own mistake is not pleasant. You also need wisdom to see your own faults. Sincere Buddhists should not think that you have been unlucky, or you have been a victim of fate. Face your shortcomings. You must realize that your mind has created the conditions which gave rise to the miseries and difficulties you are experiencing. This is the only way that can help lead you to a happy life. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: It is easy to see the faults of others, but it is difficult to perceive our own faults. A man winnows his neighbor's faults like chaff, but hides his own, as a dishonest gambler conceals a losing dice (Dharmapada 252). He who sees others' faults, is easy to get irritable and increases afflictions. If we abandon such a habit, afflictions will also be gone (Dharmapada 253). Those who perceive wrong as wrong and what is right as right, such men, embracing right views and go to the blissful state (Dharmapada 319).

XII. To Cultivate Repentance:

Repentance means repenting of past errors, feeling a great sense of shame and remorse for the transgressions we made in the past (repent misdeeds and mental hindrances or karmic obstacles). So, remorse means repentance (confession) on previous wrong actions and reforming or turning away from the future errors. Reform means turning away from the future errors, resolving to improve oneself and never making those mistakes again. Patience or forbearance of repentance or regret for error. In addition, repentance is the confession of our own past physical and mental misdeeds, our minds are purified by such repentance, and because it frees us from a sense of sin, we feel greatly refreshed. Repentance or regret for error. From infinite reincarnations in the past to the present, to feel ashamed, be remorseful, and bring forth the three karmas of body, speech and mind to repent sincerely. Repentance is one of the most entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, the mind within is always stilled. This is the fourth of the ten conducts and vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. Repent misdeeds and mental hindrances means from beginningless kalpas in the past, we have created all measureless and boundless evil karma with our body, mouth and mind because of greed, hatred and ignorance; now we bow before all Buddhas of ten directions that we completely purify these three karmas. Pure Land practitioners should always cultivate repentance in three (body, speech, and mind) karmas: ***First***, Repentance on the Body Karma or the body openly confesses all transgressions and pray for them to disappear, and then

use that body to practice wholesome actions, such as alms givings, offerings, etc. **Second**, Repentance on the Speech Karma or the speech openly confesses all transgressions and pray for them to disappear, and then use that speech to practice Buddha Recitation, chant sutras, speak wholesomely, etc. **Third**, Repentance on the Mind Karma or the mind must be genuine, remorseful, vowing not to revert back to the old ways. Pure Land practitioners should always have a mind of repentance and vows in their path of cultivation. A mind of utterly sincere repentance. If rebirth is not due to efforts at cultivation in this life nor good karma from previous lives, the cultivator, at the time of death, must have recited the Buddha's name with a mind of utterly sincere repentance. Thus, Elder Master Yung Ming has said: "Since the nature of causes and conditions is intrinsically empty, good or bad karma is not fixed. In determining the path of salvation or perdition, we should consider whether the state of mind is slowly transcendental at the time of death. This is analagous to an ounce of pure gold which is worth much more than a hundred times its weight in cotton wool, or a small, isolated flame, which can reduce a pile of straw, enormous beyond reckoning, to ashes. In 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang said: "Beside the above mentioned teachings, a Pure Land practitioner should always maintain a virtuous and forgiving mind in all circumstances, guard against mistakes in each thought, be willing to recognize mistakes and correct them, and gladly perform good actions, only then will he be in accord with Buddha Amitabha. Failure to do so indicates that his mind is still obstructed and thus not consonant with the mind of the Buddha. This makes it difficult for the two to interact. Furthermore, when bowing, reciting Mahayana sutras or accomplishing various wholesome deeds, he should dedicate all the resulting merits to rebirth in the Western Pure Land. He should not indicate only the merit of Buddha Recitation itself, while transferring incidental merits toward worldly blessings. In the latter case he would not be singleminded, making rebirth in the Pure Land very difficult to achieve. It is taught in the sutras: "There are two types of heroes in this world: those who do not commit transgressions and those who, having done so, are capable of repentance." The word "repentance" should spring from the depth of the mind. If you do not truly repent and change your ways, whatever you say is useless. It is like reading the label on a medicine bottle but refusing to take the medicine. How can your illness be cured? If you take the medicine according to instructions, the disease will certainly be cured, with body and mind calm and at peace. I only fear for those who, lacking strong and determined will, put things out in the sun to warm for one day and then let them freeze for ten days. All they get is empty fame and no true benefits!"

XIII.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.

XIV.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.

XV. To Cultivate to Satisfy With What We Have at This Very Moment:

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

XVI.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”.

XVII.Cultivation of Relaxation:

If we do our sitting meditation for a considerable time, we may feel fatigued, we may need to ease our aching limbs a little bit. Then we can start our walking meditation. Walk slowly mindful of the movements, now we need not think of the breath but become aware of the walk. If our mind wanders give attention to our walking without getting involved in other thoughts. If we stop, turn or look around, be mindful and apply clear comprehension. When our foot touches the earth we get the sensation, become aware of it. Walking is also an exercise in mindfulness. When we are following a meditation course let us try to be mindful always everywhere. When sitting, standing, walking, working, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, wearing clothes, or even when we are silent, etc., let us be always mindful. If our limbs get numbed while in meditation, rub and stretch them. We can also relax in a lying down position; however, this we may do at the end of a sitting meditation. Lie on our back on a flat surface, and try to avoid using a pillow or cushion under our head. Keep our legs stretched out slightly apart and arms loosely by our sides, keep our eyes shut, do not go to deep thinking, but allow your mind to relax, and not wander. Relax each muscle, be completely relaxed for a few minutes. At times, we may slightly fall asleep for a couple of minutes, at the end of the relaxation, get up feeling fit. We could do this type of relaxation, not only during the meditation hours, but also at any time we feel fatigued or when we have the inclination to relax.

XVIII.Purification of Negative Karmas

According to the Tantric traditions, there are four ways to purify negative karma. First, regret our destructive actions. With wisdom, we recognize and admit our errors. Regret is different from guilt, for the latter immobilizes us emotionally and is based on misconception. Regret, on the other hand, comes from an honest assessment of our actions and enables us to learn from our mistakes. Second, take refuge and generate the altruistic intention. When we have acted destructively in relation to either holy beings or ordinary beings, by taking refuge in the Three Jewels we restore our relationship with the holy beings; and by generating love, compassion and altruism, we restore our relationship with ordinary beings. Third, determine not to do those negative actions in the future. The stronger our determination, the easier it will be to avoid habitually acting destructively. Fourth, engage in a remedial practice. In general, this could be any virtuous action, i.e. helping those in need, offering service to our Sangha community, listening or reflecting or meditating on dharma, bowing or making offerings to the Three Jewels, printing dharma books, etc.

XIX. Women's Cultivation:

In 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang taught: "From the age of twelve or thirteen, until they reach forty-eight or forty-nine, women all have menstrual periods. Some people teach that women should not bow or engage in Buddha and Sutra Recitation during those times. Such advice is certainly not consonant with feelings or reason. The periods may last for a minimum of two or three days to about six or seven. Buddha Recitation practitioners need to cultivate without interruption, so how can they abandon their cultivation over a little bit of natural discomfort? During those times, women should merely shorten the bowing part of the sessions but keep to their regular schedule of Bowing, Sutra and Buddha Recitation. They should change their protective clothing and wash their hands often, so that they do not finger the rosary, turn the paper of sutras or light incense with dirty hands. Within the Dharma, each and every method is perfect and unimpeded. However, externalists grasp one-sidedly at theory and noumenon. Ordinary people tend to believe their words, are unclear about the true teachings of Buddhism and thus cannot saturate themselves with the benefits of the Dharma."

XX. Essential Steps of Cultivation On the Path to the Removal of Suffering:

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 is objective observation that gives us an opportunity to cultivate to totally destroy sufferings and afflictions. Thus, at any time, objective observation plays a key role in the experimental process in Buddhist cultivation. Essential Steps of the Path to the Removal of Suffering include: ***First, Overcome 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. **Second, Overcome 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. **Third, Overcome Demons:** To overcome demons, e.g. as the Buddha did at his enlightenment. **Fourth, Overcome Doubts:** To study scriptures, to read stories of enlightened ones, as well as to contemplate will help us perceive the truth and overcome doubts. **Fifth, Renounce 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." **Sixth, Get 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. **Seventh, Not to 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. **Eighth, 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. According to the Dharmapada, sentence 50, the Buddha taught, 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." 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." **Ninth, Examine 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. **Tenth, Control 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 prone to emotional outbursts. In the contrary, if we have a clear recognition of their destructive potential, we can get rid of them easily. **Eleventh, Get Rid of Desires:** A Buddhist practitioner should be keenly anxious to get rid of desires, and wants to persist in this. **Twelfth, Elimination 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." **Thirteenth, Eliminating Perversions:** Eliminating deceived in regard to reality (eliminating deluded and confused). 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. **Fourteenth, Elimination 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. **Fifteenth, Get 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. **Sixteenth, Get 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.

XXI.Steps of Cultivation In Tibetan Tradition:

According to the Tibetan tradition (composed by the Tibetan First Panchen Lama), Buddhists should always Review the stages on the Path. First, through the power of having made offerings and respectful requests to you holy venerable Gurus, supreme field of merit, Protectors and root of well-being and bliss, please bless me to come under your joyful care. Second, please bless me to realize how this body of liberties and endowments is found but once, is difficult to obtain, and is easily lost; and partake of its essence, make it worthwhile, undistracted by the meaningless affairs of this life. Third, please bless me to fear the searing blaze of suffering in the lower realms. Take heartfelt refuge in the Three Precious Gems, and enthusiastically practice avoiding negative actions and accumulating virtue. Fourth, please bless me to develop an intense longing for freedom from this great ocean of boundless, vicious existence, violence tossed by waves of affliction and karma, infested by sea monsters of the three sufferings. Fifth, please bless me to overcome the view which sees this unbearable prison of samsara as a pleasant garden and thereby grasp the banner of liberation, upholding it with the three trainings and the treasure of Arya jewels. Sixth, please bless me to develop unaffected compassion like a loving mother's for her precious child, by considering how all tormented beings are my mothers, who have raised me with kindness again and again. Seventh, please bless me to enhance the bliss and joy of others, realizing that there is no difference between us. None of us desires the slightest suffering, or is ever content with the happiness we have. Eighth, please bless me to perceive that this chronic disease of cherishing myself is the cause giving rise to my unsought suffering by blaming and begrudging it. May I destroy the great demon of self-grasping. Ninth, please bless me to see that cherishing all mothers, wishing to place them in bliss, is the gateway to infinite virtues. May I cherish these beings dearer than my life even should they rise up as my enemies. Tenth, infantile beings work only for their own ends while Buddhas work solely for the welfare of others. Please bless me to understand the faults of one and the advantages of the other, enabling me to equalize and exchange myself for others. Eleventh, please bless me to make my core practice the Yoga of exchange of self for others. Since cherishing myself is the doorway to all torment while cherishing my mothers the foundation for all that is good. Twelfth, please bless me venerable, compassionate Gurus so that all karmic debts, obstacles and sufferings of mother being. Ripen upon me now, without exception. And that I can give my happiness and virtue to other. And thereby invest all beings into

the samsara. And Thereby invest all beings in bliss. Thirteenth, please let me to tak miserable conditions as a path by seeing them as causes to exhaust my negative karma. Since the world and its being are full of the fruits of our evil: And unwished for suffering. Fourteenth, please bless me to transform whatever appearances may arise, good or bad into a path ever-enhancing the two bodhicittas. Through the practice of the five forces, quintessence of the entire Dharma and attune myself solely to bliss the mind. Fifteenth, please bless me to adapt whatever befalls me to meditation by skilful means of the four applications; and render this perfect rebirth infinitely meaningful by putting into practice the advice and commitments of mind training. Sixteenth, please bless me to master bodhicitta through the superior intention to rescue all beings from the vast oceans of existence, based on love and compassion that comes from the visual technique of mounting, giving and taking on the breath. Seventeenth, please bless me to eagerly endeavor to put into practice the Three Mahayana moral codes and restrain my mindstream with pure Bodhisattva vows, the single path journeyed by all Conquerors of the three times. Eighteenth, please bless me to complete the perfection of generosity through the guideline teaching for enhancing the mind that gives without attachment: Transforming my body, wealth and collection of virtue of the three times into objects desired by each sentient being. Nineteenth, please bless me to complete the perfection of moral discipline, by working for the sake of sentient beings, enacting virtuous deeds and not transgressing. The bounds of the pratimoksha, bodhicitta and tantric vows, even at the cost of my life. Twentieth, please bless me to complete the perfection of patience by not getting upset whenever any being of the three realms becomes angry at me, abuses, criticizes, threatens or even kills me. Instead may I help them in response to their harm. Twenty-first, please bless me to complete the perfection of perseverance by striving with compassion for supreme enlightenment, not getting discouraged even if I must remain for an ocean of eons in the fiery hells of Avici for every sentient being. Twenty-second, please bless me to complete the perfection of concentration, abandoning the faults of dullness, agitation and distraction through single-pointed concentration on the nature of phenomena, which is their emptiness of true existence. Twenty-third, please bless me to complete the perfection of wisdom through the space-like yoga absorbed on ultimate truth, joined with suppleness and great bliss induced by the discriminating wisdom and analyzing suchness. Twenty-fourth, please bless me to perfect samadhi on illusion by realizing how all inner and outer phenomena lack true existence, yet still appear like a mirage, a dream or the moon's image on a still lake. Twenty-fifth, samsara and nirvana lack even an atom of true existence while cause and effect and dependent arising are unfailing. Twenty-sixth, please bless me to realize the import of Nagarjuna's thought that these two are

complementary and not contradictory. Twenty-seventh, then please bless me to cross the deep ocean of Tantra, through your kindness my navigator, Vajradhara, and hold dearer than life my vows and words of honor, which are the roots of powerful attainments. Please bless me to cleanse all stain of grasping at ordinary appearance. Through the first stage yoga of transforming birth, death, and between. Twenty-eighth, please bless me to cleanse all stains of grasping through the first stage yoga transforming birth, death and between, into the three kayas of a Buddha seeing whatever arises as the form of my yidam. Twenty-ninth, please bless me to realize in this life the path uniting the clear light and illusory body, arising from placing your feet, my protector. In central channel at the very centre of my eight-petalled heart. Thirtieth, please bless me to reach a pure land, should the points of the Path not be completed by either the forceful means of enlightenment, the Guru's mind transference, or by the advice on applying the five forces. Thirty-first, from birth unremittently throughout my lives until I become your chief disciple, holding every secret of your body, speech and mind. My protector, please grant that all be auspicious. To be among your first circle disciples whenever you manifest Buddhahood. So many temporal and ultimate wishes, without exception, become effortless and spontaneously fulfilled. Thirty-second, having thus entreated, supreme Guru, pray grant this request: happily alight on the crown of my head so that you might bless me, and once again set your radiant feet firmly at the corolla of my lotus heart.

XXII. Diligent Cultivation

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 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”.

People who cultivate should not be rush, thinking that we can cultivate today and become enlightened tomorrow. It is not that 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.

XXIII. Simultaneous Cultivation of Blessedness & Wisdom:

An Overview of Simultaneous Cultivations of Blessings & Wisdom:

Buddhist cultivations, there are several different dharma doors, but there are only two ways of cultivation: Cultivation of merits and cultivation of wisdom. Cultivate to gather merits includes various practices for a Buddhist such as practicing charity, distributing free sutras, building temples and stupas, keeping vegetarian diet and precepts, etc. Merit is the result of the voluntary performance of virtuous actions, also means field of merit, or field of happiness. All good deeds, or the blessing arising from good deeds. The karmic result of unselfish action either mental or physical. The blessing wealth, intelligence of human beings and celestial realms; therefore, they are temporary and subject to birth and death. Practices of blessing or sundry practices are various practices for a Buddhist such as practicing charity, distributing free sutras, building temples and stupas, keeping vegetarian diet and precepts, etc. Merit is the quality in us which ensures future benefits to us, material of spiritual. It is not difficult to perceive that to desire merit, to hoard, store, and accumulate merit, does, however meritorious it may be, imply a considerable degree of self-seeking. It has always been the tactics of the Buddhists to weaken the possessive instincts of the spiritually less-endowed members of the community by withdrawing them from such objects as wealth and family, and directing them instead towards one aim and object, i.e. the acquisition of merit. But that, of course, is good enough only on a fairly low spiritual level. At higher stages one will have to turn also against this form of possessiveness, one will have to be willing to give up one's store of merit for the sake of the happiness of others. The Mahayana drew this conclusion and expected its followers to endow other beings with their own merit, or, as the Scriptures put it, 'to turn over, or dedicate, their merit to the enlightenment of all beings.' "Through the merit derived from all my good deeds I wish to appease the suffering of all creatures, to be the medicine, the physician, and the nurse of the sick as long as there is sickness. Through rains of food and drink I wish to extinguish the fire of hunger and thirst. I wish to be an exhaustible treasure to the poor, a servant who furnishes them with all they lack. My life, and all my re-birth, all my possessions, all the merit that I have acquired or will acquire, all that I abandon without hope of any gain for myself in order that the salvation of all beings might be promoted."

Truly speaking, owing to the practice of wisdom, practitioners will attain a number of virtues that contribute a considerable part in the process of going beyond the six paths of the samsara. Virtue is practicing what is good like decreasing greed, anger and ignorance. Virtue is to improve oneself, which will help transcend birth and death and lead to Buddhahood. Merit is what one established by benefitting others, while virtue is what one practices to improve oneself such as decreasing greed, anger, and ignorance. Both merit and virtue

should be cultivated side by side. These two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. However, there is a crucial difference. Merits are the blessings (wealth, intelligence, etc) of the human and celestial realms; therefore, they are temporary and subject to birth and death. Virtue, on the other hand, transcend birth and death and lead to Buddhahood. The same action of giving charity with the mind to obtain mundane rewards, you will get merit; however, if you give charity with the mind to decrease greed and stingy, you will obtain virtue. While blessing (merit) is obtained from doing the Buddha work, while virtue gained from one's own practice and cultivation. If a person can sit stillness for the briefest time, he creates merit and virtue which will never disappear. Someone may say, 'I will not create any more external merit and virtue; I am going to have only inner merit and virtue.' It is totally wrong to think that way. A sincere Buddhist should cultivate both kinds of merit and virtue. When your merit and virtue are perfected and your blessings and wisdom are complete, you will be known as the 'Doubly-Perfected Honored One.' According to the Platform Sutra, Chapter Three, the Master told Magistrate Wei, "Emperor Wu of Liang's mind was wrong; he did not know the right Dharma. Building temples and giving sanction to the Sangha, practicing giving and arranging vegetarian feasts is called 'seeking blessings.' Do not mistake blessings for merit and virtue. Merit and virtue are in the Dharma body, not in the cultivation of blessings." The Master further said, "Seeing your own nature is merit, and equanimity is virtue. To be unobstructed in every thought, constantly seeing the true, real, wonderful function of your original nature is called merit and virtue. Inner humility is merit and the outer practice of reverence is virtue. Your self-nature establishing the ten thousand dharmas is merit and the mind-substance separate from thought is virtue. Not being separate from the self-nature is merit, and the correct use of the undefiled self-nature is virtue. If you seek the merit and virtue of the Dharma body, simply act according to these principles, for this is true merit and virtue. Those who cultivate merit in their thoughts, do not slight others but always respect them. Those who slight others and do not cut off the 'me and mine' are without merit. The vain and unreal self-nature is without virtue, because of the 'me and mine,' because of the greatness of the 'self,' and because of the constant slighting of others. Good Knowing Advisors, continuity of thought is merit; the mind practicing equality and directness is virtue. Self-cultivation of one's nature is merit and self-cultivation of the body is virtue. Good Knowing Advisors, merit and virtue should be seen within one's own nature, not sought through giving and making offerings. That is the difference between blessings and merit and virtue."

According to Buddhist teachings, the root or organ of wisdom or sense of wisdom is one of the five organs. The wisdom that people of religion must maintain. This is not a self-centered wisdom but the true wisdom that we

obtain when we perfectly free ourselves from ego and illusion. So long as we have this wisdom, we will not take the wrong way. We can say the same thing of our belief in religion itself, not to mention in our daily lives. If we don't cultivate with our wisdom, we will surely be attached to selfish, small desires. Eventually, we are apt to stray toward a mistaken religion. However, earnestly we may believe in it, endeavoring to practice its teaching, keeping it in mind, and devoting ourselves to it, we cannot be saved because of its basically wrong teaching, and we sink farther and farther into the world of illusion. There are many instances around us of people following such a course. Although "sense of wisdom" is mentioned as the last of the five organs leading man to good conduct, it should be the first in the order in which we enter a religious life.

For any Buddhist practitioners, Wisdom and Concentration play an extremely important role on the path of cultivation. Meditation and wisdom, two of the six paramitas; likened to the two hands, the left meditation, the right wisdom. According to the Platform Sutra, Chapter Four, the Sixth, Patriarch instructed the assembly: "Good Knowing Advisors, this Dharma-door of mine has concentration and wisdom as its foundation. Great assembly, do not be confused and say that concentration and wisdom are different. Concentration and wisdom are one substance, not two. Concentration is the substance of wisdom, and wisdom is the function of concentration. Where there is wisdom, concentration is in the wisdom. Where there is concentration, wisdom is in the concentration. If you understand this principle, you understand the balanced study of concentration and wisdom. Students of the Way, do not say that first there is concentration, which produces wisdom, or that first there is wisdom, which produces concentration: do not say that the two are different. To hold this view implies a duality of dharma. If your speech is good, but your mind is not, then concentration and wisdom are useless because they are not equal. If mind and speech are both good, the inner and outer are alike, and concentration and wisdom are equal. Self-enlightenment, cultivation, and practice are not a matter for debate. If you debate which comes first, then you are similar to a confused man who does not cut off ideas of victory and defeat, but magnifies the notion of self and dharmas, and does not disassociate himself from the four marks. Good Knowing Advisors, what are concentration and wisdom like? They are like a lamp and its light. With the lamp, there is light. Without the lamp, there is darkness. The lamp is the substance of the light and the light is the function of the lamp. Although there are two names, there is one fundamental substance. The dharma of concentration and wisdom is also thus."

Devout Buddhists should always remember that hinderers or barriers caused by passions and delusion which aid rebirth and hinder to arising of wisdom. Owing to the practice of all knowledge, the practice of the

unexcelled knowledge and wisdom of Buddhas, nothing that we don't know. Besides, owing to the practice of wisdom, practitioners will attain the wisdom eye that sees all things as unreal. With the wisdom-eye, a Bodhisattva takes in at a glance all the wonders and inconceivabilities of the spiritual realm to its deepest abyss. This also means to discern the entity of things and their real state. This, in a sense, a philosophical way of looking at things. A person with the eye of wisdom can observe things that are invisible to the average person and can perceive matters that are beyond imagination. He realizes that all things in this world are always changing and there is nothing existing in a fixed form. That is to say all things are impermanent, nothing in the universe is an isolated existence, having no relation to other things; everything exists in relationship with everything else like the meshes of a net, nothing has an ego. At the same time, practitioners will attain the force of wisdom or the ability to maintain clear wisdom or the power of wisdom (awareness) which rests on insight into the four noble truths and leads to the knowledge that liberates.

The goal of practicing of meditation is to attain wisdom. True wisdom arises from purity of mind. The real wisdom is not attained from reading and studying sutras or books; the wisdom we attain from reading and studying is only worldly knowledge and not true wisdom. Besides, practitioners who cultivate wisdom should always be clear and not be deluded on the law of cause and effect. Buddhist ancients often said: "Bodhisattvas fear (are afraid of) causes; living beings fear effects (results or consequences)." As a matter of fact, all those who cultivate wisdom know that both cause and effect are closely related as they co-exist mutually. Everything in this world is subject to the law of cause and effect. Everything is empty and impermanent, but the law of cause and effect never changes. Because Bodhisattvas, those who cultivate wisdom, are afraid of bad consequences in the future, not only they avoid planting evil-causes or evil karma in the present, but they also diligently cultivate to gradually diminish their karmic obstructions; at the same time to accumulate their virtues and merits, and ultimately to attain Buddhahood. However, sentient beings complete constantly to gather evil-causes; therefore, they must suffer evil effect. When ending the effect of their actions, they are not remorseful or willing to repent. Not only do they blame Heaven and other people, but they continue to create more evil karma in opposition and retaliation. Therefore, enemies and vengeance will continue to exist forever in this vicious cycle. From the beginningless time, due to our lack of wisdom, we perceive and behave foolishly, and thus suffer afflictions and sufferings. According to Buddhism, there are consequences, either good or bad, to our thoughts, words and actions. Some people believe that reasons that cause sufferings and afflictions come from external environments and conditions, but to Buddhism, these reasons lie within everyone of us. Devout Buddhists should always remember that sufferings and afflictions caused by

ignorance, while the source of happiness and Nirvana is wisdom. For this reason, we must cultivate to transform these sufferings and afflictions into peace, mindfulness, happiness, and final goal of Nirvana. If we want to change direction away from greed, anger, delusion, arrogance, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconducts, lying... the only way to achieve our goal is to attain a real wisdom. For with the real wisdom we can overcome the above mentioned ten evil robbers. Then, our lives will become more pure and peaceful.

In Buddhism, Prajna is often interchanged with wisdom. Wisdom means knowledge, the science of the phenomenal, while prajna more generally to principles or morals. Wisdom is described as the understanding of the Four Noble Truths, the understanding of interdependent origination, and the like. The attainment of wisdom is the ability of transformation of these doctrinal items from mere objects of intellectual knowledge into real, personal experience. In other words, according to Buddhism, wisdom is the ability to change our knowledge of the four Noble Truths and the like from mere sutra learning into actual, living truth. To attain wisdom, we must first cultivate good conduct, then cultivate mental development. It should be noted that reading and understanding the meaning of a sutra doesn't mean attaining wisdom. Wisdom means reading, understanding, and transforming doctrinal items from sutras into real, personal experience. Wisdom gives us the ability of "seeing the truth" or "seeing things as they really are" because the attainment of wisdom is not an intellectual or academic exercise, it is understanding or seeing these truths directly.

In Buddhism, wisdom is the highest virtue of all. It is usual to translate the Sanskrit term "Prajna" (pali-Panna) by "wisdom," and that is not positively inaccurate. When we are dealing with the Buddhist tradition, however, we must always bear in mind that there Wisdom is taken in a special sense that is truly unique in the history of human thought. "Wisdom" is understood by Buddhists as the methodical contemplation of 'Dharmas.' This is clearly shown by Buddhaghosa's formal and academic definition of the term: "Wisdom has the characteristic of penetrating into dharmas as they are themselves. It has the function of destroying the darkness of delusion which covers the own-being of dharmas. It has the manifestation of not being deluded. Because of the statement: 'He who is concentrated knows, sees what really is,' concentration is its direct and proximate cause." Wisdom is a weapon of enlightening beings, dissolving all ignorance and afflictions. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can annihilate the afflictions, bondage, and compulsion accumulated by all sentient beings in the long night of ignorance. In short, practitioners who cultivate merits alongside wisdom will realize how this body of liberties and endowments is found but once, is difficult to obtain, and is easily lost; and partake of its essence, make it

worthwhile, undistracted by the meaningless affairs of this life. Practitioners who cultivate merits alongside wisdom will always enthusiastically practice avoiding negative actions and always cultivate to accumulate virtues and finally reach the complete emancipation.

The Buddha taught that the ultimate perfect wisdom is innate. The Flower Adornment Sutra taught: "Every being possesses the same wisdom and virtuous capabilities as Buddhas." However, why do we have not this wisdom now? It is because of wandering thoughts and attachments. Now we try to cultivate in order to restore that innate wisdom. If we have the real wisdom, our thoughts, speech and behavior will be correct; how can we suffer where there are no ill consequences to suffer from? Of course, what kind of life do we have if we don't want to say a life of peace, mindfulness and happiness? Buddhist teachings show us that with a real wisdom, people can change lives of afflictions and sufferings into ones of peace, mindfulness and happiness. In summary, cultivation in Buddhism means to restore lives of wisdom, restore the ultimate and complete wisdom that the Buddha once did more than twenty-six centuries ago.

Finally, in Buddhist cultivations, merits and wisdom are two feet of a practitioner who is walking toward the Buddha-Land. If lack just one, that person immediately becomes disabled and will never be able to reach the Buddha-Land. As a matter of fact, according to Buddhist teachings, without purity of conduct there will be no calm equipoise of thought. In other words, if we don't cultivate merits in our own body, our mind will wander around without the calm equipoise of thought there will be no completion of insight. The completion of insight (prajna) means the perfection of intellect and wisdom, i.e., perfect enlightenment. It is the result of self-creation and the ideal of the self-creating life. The code of conduct set forth by the Buddha is not a set of mere negative prohibitions, but an affirmation of doing good, a career paved with good intentions for the welfare of happiness of mankind. These moral principles aim at making society secure by promoting unity, harmony and mutual understanding among people.

Cultivation of Blessedness: In Buddhism, cultivate merits, sundry practices or practices of blessing means cultivate to gather merits includes various practices for a Buddhist such as practicing charity, distributing free sutras, building temples and stupas, keeping vegetarian diet and precepts, etc. However, the mind is not able to focus on a single individual practice and it is difficult to achieve one-pointedness of mind. Practices of blessing are various practices in cultivation for a Buddhist such as practicing charity, distributing free sutras, building temples and stupas, keeping vegetarian diet and precepts, etc. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that we must create our own blessings. If we cultivate blessings, we will obtain blessings; if we cultivate wisdom, we will obtain wisdom. However, to cultivate both blessings and

wisdom is even better. Blessings come from ourselves. If we perform good deeds, we will have blessings. On the contrary, if we commit evil deeds, we will not have blessings. Buddhists should make demands on ourselves, not to make demands on others and seek outside appearances. Ancient Virtues taught: “Calamities and blessings are not fixed; we bring them upon ourselves,” or “Sickness enters through the mouth; calamities come out of the mouth”. We are beset with calamities on all sides, careless talking may very well be the cause. We may momentarily enjoy all kinds of good tasty foods such as steak, chicken, and seafood, but in the long run, these foods may cause us a lot of deadly diseases because nowadays animal flesh contains a lot of poisons from their chemical foods that help make them grow faster to be ready for selling in the market. However, Buddhist practitioners should always remember that in the path of cultivation, a deed is considered to be totally pure when it is done without any thought of reward, whether worldly or divine. It is called ‘deed of no merit’. For no merit is sought, it is a deed of immeasurable merit, of infinite merit. For a deed to be great, it is not necessary that it be grandiose. What is important is the motive behind the deed and not the magnitude of the deed itself. If the motive is pure, then the deed is pure; if the motive is impure, then, no matter how big the deed is, it is still impure. Perhaps this is why, when Emperor Liang Wu-Ti asked Bodhidharma how much merit he had acquired for promoting Buddhism in large-scale way, and Bodhidharma replied ‘No merit at all’.

“Punya” is the result of the voluntary performance or cultivation of meritorious actions: Merit or karmic merit gained through giving alms, performing worship and religious services, reciting sutras, praying, and so on, which is said to assure a better life in the future. Accumulating merit is a major factor in the spiritual effort of a Buddhist layperson. Mahayana Buddhism teaches that accumulated merit should serve the enlightenmen of all beings by being transferred to others. The commitment to transfer a part of one’s accumulated merit to others is a significant aspect of the Bodhisattva vow. Perfection in this is achieved in the eighth stage of a Bodhisattva’s development. However, in Theravada countries, making merit is a central focus of the religious lives of laypeople, who are generally thought to be incapable of attaining the higher levels of meditative practice or Nirvana. In early Buddhism, it appears that it was assumed that merit is non-transferable, but in Mahayana the doctrine of “transference of merit” became widespread, and is said to be one of the key virtues of a Bodhisattva, who willingly gives away the karmic benefits of his or her good works for the benefit of others. *Merits are all good deeds, or the blessing arising from good deeds:* The karmic result of unselfish action either mental or physical. The blessing wealth, intelligence of human beings and celestial realms; therefore, they are temporary and subject to birth and death. Various practices for a

Buddhist such as practicing charity, distributing free sutras, building temples and stupas, keeping vegetarian diet and precepts, etc. Devout Buddhists should always remember that the law of cause and effect or the relation between cause and effect in the sense of the Buddhist law of “Karma” is inconceivable. 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.

In Buddhism, the term “field of blessing” is used just as a field where crops can be grown. People who grow offerings to those who deserve them will harvest blessing results accordingly. Sincere Buddhists should always cultivate the Field of Blessing by offerings to Buddha, His Dharma, and the Sangha. The field of blessedness or the field for cultivation of happiness, meritorious or other deeds, i.e. any sphere of kindness, charity, or virtue. Someone who is worthy of offerings. Just as a field can yield crops, so people will obtain blessed karmic results if they make offerings to one who deserves them. According to Buddhism, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhats and all sentient beings, whether friends or foes, are fields of merits for the cultivator because they provide him with an opportunity to cultivate merits and virtues. Filial piety toward one’s parents and support them, serve and respect one’s teachers and the elderly, maintain a compassionate heart, abstain from doing harm, and keep the ten commandments. One of the four fields for cultivating happiness (blessing). The Buddha taught: “Children should pay special attention to their parents. As parents age, it is inevitable that their bodies will gradually weaken and deteriorate in a variety of ways, making them increasingly susceptible to physical illnesses that can affect every organ in their system. This is natural and there is no escape. Even though, children have no forceful obligation to care for their aged and sick parents, and aged parents have to depend on their children’s goodwill. Buddhist practitioners should take good care of their parents piously, and practitioners should always remember that there is no better institution to care for the aged parents other than the family itself.” Beside the filial piety toward one’s parents and support them, Buddhist practitioners should take refuge in the Triratna, and should always serve and

respect teachers and the elderly, maintain a compassionate heart, abstain from doing harm, and keep the ten commandments.

Cultivations of Wisdom: According to Buddhist legendary, in Buddhist teachings, there are eighty-four thousand dharma-doors. Eighty-four thousand is a symbolic number which represents a countless number of the Buddha Dharma-door. Although talking about numerous dharma doors, all of them concentrate only on two matters. First, cultivation of blessing to accumulate merits; and the second matter is the cultivation of wisdom to accumulate virtues. In the limitation of this chapter, we only discuss about the cultivation of wisdom. The real wisdom is not something we can attain externally, only because most of us have become confused through general misconceptions and therefore, are unable to realize this potential wisdom. If we can eliminate this confusion, we will realize this intrinsic part of our nature. This is the main purpose of cultivation in Buddhism. The ultimate goal in cultivating is the complete enlightenment. Practitioners should always remember that the Buddha's teachings: "All things arise from the mind." Therefore, when the mind is pure, everything else is pure. Devout Buddhists 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. As mentioned above, the main causes of sufferings and afflictions are greed, anger, hatred, ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and so on... and the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to help sentient beings, especially human beings, to observe and practice discipline, meditation, and wisdom so that we can 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.

The Buddha taught his disciples numerous methods to practice to help the mind remain calm and unaffected in all situations, not giving rise to any wandering and discriminating thoughts or attachments so practitioners can recover their own original nature. Cultivation of wisdom means nothing profound but correcting our previous erroneous thoughts, speech, and acts. In cultivating to attain wisdom, observing precepts and practicing meditation play an extremely important role because observing precepts will help practitioners not to commit wrong-doings, while practicing meditation will help practitioners attain a pure mind. Fundamental wisdom which is inherent in every man and which can manifest itself only after the veil of ignorance, which screens it, has been transformed by means of self-cultivation as taught by the Buddha. According to the Buddha, wisdom is extremely important for it can be commensurate with enlightenment itself. It is wisdom that finally opens the door to freedom, and wisdom that removes ignorance, the fundamental cause of suffering. It is said that while one may sever the branches of a tree and even cut down its trunk, but if the root is not removed, the tree will grow

again. Similarly, although one may remove attachment by means of renunciation, and aversion by means of love and compassion, as long as ignorance is not removed by means of wisdom, attachment and aversion will sooner or later arise again. As for the Buddha, immediately after witnessing the unhappy incident involving the worm and the bird at the plowing ceremony, the prince sat under a nearby rose-apple tree and began to contemplate. This is a very early experience of meditation of the Buddha. Later, when he renounced the world and went forth to seek the ultimate truth, one of the first disciplines he developed was that of meditation. Thus, the Buddha himself always stressed that meditation is the only way to help us to achieve wisdom.

In Buddhism, wisdom is of the highest importance; for purification comes through wisdom, through understanding. But the Buddha never praised mere intellect. According to him, knowledge should go hand in hand with purity of heart, with moral excellence (*vijja-caranasampanna-p*). Wisdom gained by understanding and development of the qualities of mind and heart is wisdom par excellence (*bhavanamaya panna-p*). It is saving knowledge, and not mere speculation, logic or specious reasoning. Thus, it is clear that Buddhism is neither mere love of, nor inducing the search after wisdom, nor devotion, though they have their significance and bearing on mankind, but an encouragement of a practical application of the teaching that leads the follower to dispassion, enlightenment and final deliverance.

For Buddhist practitioners, to begin to cultivate wisdom means to start our own inner struggle. Zen Master Philip Kapleau wrote in *The Three Pillars of Zen*: "Zazen that leads to Self-realization is neither idle reverie nor vacant inaction but an intense inner struggle to gain control over the mind and then to use it, like a silent missile, to penetrate the barrier of the five senses and the discursive intellect (that is, the sixth sense). It demands energy, determination and courage. Yasutani-roshi (Zen master Hakuun Yasutani 1885-1973) calls it 'a battle between the opposing forces of delusion and bodhi.' This state of mind has been vividly described in these words, said to have been uttered by the Buddha as he sat beneath the Bo tree making his supreme effort, and often quoted in the zendo during sesshin: 'Though only my skin, sinews, and bones remain and my blood and flesh dry up and wither away, yet never from this seat will I stir until I have attained full enlightenment.' The drive toward enlightenment is powered on the one hand by a painful felt inner bondage, a frustration with life, a fear of death, or both; and on the other by the conviction that through awakening one can gain liberation. But it is in zazen that the body-mind's force and vigor are enlarged and mobilized for the breakthrough into this new world of freedom."

The Buddha often taught his disciples that all sentient beings possess a Buddha's wisdom or original nature which has abilities to know the past,

present and future. These are our original abilities. Unfortunately, they are covered and hidden by our delusion. Delusion occurs when the mind is not still, while an enlightened one remains unaffected. It should be noted that when our six senses encounter the environment, our mind moves, giving rise to wandering thoughts. The resulting wisdom, or training in wisdom. Even though wisdom involves cause and effect. Those who cultivated and planted good roots in their past lives would have a better wisdom. However, in this very life, 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. Wisdom is one of the three studies in Buddhism. The other two are precepts and meditation. According to Bhikkhu Piyadassi Mahathera in *The Spectrum of Buddhism*, high concentration is the means to the acquisition of wisdom or insight.

XXIV. 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.

2

Part Three
An Overview & Meanings of Faith
In Buddhist Cultivation
(Phần Hai: Tổng Quan Và Ý Nghĩa Của Tín
Trong Tu Tập Phật Giáo)

Chapter Three

A Summary of Faith in Buddhism

A basic belief in Buddhism is that the world is filled with sufferings and afflictions that are caused by the desires, angers and ignorance, pride, doubt, and wrong views. If the above mentioned troubles could be removed, then the sufferings and afflictions would naturally end. However, removing the above mentioned troubles does not mean that we chase after worldly pleasures, nor does it mean pessimism. According to the Buddha, most of daily life's troubles are caused by attachment. We get angry, we worry, we become greedy and complain bitterly. All these causes of unhappiness, tension, stubbornness and sadness are due to attachment. Thus if we want to end sufferings and afflictions, we must end attachment, no exception. However, to end attachment is not easy for in order to end attachment we must conquest ourselves. Thus the Buddha taught in the Dharmapada Sutra: "The greatest of conquests is not the subjugation of others but of the self. Even though a man conquers thousands of men in battle, he who conquers himself is the greatest of conquerors." In fact, the ultimate goal of a Buddhist is to look inward to find his own Buddha and not outward. Thus, the goal of a Buddhist is the development of self-dependency, the ability to set oneself free of sufferings and afflictions. Buddhism is strongly against a blind belief on other forces of salvation with no basic factors. The Buddha always reminded his disciples: "You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it."

With Buddhism, to believe religion without understanding it thoroughly, it's a blind faith, or it's not different from superstition. Even though understanding but understanding without finding to see if it's right or wrong, in accordance or not in accordance with truth, with reality, it's also a form of superstition or wrong belief. Believe that when you sow a seed of hot-pepper, you will have a hot-pepper tree and eventually you will reap hot-pepper fruit. However, even though you have already sown the seed of hot-pepper, but you realize that you

don't like to eat fruit that is hot, you stop fertilizing and watering the hot-pepper tree, the tree will wither and die, and will not produce any fruit. Similarly, if you know an action is bad and unwholesome, you refuse to act, of course you will not receive any bad or unwholesome consequence. The Buddha refuses to believe that whatever happens to a person, either good or bad, is due to chance, fate or fortune. Everything that happens has a specific cause or causes and there must be some tight relationships between the cause and the effect. Those who want to believe in Buddhism should not rush to become a Buddhist with the wrong understanding or blind belief in Buddhism. You should take your time to do more researches, to ask questions, and to consider carefully before making your final decision. Religions that worship god have always considered reason and wisdom as the enemy of faith and dogma for them there exist only "believe" or "not believe" and nothing else. In fact, if we accept that there exists a so-called almighty god, we cannot accept any of the findings of modern science; neither Darwin's science of biological evolution nor the theories of the nature and evolution of the universe coming from modern physics. They believe that a so-called creator god invented humankind and the universe all at once and that these three realms of god, man and universe, all are separate. However, modern science agrees with what the Buddha taught almost twenty-six centuries ago, and proves that the universe as one infinite process of change. Furthermore, the belief of salvation by god caused a serious danger to the whole world, especially from the first century to the end of the nineteenth century, for those who believe in the salvation of god believe that they must impose salvation on others. For this reason, Catholic countries sent their troops and priests all over the world to save others by force. And as a result, millions of people got killed or slaughtered and subjugated in the name of god. Buddhism is in contrast with other religions that believe in god. Buddhism teaches that one must develop wisdom. However, wisdom in Buddhism is not simply believing in what we are told or taught. True wisdom is to directly see and understand for ourselves. With this wisdom, people will have an open mind that listens to others' points of view rather than being closed-minded; people will also carefully examine fates that contradicts their belief rather than blindly believing. Sincere Buddhists never believe in the law of eternity. The Buddha accepts the law of impermanence or change and denies the existence of eternal substances. Matter and spirit are false abstractions that, in

reality, are only changing factors or dharms which are connected and which arise in functional dependence on each other. Thus, Buddhist faith means that the devotee accepts the Buddha as a Teacher and a Guide, His doctrine as way of life, and the Sangha community as the exemplars of this way of life. According to Buddhist point of view in faith, everyone is completely free to make his own choice in faith, no one has the right to interfere with other people's choice. Let's take a close look in the Buddha's teaching in the Kalama Sutra: "Nothing should be accepted merely on the ground of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. Everything should be weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one's own true benefits. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected but left for further considerations." Therefore, we see clearly that Buddhism is based on personal experience, rationalism, practice, morality, and insight. There is no need to propitiate gods or masters. There is no blind adherence to a faith, rigid dogmas, rituals, holy scriptures, or myths. The Buddha always confirmed his disciples that a salvation can only be gained by man and by man only during his life without the least help from a so-called god or gods.

The Buddha taught us to try to recognize truth, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. Furthermore, Buddhists do not believe in god because there does not seem to be any concrete evidence to support this idea. Who can answer questions on god? Who is god? Is god masculine or feminine or neuter? Who can provide ample evidence with real, concrete, substantial or irrefutable facts to prove the existence of god? So far, no one can. Buddhists suspend judgment until such evidence is forthcoming. Besides, such belief in god is not necessary for a really meaningful and happy life. If you believe that god make your life meaningful and happy, so be it. But remember, more than two-thirds of the world do not believe in god and who can say that they don't have a meaningful and happy life? And who dare to say that those who believe in god, all have a meaningful and happy life? If you believe that god help you overcome disabilities and difficulties, so be it. But Buddhists do not accept the theological concept of salvation. In the contrary, based on the Buddha's own

experience, he showed us that each human being had the capacity to purify the body and the mind, develop infinitive love and compassion and perfect understanding. He shifted the gods and heavens to the self-heart and encouraged us to find solution to our problems through self-understanding. Finally, such myths of god and creation concept has been superseded by scientific facts. Science has explained the origin of the universe completely without recourse to the god-idea.

Buddhism considers human's liberation the priority. Once the Buddha was asked by a monk named Malunkya-putta, whether the world was eternal or not eternal, whether the world was finite or infinite, whether the soul was one thing and the body another, whether a Buddha existed after death or did not exist after death, and so on, and so on. The Buddha flatly refused to discuss such metaphysics, and instead gave him a parable. "It is as if a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and yet he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know by what man I was wounded,' or 'I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know of what the arrow with which I was wounded was made.'" As a practical man he should of course get himself treated by the physician at once, without demanding these unnecessary details which would not help him in the least. This was the attitude of the Buddha toward the metaphysical speculation which do not in any way help improve ourselves in our cultivation. The Buddha would say, "Do not go by reasoning, nor by argument." Besides, Buddhism does not accept such practices as fortune telling, wearing magic charms for protection, fixing lucky sites for building, prophesying and fixing lucky days, etc. All these practices are considered useless superstitions in Buddhism. However, because of greed, fear and ignorance, some Buddhists still try to stick to these superstitious practices. As soon as people understand the Buddha's teachings, they realize that a pure heart can protect them much better than empty words of fortune telling, or wearing nonsense charms, or ambiguous chanted words and they are no longer rely on such meaningless things. In Buddhism, liberation is a motto which heightens (elevates) the unfettered spirit beyond the irrational wall of conventional restriction in which the faith of each individual must be chosen by that individual and by no one else. However, the Buddha always emphasized "Try to understand thoroughly before believing, even with my teachings, for acting freely and without knowing the real meaning of whatever you act sometimes you unintentionally destroy

valuable traditions of yourselves. This is the same as a diamond being thrown into the dirt.” The Buddha continued to advise: “When you do anything you should think of its consequence.” Nowadays, more than 2,500 years after the Buddha’s time, all scientists believe that every event that takes place in the world is subject to the law of cause and effect. In other words, cause is the activity and effect is the result of the activity. The Buddha described the world as an unending flux of becoming. All is changeable, continuous transformation, ceaseless mutation, and a moving stream. Everything exists from moment to moment. Everything is recurring rotation of coming into being and then passing out of existence. Everything is moving from formation to destruction, from birth to death. The matter of material forms are also a continuous movement or change towards decay. This teaching of the impermanent nature of everything is one of the most important points of view of Buddhism. Nothing on earth partakes of the character of absolute reality. That is to say there will be no destruction of what is formed is impossible. Whatever is subject to origination is subject to destruction. Change is the very constituent of reality. In daily life, things move and change between extremes and contrasts, i.e., rise and fall, success and failure, gain and loss, honor and contempt, praise and blame, and so on. No one can be sure that a “rise” does not follow with a “fall”, a success does not follow with a failure, a gain with a loss, an honor with a contempt, and a praise with a blame. To thoroughly understand this rule of change or impermanence, Buddhists are no longer dominated by happiness, sorrow, delight, despair, disappointment, satisfaction, self-confidence and fear.

In the noble teachings of the Buddha, it is honesty, kindness, understanding, patience, generosity, forgiveness, loyalty and other good qualities that truly protect us and give us true happiness and prosperity. A man who possesses the above mentioned characteristics, that man is travelling on the Path to the Buddha’s Land. It is true that Buddhahood cannot be found outside. It has no limit and not be confined in the East, West, South or North. It is in fact, in every man’s mind. In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Once upon a time, there was a father who was very old and death was hovering on him. He had a little son and wanted him to be well off in the future. He hid a very valuable diamond between the hems of his son’s shirt and then gave him some advice. After his father’s passing away, the son forgot completely about the hidden diamond. He became poor, wandering

here and there to beg for help, met with nothing but refusal. One day, he suddenly remembered about the hidden treasure left by his father, from thence he became a rich man and no longer depended on others for help.”

Most of us are agreed to the fact that among all living beings, human beings are unique beings who can understand what we are and what we should be. Compared to other beings, man is most complete and superior not only in the mentality and thinking, but also in the ability of organization of social life. Human beings’ life cannot be substituted nor repeated nor determined by someone else. Once we are born in this world, we have to live our own life, a meaningful and worth living life. Thus the ancient said: “Man is the most sacred and superior animal.” And the Buddha taught in the Upasaka Sutra: “In all beings, man is endowed with all necessary faculties, intelligence. Besides man’s conditions are not too miserable as those beings in hell, not too much pleasure as those beings in heaven. And above all, man’s mind is not so ignorant as that of the animals.” So man has the ability to build and improve his own life to the degree of perfection.

Chapter Four

Faith In the Kalama Sutra

According to Buddhism, “Faith” regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. The question is to what place, faith is placed in Buddhism? Faith in Buddhism is totally different from faith in other religions. While other religions confirm that to believe means to be saved. Faith in Buddhism, in the contrary, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge, and there is nothing to do with “to believe means to be saved” in Buddhism. In Buddhism, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge that taking the three refuges and cultivating in accordance with the Buddha’s Teachings. Sincere Buddhists do not only believe in the Buddha as the noblest of Teachers, in the Buddhist Doctrines preached by Him, and in His Sangha Order, but practice His precepts in daily life. In Buddhism, there exists no “blind faith.” In no circumstances the term “believe or be damned” survives in Buddhism. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. Also according to Buddhism, the religious life which is evolved from faith in the teaching of others. It is that of the unintellectual type, in contrast with those whose intelligence is sharp, their religious life is evolved from practice on the teaching of others. In Buddhism, 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).

Faith (Sraddha-skt) 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). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the

Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. In Buddhism, doubt means having no faith that is directed towards the Four Truths, the Three Jewels, cause and effect, and so on. When we are in doubt in the Three Jewel, we cannot advance in our path of cultivation. When we doubt the law of cause and effect, we will not hesitate to create karmas. When we are in doubt in the four truths, it is extremely difficult for us to attain liberation. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. While practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. And vow means to wish to attain Buddhahood or to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, with point of view from the Pureland, practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. This means to recite often the virtuous name “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without distraction and without chaos throughout one’s life. The Pure Land followers believe that “Vow” is with each thought that arises, there is a “love and yearning” to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World, and with each thought, there is a “wish and prayer” To achieve a place in the nine-levels of Golden Lotus. In these three components of faith, practice, and vow, it is absolutely essential for the Pureland cultivator to have all three; however, vow is the most important. The Great Master Ou-I, the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism taught: “If Faith and Vow are solidified, when nearing death, it is possible to gain rebirth by reciting the Buddha’s name in ten recitations. In contrast, no matter how much one recites Buddha, if Faith and Vow are weak and deficient, then this will result only in reaping the merits and blessings in the Heavenly or Human realms.” However, this teaching only applies to beings with higher faculties. As for us, beings with low faculties, thin blessings and heavy karmas; if we wish to gain rebirth to the Ultimate Bliss World, we must have Faith, Practices and Vow. In other words, we must carry out both parts of Theory and Practice.

In Buddhist teachings, Kalama sutra (skt) or Kalama sutta (p), the sutra mentioned about the Buddha’s famous advice on the subject of authority in the search for Truth for the people in the tribe of Kalama.

In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Nothing should be accepted merely on the grounds of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. We must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumors; nor writings by sages, merely because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a Deva; nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our own teachers or masters. We are to believe when the writing doctrine or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness. In other words, everything should be carefully weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected immediately, but left for further consideration.” In short, on sraddha, the Buddha wanted to advise his disciples that not to have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Not to believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Not to believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Not to believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Not to believe in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly.

Chapter Five

Wanting to Advance to the Buddhahood One Should Have A Firm Faith In Taking Refuge on the Three Gems & Reliance on the Buddha's Dharma and Cultivate Buddha's Teachings

(A)Buddhists Should Have a Firm Faith In Taking Refuge on the Three Gems

I. An Overview of the Starting Point of the Triratna:

It should be reminded that 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. The Buddha did preach the Buddha's Ideal, or the 'realization of the Buddha's Ideal in the world and started the foundation of Kingdom of Truth. The first time, the Buddha preached the Four Noble Truths: "This is suffering! Its nature is oppression. This is accumulation. Its nature is enticement. This is Cessation. Its nature is that it can be realized. This is the Way. Its nature is that it can be cultivated." The second time, the Buddha also preached the Four Noble Truths: "This is suffering! You should know it. This is accumulation. You should cut it off. This is Cessation. You should realize it. This is the Way. You should cultivate it." The Third Turning of the Four Noble Truths: "This is suffering! I have already known it and need not know it again. This is accumulation. I have already cut it off and need not cut it off again. This is Cessation. I have already realized and need not

realize it any more. This is the Way. I have already successfully cultivated and need not cultivate it any more.” Then, He summarized: “O monk! You must know that there are Four Noble Truths. The first is the Noble Truth of Suffering. Life is filled with the miseries and afflictions of old age, sickness, unhappiness and death. People chase after pleasure but find only pain. Even when they do find something pleasant they soon grow tired of it. Nowhere is there any real satisfaction or perfect peace. The second is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering. When our mind is filled with greed and desire and wandering thoughts, sufferings of all types follow. The third is the Noble Truth of the End of Suffering. When we remove all craving, desire, and wandering thoughts from our mind, sufferings will come to an end. We shall experience undescrivable happiness. And finally, the Noble Truth of the Path. The Path that helps us reach the ultimate wisdom.” After the Buddha's first lecture, all the five brothers of Kaundinya wanted to be His first disciples. This was the starting point of the Triratna.

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 Priceless Message from the Buddha or the Four Noble Truths is one of the most important parts in the Buddha’s Teachings. The Buddha gave this message to suffering humanity for their guidance, to help them to be rid of the bondage of “Dukkha” and to attain happiness, both relative and absolute (relative happiness or worldly happiness, absolute happiness or Nirvana). These Truths are not the Buddha’s creation. He only re-discovered their existence. The Buddha said: “I am neither a vaguely so-called God nor an incarnation of any vaguely so-called God. I am only a man who re-discovers what had been covered for so long. I am only a man who attains enlightenment

by completely comprehending all Noble Truths.” In fact, the Buddha is a man who deserves our respect and reverence not only as a teacher but also as a Saint. He was a man, but an extraordinary man, a unique being in the universe. All his achievements are attributed to his human effort and his human understanding. He achieved the highest mental and intellectual attainments, reached the supreme purity and was perfect in the best qualities of human nature. He was an embodiment of compassion and wisdom, two noble principles in Buddhism. The Buddha never claimed to be a savior who tried to save ‘souls’ by means of a revelation of other religions. The Buddha’s message is simple but priceless to all of us: “Infinite potentialities are latent in man and that it must be man’s effort and endeavor to develop and unfold these possibilities. That is to say, in each man, there exists the Buddha-nature; however, deliverance and enlightenment lie fully within man’s effort and endeavor.”

II. An Overview of the Triple Jewel:

A Sanskrit term for “three jewels,” or “threefold refuge,” which means taking refuge in Buddha as a teacher, in Dharma as medicine and in Sangha as companion on the path, which follows the invocation to the Buddha in Pansil and precedes the five-fold vow of Pansil or Pancha-Sila. To Buddhists, the Buddha is an object of veneration and the most safe source of refuge because he has found the path to liberation and taught it to others. The dharma, his teaching, is also a safe source of refuge because it outlines the path and means for us to cross the shore of birth and death. The Samgha (Sangha) is also another safe source of refuge because it comprises of people who have dedicated their lives to the cultivation of the Buddha-dharma with the vow: “Above to seek bodhi, below to save (transform) beings.” According to Buddhism, while Sakyamuni Buddha is the first person of the Trinity, his Law the second, and the Order the third, all three by some are accounted as manifestations of the All-Buddha. The Buddha: The Supremely Enlightened Being. The iconography of Buddhas which have come down to us. The Dharma: The teaching imparted by the Buddha. All written sermons and discourses of Buddhas (that is, fully enlightened beings) as found in the sutras and other Buddhist texts still extant. The Sangha: The congregation of monks and nuns or genuine Dharma followers. Sangha consists of contemporary disciples who

practice and realize the saving truth of the Unified Three Treasures that was first revealed by Sakyamuni Buddha. The foundation of Buddhism is the Three Treasures, without trust in which and reverence for there can be no Buddhist religious life. There are three kinds of Triratna (three Treasures).

According to Buddhism, while Sakyamuni Buddha is the first person of the Trinity, his Law the second, and the Order the third, all three by some are accounted as manifestations of the All-Buddha. The foundation of Buddhism is the Three Treasures, without trust in which and reverence for there can be no Buddhist religious life. There are three kinds of Triratna (three Treasures). It should be reminded that Buddha is an epithet of those who successfully break the hold of ignorance, liberate themselves from cyclic existence, and teach others the path to liberation. The word “Buddha” derived from the Sanskrit root budh, “to awaken,” it refers to someone who attains Nirvana through meditative practice and the cultivation of such qualities as wisdom, patience, and generosity. Such a person will never again be reborn within cyclic existence, as all the cognitive ties that bind ordinary beings to continued rebirth have been severed. Through their meditative practice, buddhas have eliminated all craving, and defilements. The Buddha of the present era is referred to as “Sakyamuni” (Sage of the Sakya). He was born Siddhartha Gautama, a member of the Sakya clan. With Zen practitioners, the problem of emancipation is important, but the still more important one is, “Who or what is the Buddha?” When this is mastered, practitioners have rendered their full services. Dharma would mean ‘that which is held to,’ or ‘the ideal’ if we limit its meaning to mental affairs only. This ideal will be different in scope as conceived by different individuals. In the case of the Buddha it will be Perfect Enlightenment or Perfect Wisdom (Bodhi). Dharma is the way of understanding and love taught by the Buddha. The Buddha says: “He who sees the Dharma sees me.”. All things are divided into two classes: physical and mental; that which has substance and resistance is physical, that which is devoid of these is mental (the root of all phenomena is mind). According to the Madhyamakas, Dharma is a protean word in Buddhism. In the broadest sense it means an impersonal spiritual energy behind and in everything. There are four important senses in which this word has been used in Buddhist philosophy and religion: Dharma in the sense of one ultimate Reality. It is both transcendent and immanent to the

world, and also the governing law within it. Dharma in the sense of scripture, doctrine, religion, as the Buddhist Dharma. Dharma in the sense of righteousness, virtue, and piety. Dharma in the sense of 'elements of existence.' In this sense, it is generally used in plural. Sangha is a corporate assembly of at least three monks under a chair a senior monk, empowered to hear confession, or a community of monks and nuns who live in harmony in the six sentiments of concord.

According to Buddhism, while Sakyamuni Buddha is the first person of the Trinity, his Law the second, and the Order the third, all three by some are accounted as manifestations of the All-Buddha. The foundation of Buddhism is the Three Treasures, without trust in which and reverence for there can be no Buddhist religious life. There are three kinds of Triratna (three Treasures). Triratna (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) as the treasury of all virtue and merit. Tripitaka are also considered the treasury of all virtue and merit. Three saints (sravakas, prateyka-buddhas, and bodhisattvas) as the treasury of all virtue and merit. Taking refuge in the "three jewels," or "threefold refuge," which means taking refuge in Buddha as a teacher, in Dharma as medicine and in Sangha as companion on the path, which follows the invocation to the Buddha in Pansil and precedes the five-fold vow of Pansil or Pancha-Sila. To Buddhists, the Buddha is an object of veneration and the safest source of refuge because he has found the path to liberation and taught it to others. The dharma, his teaching, is also a safe source of refuge because it outlines the path and means for us to cross the shore of birth and death. The Samgha (Sangha) is also another safe source of refuge because it comprises of people who have dedicated their lives to the cultivation of the Buddha-dharma with the vow: "Above to seek bodhi, below to save (transform) beings."

The foundation of Buddhism is the Three Treasures, without trust in which and reverence for there can be no Buddhist religious life. There are three kinds of Triratna (three Treasures). The Triple Jewel was defined in many different ways. *First, the Unified or One-Body Three Treasures:* "The Vairocana Buddha, representing the realization of the world of Emptiness, of Buddha-nature, of unconditioned Equality. The Dharma that is the law of beginningless and endless becoming, to which all phenomena are subject according to causes and conditions. The harmonious fusion of the preceding two, which constitutes total reality as experienced by the enlightened." The Three Treasures are mutually related and interdependent. One unrealized

in the Unified Three Treasures can neither comprehend in depth the import of Sakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, nor appreciate the infinite preciousness of his teachings, nor cherish as living images and pictures of Buddhas. Again, the Unified Three Treasures would be unknown had not it been made manifest by Sakyamuni in his own body and mind and the Way to its realization expounded by him. Lastly, without enlightened followers of the Buddhas' Way in our own time to inspire and lead others along this Path to Self-realization, the Unified Three Treasures would be a remote ideal, the saga of Sakyamuni's life desiccated history, and the Buddhas' words lifeless abstractions. More, as each of us embodies the Unified Three Treasures, the foundation of the Three Treasures is none other than one's own self. *Second, the Manifested Three Treasures:* "The Buddha is the historic Buddha Sakyamuni, who through his perfect enlightenment realized in himself the truth of the Unified Three Treasures. The Dharma, which comprises the spoken words and sermons of Sakyamuni Buddha wherein he elucidated the significance of the Unified Three Treasures and the way to its realization. The Sangha, Sakyamuni Buddha's disciples, including the immediate disciples of the Buddha Sakyamuni and other followers of his day who heard, believed, and made real in their own bodies the Unified Three Treasures that he taught. The Sangha Treasure is the third treasure in the Triratna. The corporate assembly of at least three monks under a chair a senior monk, empowered to hear confession, or a community of monks and nuns who live in harmony in the six sentiments of concord. "Sangha" is a Sanskrit term for "community." The community of Buddhists. In a narrow sense, the term can be used just to refer to monks (Bhiksu) and nuns (Bhiksuni); however, in a wider sense, Sangha means four classes of disciples (monks, nuns, upasaka and upasika). Lay men (Upasaka) and lay women (Upasika) who have taken the five vows of the Pancasila (fivefold ethics). All four groups are required formally to adopt a set of rules and regulations. Monastics are bound to two hundred-fifty and three hundred forty-eight vows, however, the actual number varies between different Vinaya traditions. An important prerequisite for entry into any of the four categories is an initial commitment to practice of the Dharma, which is generally expressed by "taking refuge" in the "three jewels": Buddha, Dharma, and Samgha." *Third, the Abiding Three Treasures:* The Triratna in which the Buddha is the Supremely Enlightened Being. The iconography of Buddhas which

have come down to us. The Dharma includes the teaching imparted by the Buddha. All written sermons and discourses of Buddhas (that is, fully enlightened beings) as found in the sutras and other Buddhist texts still extant. The Sangha includes the congregation of monks and nuns or genuine Dharma followers. Sangha consists of contemporary disciples who practice and realize the saving truth of the Unified Three Treasures that was first revealed by Sakyamuni Buddha.

The Three Treasures are mutually related and interdependent. As mentioned above, one unrealized in the Unified Three Treasures can neither comprehend in depth the import of Sakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, nor appreciate the infinite preciousness of his teachings, nor cherish as living images and pictures of Buddhas. Again, the Unified Three Treasures would be unknown had not it been made manifest by Sakyamuni in his own body and mind and the Way to its realization expounded by him. Lastly, without enlightened followers of the Buddhas' Way in our own time to inspire and lead others along this Path to Self-realization, the Unified Three Treasures would be a remote ideal, the saga of Sakyamuni's life desiccated history, and the Buddhas' words lifeless abstractions. More, as each of us embodies the Unified Three Treasures, the foundation of the Three Treasures is none other than one's own self.

The Manifested Three Treasures include: *The first jewel is the Buddha:* The Buddha is the person who has achieved the enlightenment that leads to release from the cycle of birth and death and has thereby attained complete liberation. The word Buddha is not a proper name but a title meaning "Enlightened One" or "Awakened One." Prince Siddhartha was not born to be called Buddha. He was not born enlightened, nor did he receive the grace of any supernatural being; however, efforts after efforts, he became enlightened. It is obvious to Buddhists who believe in re-incarnation, that the Buddha did not come into the world for the first time. Like everyone else, he had undergone many births and deaths, had experienced the world as an animal, as a man, and as a god. During many rebirths, he would have shared the common fate of all that lives. A spiritual perfection like that of a Buddha cannot be the result of just one life. It must mature slowly throughout many ages and aeons. However, after His Enlightenment, the Buddha confirmed that any beings who sincerely try can also be freed from all clings and become enlightened as the Buddha. All

Buddhists should be aware that the Buddha was not a god or any kind of supernatural being (supreme deity), nor was he a savior or creator who rescues sentient beings by taking upon himself the burden of their sins. Like us, he was born a man. The difference between the Buddha and an ordinary man is simply that the former has awakened to his Buddha nature while the latter is still deluded about it. However, the Buddha nature is equally present in all beings. According to Tao-Ch'o (562-645), one of the foremost devotees of the Pure Land school, in his *Book of Peace and Happiness*, one of the principal sources of the Pure Land doctrine. All the Buddhas save sentient beings in four ways. First, by oral teachings such recorded in the twelve divisions of Buddhist literature; second, by their physical features of supernatural beauty; third, by their wonderful powers and virtues and transformations; and fourth, by recitating of their names, which when uttered by beings, will remove obstacles and result their rebirth in the presence of the Buddha.

The second jewel is the Dharma: Dharma is a very troublesome word to handle properly and yet at the same time it is one of the most important and essential technical terms in Buddhism. First, etymologically, it comes from the Sanskrit root "Dhri" means to hold, to bear, or to exist; there seems always to be something of the idea of enduring also going along with it. The most common and most important meaning of "Dharma" in Buddhism is "truth," "law," or "religion." Secondly, it is used in the sense of "existence," "being," "object," or "thing." Thirdly, it is synonymous with "virtue," "righteousness," or "norm," not only in the ethical sense, but in the intellectual one also. Fourthly, it is occasionally used in a most comprehensive way, including all the senses mentioned above. In this case, we'd better leave the original untranslated rather than to seek for an equivalent in a foreign language. Besides, Dharma also means the cosmic law which is underlying our world. According to Buddhism, this is the law of karmically determined rebirth. Dharmas are all phenomena, things and manifestation of reality. All phenomena are subject to the law of causation, and this fundamental truth comprises the core of the Buddha's teaching. In Buddhism, Dharma means the teaching of the Buddha (Understanding and Loving). The way of understanding and love taught by the Buddha. The Buddha says: "He who sees the Dharma sees me." All things are divided into two classes: physical and mental; that which has substance and resistance is physical, that which is devoid of these is mental (the root of all

phenomena is mind). The doctrines of Buddhism, norms of behavior and ethical rules including pitaka, vinaya and sila.

According to Prof. Junjiro Takakusu in *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, the word “Dharma” has five meanings. First, the Dharma would mean ‘that which is held to,’ or ‘the ideal’ if we limit its meaning to mental affairs only. This ideal will be different in scope as conceived by different individuals. In the case of the Buddha it will be Perfect Enlightenment or Perfect Wisdom (Bodhi). Secondly, the ideal as expressed in words will be his Sermon, Dialogue, Teaching, or Doctrine. Thirdly, the ideal as set forth for his pupils is the Rule, Discipline, Precept, or Morality. Fourthly, the ideal to be realized will be the Principle, Theory, Truth, Reason, Nature, Law, or Condition. Fifthly, the ideal as realized in a general sense will be Reality, Fact, Thing, Element (created and not created), Mind-and-Matter, or Idea-and-Phenomenon. According to the Madhyamakas, Dharma is a protean word in Buddhism. In the broadest sense it means an impersonal spiritual energy behind and in everything. There are four important senses in which this word has been used in Buddhist philosophy and religion. First, Dharma in the sense of one ultimate Reality. It is both transcendent and immanent to the world, and also the governing law within it. Secondly, Dharma in the sense of scripture, doctrine, religion, as the Buddhist Dharma. Thirdly, Dharma in the sense of righteousness, virtue, and piety. Fourthly, Dharma in the sense of ‘elements of existence.’ In this sense, it is generally used in plural. According to the meaning of Dharma in Sanskrit, Dharma is a very troublesome word to handle properly and yet at the same time it is one of the most important and essential technical terms in Buddhism. Dharma has many meanings. A term derived from the Sanskrit root “dhr,” which means “to hold,” or “to bear”; there seems always to be something of the idea of enduring also going along with it. Originally, it means the cosmic law which underlying our world; above all, the law of karmically determined rebirth. The teaching of the Buddha, who recognized and regulated this law. In fact, dharma (universal truth) existed before the birth of the historical Buddha, who is no more than a manifestation of it. Today, “dharma” is most commonly used to refer to Buddhist doctrine and practice. Dharma is also one of the three jewels on which Buddhists rely for the attainment of liberation, the other jewels are the Buddha and the Samgha.

Besides, the term “Dharma” also means the teaching of the Buddhas which carry or hold the truth. The way of understanding and love taught by the Buddha doctrine. The Buddha taught the Dharma to help us escape the sufferings and afflictions caused by daily life and to prevent us from degrading human dignity, and descending into evil paths such as hells, hungry ghosts, and animals, etc. The Dharma is like a raft that gives us something to hang onto as we eliminate our attachments, which cause us to suffer and be stuck on this shore of birth and death. The Buddha’s dharma refers to the methods of inward illumination; it takes us across the sea of our afflictions to the other shore, nirvana. Once we get there, even the Buddha’s dharma should be relinquished. The Dharma is not an extraordinary law created by or given by anyone. According to the Buddha, our body itself is Dharma; our mind itself is Dharma; the whole universe is Dharma. By understanding the nature of our physical body, the nature of our mind, and worldly conditions, we realize the Dharma. The Dharma that is the law of beginningless and endless becoming, to which all phenomena are subject according to causes and conditions. The Dharma, which comprises the spoken words and sermons of Sakyamuni Buddha wherein he elucidated the significance of the Unified Three Treasures and the way to its realization. The Dharma, the teaching imparted by the Buddha. All written sermons and discourses of Buddhas (that is, fully enlightened beings) as found in the sutras and other Buddhist texts still extant. According to the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra, the basic characteristic of all dharmas is not arising, not ceasing, not defiled, not immaculate, not increasing, not decreasing. The Buddha says: “He who sees the Dharma sees me.”

The third jewel is the Sangha: “Sangha” is a Sanskrit term for “community.” The community of Buddhists. In a narrow sense, the term can be used just to refer to monks (Bhiksu) and nuns (Bhiksuni); however, in a wider sense, Sangha means four classes of disciples (monks, nuns, upasaka and upasika). Lay men (Upasaka) and lay women (Upasika) who have taken the five vows of the Panca-sila (fivefold ethics). All four groups are required formally to adopt a set of rules and regulations. Monastics are bound to two hundred-fifty and three hundred forty-eight vows, however, the actual number varies between different Vinaya traditions. An important prerequisite for entry into any of the four categories is an initial commitment to practice of the Dharma, which is generally expressed by “taking

refuge” in the “three jewels”: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The Sangha means the congregation of monks and nuns or genuine Dharma followers. Sangha consists of contemporary disciples who practice and realize the saving truth of the Unified Three Treasures that was first revealed by Sakyamuni Buddha. Sangha is a Sanskrit term means the monastic community as a whole. Sangha also means a harmonious association. This harmony at the level of inner truth means sharing the understanding of the truth of transcendental liberation. At the phenomenal level, harmony means dwelling together in harmony; harmony in speech means no arguments; harmony in perceptions; harmony in wealth or sharing material goods equally, and harmony in precepts or sharing the same precepts. Buddhist monks and nuns have left the family life to practice the Buddha’s teachings. They usually own only a few things, such as robes, an alms bowl and a razor to shave their heads. They aim to give up the need for material possessions. They concentrate on their inner development and gain much understanding into the nature of things by leading a pure and simple life. Community (congregation) of monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists who cultivate the Way. The Buddhist Brotherhood or an assembly of brotherhood of monks. Sangha also means an assembly, collection, company, or society. The corporate assembly of at least three or four monks under a chairperson. “Sangha” is an Assembly of Buddhists; however, in a narrow sense, sangha means the members of which are called Bhikkhus or Bhikkhunis; however, in a wider sense, Sangha means four classes of disciples (monks, nuns, upasaka and upasika). Usually, an assembly of monks. The corporate assembly of at least three or four monks under a chairman, empowered to hear a confession, grant absolution, and ordain. The church or monastic order, the third member of the Triratna.

III.Reasons for Buddhists to Take Refuge in the Three Gems:

To take refuge in the Triratna, an admission of a lay disciple, after recantation of his previous wrong belief and sincere repetition to the abbot or monk of the Three Refuges. According to Buddhist teachings, taking refuge in the three Refuges are three of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment. Practitioners should always remember that there are several problems for a Buddhist who does not

take refuge in the Three Gems. There is not any chance to get blessings from Buddhas, nor chance to imitate the compassion of the Buddhas. Thus, anger increased, and anger is one of the main causes of the rebirth in hell. Therefore, Buddhist sutras always say, “if one does not take refuge in Buddha, it’s easier to be reborn in hell. There is no chance to study Dharma in order to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad. Thus desire appears, and desire is one of the main causes of rebirth in the hungry ghost. Therefore, Buddhist sutras always say, “if one does not take refuge in the Dharma, it’s easier to be reborn in the hungry ghost realms.” There is no chance to meet the Sangha for guidance. Buddhist sutras always say, “If one does not take refuge in the Sangha, it’s easier to be reborn into the animal kingdom.” Not taking refuge in the Sangha means that there is no good example for one to follow. If there is no one who can show us the right path to cultivate all good and eliminate all-evil, then ignorance arises, and ignorance is one of the main causes of rebirth in the animal realms. To take refuge in the Triratna, a Buddhist must first find a virtuous monk who has seriously observed precepts and has profound knowledge to represent the Sangha in performing an ordination ceremony.

For Zen practitioners, to take refuge in the Buddha as a supreme teacher. To take refuge in the Buddha means acknowledging the seed of enlightenment that is within ourselves, and we all have the possibility of emancipation. It also means taking refuge in those qualities which the Buddha embodies, qualities like fearlessness, wisdom, loving kindness, compassion, joy and letting go, and so on. Take refuge in the Dharma as the best medicine in life. Taking refuge in the Dharma means taking refuge in the law, in the way things are; it is acknowledging that our mind surrenders to the truth. Take refuge in the Sangha, wonderful Buddha’s disciples. For Zen practitioners, taking refuge in the Sangha means taking support in those who have the same goal with us; those in the Buddhist community who can support, help, and guide us to achieve our goals of enlightenment and freedom. Any Buddhist follower must attend an initiation ceremony with the Three Gems, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, i.e., he or she must venerate the Buddha, follow his teachings, and respect all his ordained disciples. Buddhists swear to avoid deities and demons, pagans, and evil religious groups. A refuge is a place where people go when they are distressed or when they need safety and security. There are many types of refuge. When people are unhappy, they take refuge with their friends; when

they are worried and frightened they might take refuge in false hope and beliefs. As they approach death, they might take refuge in the belief of an eternal heaven. But, as the Buddha says, none of these are true refuges because they do not give comfort and security based on reality. Taking refuge in the Three Gems is necessary for any Buddhists. It should be noted that the initiation ceremony, though simple, is the most important event for any Buddhist disciple, since it is his first step on the way toward liberation and illumination. This is also the first opportunity for a disciple to vow to diligently observe the five precepts, to become a vegetarian, to recite Buddhist sutras, to cultivate his own mind, to nurture himself with good deeds, and to follow the Buddha's footsteps toward his own enlightenment. Especially for Zen practitioners, taking refuge in the Three Gems is an indispensable foundation. Therefore, owing to the taking refuge in the Three Gems, Zen practitioners, especially lay practitioners, know how to keep precepts. In fact, keeping precepts is extremely necessary for meditation practice, for it is a way of maintaining a basic purity of body, speech, and mind. The five precepts which should be followed are: not killing, which means refraining from knowingly taking any life, not even swatting a mosquito or stepping on an ant; not stealing, which means not taking anything which is not given; refraining from sexual misconduct, for lay practitioners, which means keep our body and mind purity; not lying or speaking falsely or harshly; and not taking intoxicants, which means not taking alcohol or drugs.

Truly speaking, Buddhism has indeed proved to be the genuine article and has given those people where it has come the highest right conduct for a human being. The gentle, courtesy and upright lives of the Buddhists from all over the world show that Buddhism has indeed proved to be the genuine article and has given those people where it has come the highest right conduct for a human being. If happiness is the result of good thoughts, words and actions; then indeed devout Buddhists have found the secret of right living. In fact, have we ever found true happiness resulting from wrong thinking and wrong doing, or can we ever sow evil cause and reap sweet fruits? Furthermore, Can any of us escape from the Law of Change or run away from the sufferings and afflictions? Devout Buddhists, especially laypeople, should try to understand the Four Noble Truths because the more we have the understanding of the Four Noble Truths, the more we respect the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sacred Disciples of the Buddha. Of

course we all respect the Buddha, but all of us should gain a profound admiration for the Dharma too for at the time we do not have the Buddha, the Dharma is the true refuge for us, the lighthouse that guide us in our path of cultivation towards liberation. The process of “Taking refuge” is not a process that happens on the day of the ceremony of “Taking refuge”, or take place within just a few days, or a few years. It takes place not only in this very life, but also for many many aeons in the future. Besides, there are other benefits of taking refuge: First, we become a Buddhist. Second, we can destroy all previously accumulated karma. Third, we will easily accumulate a huge amount of merit. Fourth, we will seldom be bothered by the harmful actions of others. Fifth, we will not fall to the lower realms. Sixth, we will effortlessly achieve our goal in the path of cultivation. Seventh, it is a matter of time, we will soon be enlightened.

IV. Meanings of Taking Refuge in the Triratna:

The three Refuges are three of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment. There are several problems for a Buddhist who does not take refuge in the Three Gems. There is no chance to meet the Sangha for guidance. Buddhist sutras always say, “If one does not take refuge in the Sangha, it’s easier to be reborn into the animal kingdom.” Not taking refuge in the Sangha means that there is no good example for one to follow. If there is no one who can show us the right path to cultivate all good and eliminate all-evil, then ignorance arises, and ignorance is one of the main causes of rebirth in the animal realms. There is no chance to study Dharma in order to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad. Thus desire appears, and desire is one of the main causes of rebirth in the hungry ghost. Therefore, Buddhist sutras always say, “If one does not take refuge in the Dharma, it’s easier to be reborn in the hungry ghost realms.” There is not any chance to get blessings from Buddhas, nor chance to imitate the compassion of the Buddhas. Thus, anger increased, and anger is one of the main causes of the rebirth in hell. Therefore, Buddhist sutras always say, “if one does not take refuge in Buddha, it’s easier to be reborn in hell. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Men were driven by fear to go to take refuge in the mountains, in the forests, and in sacred trees (Dharmapada 188). But that is not a safe refuge or no such refuge is supreme. A man who has gone to such refuge, is not delivered from all

pain and afflictions (Dharmapada 189). On the contrary, he who takes refuge in the Buddhas, the Dharma and the Sangha, sees with right knowledge (Dharmapada 190). With clear understanding of the four noble truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the destruction of suffering, and the eightfold noble path which leads to the cessation of suffering (Dharmapada 191). That is the secure refuge, the supreme refuge. He who has gone to that refuge, is released from all suffering (Dharmapada 192)."

The Buddha had said: "I am a realized Buddha, you will be the Buddha to be realized," meaning that we all have a Buddha-nature from within. To take refuge in the Triratna, a Buddhist must first find a virtuous monk who has seriously observed precepts and has profound knowledge to represent the Sangha in performing an ordination ceremony. An admission of a lay disciple, after recantation of his previous wrong belief and sincere repentance to the abbot or monk of the Three Refuges. Take refuge in the Buddha as a supreme teacher. To the Buddha, I return to rely, vowing that all living beings understand the great way profoundly, and bring forth the bodhi mind (1 bow). Take refuge in the Dharma as the best medicine in life. To the Dharma, I return and rely, vowing that all living beings deeply enter the sutra treasury, and have wisdom like the sea (1 bow). Take refuge in the Sangha, wonderful Buddha's disciples. To the Sangha, I return and rely, vowing that all living beings form together a great assembly, one and all in harmony without obstructions (1 bow). When listening to the three refuges, Buddhists should have the full intention of keeping them for life; even when life is hardship, never change the mind.

To take refuge in the Triratna, or to commit oneself to the Triratna, i.e. Buddha, Dharma, Sangha (Buddha, his Truth, and his Order). Those who sincerely take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha shall not go to the woeful realm. After casting human life away, they will fill the world of heaven. Any Buddhist follower must attend an initiation ceremony with the Three Gems, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, i.e., he or she must venerate the Buddha, follow his teachings, and respect all his ordained disciples. Buddhists swear to avoid deities and demons, pagans, and evil religious groups. A refuge is a place where people go when they are distressed or when they need safety and security. There are many types of refuge. When people are unhappy, they take refuge with their friends; when they are worried and frightened they might take refuge in false hope and beliefs. As they approach death, they

might take refuge in the belief of an eternal heaven. But, as the Buddha says, none of these are true refuges because they do not give comfort and security based on reality. Taking refuge in the Three Gems is necessary for any Buddhists. It should be noted that the initiation ceremony, though simple, is the most important event for any Buddhist disciple, since it is his first step on the way toward liberation and illumination. This is also the first opportunity for a disciple to vow to diligently observe the five precepts, to become a vegetarian, to recite Buddhist sutras, to cultivate his own mind, to nurture himself with good deeds, and to follow the Buddha's footsteps toward his own enlightenment.

To take refuge means to vow to Take Refuge in the Buddha-Dharma-Sangha. The root "Sr" in Sanskrit, or "Sara" in Pali means to move, to go; so that "Saranam" would denote a moving, or he that which goes before or with another. Thus, the sentence "Gachchàmi Buddham Saranam" means "I go to Buddha as my Guide". Take refuge in the three Precious Ones, or the Three Refuges. In Buddhism, a refuge is something on which one can rely for support and guidance, not in a sense of fleeing back or a place of shelter. In most Buddhist traditions, "going for refuge" in the "three refuges" or "three jewels": Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, is considered to be the central act that establishes a person as a Buddhist. Going for refuge is an acknowledgment that one requires aid and instruction and that one has decided that one is committed to following the Buddhist path. The Buddha is one who has successfully found the path to liberation, and he teaches it to others through his instructions on dharma. The Sangha, or monastic community, consists of people who have dedicated their lives to this practice and teaching, and so are a source of instruction and role models for laypeople. The standard refuge prayer is:

"I go for refuge in the Buddha.
I go for refuge in the Dharma
I go for refuge in the Sangha."

These three phrases mean: "I go to Buddha, the Law, and the Order, as the destroyers of my fears, the first by the Buddha's teachings, the second by the truth of His teachings, and the third by good examples and virtues of the Sangha.

There are five stages of taking refuge: Take refuge in the Buddha, take refuge in the Dharma, take refuge in the Sangha, take refuge in the eight commandments, and take refuge in the Ten Commandments.

These are five modes of trisarana, or formulas of trust in the Triratna, taken by those who: First, those who turn from heresy. Second, those who take the five commandments. Third, those who take the eight commandments. Fourth, those who take the Ten Commandments. Fifth, those who take the complete commandments. The ceremony of taking refuge in the Triratna and observing precepts should be celebrated solemnly in front of the Buddha's Shrine with the represent of the Sangha in performing an ordination ceremony. The initiation ceremony must be simple, depend on the situation of each place. However, it must be solemn. It is led by Buddhist Master who would grace it by standing before the altar decorated with the Buddha's portrait, with the assistance of other monks and nuns, relatives, and friends. As for the initiated, he must be clean and correctly dressed. Under the guidance of the Master, he must recite three times the penance verses in order to cleanse his karmas: "As a Buddhist disciple, I swear to follow in Buddha's footsteps during my lifetime, not in any god, deity or demon. As a Buddhist disciple, I swear to perform Buddhist Dharma during my lifetime, not pagan, heretic beliefs or practices. As a Buddhist disciple, I swear to listen to the Sangha during my lifetime, not evil religious groups."

Buddhism has indeed proved to be the genuine article and has given those people where it has come the highest right conduct for a human being. The gentle, courtesy and upright lives of the Buddhists from all over the world show that Buddhism has indeed proved to be the genuine article and has given those people where it has come the highest right conduct for a human being. If happiness is the result of good thoughts, words and actions; then indeed devout Buddhists have found the secret of right living. In fact, have we ever found true happiness resulting from wrong thinking and wrong doing, or can we ever sow evil cause and reap sweet fruits? Furthermore, Can any of us escape from the Law of Change or run away from the sufferings and afflictions? According to Buddhism, false refuge means not to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. From the beginningless time, we had taken refuge in momentary and transitory pleasures with the hope to find some satisfaction in these pleasures. We consider them as a way out of our depression and boredom, only end up with other sufferings and afflictions. When the Buddha talked about "taking refuge", he wanted to advise us to break out of such desperate search for satisfaction. Taking true refuge involves a

changing of our attitude; it comes from seeing the ultimate worthlessness of the transitory phenomena we are ordinarily attached to. When we see clearly the unsatisfactory nature of the things we have been chasing after, we should determine to take refuge in the Triple Gem. The Benefits of a true refuge. Devout Buddhists, especially laypeople, should try to understand the Four Noble Truths because the more we have the understanding of the Four Noble Truths, the more we respect the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sacred Disciples of the Buddha. Of course we all respect the Buddha, but all of us should gain a profound admiration for the Dharma too for at the time we do not have the Buddha, the Dharma is the true refuge for us, the lighthouse that guide us in our path of cultivation towards liberation. The process of “Taking refuge” is not a process that happens on the day of the ceremony of “Taking refuge”, or take place within just a few days, or a few years. It takes place not only in this very life, but also for many many aeons in the future. Besides, there are still other benefits of taking refuge include the followings: first, we become a Buddhist; second, we can destroy all previously accumulated karma; third, we will easily accumulate a huge amount of merit; fourth, we will seldom be bothered by the harmful actions of others; fifth, we will not fall to the lower realms; sixth, we will effortlessly achieve our goal in the path of cultivation; and lastly, it is a matter of time, we will soon be enlightened.

V. Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem for Secret Sects:

Take refuge in the Triple Gem for Secret Sects according to the first Tibetan Panchen Lama: “With great bless, I arise as my Guru Yidam. From my clear body masses of light rays diffuse into the ten directions. Blessing the world and all sentient beings. All becomes perfectly arrayed with only extremely pure qualities. From the state of an exalted and virtuous mind. I and all infinite, old mother sentient beings. From this moment until our supreme enlightenment. We vow to go for refuge to the Gurus and the Three Precious Gems. Homage to the Guru (Namo Gurubhya). Homage to the Buddha (Namo Buddhaya). Homage to the Dharma (Namo Dharmaya). Homage to the Sangha (Namo Sanghaya three times). For the sake of all mother sentient beings. I shall become my Guru Deity. And place all sentient beings in the supreme state of a Guru Deity (three times). For the sake of all

mother sentient beings, I shall quickly attain supreme state of a Guru Deity in this very life (three times). I shall free all mother sentient beings from suffering and place them in the great bliss of Buddhahood (three times). Therefore, I shall now practice the profound path of Guru-Yidam yoga (three times). Om-Ah-Hum (three times). Pure clouds of outer, inner and secret offerings. Fearsome items and objects to bond us closely and fields of vision pervade the reaches of space, earth and sky spreading out inconceivably. In essence wisdom-knowledge in aspect inner offerings and various offerings objects as enjoyments of the six senses they function to generate the special wisdom-knowledge of bliss and voidness.

Take refuge in the Triple Gem and Hundred Thousand Buddhas in the Pure Land for Secret Sects according to Lozang-Drappa: "I take safe direction from the Three Precious Gems; I shall liberate every limited being. I reaffirm and correct my bodhicitta aim (three times). May the surface of the land in every direction be pure, without even a pebble. As smooth as the palm of a child's hand; naturally polished, as is a beryl gem. May divine and human objects of offering actually arrayed and those envisioned as peerless clouds of Samantabhadra offerings. From the heart of the Guardian of the hundreds of deities of Tusita, the Land of Joy, on the tip of a rain-bearing cloud resembling a mound of fresh, white curd. We request you alight and grace this site, King of the Dharma, Lozang-Drappa, the omniscient, with the pair of your spiritual sons. Seated on lion-thrones, lotus, and moon in the sky before us, ennobling, impeccable gurus, we request you remain, with white smile of delight. For hundreds of eons to further the teachings as the foremost fields for growing a positive force for us with minds of belief in the facts. Your minds have the intellect that comprehends the full extent of what can be known. Your speech, with its elegant explanations, becomes an adornment for the ears of those of good fortune. Your bodies are radiantly handsome with glorious renown. We prostrate to you whom to behold, hear, or recall is worthwhile. Refreshing offerings of water, assorted flowers, fragrant incense, lights, scented water, and more. This ocean of clouds of offerings, actually arranged and imagined here. We present to you foremost fields for growing a positive force. Whatever destructive actions of body, speech and mind that we have committed, since beginningless time, and especially the breaches of our three sets of vows, we openly admit, one by one, with fervent regret from our heart. In this degenerate age, you perserved with a phenominal amount of study and practice and, by riding yourselves of the eight childish feelings, you made the respites and enrichments of your lives worthwhile, and from the depth of our hearts, we rejoice, O Guardians, in the towering waves of your enlightening deeds. In the towering waves of your enlightening deeds that billow in the

skies of your Dharmakayas, we request you to release a rain of profound and vast Dharma to rain upon the absorbent earth of us, eager to be tamed in fitting ways. May whatever constructive forces built up by this benefit the teachings and those who wander, and may they especially enable the heart of the teachings of the ennobling, impeccable Lozang-dragpa to beat ever on. By directing and offering to the Buddha-fields this base, anointed with fragrant waters, strewn with flowers, and decked with Mount Meru, four islands, the sun, and the moon. May all those who wander be led to pure land. I send forth this mandala to you precious gurus by the force of having made fervent requests in this way. From the hearts of the ennobling, impeccable father and the pairs of his spiritual sons, hollow beams of white light radiate forth. Their tips combine into one and penetrate us through the crowns of our heads. Through the conduit of these white tubes of light, white nectars flow freely, the color of milk, purging us of diseases, demons, negative forces, obstacles, and constant habits, baring none. Our bodies become as pure and as clear as a crystal. You are Avalokitesvara, a great treasury of compassion. Manjushri, a commander of flawless wisdom. Vajrapani, a destroyer of all hordes of demonic forces. Tsongkhapa, the crown jewel of the erudite masters of the Land of Snow. At your feet, Lozang-Dragpa, we make you requests (three times). Glorious, precious root guru, come grace the lotus and moon seats at the crowns of our heads. Taking care of us through your great kindness. Direct us to the actual attainments of your body, speech and mind. Glorious, precious guru, come grace the lotus seats at our hearts. Taking care of us through your great kindness. Remain steadfast to the core of our enlightenment. By this constructive act, may we quickly actualize ourselves as Guru-Buddhas and thereafter lead to that state, all wandering beings, not neglecting even one.

VI. Markless Triple Refuge In the Jewel Platform Sutra:

Markless Triple Refuge also means Own Mind Takes Refuge with Own Self-Nature. According to the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Treasure, the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-Neng, taught: Good Knowing Advisors, I will transmit the precepts of the triple refuge that has no mark. Good Knowing Advisors, take refuge with the enlightened, the honored, the doubly complete. Take refuge with the right, the honored, that is apart from desire. Take refuge with the pure, the honored among the multitudes. 'From this day forward, we call enlightenment our master and will never again take refuge with deviant demons or outside religions. We constantly enlighten ourselves by means of the Triple Jewel of our own self-nature.' Good Knowing Advisors, I exhort you all to take refuge with the Triple Jewel of your own nature: the Buddha, which is enlightenment; the Dharma, which is right; and the Sangha, which is pure. When your mind takes refuge with enlightenment, deviant confusion does not arise. Desire decreases, so that you know contentment and are able

to keep away from wealth and from the opposite sex. That is called the honored, the doubly complete. When your mind takes refuge with what is right, there are no deviant views in any of your thoughts because there are no deviant views; there is no self, other, arrogance, greed, love or attachment. That is called the honored that is apart from desire. When your own mind takes refuge with the pure, your self-nature is not stained by attachment to any state of defilement, desire or love. That is called the honored among the multitudes. If you cultivate this practice, you take refuge with yourself. Common people do not understand that, and so, from morning to night, they take the triple-refuge precepts. They say they take refuge with the Buddha, but where is the Buddha? If they cannot see the Buddha, how can they return to him? Their talk is absurd. Good Knowing Advisors, each of you examine yourselves. Do not make wrong use of the mind. The Avatamsaka Sutra clearly states that you should take refuge with your own Buddha, not with some other Buddha. If you do not take refuge with the Buddha in yourself, there is no one you can rely on. Now that you are self-awakened, you should each take refuge with the Triple Jewel of your own mind. Within yourself, regulate your mind and nature; outside yourself, respect others. That is to take refuge with yourself.” Good Knowing Advisors, when your own mind takes refuge with your self-nature, it takes refuge with the true Buddha. To take refuge is to rid your self-nature of ego-centered and unwholesome thoughts as well as jealousy, obsequiousness, deceitfulness, contempt, pride, conceit, and deviant views, and all other unwholesome tendencies whenever they arise. To take refuge is to be always aware of your own transgressions and never to speak of other people’s good or bad traits. Always to be humble and polite is to have penetrated to the self-nature without any obstacle. That is taking refuge.”

In the Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra, Chapter Six, the Sixth Patriarch taught: “Good Knowing Advisors, now that you have taken refuge with the Triple Jewel, you should listen carefully while I explain to you the three bodies of a single substance, the self-nature of the Buddha, so that you may see the three bodies and become completely enlightened to your own self-nature. Repeat after me: I take refuge with the clear, pure Dharma-body of the Buddha within my own body. I take refuge with the hundred thousand myriad Transformation-bodies of the Buddha within my own body. I take refuge with the complete and full Reward-body of the Buddha within my own body. Good Knowing Advisors, the form-body is an inn; it cannot be returned to. The three bodies of the Buddha exist within the self-nature of worldly people but, because they are confused, they do not see the nature within them and so, seek the three bodies of the Tathagata outside themselves. They do not see that the three bodies of the Buddha are within their own bodies. Listen to what I say, for it can cause you to see the three bodies of your own self-nature

within your own body. The three bodies of the Buddha arise from your own self-nature and are not obtained from outside. What is the clear pure Dharma-body Buddha? The worldly person's nature is basically clear and pure and, the ten thousand dharmas are produced from it. The thought of evil produces evil actions and the thought of good produces good actions. Thus, all dharmas exist within self-nature. This is like the sky which is always clear, and the sun and moon which are always bright, so that if they are obscured by floating clouds, it is bright above the clouds and dark below them. But if the wind suddenly blows and scatters the clouds, there is brightness above and below, and the myriad forms appear. The worldly person's nature constantly drifts like those clouds in the sky. Good Knowing Advisors, intelligence is like the sun and wisdom is like the moon. Intelligence and wisdom are constantly bright but, if you are attached to external states, the floating clouds of false thought cover the self-nature so that it cannot shine. If you meet a Good Knowing Advisor, if you listen to the true and right Dharma and cast out your own confusion and falseness, then inside and out there will be penetrating brightness, and within the self-nature all the ten thousand dharmas will appear. That is how it is with those who see their own nature. It is called the clear, pure Dharma-body of the Buddha."

***(B) Wanting to Advance to the Buddhahood, One
Must Rely on & Cultivate the Buddha's Dharma***

***(B-1) To Have Faith & Reliance on
the Buddha's Dharma***

Before entering Nirvana, the Buddha emphasized in front of his disciples that in cultivation, Buddhists must definitely rely on the Buddha's Dharma. Reliance on the dharma means to base on the Buddha's teachings to cultivate. Buddha Dharma is Buddha's Teachings, or Law of Buddhist or universal law which preached by the Buddha, methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment. Buddhists, especially lay people only need to always remember the essence 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. According to Zen Master Kosho Uchiyama in the Instructions for the Zen Cook: "We view heaven or hell, enlightenment or delusion all with the same eye, or to put it more positively, we throw our whole lives into whatever we encounter, and

that is attitude of living out the Buddhadharma. When we have developed this kind of attitude toward our lives, the meaning of living day by day changes completely, along with our valuation of the events and people and circumstances that arise. Since we no longer try to escape from delusion, misfortune, or adversity, nor chase after enlightenment and peace of mind, things like money and position lose their former value. People's reputations or their skills at maneuvering in society have no bearing on the way we see them as human beings, nor does a certificate of enlightenment make any impression on anyone. What is primary and essential is that as we develop this vision, the meaning of encountering the things, situations, or people in our lives completely changes." Besides, the Buddha also pointed out basic reliances in the Buddha-Dharma.

Four Reliances: The Buddha pointed out four basic principles for thorough understanding Buddhism for his His disciples, among them, *the first one* is to rely upon the dharma, or truth itself, and not upon the false interpretations of men (relying on the teaching, not on any person; or trust the teaching, not the person). *The second reliance* is relying on the true meaning or spirit of a dharma statement in a sutra, not on the words of the statement (trust the meaning of the teaching, not the expression). *The third reliance* is relying on intuitive wisdom, not on intellectual understanding (trust intuitive wisdom, not normal consciousness). *The fourth reliance* is relying on sutras that give ultimate teachings, not on those which preach expedient teachings (trust discourses definitive meaning, not discourses of interpretable meaning). Furthermore, upon taking refuge in Triratna, when it's time for taking refuge in the Dharma Treasure, the follower vows: To the Dharma, I return and rely, vowing that all living beings deeply enter the sutra treasury, and have wisdom like the sea. ***Ten Reliances:*** 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. *First*, Great Enlightened Beings take the determination for enlightenment as a reliance, as they never forget it. *Second*, Great Enlightened Beings take spiritual friends as a reliance, harmonizing as one. *Third*, they take roots of goodness as a reliance, cultivating, gathering, and

increasing them. *Fourth*, they take the transcendent ways as a reliance, fully practicing them. *Fifth*, they take all truths as a reliance, as they ultimately end in emancipation. *Sixth*, they take great vows as a reliance, as they enhance enlightenment. *Seventh*, Great Enlightened Beings take practice as a reliance, consummating them all. *Eighth*, Great Enlightened Beings take all Enlightening Beings as a reliance because they have the same one wisdom. *Ninth*, Great Enlightened Beings take honoring the Buddhas as a reliance because their faith is purified. *Tenth*, Great Enlightened Beings take all Buddhas as a reliance because they teach ceaselessly like benevolent parents. ***Ten Other Reliances:*** According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, chapter 38, there are ten kinds of basis on which Great Enlightening Beings carry out their practices. *First*, Enlightening Beings carry out the practices of Enlightening Beings based on honoring all Buddhas. *Second*, Enlightening Beings carry out the practices of taming all sentient beings. *Third*, Enlightening Beings associate with all good companions. *Fourth*, Enlightening Beings accumulate all roots of goodness. *Fifth*, Enlightening Beings purify all Buddha-lands. *Sixth*, Enlightening Beings do not abandon all sentient beings. *Seventh*, Enlightening Beings enter deeply into all transcendent ways. *Eighth*, Enlightening Beings fulfill vows of Enlightening Beings. *Ninth*, Enlightening Beings have infinite will for enlightenment. *Tenth*, Enlightening Beings rely on enlightenment of all Buddhas. In short, Buddhist practitioners should take all Buddhas as a reliance because they teach ceaselessly like benevolent parents.

(B-2) Wanting to Advance to the Buddhahood One Must Have Faith & Cultivate Buddha's Teachings

During the time of the Buddha always confirmed his disciples that He was only a guide who showed the Way of Enlightenment and Liberation; and He could never be able to liberate anyone. Those who listen to the Buddha's Teachings on methods of cultivation, then follow these teachings to cultivate will lead to enlightenment. In other words, **those who want to advance to the Buddhahood, everybody should study, understand, believe, and then practice to become a Buddha.** The birth of the Buddha's teachings is the pinnacle of the Buddha's achievement. The Buddha's enlightenment was in some respects the pinnacle of his achievement, but it was his subsequent teaching of Dharma (Truth) that laid the foundation for his enduring legacy. The

community of monks and nuns that he established ensured the transmission of this doctrine to future generations, and in the 3rd century B.C. the reign of the emperor Asoka played an instrumental role in the dissemination of Buddhism in India. After he had attained enlightenment, the Buddha remained for seven weeks at the site of the Bodhi Tree and enjoyed great bliss. During this period he realized that what he had come to understand was a profound and difficult truth, which other people relished worldly attachment, would find hard to grasp. According to the Buddha, the Buddha-dharma is simply worldly dharma in which we turn ourselves around. It is the dharma that most ordinary people are unwilling to use. Worldly people are sinking and floating in the worldly dharma; they are always busy running here and there, constantly hurried and agitated. The source of all these activities is invariably selfishness, motivated by a concern to protect their own lives and properties. Buddha-dharma, on the other hand, is unselfish and public-spirited, and springs from a wish to benefit others. Sincere cultivators always think of others' welfare. Sincere cultivators always forget their own "Ego". They always give up their own interests in service to others, and never bring uncomfortable circumstances and afflictions to others. However, most people fail to clearly understand the basic ideas that the Buddha once preached. As a result as we can see now, within Buddhist circles we find struggle and contention, troubles and hassles, quarrels and strife. These problems seem to be no different from that of ordinary people, if we do not want to say worst than what we can find in worldly life. The Buddha predicted all these problems, thus He concluded that it would be pointless to try to teach others about his enlightenment, but the great god Brahma Sahampati intervened and implored the Buddha to share his discoveries with humankind.

Impelled by his great compassion, the Buddha decided to survey the world. He saw that beings are of different kinds: like lotuses in a pond, some are immersed underwater, other grow and rest on the surface, and other again come right out of the water and stand clear. He understood that just as some people have good qualities and others bad, some would be easy to teach and others would be difficult. Because of this diversity and out of his great compassion for all beings, the Buddha changed his mind and resolved to teach. The Buddha's first sermon was addressed to the five ascetics who had been his companions before the enlightenment. At the deer park at Sarnath, near present day Varanasi, he explained to them the content of his enlightenment in the form of the Four Noble Truths. These ascetics were so struck by the depth

of his insight and the novelty of his message that one of them instantly became an arhat, a “worthy one” who attains nirvana through a Buddha’s teaching. The other four followed suit in the days to come. This momentous first sermon, which has become one of the better-known articulations of the Buddha’s teaching and of Buddhism in general, is called the “Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dharma.” It is still celebrated in most Theravada countries in the festival called “Asalha Puja,” which takes place on the full moon day of the month of July.

For the next forty-five years, until his ultimate extinction, the Buddha taught Dharma. The number of his followers increased steadily and the community of monks, the Sangha, began to form. The Buddha himself continued wandering and begging for his food. He taught indiscriminately, talking to kings and paupers alike, and ceased traveling only in the three months of the rainy season. The Buddha did not appoint a successor. When his disciples asked who would lead them after his death, he retorted that they must turn to themselves and be guided by the Dharma as he had taught it to them. It would be the duty of the Sangha to maintain the Dharma when he was gone. At his death approached, the Buddha asked the assembled monks if they had any questions. The gathering remained silent. The Buddha’s last words to the monks were: “All things composed are perishable. Now strive diligently.” Then, lying on his right side between two “sal” trees, he began meditating into the many stages of his complete and final extinction (parinirvana), after which he would never again be reborn. His body was cremated and, in accordance with his wish, the remains were divided among humans and gods. Stupas (dome-shaped funerary mounds) were erected over the relics. Stupas can be seen today at such sites as Sanchi and Amaravati in India, Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka and Borobudur in Indonesia.

Truly speaking, not only Buddhists but the who world also are indebted to the Buddha for it is He who first showed the Way to free human beings from the coils of lush, anger, stupidity, arrogance, doubtness, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying... To Him, religion was not a bargain, but a Noble Way of life to gain enlightenment and liberation. When the Buddha said that life is an ocean of sufferings; he did not mean to draw a pessimistic picture of life; however, He wanted to explain clearly causes of sufferings and afflictions, then He showed us the Path of Elimination of Sufferings. Besides, each and every teachings of His, from Dharma, Four Noble Truths, Eight Noble Paths, Causes and Effects, Karmas and Retributions, Rebirth, and Egolessness, and so on, all of the above helps lead us penetrate Buddhist Teachings and advance on the Path Leading To Buddhahood. If we, Buddhists, can penetrate Buddhist Teachings and advance on the Path Leading To Buddhahood, not talking about becoming a Buddha, at the very moment, at least, we can reduce evil thoughts, selfishness, hatred,

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

Chapter Six

Ten Grades of Bodhisattva Faith In the Surangama Sutra

As mentioned above, faith always plays an important role in Buddhist cultivation. Without a firm faith on Buddhist True Faith, practitioners will easily fall into the wrong views of Externalists (Outsiders). According to Buddhism, “Faith” regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. The question is to what place, faith is placed in Buddhism? Faith in Buddhism is totally different from faith in other religions. While other religions confirm that to believe means to be saved. Faith in Buddhism, in the contrary, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge, and there is nothing to do with “to believe means to be saved” in Buddhism. In Buddhism, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge that taking the three refuges and cultivating in accordance with the Buddha’s Teachings. Sincere Buddhists do not only believe in the Buddha as the noblest of Teachers, in the Buddhist Doctrines preached by Him, and in His Sangha Order, but practice His precepts in daily life. In Buddhism, there exists no “blind faith.” In no circumstances the term “believe or be damned” survives in Buddhism. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Do not have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Do not believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Do not believe in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly.” In other words, nothing should be accepted merely on the grounds of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. We must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been

handed down from antiquity; nor rumors; nor writings by sages, merely because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a Deva; nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our own teachers or masters. We are to believe when the writing doctrine or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness. In other words, everything should be carefully weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected immediately, but left for further consideration.

In the Surangama Sutra, book Eight, the Buddha reminded Ananda about the ten grades of Bodhisattva faith. First, the mind that resides in faith and faith which destroys illusions. With the mind centered in the middle, they enter the flow where where wonderful perfection reveals itself. From the truth of that wonderful perfection there repeatedly arise wonders of truth. They always dwell in the wonder of faith, until all false thinking is completely eliminated and the middle way is totally true. This is called the mind that resides in faith. The second Bodhisattva's faith is the remembrance, the unforgetfulness or the mind that resides in mindfulness. When true faith is clearly understood, then perfect penetration is total, and the three aspects of skandhas, places, and realms are no longer obstructions. Then all their habits throughout innumerable kalpas of past and future, during which they abandon bodies and receive bodies, appear to them now in the present moment. These good people can remember everything and forget nothing. This is called "The mind that resides in mindfulness." The third Bodhisattva's faith is the zealous progress or the mind that resides in vigor. When the wonderful perfection is completely true, that essential truth brings about a transformation. They go beyond the beginningless habits to reach the one essential brightness. Relying solely on this essential brightness, they progress toward true purity. This is called the mind of vigor. The fourth Bodhisattva's faith is the wisdom or the mind resides in wisdom. The essence of the mind reveals itself as total wisdom; this is called the mind that resides in wisdom. The fifth Bodhisattva's faith is the settled firmness on concentration or the mind that resides in samadhi. As the wisdom and brightness are held steadfast, a profound stillness pervades. The stage at which the majesty of this stillness becomes constant and solid. This

is called the mind that resides in samadhi. The sixth Bodhisattva's faith is the non-retrogression or the mind that resides in irreversibility. The light of samadhi emits brightness. When the essence of the brightness enters deeply within, they only advance and never retreat. This is called the mind of irreversibility. The seventh Bodhisattva's faith is the protection of the Truth or the mind that resides in protecting the Dharma. When the progress of their minds is secure, and they hold their minds and protect them without loss, they connect with the life-breath of the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions. This is called the mind that protects the Dharma. The eighth Bodhisattva's faith is the reflexive powers or the mind that resides in Making Transferences. Protecting their light of enlightenment, they can use this wonderful force to return to the Buddha's light of compassion and come back to stand firm with the Buddha. It is like two mirrors that are set facing one another, so that between them the exquisite images interreflect and enter into one another layer upon layer. This is called the mind of transference. The ninth Bodhisattva's faith is the nirvana mind in effortlessness or the mind that resides in precepts. With this secret interplay of light, they obtain the Buddha's eternal solidity and unsurpassed wonderful purity. Dwelling in the unconditioned, they know no loss or dissipation. This is called the mind that resides in precepts. The tenth Bodhisattva's faith is the action at will in anything in anywhere or the mind that resides in vows. Abiding in the precepts with self-mastery, they can roam throughout the ten directions, going anywhere they wish. This is called the mind that resides in vows.

Chapter Seven

The Eight Beliefs For Zen Practitioners

The Eight Beliefs of Buddhism, name of a famous Japanese Buddhist Zen book, written by Zen master Sogaku Harada, who was a brilliant scholar as well as a tough Zen master. A more literal translation of the title would be "Eight things that we can trust or have faith in Buddhism." *The first belief is intrinsic Buddha nature:* You are this nature now, at this very moment! What is intrinsic Buddha nature? Where is it? Buddha nature is not only no other than this very form, it is also everything. It is one blossom, a hundred blossoms, ten thousand blossoms. What is the difference between this body and mind and your true nature? Do you have any false nature? You, being as you are, are you false? Even to say true nature is funny. Nature has no true or false. What is it? This lead us to the second belief, the misconception of the self or ego, "I". *The second belief is the misunderstanding of an Ego:* Where does this "I" sneak in? One's understanding about oneself is somewhat deluded. How do these deluded thoughts occur? We recognize something that is not quite adequate, and we lose the vision of the true nature of life. *The third belief is the continuity of life before and after death:* If this life continues, how does it continue? *The fourth belief is the sureness of causation:* This is relatively easy to understand, everything occurs by causation. We often speak of something as a coincidence or accident, but nothing happens without direct and indirect causes. *The fifth belief is the existence of all Buddhas:* There exist those who have broken through the illusion of ego and have realized Buddha nature. *The sixth belief is the mutual attraction between you and the Buddhas:* Without this mutual attraction, would we practice the Way? Would we seek nirvana? Not only are we seeking, but the Way itself is supporting us. All Buddhas exist, how do you communicate with them? Where and how do they exist? *Then, the seventh belief is that you and others are not two:* Do you believe this? If you do, how sure are you about it? How can you confirm the fact that everything is dependent upon every other thing? *And finally, the eighth belief is that we are all in the process of becoming Buddha:* All of us, without exception regardless of race, nationality, education, and so

forth, are becoming Buddha. What is the relationship between the first belief of Buddha-nature, that is intrinsic, and the last belief, that we are all accomplishing the Buddha Way? Of course, it is not a matter of first and last, this is a continuous process, without beginning or end. If you do not see even one of these eight beliefs, you do not understand any of them. The reverse is also true. When you are sure of just one of these beliefs, you understand them all because all are connected. These are eight different aspects or perspectives of one fact. What is this fact? Another definition of nirvana is no dwelling place. What is this dwelling nowhere? In other words, in this life we are not confined to any permanent or fixed state, so dwelling in no place is itself nirvana. Dogen Zenji urges us to take birth and death as nirvana itself. When you do this, you will dislike neither birth nor death, nor will you desire to attain nirvana. Thus, you are free from birth and death. This is the nirvana of no dwelling place, do you see? The Platform Sutra says that the Sixth Patriarch was enlightened upon hearing the line from the Diamond Sutra, "Dwelling in no place, raise the mind." In other words, being truly free and liberated, your life unfolds naturally, without obstructions, and that is nirvana. So this Buddha nature is nirvana. This genuine nature is the Blossom of your life. Dogen Zenji says: "Consider that nirvana is itself no other than our life." How do we experience this for ourselves? Such experience gives us indestructible strength; it gives us confidence, conviction, and peace. Our life is nothing but this blossom of non-dwelling, non-attached nirvana. How can you confirm this for yourself?

Chapter Eight

Ten Indestructible Faiths In the Avatamsaka Sutra

I. An Overview of the Avatamsaka Sutra:

Also called the Garland Sutra or the Flower Ornament Sutra. The Sanskrit title is Avatamsaka, but it is Gandavyuha according to Fa-Tsang's commentary on the sixty-fascicle Garland Sutra. Avatamsaka means a 'garland,' while in Gandavyuha, ganda means 'a flower of ordinary kind,' and vyuha 'an orderly arrangement' or 'array.' Gandavyuha means 'flower-decoration.' Avatamsaka is one of the profound Mahayana sutras embodying the sermons given by the Buddha immediately following his perfect enlightenment. The Gandavyuha is the Sanskrit title for a text containing the account of Sudhana, the young man, who wishing to find how to realize the ideal life of Bodhisattvahood, is directed by Manjusri the Bodhisattva to visit spiritual leaders one after another in various departments of life and in various forms of existence, altogether numbering fifty-three. This is the basic text of the Avatamsaka school. It is one of the longest and most profound sutras in the Buddhist Canon and records the highest teaching of Buddha Sakyamuni, immediately after enlightenment. It is traditionally believed that the sutra was taught to the Bodhisattvas and other high spiritual beings while the Buddha was in samadhi. The sutra has been described as the "epitome of Buddhist thought, Buddhist sentiment, and Buddhist experiences" and is quoted by all schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The sutra compares the whole Universe to the realization of Vairocana Buddha. Its basic teaching is that myriad things and phenomena are the oneness of the Universe, and the whole Universe is myriad things and phenomena. After examining the sutra, we find that there were in the beginning many independent sutras which were later compiled into one encyclopaedic collection, as the subject-matters treated in them are all classified under one head, and they came to be known as Avatamsaka. There are three translations of the Avatamsaka-sutra in China: First, 60 books translated by Buddhahadra, who arrived in China around 406 A.D., also known as the East-Chin Sutra or the old sutra. Second, 80 books translated by

Siksananda, about 700 A.D., also known as the T'ang Sutra or the new sutra. Third, 40 books translated by Prajna around 800 A.D. This translation also included the Dictionary of Classic by Hui-Yuan in 700 A.D.

II. Ten Bodhisattvas' Indestructible Faiths In the Avatamsaka Sutra:

Indestructible faiths are firm and indestructible beliefs. According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of indestructible faith of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supreme indestructible faith of great knowledge of Buddhas: indestructible faith in all Buddhas, in all Buddhas' teachings, in all wise and holy mendicants; in all enlightening beings, in all genuine teachers, in all sentient beings, in all great vows of enlightening beings, in all practices of enlightening beings, in honoring and serving all Buddhas, and in the skillful mystic techniques of enlightening beings.

Chapter Nine

Devout Buddhists Should Not to Believe In Wrong Views, But Always Believe In Right Views In Daily Life & Cultivation

(A)Not to Believe In Wrong Views For They Are Not In Accordance With Buddhist Teachings

I. False Views In Buddhist Point of View:

An Overview & Meanings of False Views: Improper views or Wrong views in Buddhism means not recognizing the doctrine of normal karma. Perverted (wrong) views or opinions, not consistent with the dharma, one of the five heterodox opinions and ten evils. In fact, there is no specific definition for the term “wrong views” (micchaditthi) in Buddhism. During the Buddha’s time, the Buddha confirmed his disciples that even the validity of the Buddha’s own statements could be questioned.” The Buddha claimed no authority for his doctrine except his own experience. Perverted (wrong) views or opinions arises from a misconception of the real characteristic of existence. There were at least sixty-two heretical views (views of the externalist or non-Buddhist views) in the Buddha’s time. Buddhism emphasizes on theory of causation. Understanding the theory of causation means to solve most of the question of the causes of sufferings and afflictions. Not understanding or refuse of understanding of the theory of causation means a kind of wrong view in Buddhism. According to the Buddha, sentient beings suffer from sufferings and afflictions because of desires, aversions, and delusion, and the causes of these harmful actions are not only from ignorance, but also from wrong views. Wrong views according to Hinayana Buddhism: “Wrong view is the acausality view, which states that there is no cause or condition for the defilement and purification of beings, that beings are defiled and purified by chance, or necessity. The inefficacy of action view, which claims that deeds have no efficacy in producing results and thus invalidates moral distinctions. Annihilism, which denies the survival of the personality in

any form after death, thus negating the moral significance of deed. Also according to the Hinayana Buddhism, there are another ten kinds of wrong views: There is no such virtue and generosity. This means that there is no good effect in giving alms: There is no such virtue as liberal alms-giving: There is no such virtue as offering gifts to guests. This means there is no effect in such charitable actions. There is neither fruit, nor result of good or evil deeds. There is no such belief as “this world.” There is no such belief as “a world beyond,” i.e. those born here do not accept a past existence, and those living here do not accept future life. There is no “mother.” There is no father, i.e. there is no effect in anything done to them. There are no beings that died and are reborn. There are no righteous and well-disciplined recluses and Brahmins who, having realized by their own super-intellect this world and the world beyond, make known the same (Buddhas and Arahants). According to Bhikkhu Bodhi in *Abhidhamma*, there are three kinds of wrong views: Nihilism (*natthika-ditthi*), which denies the survival of the personality in any form after death, thus negating the moral significance of deeds. The causality view (*ahetuka-ditthi*), which states that there is no cause or condition for the defilement and purification of beings, that beings are defiled and purified by chance, fate, or necessity. The inefficacy of action view (*akiriya-ditthi*), which claims that deeds have no efficacy in producing results and thus invalidates moral distinctions. According to Buddhist teachings, there are two things that are necessary to complete the evil of wrong views: First, perverted manner in which the object is viewed. Second, the understanding of it according to that misconception. According to Buddhist teachings, there are inevitable consequences of false views: Base desire, lack of wisdom, dull wit, chronic diseases, and blameworthy ideas.

In short, wrong views also means holding to the view of total annihilation, the philosophic doctrine that denies a substantial reality to the phenomenal universe, or the view that death ends life, or world-extinction and the end of causation, in contrast with the view that body and soul are eternal, both views being heterodox. According to the Simile of the Snake in the Middle length Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha taught about someone who has the wrong views as follows: “This is self, this is the world; after death I shall be permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change; I shall endure as long as eternity.” Also, according to the Simile of the Snake in the Middle

Length Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha taught about someone who does not have wrong views as follows: “Here Bhikkhus! Someone who hears the Tathagata or a disciple of the Tathagata teaching the Dharma for the elimination of all standpoints, decisions, obsessions, adherences, and underlying tendencies, for the stilling of all formations, for the relinquishing of all attachments, for the destruction of craving, for dispassion, for cessation, for Nirvana. He thinks that he will be annihilated, he will be perished; he will have no more sorrow, grieve, and lament; he does not weep beating his breast and become distraught.” In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Those who embrace the wrong views, are ashamed of what is not shameful, and are not ashamed of what is shameful, will not be able to avoid the hell (Dharmapada 316). Those who fear when they should not fear, and don’t fear in the fearsome, embrace these false views, will not be able to avoid the hell (Dharmapada 317). Those who perceive faults in the faultless, and see no wrong in what is wrong; such men, embracing false doctrines, will not be able to avoid the hell (Dharmapada 318).”

The Real Nature of “Wrong Views”: In Buddhism, Improper views or Wrong views means not recognizing the doctrine of normal karma. Perverted (wrong) views or opinions, not consistent with the dharma, one of the five heterodox opinions and ten evils. In fact, there is no specific definition for the term “wrong views” (micchaditthi) in Buddhism. During the Buddha’s time, the Buddha confirmed his disciples that even the validity of the Buddha’s own statements could be questioned.” The Buddha claimed no authority for his doctrine except his own experience. Perverted (wrong) views or opinions arises from a misconception of the real characteristic of existence. There were at least sixty-two heretical views (views of the externalist or non-Buddhist views) in the Buddha’s time. Buddhism emphasizes on theory of causation. Understanding the theory of causation means to solve most of the question of the causes of sufferings and afflictions. Not understanding or refuse of understanding of the theory of causation means a kind of wrong view in Buddhism. According to the Buddha, sentient beings suffer from sufferings and afflictions because of desires, aversions, and delusion, and the causes of these harmful actions are not only from ignorance, but also from wrong views. Through practices, we can see that holding wrong views involves vigorously and hostilely denying the existence of such things as past

and future lives, the possibility of attaining Nirvana. Wrong views mean the false belief that the skandhas, or constituents of personality, contain an immortal soul. False view also means seeing wrongly. Its characteristic is unwise or unjustified interpretation or belief. Its function is to preassume. It is manifested as a wrong interpretation or belief. Its proximate cause is unwillingness to see the noble ones. Holding wrong views in Buddhism involves vigorously and hostilely denying the existence of such things as past and future lives, the possibility of attaining nirvana, the existence of the Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha. Doubt about these subjects does not constitute wrong views; however, if we neglect to resolve our doubts by asking questions and investigating these issues, we could later generate wrong views by believing in deceptive doctrines.

II. Buddhist Practitioners Do Not Have Faith in Wrong Views For They Arise From Ignorance & Do Not Tally With Buddhist Teachings:

According to Buddhism, most wrong views arise from ignorance that cause people to possess views that are not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor do they tally with these wonderful teachings that the World's Honored One lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago. Ignorance means stupidity, or unenlightenment. Ignorance also means misunderstanding, being dull-witted ignorant, not conforming to the truth, not bright, dubious, blind, dark. Ignorance also means being dull-witted ignorant not knowing the four noble truths, not knowing sufferings, the causes of sufferings, the mental state after severing sufferings, and the way to sever sufferings. Ignorance which mistakes the illusory phenomena of this world for realities. 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. In Zen, ignorance is not seeing things as they really are. It is failing to understand the truth about life. As long as we have not developed our minds to obtain wisdom, we remain ignorant of the true nature of things. According to Buddhism, ignorance means regarding the self as real. Due to ignorance, people do not see things as they really are, and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. They become blind under the delusion of self, clinging to things which are impermanent, changeable, and perishable. Once anger arises, one has nothing but "ignorance." In order to eliminate "ignorance," you should meditate on causality. All of our psychological problems are rooted in ignorance, in delusion. Ignorance is the crowning corruption. Our greeds, hates, conceits and a host of other defilements go hand in hand with our ignorance. The solutions are to be found in the problems themselves

and hence we should not run away from our problems. Analyze and scrutinize the problems, and you will see that they are human problems, so do not attribute them to non-humans. Our real problems can be solved only by giving up illusions and false concepts and bringing our lives into harmony with reality and this can be done only through meditation. Ignorance is also thoughts and impulses that try to draw us away from emancipation. If we wish to liberate ourselves from these hindrances, we should first recognize them through meditation. Just as the Buddha described in His discourses how He would exclaim, “Mara! I see you.” Zen practitioners should remember that the purpose of disciplined meditation practice is to eliminate ignorance, to open the essential nature of mind, and to stabilize awareness. Through meditation, we concentrate on things with an undistracted awareness. We are not thinking about anything, not analyzing, not getting lost in flux of things, but just seeing the nature of what is happening in the mind. Through practices of meditation, our mind becomes clearer and clearer; it is to say ‘ignorance’ is gradually eliminated through the course of meditation. If you think that your mind can only be opened by a certain master out there, you are never cultivating in accordance with Buddhism at all. If you think someone out there can eliminate ignorance for you, you are not a devout Buddhist.

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III. Buddhists Should Not Believe Nor Blindly Cultivate On Inverted Views For They Are Not In Accordance With Buddhist Teachings:

In many Buddhist scriptures, especially in the Kalama Sutra, on *śraddhā*, the Buddha wanted to advise his disciples that not to have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Not to believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many

generations. Not to believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Not to believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Not to believe in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly. Therefore, Buddhists should not blindly believe nor blindly cultivate on inverted views for they are surely not in accordance with Buddhist teachings.

According to Buddhist teachings, there are many different kinds of wrong views. However, in the limitation of this writing, we only mention some typical wrong views that can impact our life and cultivation. ***Two Kinds of Wrong Views:*** According to Buddhist teachings, there are two kinds of wrong view: First, holding to the real existence of material things. Second, holding to their entire unreality. There are still two other kinds of wrong view: First, holding to the view of total annihilation. Second, holding to the view of permanence or immortality. The view that personality is permanent. ***Three Kinds of Wrong Views:*** According to Bhikkhu Bodhi in Abhidhamma, there are three kinds of wrong views. First, Nihilism (natthika-ditthi), which denies the survival of the personality in any form after death, thus negating the moral significance of deeds. Second, the causality view (ahetuka-ditthi), which states that there is no cause or condition for the defilement and purification of beings, that beings are defiled and purified by chance, fate, or necessity. Third, the inefficacy of action view (akiriya-ditthi), which claims that deeds have no efficacy in producing results and thus invalidates moral distinctions. ***Four Kinds of Inverted Views: Four Currents That Carry Thinking Along:*** These are the defilements that sweep away the wholesome dhammas and cause sentient beings to drift and drown in the torrential stream of Samsara. These are wrong views, or the illusion of seeing things as they seem, not as they really are: First, Wrong views, or the illusion of seeing things as they seem, not as they really are. Second, Desires, or thinking of desires. Third, Samsaric existence, or thinking of existence or life. Fourth, Ignorance, or Unenlightened thinking or condition. ***Four Upside Down or Inverted Views:*** Seeing things as they seem not as they are, e.g. the impermanent as permanent, misery as joy, non-ego as ego, and impurity as purity. First, considering what is really impermanent to be permanent. Second, considering what is really suffering to be joy.

Third, considering what is not a self to be a self. Fourth, considering what is impure to be pure. ***Five Kinds of Wrong Views:*** *Five Kinds of Gross Servants:* greed, anger, stupidity, arrogance, and doubt or doubtfulness. *Five Types of Sharp False Views:* body view, one-sided view, improper view, obstinate view, and precept fixation view. The five sharp wrong views: First, the view that there is a real and permanent body. The illusion of the body or self. The concept that all beings have reality and the five skandhas as not the constituents of the livings. False view that every man has a permanent lord within. Wrong view on the existence of a permanent ego. The erroneous doctrine that the ego or self composed of the temporary five skandhas, is a reality and permanent. The view that there is a real mine and thine. Believe that our self is our greatest and most precious possession in our eyes. We try by all means to satisfy to our self, irrespective of others' interest of rights. Second, extreme view (of extinction and/or permanence). Being prejudiced to one extreme or another. Third, perverse view which denying cause and effect (deviant views). *Fourth*, the view of grasping at views or stubborn perverted views, viewing inferior thing as superior, or counting the worse as the better. That is the tendency of those who maintain their point of view or resist and oppose change. For example, there are some out-dated customs still practiced in Vietnam such as using Chinese money papers and burning them at funeral ceremonies. In fact, Buddhist funeral rites are simple. Relatives and friends recite the Amitabha Sutra to help free the dead from suffering. Buddhists, especially monks and nuns, prefer cremation to burial, since the first mode is more economic, and hygienic than the second one. Moreover, with time, the burial grounds would extend considerably, reducing thus the land reserved for cultivation and other utilities. *Fifth*, view of grasping at precepts and prohibitions. Rigid view in favor of rigorous ascetic prohibitions. This is a biased viewpoint tending to favor one side. Those who conceive this way think that practicing Buddha's teachings is equivalent to not practicing it. Another biased one claims that, after death man will be reborn as man, beast as beast, or that there is nothing left after death. The last viewpoint belongs to a materialistic philosophy that rejects the law of causality. ***Six Kinds of Wrong Views on the "Self":*** According to the Majjhima Nikaya, there are six wrong views on the "self". First, I have a self (there is a self for me). This is the view of the

externalists who hold that the self exists permanently through all time. Second, I have no self (there is not a self for me). This is the view of annihilationists who hold to the destruction of the being. *Third*, by self, I perceive self. *Fourth*, by self, I perceive no-self. *Fifth*, by no-self, I perceive self. *Sixth*, it is this self for me that speaks, that feels, that experiences now here and now there the fruits of good and bad deeds, it is this self for me that is permanent, stable, eternal, unchanging, remaining the same forever. This is the belief of the eternalists who hold that this self undergoes the fruits of lovely or wicked actions in this or that born, abode, class of womb. This self is that consciousness that they hold as permanent, eternal, unchanging as the world, the sun, the moon, the earth, etc. ***Eight Kinds of Incorrect Views:*** According to Buddhist teachings, there are eight incorrect views: First, holding to the idea of the existence of a permanent ego. Second, holding to the idea of the five skandhas as not the constituents of the living. Third, holding to the idea of fate or determination of length of life. Fourth, holding to the idea of a creator. Fifth, holding to the idea of permanence. Sixth, holding to the idea of annihilation. Seventh, holding to the idea of the reality of things. Eighth, holding to the idea of unreality of all things. ***Ten Kinds of Wrong Views:*** According to Buddhist teachings, there are ten basic deluded views: Deluded views are illusory or misleading views and thoughts. There are ten basic deluded views which manifest themselves in relation to the Four Noble Truths in each of the three worlds: desire, form, and formless. The ten are greed, anger, delusion, arrogance, doubt, wrong view of self, one-sided view, deviant views, the view of being attached to views, view of grasping prohibitive precepts. According to The Buddha and His Teachings of Most Venerable Narada, there are ten kinds of wrong views. First, there is no such virtue as generosity (There is no good effect in giving alms). Second, there is no such virtue as offering. Third, there is no effect or virtue in charitable actions or offering gifts to guests. Fourth, there is neither fruit nor result of good or evil deeds. Fifth, there is no such belief as this world. Sixth, there is no such world beyond. Seventh, there is no effect to anything done to mother. Eighth, there is no effect to anything done to father. Ninth, there are no beings that die and are reborn. Tenth, there are no righteous and well disciplined recluses and brahmins who having realized by their own super-intellect.

According to Mahayana, there are at least two kinds of wrong views. **First, Annihilation-View:** Annihilation-illusion or Annihilation-view or holding to the idea of annihilation. Negativism or nihilism opposed to eternalism; the philosophical school which teaches that the world is destined to come to a total extinction when the law of causation works no more. Considering that things do not exist in any sense, even the delusory manifestations of the world, nor anything continue after death. Denial of the doctrine of reincarnation. Annihilation-view holds to the view of total annihilation, or the view that death ends life, or world-extinction and the end of causation, in contrast with the view that body and soul are eternal, both views being heterodox. The philosophic doctrine that denies a substantial reality to the phenomenal universe. The theory of Attachment on Nihilism believes in nihilism, claims that after death there is nothing left. Man born from dust will return to dust. This is what scientists believe. They say every person conceived by the fusion of a sperm and egg, will live his life and will die, thus terminating his existence on earth. This theory does not conform to the Buddhist law of causality. In Buddhist view, men are tied to the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of reincarnation. This cycle turns around and around, compelling men to reincarnate in one of the six realms. Buddhists believe that Nihilism is false because it is based on incomplete understanding of reality. Eternalism is also wrong, because Buddhists cannot accept that there is anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable. **Second, Eternity-View:** Holding to the view of immortality or wrong view that holds to the idea of permanence (the view that holds personality as permanent). Also wrong view that holds to the view of permanence or immortality (the view that personality is permanent). This is one of the eight incorrect views. Believing that there is true existence of real being in objects, or that there is some entity that exists forever. The theory of Attachment on Eternalism believes in eternalism, believes that man was created by the will of some Deity. He will live his life and act according to his beliefs in order to return to Heaven or to be condemned forever in Hell. This theory does not conform to the Buddhist law of causality. In Buddhist view, men are tied to the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of reincarnation. This cycle turns around and around, compelling men to reincarnate in one of the six realms. Buddhists believe that Nihilism is false because it is based on

incomplete understanding of reality. Eternalism is also wrong, because Buddhists cannot accept that there is anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable.

According to Theravada Buddhism in Abhidharma, wrong views are the following three wrong views which mentioned in the Sutra Pitaka. **First, Ahetuka-ditthi or the acausality view:** The acausality view, which states that there is no cause or condition for the defilement and purification of beings, that beings are defiled and purified by chance, or necessity. **Second, Akiriya-ditthi or the inefficacy of action view:** The inefficacy of action view, which claims that deeds have no efficacy in producing results and thus invalidates moral distinctions. **Third, Natthika-ditthi:** Nihilism, which denies the survival of the personality in any form after death, thus negating the moral significance of deed. Also according to the Hinayana Buddhism, there are another ten kinds of wrong views: **First,** there is no such virtue and generosity. This means that there is no good effect in giving alms. **Second,** there is no such virtue as liberal alms-giving. **Third,** there is no such virtue as offering gifts to guests. This means there is no effect in such charitable actions. **Fourth,** there is neither fruit, nor result of good or evil deeds. **Fifth,** there is no such belief as “this world.” **Sixth,** there is no such belief as “a world beyond,” i.e. those born here do not accept a past existence, and those living here do not accept future life. **Seventh,** there is no “mother.” **Eighth,** there is no father, i.e. there is no effect in anything done to them. **Ninth,** there are no beings that died and are reborn. **Tenth,** there are no righteous and well-disciplined recluses and brahmins who, having realized by their own super-intellect this world and the world beyond, make known the same (Buddhas and Arahants).

According to the Studies of the Consciousness-Only, there are ten kinds of wrong views. **The first wrong view is the Satkayadrshiti:** The view of the body or the view that there is a real and permanent body or view of egoism, the view that there is a real self or ego, or view of mine and thine, the view that there is a real mine and thine. Heresy of individuality. The illusion of the body is the erroneous belief that the ego or self composed of the temporary five skandhas, is a reality and permanent. The illusion of the body or self, one of the five wrong views. Thought of an ego, one of the three knots. There are two ways in which one comes to conceive the real existence of an ego, the

one is subjective imagination and the other the objective conception of reality. Believe that our self is our greatest and most precious possession in our eyes. We try by all means to satisfy to our self, irrespective of others' interest of rights. ***The second wrong view is the Antagnahadrsti:*** Also called Biased views, extreme views, one-sided standpoint, or one-sided views. The state of clinging to one of the two extremes in the world of relativity, such as clinging to permanence, impermanence, being or non-being, etc. These views are also the two extreme views of annihilation and personal immortality, one of the five sharp wrong views. This is a biased viewpoint tending to favor one side. Those who conceive this way think that practicing Buddha's teachings is equivalent to not practicing it. Another biased one claims that, after death man will be reborn as man, beast as beast, or that there is nothing left after death. The last view belongs to a materialistic philosophy that rejects the law of causality. ***The third wrong view is the Drishti or Ditthi:*** Also called false views, heretical views, improper views, perverse views, heterodox views, not recognizing the doctrine of normal karma, to follow wrong views, or wrong views. In Buddhism, perverted views means holding to the real existence of material things or viewing the seeming as real and the ego as real, or not recognizing the doctrine of causality and karma. Perverted (wrong) views or opinions, not consistent with the dharma, one of the five heterodox opinions and ten evils. "Wrong views" are attitudes and doctrines that are antithetical to the teachings and practices of Buddhism. In Indian Buddhism, seven false views are commonly enumerated: 1) belief in a truly existent self (atman); 2) rejection of the working of cause and effect (karma); 3) eternalism or belief that there is a soul that exists after death; 4) annihilationism or belief that the soul perishes after death; 5) adherence to false ethics; 6) perceiving negative actions as good; and 7) doubt regarding the central tenets of Buddhism. There were at least sixty-two heretical views (views of the externalist or non-Buddhist views) in the Buddha's time. ***The fourth wrong view is the Drstiparamasra:*** Attachment to one's view. Wrong views caused by attachment to one's own erroneous understandings. To hold heterodox doctrines and be obsessed with the sense of the self. That is the tendency of those who maintain their point of view or resist and oppose change. ***The fifth wrong view is the Silavrataparamasra:*** Upholding forbidden religious practices, clinging

to mere rules and rituals, or rigid views in favor of rigorous ascetic prohibitions (covering oneself with ashes). Clinging to heterodox ascetic views, i.e. those of ultra-asceticism, one of the four attachments (catuh-paramarsa). In India there are still people who still uphold heterodox beliefs such as pressing the belly with a stone or throwing oneself from a high position into a fire in order to enjoy blessings. ***The sixth wrong view is the Kamaragaparamasra:*** The illusion or false views caused by desires. Desires for 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. ***The seventh wrong view is the Dosaparamasra:*** 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. 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." A man was rowing his boat upstream on a very misty morning. Suddenly, he saw another boat coming downstream, not trying to avoid him. It was coming straight at him. He shouted, "Be careful!" but the boat came right into him, and his boat was almost sunk. The man became very angry, and began to shout at the other person, to give him a piece of his mind. But when he looked closely, he saw that there was no one in the

other boat. Charlotte Joko Beck wrote in 'Nothing Special': "There's a killer shark in everybody. And the killer shark is unexperienced fear. Your way of covering it up is to look so nice and do so much and be so wonderful that nobody can possibly see who you really are, which is someone who is scared to death. As we uncover these layers of rage, it's important not to act out; we shouldn't inflict our rage on others. In genuine practice, our rage is simply a stage that passes. But for a time, we are more uncomfortable than when we started. That's inevitable; we're becoming more honest, and our false surface style is beginning to dissolve. The process doesn't go on forever, but it certainly can be most uncomfortable while it lasts. Occasionally we may explode, but that's better than evading or covering our reaction." Zen practitioners should always remember that hatred is one of the three fires which burn in the mind until allowed to die for fuelling. Anger is also one of the mula-klesa, or root causes of suffering. 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. As in the case of lust or sense-desire, it is unwise or unsystematic attention that brings about ill-will, which when not checked propagates itself, saps the mind and clouds the vision. It distorts the entire mind and its properties and thus hinders awakening to truth, and blocks the path to freedom. Lust and ill-will based on ignorance, not only hamper mental growth, but act as the root cause of strife and dissension between man and man and nation and nation. Besides, Zen practitioner should always pay close attention to your breathing because there is surely a so-called reciprocal character of mind and breathing (Prana), which means that a certain type of mind or mental activity is invariably accompanied by a breathing of corresponding character, whether transcendental or mundane. For instance, a particular mood, feeling, or thought is always accompanied, manifested, or reflected by a breathing of corresponding character and rhythm. Thus anger produces not merely an inflamed thought-feeling, but also a harsh and accentuated "roughness" of breathing. On the other hand, when there is a calm concentration on an intellectual problem, the thought and the breathing exhibit a like calmness. The binding of anger is one of the nine bonds that bind men to mortality, the fetter of hatred binding to transmigration. 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, 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, 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.” ***The eighth wrong view is the Manaparamasra:*** Proud, arrogance, self-conceit, or looking down on others. Haughty people are self-aggrandized and boasting. They tend to bully their superiors and trample the inferior. They refuse to learn any more or listen to advice or explanations; and as a result commit regrettable errors. Pride, regarding oneself as superior, one of the ten wrong views. Pride means arrogance or haughtiness. Arrogance and pride, a kind of klesa, one of the five higher bonds of desire. Pride is asserting superiority over inferiors and equality with equals. Looking down on others. Haughty people are self-aggrandized and boasting. They tend to bully their superiors and trample the inferior. They refuse to learn any more or listen to advice or explanations; and as a result commit regrettable errors. Haughtiness means false arrogance, thinking oneself correct in spite of one’s wrong conduct, thinking oneself is good in spite of one’s very bad in reality. Haughtiness also means arrogance and conceit due to one’s illusion of having completely understood what one has hardly comprehended at all. Practitioners should always remember that conceit and ingratitude belong to the eighth army of Mara. Conceit arises when practitioners begin to experience joy, rapture, delight, and other interesting things in practice. At this point they may wonder whether their teacher has actually attained this wondrous stage yet, whether other practitioners are

practicing as hard as they are, and so forth. Conceit most often happens at the stage of insight when practitioners perceive the momentary arising and passing away of phenomena. It is a wonderful experience of being perfectly present, seeing how objects arise and pass away at the very moment when mindfulness alights on them. At this particular stage, a series of defilements can arise. They are specifically known as the “vipassana kilesas,” defilements of insight. Since these defilements can become a harmful obstacle, it is important for practitioners to understand them clearly. The scriptures tell us that *mana* or conceit has the characteristic of bubbly energy, of a great zeal and enthusiasm arising in the mind. One overflows with energy and is filled with self-centered, self-glorifying thoughts like, “I’m so great, no one can compare with me.” A prominent aspect of conceit is “stiffness and rigidity.” One’s mind feels stiff and bloated, like a python that has just swallowed some other creature. This aspect of *mana* is also reflected as tension in the body and posture. Its victims get big-headed and stiff-necked, and thus may find it difficult to bow respectfully to others. Conceit is really a fearsome mental state. It destroys gratitude, making it difficult to acknowledge that one owes any kind of debt to another person. Forgetting the good deeds other have done for us in the past, one belittles them and denigrates their virtues. Not only that, but one also actively conceals the virtues of others so that no one will hold them in esteem. All of us have had benefactors in our lives, especially in childhood and younger days. Our parents, for example, gave us love, education and necessities of life at a time when we were helpless. Our teachers gave us knowledge. Friends helped us when we got into trouble. Remembering our debts to those who have helped us, we feel humble and grateful, and we hope for a chance to help them in turn. The Buddha taught: there are two types of rare and precious people in the world. The first type is a benefactor, one who is benevolent and kind, who helps another person for noble reasons, sparing no effort to help beings liberate themselves from the sufferings of *samsara*. The second type is the one who is grateful, who appreciates the good that has been done for him or her, and who tries to repay it when the time is ripe.” ***The ninth wrong view is the Avidyaparamasra:*** In Buddhism, Avidya is ignorance or noncognizance of the four noble truths, the three precious ones (*triratna*), and the law of karma, etc. Avidya is the first link of conditionality (*pratityasampada*), which leads to

entanglement of the world of samsara and the root of all unwholesome in the world. This is the primary factor that enmeshes (làm vướng víu) beings in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In 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 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 also a mind of illusion or darkness without illumination, the ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Ignorance is one of the three fires which must be allowed to die out before Nirvana is attained. The erroneous state of mind which arises from belief in self. ***The tenth wrong view is the Doubt and Delusion:*** Doubtful views or doubtfully to view, one of the ten wrong views. The overhanging cover of doubt, which prevents sentient beings from seeing and practicing good deeds, one of the five covers or mental and moral hindrances in cultivation. Bernard Glassman and Rick Fields wrote in 'Instructions to the Cook': "Doubt is a state of openness and unknowing. It's a willingness to not be in charge, to not know what is going to happen next. The state of doubt allows us to explore things in an open and fresh way. Like water, doubt is fluid. It had no fixed position. If you pour water into a round container, it becomes round, and if you pour water into a square

container, it becomes square. In the same way, doubt or unknowing flows in accordance with the situation. It's the state of surrender, of being open to what is. Only when we raise sufficient doubt and questioning can we go further. Our problem with doubt is that we take it to be a negative thing. We think that because we don't understand or because we are not sure, there is something wrong. When we get caught by the negative aspects of doubt, we wallow in self-pity. 'How come I can't see it?' we say. But this doubt can be positive. Positive doubt can allow us to see what this life is about. It can help us get rid of our complacency."

(B) Devout Buddhists Should Always Believe In Right Views In Daily Life & Cultivation

(B-1) To Believe In Right Views For They Are Always In Accordance With Buddhist Teachings

I. An Overview & Meanings of the Faith on Right Views:

Devout Buddhists should always remember that the goal of a Buddhist is the development of self-dependency, the ability to set oneself free of sufferings and afflictions. Buddhism is strongly against a blind belief on other forces of salvation with no basic factors. The Buddha always reminded his disciples: "You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it." In most Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha always taught us to try to recognize the truth of right views, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth of all right views.

Right view means to abandon a self-centered way of looking at things and to have a right view of the Buddha, that is "Nothing has its own self; everything exists due to temporary combination. If this exists, the other exists; if this ceases to exist, the other is in no way to be able

to exist.” Right view also means profoundly and subtly understand our true nature. In Buddhism, right view means the seeing and understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Right View is one of the two trainings in Wisdom, the other training is Right Thought. Right view can be said to mean seeing things as they really are, or understanding the real truth about things, rather than simply seeing them as they appear to be. According to Buddhist point of view, it means insight, penetrative understanding, or seeing beneath the surface of things, etc., under the lens of the Four Noble Truths, Interdependent origination, impermanence, impersonality, and so forth. Right understanding can be acquired by ourselves or by acquiring the truths that are shown by others. The process of acquiring right understanding must follow the following order: first we must observe objectively the facts which we are presented, then consider their significance. It is to say first to study and then to consider and examine them, and finally attaining right understanding through contemplation. At this point, the two types of understanding, either by ourselves or through others, become indistinguishable. To summarize, the process of acquiring right understanding are as follows: to observe and to study, to examine intellectually what we have observed and studied, to contemplate what we have examined. In short, Right view means the understanding of the four noble truths: the truths of suffering and its causes perpetuate cyclic existence, the truths of cessation and the path are the way to liberation. Correct views refer to accepting certain key Buddhist concepts such as the four noble truths (arya-satya), dependent arising (pratiya-samutpada), karma, etc., as well as to eliminating wrong views. Correct or Right View or Perfect View, freedom from the common delusion. Understanding correctly of the four noble truths of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the extinction of suffering, and of the path leading to the extinction of suffering. Understand correctly on the non-ego of existence (nonindividuality of existence). Right view means to have a correct understanding of oneself and the world. Although we may have our own view of the world, it may not always be right. If we understand things as they really are, we would be able to live a happier and more meaningful life. For example, students who understand that it is to their own benefit to learn would work hard to learn more and do better. When they do well, everyone will be happy,

including their parents and teachers. Right view also means understanding thoroughly and correctly the four noble truths and having penetrative insight into reality.

II. Categories of Right View in Buddhist Teachings:

According to Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda in the Gems of Buddhism Wisdom, *there are two sorts of right understanding*: An accumulated memory and a real deep understanding. An accumulated of memory, an intellectual grasping of a subject according to certain given data. Real deep understanding, a penetration or an intellectual seeing a thing in its true nature, without name and external label. This penetration is possible only when the mind is free from all impurities and is fully developed through meditation. Buddhist practitioners should develop right understanding by seeing impermanence, suffering, and not-self in everything, which leads to detachment and loss infatuation. Detachment is not aversion. An aversion to something we once liked is temporary, and the craving for it will return. Practitioners do not seek for a life of pleasure, but to find peace. Peace is within oneself, to be found in the same place as agitation and suffering. It is not found in a forest or on a hilltop, nor is it given by a teacher. Practitioners meditate to investigate suffering, see its causes, and put an end to them right at the very moment, rather dealing with their effects later on. Right Understanding, in the ultimate sense, is to understand life as it really is. For this, one needs a clear comprehension of the Four Noble Truths, namely: the Truth of Suffering or Unsatisfactoriness, the Arising of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. Right understanding means to understand things as they really are and not as they appear to be. It is important to realize that right understanding in Buddhism has a special meaning which differs from that popularly attributed to it. In Buddhism, right understanding is the application of insight to the five aggregates of clinging, and understanding their true nature, that is understanding oneself. It is self-examination and self-observation. Right understanding is the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation.

III. Conditions That Lead to Right View In Buddhist Cultivation:

There are two conditions that are conducive to right understanding: Hearing from others that is hearing the Correct Law (Saddhamma), from others (Paratoghosa), and systematic attention or wise attention (Yoniso-manasikara). The first condition is external, that is, what we get from outside, while the second is internal, what we cultivate (manasikara literally means doing-in-the-mind). What we hear gives us food for thought and guides us in forming our own views. It is, therefore, necessary to listen, but only to that which is conducive to right understanding and to avoid all the harmful and unwholesome utterances of others which prevent straight thinking. The second condition, systematic attention, is more difficult to cultivate, because it entails constant awareness of the things that one meets with in everyday life. The word 'Yoniso-manasikara' which is often used in the discourses is most important, for it enables one to see things deeply. 'Yoniso' literally means by-way-of-womb instead of only on the surface. Metaphorically, therefore, it is 'radical' or 'reasoned attention'. These two conditions, learning and systematic attention, together help to develop right understanding. One who seeks truth is not satisfied with surface knowledge, with the mere external appearance of things, but wants to dig deep and see what is beyond the reach of naked eye. That is the sort of search encouraged in Buddhism, for it leads to right understanding. The man of analysis states a thing after resolving it into its various qualities, which he puts in proper order, making everything plain. He does not state things unitarily, looking at them as a whole, but divides them up according to their outstanding features so that the conventional and the highest truth can be understood unmixed. The Buddha was discriminative and analytical to the highest degree. As a scientist resolves a limb into tissues and the tissues into cells, the Buddha analyzed all component and conditioned things into their fundamental elements, right down to their ultimates, and condemned shallow thinking, unsystematic attention, which tends to make man muddle-headed and hinders the investigation of the true nature of things. It is through right understanding that one sees cause and effect, the arising and ceasing of all conditioned things. The truth of the Dhamma can be only grasped in that way, and not through blind belief, wrong view, speculation or even by abstract philosophy.

According to the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha says: “This Dhamma is for the wise and not for the unwise.” The Nikaya also explains the ways and means of attaining wisdom by stages and avoiding false views. Right understanding permeates the entire teaching, pervades every part and aspect of the Dhamma and functions as the key-note of Buddhism. Due to lack of right understanding, the ordinary man is blind to the true nature of life and fails to see the universal fact of life, suffering or unsatisfactoriness. He does not even try to grasp these facts, but hastily considers the doctrine as pessimism. It is natural perhaps, for beings engrossed in mundane pleasures, beings who crave more and more for gratification of the senses and hate pain, to resent the very idea of suffering and turn their back on it. They do not, however, realize that even as they condemn the idea of suffering and adhere to their own convenient and optimistic view of things, they are still being oppressed by the ever recurring unsatisfactory nature of life.

IV. Strongly Believe in the Roles of Right Understanding and Right Thought in Cultivation:

In many Buddhist scriptures, especially in the Kalama Sutra, on *sraddha*, the Buddha wanted to advise his disciples that not to have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Not to believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Not to believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Not to believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Not to believe in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly. However, Buddhists should always strongly believe to and cultivate on right views for they are always in accordance with Buddhist teachings.

Strongly Believe in the Roles of Right View In the Four Noble Truths & the Eightfold Noble Path: In Buddhism, right view plays an extremely important role in both the teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path. Through Right view and right thought we eliminate greed, anger and ignorance: Through right view and right thinking we can eliminate greed, anger, and ignorance. The mind supported by wisdom will bring forth the Right Understanding which help us wholly and entirely free from the intoxication of sense desire

(kama), from becoming (bhava), wrong views (ditthi) and ignorance (avijja). Right view also can refer to insight into the nature of the Dharma Body of the Buddha. Right view refers to your manner of regarding something, your mental outlook and your opinions, not to what you view with your eyes. Right view refers to understanding of the “Four Holy Truths.” It also can refer to insight into the nature of the Dharma Body of the Buddha. Right view refers to your manner of regarding something, your mental outlook and your opinions, not to what you view with your eyes. Right understanding, right views, or knowledge of the four noble truth. This understanding is the highest wisdom which sees the Ultimate Reality. That is to say to see things as they are. The understanding the four noble truths. Right understanding or right view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being influenced by prejudice or emotion. Right view helps differentiate the true from the false, and determines the true religious path for attaining liberation. Right understanding is of the highest importance of the Eightfold Noble Path, for the remaining seven factors of the path are guided by it. It ensures that right thoughts are held and it co-ordinates ideas; when as a result thoughts and ideas become clear and wholesome, man’s speech and action are also brought into proper relation. It is through right understanding that one gives up harmful or profitless effort and cultivates right effort which aids the development of right mindfulness. Right effort and right mindfulness guided by right understanding bring about right concentration.

Thus, right understanding, which is the main spring in the Eightfold Noble Path, causes other factors of the co-ordinate system to move in proper relation. In other words, this view or understanding is the highest wisdom which sees the Ultimate Reality. That is to say to see things as they are. Understanding the four noble truths, the first of the eightfold noble path. Meanwhile, according to Buddhism, the eight noble paths play an extremely important role in Buddhist cultivation for these are the eight right (correct) ways; the paths leading to release from suffering, the goal of the third in the four noble truths. These are also eight in the 37 bodhi ways to enlightenment. Thus, the eight noble paths play a very important role cultivation in Buddhism. In order to provide answers to layman Visakha on the relationships between “eightfold noble path” and “disciplines-concentration-wisdom”, Bhikhuni Dhammadinna explained in the Culavedalla Sutta (the

Shorter Set of Questions-and-Answers), in Majjhima Nikaya, book 44: “This is the noble eightfold path, friend Visakha: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. The noble eightfold path is fabricated (unconditioned). The noble eightfold path is included under the three studies of ‘Virtue-Concentration-Wisdom’. Right speech, right action, and right livelihood come under the study of virtue. Right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration come under the study of concentration. Right view and right resolve come under the study of discernment. Among which, singleness of mind is concentration; the four frames of reference are its themes; the four right exertions are its requisites; and any cultivation, development, and pursuit of these qualities is its development.” According to the “Supreme Vehicle” Sutta in the Samyutta Nikaya, volume four, in the morning, the Venerable Ananda dressed and, taking bowl and robe, entered Savatthi for alms. The Venerable Ananda saw the Brahmin Janusoni departing from Savatthi in an all-white chariot drawn by mares. The horses that were yoked to it were white, its ornaments were white, the chariot was white, its upholstery was white, the reins, goad, and canopy were white, his turban, clothes, and sandals were white, and he was being fanned by a white fan. People, having seen this, said: “Divine, indeed, sir, is the vehicle! It appears to be a divine vehicle, indeed, sir!” Then, when the Venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One about the divine vehicle. By that opportunity, the Buddha taught: “Ananda, this noble eightfold path is the divine vehicle and the vehicle of Dharma and the unsurpassed victory in battle. Right view, Ananda, when developed and cultivated, has as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, and the removal of delusion. Right intention, Ananda, when developed and cultivated, has as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, and the removal of delusion. Right speech, Ananda, when developed and cultivated, has as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, and the removal of delusion. Right action, Ananda, when developed and cultivated, has as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, and the removal of delusion. Right livelihood, Ananda, when developed and cultivated, has as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, and the removal of delusion. Right effort, Ananda, when developed and cultivated, has as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, and the removal of delusion. Right mindfulness, Ananda, when developed and

cultivated, has as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, and the removal of delusion. Right concentration, Ananda, when developed and cultivated, has as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, and the removal of delusion. In this way, Ananda, it may be understood how this is a designation for this noble eightfold path: 'the divine vehicle' and 'the vehicle of Dhamma' and 'the unsurpassed victory in battle.' This is what the Blessed One said. Having said this, the Sublime One, the Buddha, further said this:

“Its qualities of faith and wisdom
 Are always yoked evenly together.
 Shame is its pole, mind its yoke-tie,
 Mindfulness the watchful charioteer.
 The chariot's ornament is virtue,
 Its axles meditation, energy its wheels;
 Equanimity keeps the burden balanced,
 Desirelessness its upholstery.
 Good will, non-harming, and seclusion:
 These are the chariot's weaponry,
 Forbearance its armour and shield,
 As it rolls towards security from bondage.
 This divine vehicle unsurpassed
 Originates from within oneself.
 The wise depart from the world in it,
 In evitably winning the victory.”

Strongly Believe in the Roles of Right Understanding and Right Thought in Cultivation: The Noble Eightfold Path can be divided into three groups: virtue, concentration and wisdom. This is the only path; there are no short cuts to enlightenment and deliverance of the mind. All the practical guidance and instructions given by the Buddha to remove mental conflicts due to the unsatisfactoriness of life are to be found in the Noble Eightfold Path, from right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. Buddhist cultivation and practicing of meditation have close relationship with the branch of wisdom through two branches of right understanding and right thought. Through Right understanding and right thought we eliminate greed, anger and ignorance.

Regarding the Right Understanding, practitioners should try to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. Right understanding or right

view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being influenced by prejudice or emotion. Right view helps differentiate the true from the false, and determines the true religious path for attaining liberation. Right understanding means to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. One of the most important of these is the law of karma, the law of cause and effect, every action brings a certain result, without any exception. There is no such 'no wholesome nor unwholesome' in Buddhism. Practitioners should always remember that whenever we act with greed, hatred, or delusion, pain and suffering come back to us. On the contrary, when our actions are motivated by generosity, love or wisdom, the results are happiness and peace. Devout Buddhists should always have a mindful mind to skilfully integrate the understanding of the law of karma into our lives. Right understanding also means profoundly and subtly understand our true nature. In Buddhism, right understanding means the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Right Understanding or Right View is one of the two trainings in Wisdom (the other training is Right Thought). Right understanding can be said to mean seeing things as they really are, or understanding the real truth about things, rather than simply seeing them as they appear to be. According to Buddhist point of view, it means insight, penetrative understanding, or seeing beneath the surface of things, etc., under the lens of the Four Noble Truths, Interdependent origination, impermanence, impersonality, and so forth. Right understanding can be acquired by ourselves or by acquiring the truths that are shown by others. The process of acquiring right understanding must follow the following order: first we must observe objectively the facts which we are presented, then consider their significance. It is to say first to study and then to consider and examine them, and finally attaining right understanding through contemplation. At this point, the two types of understanding, either by ourselves or through others, become indistinguishable. To summarize, the process of acquiring right understanding are as follows: to observe and to study, to examine intellectually what we have observed and studied, to contemplate what we have examined. In short, Right Understanding means the understanding of the four noble truths: the truths of suffering and its causes perpetuate cyclic existence, the truths of cessation and the path are the way to liberation. Buddhist practitioners should develop right understanding by seeing impermanence, suffering, and not-self in everything, which leads to detachment and loss infatuation. Detachment is not aversion. An aversion to something we once liked is temporary, and the craving for it will return. Practitioners do not seek for a life of pleasure, but to find peace. Peace is within oneself, to be found in the same place as agitation and suffering. It is not found in a forest or on a hilltop, nor is it given by a teacher. Practitioners

meditate to investigate suffering, see its causes, and put an end to them right at the very moment, rather dealing with their effects later on. Besides, Right Effort and Right Mindfulness guided by Right Understanding to bring about Right Concentration. Right Understanding, in the ultimate sense, is to understand life as it really is. For this, one needs a clear comprehension of the Four Noble Truths, namely: the Truth of Suffering or Unsatisfactoriness, the Arising of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. Right understanding means to understand things as they really are and not as they appear to be. It is important to realize that right understanding in Buddhism has a special meaning which differs from that popularly attributed to it. In Buddhism, right understanding is the application of insight to the five aggregates of clinging, and understanding their true nature, that is understanding oneself. It is self-examination and self-observation. Right understanding is the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. Right understanding is of the highest importance in the Eightfold Noble Path, for the remaining seven factors of the path are guided by it. It ensures that right thoughts are held and it co-operates with ideas; when as a result thoughts and ideas become clear and wholesome, man's speech and action are also brought into proper relation. Moreover, it is through right understanding that one gives up harmful or profitless effort and cultivates right effort which aids the development of right mindfulness. Right effort and right mindfulness guided by right understanding bring about right concentration. Thus, right understanding, which is the main spring in Buddhism, causes the other limbs of the co-ordinate system to move in proper relation. There are two conditions that are conducive to right understanding: Hearing from others means hearing the Correct Law (Saddhamma), from others (Paratoghosa), and having a systematic attention or a wise attention (Yoniso-manasikara). The first condition is external, that is, what we get from outside, while the second is internal, what we cultivate (manasikara literally means doing-in-the-mind). What we hear gives us food for thought and guides us in forming our own views. It is, therefore, necessary to listen, but only to that which is conducive to right understanding and to avoid all the harmful and unwholesome utterances of others which prevent straight thinking. The second condition, systematic attention, is more difficult to cultivate, because it entails constant awareness of the things that one meets with in everyday life. The word 'Yoniso-manasikara' which is often used in the discourses is most important, for it enables one to see things deeply. 'Yoniso' literally means by-way-of-womb instead of only on the surface. Metaphorically, therefore, it is 'radical' or 'reasoned attention'. These two conditions, learning and systematic attention, together help to develop right understanding. One who seeks truth is not satisfied with surface knowledge, with the mere external

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

Regarding the Right Thought, practitioners should be free from sensual desire, ill-will, and cruelty. Right thought means thoughts that are free from sensual desire, ill-will, and cruelty. Thoughts free from ill-will means thoughts that are free from anger, for when anger is burning in the mind, both us and people around us will suffer. Right thoughts includes thoughts of renunciation, good will, and of compassion, or non-harm. These thoughts are to be cultivated and extended towards all living beings regardless of race, caste, clan, or creed. As they embrace all that breathes there are no compromising limitations. Right thought means that our reflection must be consistent with common sense, useful both to others and ourselves. We must strive to correct our faults, or change our wicked opinions. While meditating on the noble formula of "Precept, Concentration, and Wisdom," we must realize that 'ignorance' is the main cause of suffering, the root of all wicked acts;

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

(B-2) The Path of Cultivation of Practitioners Who Have Faith in the Correct Views

I. The Faith in the Correct View In Buddhist Point of View:

Buddhist practitioners should always remember that although the main purpose of cultivation in Buddhism is enlightenment and emancipation, the immediate and important purpose of cultivation in Buddhism is to have correct views that help practitioners to cultivate the correct dharmas to eliminate the self. Once the attachment of the self is eliminated, the ignorance will

automatically end. At that moment, desires, angers, ignorance, arrogance, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual desire (sexual passion), and lying... will also naturally end. At that moment, the practitioner will gain the enlightenment which the Honorable Buddha declared 26 centuries ago. All Buddhists have had one and the same aim, which is the “extinction of self, the giving up the concept of a separate individuality, and all their practices have generally tended to foster such easily recognizable spiritual virtues as serenity, detachment, consideration and tenderness for others. In the scriptures, the Dharma has been compared to a taste for direct feeling, not for learning and keeping. The golden word of the Buddha is there defined as that which has the taste of Peace, the taste of Emancipation, the taste of Nirvana. It is, of course, a peculiarity of tastes that they are not easily described, and must elude those who refuse actually to taste them for themselves.” Once we are able to eliminate the attachment of the self, our minds will completely purify and we are able to know everything in the universe with wisdom. Once we are able to eliminate the attachment of the self, we are able to see all sentient beings’ sufferings, thus we are able to develop loving kindness toward all beings with great compassion. Thus, meditation and contemplation does not only help us purify our bodies and minds, but they also set us free from the long-term clinging of self.

It is through right understanding that one sees cause and effect, the arising and ceasing of all conditioned things. The truth of the Dhamma can be only grasped in that way, and not through blind belief, wrong view, speculation or even by abstract philosophy. According to the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha says: “This Dhamma is for the wise and not for the unwise.” The Nikaya also explains the ways and means of attaining wisdom by stages and avoiding false views. Right understanding permeates the entire teaching, pervades every part and aspect of the Dhamma and functions as the key-note of Buddhism. Due to lack of right understanding, the ordinary man is blind to the true nature of life and fails to see the universal fact of life, suffering or unsatisfactoriness. He does not even try to grasp these facts, but hastily considers the doctrine as pessimism. It is natural perhaps, for beings engrossed in mundane pleasures, beings who crave more and more for gratification of the senses and hate pain, to resent the very idea of suffering and turn their back on it. They do not, however, realize that even as they condemn the idea of suffering and adhere to their own convenient and optimistic view of things, they are still being oppressed by the ever recurring unsatisfactory nature of life.

As a matter of fact, right view is the foundation in the cultivation of wisdom. The right view is also the lighthouse that helps destroying ignorance and showing the real nature of the five aggregates. Owing to the correct view, practitioners bravely deny the dead Buddhism. Those who have faith in correct views always know that they, themselves, are responsible for their

own karmas. Besides, correct views are also the foundation for cultivating to stop evil actions and to increase good actions. To have faith in correct views on sufferings will help practitioners pushing away obstacles and to advance on the path of cultivation. To have faith in correct views on the selflessness and impermanence of all things will help pushing away obstacles to advance on the path of cultivation. To have faith in correct views on the twelve links of causation also means seeing the Way, and so on.

II. The Path of Cultivation of Practitioners Who Have Faith in the Correct Views:

To Have Faith in the Right View, Practitioners Will Cultivate & Live In Accordance With the Theory of Cause and Effect:

In Buddhist teachings, right view on cause and effect is seeing that 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. Truly speaking, those who have correct view on cause and effect, or those who cultivate and live in accordance with the law of causality, they see the Way. According to Buddhism, cause is a primary force that produces an effect; effect is a result of that primary force. The law of causation governs everything in the universe without exception. Law of cause and effect or the relation between cause and effect in the sense of the Buddhist law of “Karma” (The law of causation (reality itself as cause and effect in momentary operation)). Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action or effect has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situations. The Moral Causation in Buddhism means that a deed, good or bad, or indifferent, brings its own result on the doer. Good people are happy and bad ones unhappy. But in most cases “happiness” is understood not in its moral or spiritual sense but in the sense of material prosperity, social position, or political influence. For instance, kingship is considered the reward of one’s having faithfully practiced the ten deeds of goodness. If one meets a tragic death, he is thought to have committed something bad in his past lives even when he might have spent a blameless life in the present one.

Causality is a natural law, mentioning the relationship between cause and effect. All things come into being not without cause, since if there is no cause, there is no effect and vice-versa. As so sow, so shall you reap! Cause and effect never conflict with each other. In other words, cause and effect are always consistent with each other. If we want to have beans, we must sow bean seeds. If we want to have oranges, we must sow orange seeds. If wild weeds are planted, then it’s unreasonable for one to hope to harvest edible

fruits. One cause cannot have any effect. To produce an effect, it is necessary to have some specific conditions. For instance, a grain of rice cannot produce a rice plant without the presence of sunlight, soil, water, and care. In the cause there is the effect; in the effect there is the cause. From the current cause, we can see the future effect and from the present effect we discerned the past cause. The development process from cause to effect is sometimes quick, sometimes slow. Sometimes cause and effect are simultaneous like that of beating a drum and hearing its sound. Sometimes cause and effect are three or four months away like that of the grain of rice. It takes about three to four, or five to six months from a rice seed to a young rice plant, then to a rice plant that can produce rice. Sometimes cause is result, result is cause or simultaneity of Cause and Effect. 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. 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. Retribution of good and evil karma or cause and effect in the moral realm have their corresponding relations. According to Buddhism, whoever denies the rule of “cause and effect” will destroy all moral responsibility.

Practitioners of mindfulness should try to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. Right understanding or right view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being influenced by prejudice or emotion. Right view helps differentiate the true from the false, and determines the true religious path for attaining liberation. Right understanding means to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. One of the most important of these is the law of karma, the law of cause and effect, every action brings a certain result, without any exception. There is no such ‘no wholesome nor unwholesome’ in Buddhism. Buddhist practitioners should always remember that whenever we act with greed, hatred, or delusion, pain and suffering come back to us. On the contrary, when our actions are motivated by generosity, love or wisdom, the results are happiness and peace. Devout Buddhists should always have right views to be able to skilfully integrate the understanding of the law of karma into our lives.

Some people believe in some other religions 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.

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, Buddhist 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.

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 10 years. Other causes may involve more time to produce effects, may be the whole life or two lives.

In short, according to Buddhist teachings, you reap what you sow without any exception. By understanding and believing in the law of causality, Buddhists will not become superstitious, or alarmed, and rely passively on heaven authority. He knows that his life depends on his karmas. If he truly believes in such a causal mechanism, he strives to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If he continues to live a good life, devoting his time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings,

he can eliminate all of his bad karmas. He knows that he is the only driving force of his success or failure, so he will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. He will put more effort into performing his duties satisfactorily. Realizing the value of the law of causality, he always cares for what he thinks, tells or does in order to avoid bad karma. Devout Buddhists should always remember that retribution of good and evil karma or cause and effect in the moral realm have their corresponding relations. As mentioned above, owing to having the correct view on cause and effect, practitioners see and understand the true nature of causality, thus, they always try to cultivate to maintain correct view on the causality in their life and cultivation. Those who deny the rule of “cause and effect” will destroy all moral responsibility.

To Have Faith in the Right View For It Is the Foundation In the Cultivation of Wisdom: The Noble Eightfold Path is the fourth Noble Truth in the Four Noble Truths that can help us prevent problems or deal with any problems we may come across in our daily life. This is the path that leads to the end of sufferings and afflictions. If we follow it, we are on the way to less suffering and more happiness. The eight right (correct) ways. The path leading to release from suffering, the goal of all Buddhist practitioners. These are eight in the 37 bodhi ways to enlightenment. The Noble Eightfold Path can be divided into three groups: virtue, concentration and wisdom. This is the only path; there are no short cuts to enlightenment and deliverance of the mind. All the practical guidance and instructions given by the Buddha to remove mental conflicts due to the unsatisfactoriness of life are to be found in the Noble Eightfold Path, from right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. Practicing the Noble Eight-fold Path can bring about real advantages such as improvement of personal conditions. It is due to the elimination of all evil thoughts, words, and actions that we may commit in our daily life, and to the continuing practice of charitable work; improvement of living conditions. If everyone practiced this noble path, the world we are living now would be devoid of all miseries and sufferings caused by hatred, struggle, and war between men and men, countries and countries, or peoples and peoples. Peace would reign forever on earth. Besides, to cultivate the Eightfold Noble Path also means to practice meditation to attain of enlightenment or Bodhi Awareness. The Noble Eight-fold Path is the first basic condition for attaining Bodhi Consciousness that is untarnished (while Alaya Consciousness is still defiled).

According to Buddhist teachings, Right Understanding and Right Thought constitute wisdom, the first two Noble Paths of the Eightfold Noble Path. Right view refers to understanding of the “Four Holy Truths.” It also can refer to insight into the nature of the Dharma Body of the Buddha. Right view refers to your manner of regarding something, your mental outlook and your opinions,

not to what you view with your eyes. Right understanding is of the highest importance of the Eightfold Noble Path, for the remaining seven factors of the path are guided by it. It ensures that right thoughts are held and it co-ordinates ideas; when as a result thoughts and ideas become clear and wholesome, man's speech and action are also brought into proper relation. It is through right understanding that one gives up harmful or profitless effort and cultivates right effort which aids the development of right mindfulness. Right effort and right mindfulness guided by right understanding bring about right concentration. Thus, right understanding, which is the main spring in the Eightfold Noble Path, causes other factors of the co-ordinate system to move in proper relation. In Buddhism, right understanding means the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Right understanding, right views, or knowledge of the four noble truths. This understanding is the highest wisdom which sees the Ultimate Reality. That is to say to see things as they are. Understanding the four noble truths, the first of the eightfold noble path. Correct views refer to accepting certain key Buddhist concepts such as the four noble truths (arya-satya), dependent arising (pratiya-samutpada), karma, etc., as well as to eliminating wrong views. Although there is no specific definition for the term sammaditthi in Buddhism, generally speaking, Right view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being influenced by prejudice or emotion. Right view helps differentiate the true from the false, and determines the true religious path for attaining liberation. Correct or Right View or Perfect View, freedom from the common delusion. Understanding correctly of the four noble truths of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the extinction of suffering, and of the path leading to the extinction of suffering. Understand correctly on the non-ego of existence (nonindividuality of existence). Right understanding means to have a correct understanding of oneself and the world. Although we may have our own view of the world, it may not always be right. If we understand things as they really are, we would be able to live a happier and more meaningful life. For example, students who understand that it is to their own benefit to learn would work hard to learn more and do better. When they do well, everyone will be happy, including their parents and teachers. Right Understanding also means understanding thoroughly and correctly the four noble truths and having penetrative insight into reality. Mundane right understanding means an ordinary worldling's knowledge of the efficacy of moral causation or of actions and their results. Therefore, mundane right understanding means the knowledge that accords with the Four Noble Truths. This is called mundane because the understanding is not yet free from taints. This may be called "knowing accordingly."

According to Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda in the Gems of Buddhism Wisdom, there are two sorts of understanding: First, an accumulated of memory, an intellectual grasping of a subject according to certain given data. Second, real deep understanding, a penetration or an intellectual seeing a thing in its true nature, without name and external label. This penetration is possible only when the mind is free from all impurities and is fully developed through meditation. Buddhist practitioners should try to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. Right understanding or right view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being influenced by prejudice or emotion. Right view helps differentiate the true from the false, and determines the true religious path for attaining liberation. Right understanding means to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. One of the most important of these is the law of karma, the law of cause and effect, every action brings a certain result, without any exception. There is no such 'no wholesome nor unwholesome' in Buddhism. Practitioners who practice meditation should always remember that whenever we act with greed, hatred, or delusion, pain and suffering come back to us. On the contrary, when our actions are motivated by generosity, love or wisdom, the results are happiness and peace. Devout Buddhists should always have a mindful mind to skilfully integrate the understanding of the law of karma into our lives. Right understanding also means profoundly and subtly understand our true nature. In Buddhism, right understanding means the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. In short, through right understanding, we can see things under the light of impermanence, suffering, and not-self, and this will lead not causing sufferings and afflictions for people and for self; on the contrary, it would bring us and other people peace, mindfulness and happiness. Through Right understanding and right thought we eliminate greed, anger and ignorance: The mind supported by wisdom will bring forth the Right Understanding which help us wholly and entirely free from the intoxication of sense desire (kama), from becoming (bhava), wrong views (ditthi) and ignorance (avijja). Right Understanding or Right View is one of the two trainings in Wisdom (the other training is Right Thought). Right understanding can be said to mean seeing things as they really are, or understanding the real truth about things, rather than simply seeing them as they appear to be. According to Buddhist point of view, it means insight, penetrative understanding, or seeing beneath the surface of things, etc., under the lens of the Four Noble Truths, Interdependent origination, impermanence, impersonality, and so forth. Right understanding can be acquired by ourselves or by acquiring the truths that are shown by others. The process of acquiring right understanding must follow the following order: first we must observe objectively the facts which we are presented,

then consider their significance. It is to say first to study and then to consider and examine them, and finally attaining right understanding through contemplation. At this point, the two types of understanding, either by ourselves or through others, become indistinguishable. To summarize, the process of acquiring right understanding are as follows: to observe and to study, to examine intellectually what we have observed and studied, to contemplate what we have examined. In short, Right Understanding is the foundation in the cultivation of wisdom of the understanding of the four noble truths: the truths of suffering and its causes perpetuate cyclic existence, the truths of cessation and the path are the way to liberation.

Through Right understanding, we can see things under the light of impermanence, suffering, and not-self. Buddhist practitioners should develop right understanding by seeing impermanence, suffering, and not-self in everything, which leads to detachment and loss infatuation. Detachment is not aversion. An aversion to something we once liked is temporary, and the craving for it will return. Practitioners do not seek for a life of pleasure, but to find peace. Peace is within oneself, to be found in the same place as agitation and suffering. It is not found in a forest or on a hilltop, nor is it given by a teacher. Practitioners meditate to investigate suffering, see its causes, and put an end to them right at the very moment, rather dealing with their effects later on. In short, Right understanding is to understand life as it really is. Right Understanding, in the ultimate sense, is to understand life as it really is. For this, one needs a clear comprehension of the Four Noble Truths, namely: the Truth of Suffering or Unsatisfactoriness, the Arising of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. Right understanding means to understand things as they really are and not as they appear to be. It is important to realize that right understanding in Buddhism has a special meaning which differs from that popularly attributed to it. In Buddhism, right understanding is the application of insight to the five aggregates of clinging, and understanding their true nature, that is understanding oneself. It is self-examination and self-observation. Right understanding is the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. Right understanding is of the highest importance in the Eightfold Noble Path, for the remaining seven factors of the path are guided by it. It ensures that right thoughts are held and it co-operates ideas; when as a result thoughts and ideas become clear and wholesome, man's speech and action are also brought into proper relation.

Moreover, it is through right understanding that one gives up harmful or profitless effort and cultivates right effort which aids the development of right mindfulness. Right effort and right mindfulness guided by right understanding bring about right concentration. Thus, right understanding, which is the main

spring in Buddhism, causes the other limbs of the co-ordinate system to move in proper relation. There are two conditions that are conducive to right understanding: Hearing from others means hearing the Correct Law (Saddhamma) from others (Paratoghosa), and having a systematic attention or a wise attention (Yoniso-manasikara). The first condition is external, that is, what we get from outside, while the second is internal, what we cultivate (manasikara literally means doing-in-the-mind). What we hear gives us food for thought and guides us in forming our own views. It is, therefore, necessary to listen, but only to that which is conducive to right understanding and to avoid all the harmful and unwholesome utterances of others which prevent straight thinking. The second condition, systematic attention, is more difficult to cultivate, because it entails constant awareness of the things that one meets with in everyday life. The word 'Yoniso-manasikara' which is often used in the discourses is most important, for it enables one to see things deeply inside. 'Yoniso' literally means by-way-of-womb instead of only on the surface outside. Metaphorically, therefore, it is 'radical' or 'reasoned attention'. These two conditions, learning and systematic attention, together help to develop right understanding. One who seeks truth is not satisfied with surface knowledge, with the mere external appearance of things, but wants to dig deep and see what is beyond the reach of naked eye. That is the sort of search encouraged in Buddhism, for it leads to right understanding. The man of analysis states a thing after resolving it into its various qualities, which he puts in proper order, making everything plain. He does not state things unitarily, looking at them as a whole, but divides them up according to their outstanding features so that the conventional and the highest truth can be understood unmixed. The Buddha was discriminative and analytical to the highest degree. As a scientist resolves a limb into tissues and the tissues into cells, the Buddha analyzed all component and conditioned things into their fundamental elements, right down to their ultimates, and condemned shallow thinking, unsystematic attention, which tends to make man muddle-headed and hinders the investigation of the true nature of things. It is through right understanding that one sees cause and effect, the arising and ceasing of all conditioned things. The truth of the Dhamma can be only grasped in that way, and not through blind belief, wrong view, speculation or even by abstract philosophy.

According to the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha says: "This Dhamma is for the wise and not for the unwise." The Nikaya also explains the ways and means of attaining wisdom by stages and avoiding false views. Right understanding permeates the entire teaching, pervades every part and aspect of the Dhamma and functions as the key-note of Buddhism. Due to lack of right understanding, the ordinary man is blind to the true nature of life and fails to see the universal fact of life, suffering or unsatisfactoriness. He does not even try to grasp these facts, but hastily considers the doctrine as

pessimism. It is natural perhaps, for beings engrossed in mundane pleasures, beings who crave more and more for gratification of the senses and hate pain, to resent the very idea of suffering and turn their back on it. They do not, however, realize that even as they condemn the idea of suffering and adhere to their own convenient and optimistic view of things, they are still being oppressed by the ever recurring unsatisfactory nature of life.

To Have Faith in A Correct View Will Help in Not Be Wasting Time With Metaphysical Issues: The Buddha was not concerned with such metaphysical issues which only confuse man and upset his mental equilibrium. Their solution surely will not free mankind from misery and ill. That was why the Buddha hesitated to answer such questions, and at times refrained from explaining those which were often wrongly formulated. The Buddha was a practical teacher. His sole aim was to explain in all its detail the problem of Dukkha, suffering, the universal fact of life, to make people feel its full force, and to convince them of it. He has definitely told us what he explains and what he does not explain. Even questions relating to the past and the future, the Buddha's answers were very clear: "Let be the past, let be the future, I will teach you the Dhamma." The Buddha always emphasized: "When this is, that comes to be. With the arising of this, that arises. When this is not, that does not come to be. With the cessation of this, that ceases." This in a nutshell is the Buddhist doctrine of conditionality or Dependent Arising (paticca samuppada). And this forms the foundation of the Four Noble Truths, the central conception of Buddhism. In short, through the Buddha's teachings, we clearly see that those who have correct views will never be concerned with metaphysical issues for they all are useless for Buddhist practitioners and are considered worse than wrong views.

To Have Faith in Correct Views For It Is the Lighthouse That Helps Destroying Ignorance & Showing the Real Nature of the Five Aggregates: It should be reminded that according to Buddhism, the correct view is not only in accordance with Correct Buddhist teachings, but it also tally with these wonderful teachings that the World's Honored One. Those who have correct views on the five aggregates are those who see and understand the five aggregates in accordance with Buddhist teachings. According to Buddhist teachings, skandha only means the five aggregates or five aggregates of conditioned phenomena (constituents), or the five causally conditioned elements of existence forming a being or entity. According to Buddhist philosophy, each individual existence is composed of the five elements and because they are constantly changing, so those who attempt to cling to the "self" are subject to suffering. Though these factors are often referred to as the "aggregates of attachment" because they are impermanent and changing, ordinary people always develop desires for them. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five

aggregates (Five Skandhas). The aggregates which make up a human being. The five skandhas are the roots of all ignorance. They keep sentient beings from realizing their always-existing Buddha-Nature. The five aggregates are considered as maras or demons fighting against the Buddha-nature of men. In accordance with the Dharma, life is comprised of five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness). Matter plus the four mental factors classified below as feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness combined together form life. The real nature of these five aggregates is explained in the Teaching of the Buddha as follows: "Matter is equated to a heap of foam, feeling is like a bubble, perception is described as a mirage, mental formations are like a banana tree and consciousness is just an illusion. In short, according to Buddhism, right view is the lighthouse that helps practitioners destroy ignorance in order to be able to clearly see the real nature of the five aggregates that is basically empty. This view is totally in accordance with Buddhist teachings. It also tally with the wonderful teachings that the Buddha lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago. Therefore, Buddhist practitioners always try to maintain the correct view of "the five aggregates are totally empty" and always try to cultivate to eliminate obstructive ghosts arise from these five aggregates.

Buddhist Practitioners Always Try to Maintain the Correct View of the Five Skandhas Are Equally Empty: In cultivation, wanting to gain progress, devout practitioners should try to keep this correct view of the emptiness of these five aggregates. The Pali scripture declares six sense-organs, six sense-objects and six consciousnesses as well as five aggregates are Sunyata as "Eye is void of self and anything belonging to self; form is void from self and anything belonging to self; visual consciousness is void of self and anything belonging to self." Matter is just the immaterial, the immaterial is just matter (form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form). In the Heart Sutra, the Buddha told Sariputra: "Sariputra! This phenomenal world or form is emptiness, and emptiness is truly the phenomenal world. Emptiness is not different from the phenomenal world, the phenomenal world is not different from emptiness. What is the phenomenal world that is emptiness, what is emptiness that is the phenomenal world." The Hridaya Sutra expands this concept by emphasis that "Rupa does not differ from Sunya", or "Sunya does not differ from rupa" and "Sunya of all things is not created, not annihilated, not impure, not pure, not increasing, and not decreasing." It means that because rupa must have no nature of its own, it is produced by causes or depend on anything else, so rupa is sunyata or identical with void. Therefore, the perceived object, the perceiving subject and knowledge are mutually interdependent. The reality of one is dependent upon others; if one is false, the others must be false. The perceiving subject and knowledge of the external object must also be false. So what one perceives within or without is

illusory. Therefore, there is nothing, creation and annihilation, pure and impure, increase and decrease and so on. However, in reality, we cannot say a thing to be either real or unreal at the same time. Here, Sunyata must be defined as Pratityasamutpada. There is the intimate connection that exists between causality and sunyata. The one presupposes the other; the two are inseparably connected. Sunyata is the logical consequence of the Buddha's view of causality and effect.

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

Skandha in Sanskrit means "group, aggregate, or heap." In Buddhism, Skandha means the trunk of a tree, or a body. Skandha also means the five aggregates or five aggregates of conditioned phenomena (constituents), or the five causally conditioned elements of existence forming a being or entity. According to Buddhist philosophy, each individual existence is composed of the five elements and because they are constantly changing, so those who attempt to cling to the "self" are subject to suffering. Though these factors are often referred to as the "aggregates of attachment" because they are impermanent and changing, ordinary people always develop desires for them. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five aggregates. The aggregates which make up a human being. The five skandhas are the roots of all ignorance. They keep sentient beings from realizing their always-existing Buddha-Nature. The five aggregates are considered as maras or demons fighting against the Buddha-nature of men. In accordance with the Dharma, life is comprised of five aggregates (form,

feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness). Matter plus the four mental factors classified below as feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness combined together from life. The real nature of these five aggregates is explained in the Teaching of the Buddha as follows: "Matter is equated to a heap of foam, feeling is like a bubble, perception is described as a mirage, mental formations are like a banana tree and consciousness is just an illusion. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in 'The Heart of Understanding': 'If I am holding a cup of water and I ask you, 'Is this cup empty?' You will say, 'No, it is full of water.' But if I pour the water and ask you again, you may say, 'Yes, it is empty.' But, empty of what? My cup is empty of water, but it is not empty of air. To be empty is to be empty of something... When Avalokitesvara (Kuan-yin or Kannon, the Bodhisattva who embodies Compassion) says (in the Heart Sutra) that the five skandhas are equally empty, to help him be precise we must ask, 'Mr. Avalokitesvara, empty of what?' The five skandhas, which may be translated into English as five heaps, or five aggregates, are the five elements that comprise a human being... In fact, these are really five rivers flowing together in us: the river of form, which means our body, the river of feeling, the river of perceptions, the river of mental formations, and the river of consciousness. They are always flowing in us... Avalokitesvara looked deeply into the five skandhas..., and he discovered that none of them can be by itself alone... Form is empty of a separate self, but it is full of everything in the cosmos. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness."

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

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in 'The Heart of Understanding': "If I am holding a cup of water and I ask you, 'Is this cup empty?' You will say, 'No, it is full of water.' But if I pour the water and ask you again, you may say, 'Yes, it is empty.' But, empty of what? My cup is empty of water, but it is not

empty of air. To be empty is to be empty of something... When Avalokitesvara (Kuan-yin or Kannon, the Bodhisattva who embodies Compassion) says (in the Heart Sutra) that the five skandhas are equally empty, to help him be precise we must ask, 'Mr. Avalokitesvara, empty of what?' The five skandhas, which may be translated into English as five heaps, or five aggregates, are the five elements that comprise a human being... In fact, these are really five rivers flowing together in us: the river of form, which means our body, the river of feeling, the river of perceptions, the river of mental formations, and the river of consciousness. They are always flowing in us... Avalokitesvara looked deeply into the five skandhas..., and he discovered that none of them can be by itself alone... Form is empty of a separate self, but it is full of everything in the cosmos. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness."

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

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

Buddhist Practitioners Always Try to Cultivate to Eliminate Obstructive Ghosts Arise From These Five Aggregates: As mentioned above, owing to having the correct view on the five aggregates, practitioners see that these aggregates are equally empty, thus, practitioners always try to cultivate to eliminate obstructive ghosts arise from these five aggregates. Suffering of all the ills of the five skandhas or suffering due to the raging aggregates. This is the suffering of a body and mind that are too demanding and almost uncontrollable. As mentioned above, according to Buddhism, there are five aggregates which make up a human being. First, "Form" or aggregate of matter (material or physical factors), which includes four elements of our own body and other material objects such as solidity, fluidity, heat and motion comprise matter. The aggregate of form includes the five physical sense organs and the corresponding physical objects of the sense organs (the eyes and visible objects, the ears and sound, the nose and smell, the tongue and taste, the skin and tangible objects). Second, "Feeling or sensation" or aggregate of feeling. Aggregate of feeling or sensation of three kinds pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent. When an object is experienced, that experience takes on one of these emotional tones, either of pleasure, of displeasure or of indifference. Third, "Thinking" or Thought, cognition or perception. Aggregate of perception includes activity of recognition or identification or attaching of a name to an object of experience. Perceptions include form, sound, smell, taste, body. Fourth, "Aggregate of mental formation" or impression. This mental formation is a conditioned response to the object of experience including volition, attention, discrimination, resolve, etc. Fifth, "Aggregate of consciousness" or consciousness, which includes the six types of consciousness (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and mental consciousness). Awareness or sensitivity to an object, i.e. the consciousness associates with the physical factors when the eye and a visible

object come into contact, an awareness of a visible object occurs in our mind. Consciousness or a turning of a mere awareness into personal experience is a combined function of feeling, perception and mental formation. The five skandhas are the roots of all ignorance. They keep sentient beings from realizing their always-existing Buddha-Nature. The five aggregates are considered as maras or demons fighting against the Buddha-nature of men. In accordance with the Dharma, life is comprised of five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness). Matter plus the four other mental factors as feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness combined together form life. We, normal people, do not see the five aggregates as phenomena but as an entity because of our deluded minds, and our innate desire to treat these as a self in order to pander to our self-importance. Therefore, the Buddha taught: "If you have patience and the will to see things as they truly are. If you would turn inwards to the recesses of your own minds and note with just bare attention (sati), not objectively without projecting an ego into the process, then cultivate this practice for a sufficient length of time, then you will see these five aggregates not as an entity but as a series of physical and mental processes. Then you will not mistake the superficial for the real. You will then see that these aggregates arise and disappear in rapid succession, never being the same for two consecutive moments, never static but always in a state of flux, never being but always becoming." Zen practitioners should always see the real nature of these five aggregates and should always remember the Teaching of the Buddha on how to eliminate these aggregates in the Lotus Sutra, including the method of elimination of form aggregate in chapter Bhaisajyara-samudgata (Bodhisattva of Healing), elimination of feeling in chapter Wonderful Sound, elimination of perception in chapter Avalokitesvara, elimination of mental formations in chapter Dharani, and elimination of consciousness in chapter Subhavyuha as follows: "Matter is equated to a heap of foam, feeling is like a bubble, perception is described as a mirage, mental formations are like a banana tree and consciousness is just an illusion." The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness." If we practice in accordance with the Buddha's teachings, then surely we can easily eliminate the grasping of form, of feelings, of perceptions, of mental formations, and of consciousness.

***To Have Faith in the Correct Views For It Helps Practitioners
Bravely Denying the Dead Buddhism:*** Dead Buddhism is a kind of Buddhism with its superfluous organizations, classical rituals, multi-level offerings, dangling and incomprehensible sutras written in strange languages which puzzle the young people. In their view the Buddhist pagoda is a nursing home, a place especially reserved for the elderly, those who lack self-confidence or who are superstitious. Furthermore, there exists a dead

Buddhism when the Buddhadharma is only in talking, not in practice. It's not enough to say that we believe in the Buddha; it's better not to know the Buddhadharma than knowing it only for talking. Time flies really fast like a flying arrow, and days and months fly by like a shuttlecock. The water waves follow one after another. Life is passing quickly in the same manner. Impermanence avoids nobody, youth is followed by old age moment after moment, and we gradually return to the decay and extinction of old age and death, leaving no trace or shadow. Buddhism is not culture-bound. It is not restricted to any particular society or race. In the contrary, it moves easily from one culture context to another because its emphasis is on internal practice rather than external forms of religious behavior. According to Dr. Peter Della Santina in the Tree of Enlightenment, the most important thing in Buddhism is that each practitioner develops his or her own mind, not on how he dresses, the kind of food he eats, the way he wears his hair, and so forth.

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 Middle 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.

In short, as mentioned above, those who have correct views bravely deny dead Buddhism with the cause of its superfluous organizations, classical rituals, multi-level offerings, dangling and incomprehensible sutras written in strange languages. 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.

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. 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. 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. 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!

To Have Faith in the Correct Views For It Helps Practitioners Always Being Responsible for Our Own Karmas: Some people say "I am not responsible for what I am because everything, including my brain, nature, and physical constitution, partake of the nature of my parents." It's no doubt that our parents and ancestors must be responsible for some of the nature of their descendants, but those who have correct views on Buddhist laws of cause and effect and retributions always know that we are responsible for our own karmas, and no one else can take that responsibility for us, not even the Buddha. As a matter of fact, the majority of other characteristics is the responsibility of the descendants themselves because beings coming into existence with their own karma that they have produced in their past lives. Moreover, the self that exists after one's childhood is the effect of the karma that one has produced oneself in this world. So the responsibility of one's parents is very limited. The idea of karma teaches us clearly that one will reap the fruits of what he has sown. Supposed that we are unhappy at present; we are apt to lose our temper and express discontent if we attribute our unhappiness to others. But if we consider our present unhappiness to be the effect of our own deeds in the past, we can accept it and take responsibility for it. Besides such acceptance, hope for the future wells up strongly in our hearts: "The more good karma I accumulate, the happier I will become and the better recompense I will receive. All right, I will accumulate much more good karma in the future." We should not limit this idea only to the problems of human life in this world. We can also feel hope concerning the traces of our lives after death. For those who do not know the teachings of the Buddha, nothing is so terrible as death. Everyone fears it. But if we truly realize the meaning of karma-result, we can keep our composure in the face of death because we can

have hope for our next life. When we do not think only of ourselves but realize that the karma produced by our own deeds exerts an influence upon our descendants, we will naturally come to feel responsible for our deeds. We will also realize that we, as parents, must maintain a good attitude in our daily lives in order to have a favorable influence or recompense upon our children. We will feel strongly that we must always speak to our children correctly and bring them up properly and with affection.

To Have Faith in the Correct View For It Is the Foundation for Cultivating to Stop Evil Actions and to Increase Good Actions:

According to Buddhist teachings, correct views are the foundation for cultivating to stop evil actions and to increase good actions. In other words, those who have right views always obey and practice in accordance with the Buddha's teachings in the Dharmapada Sutra, verse 183: Not to do evil, to do good, to purify one's mind, this is the teaching of the Buddhas." Good karma created by wholesome path such as practicing of the five precepts and the ten wholesome deeds, which will result in happiness. Good karmas are deeds that lead to birth in better realms. According to The Path of Purification, ten unwholesome deeds are both unprofitable action and courses that lead to unhappy destinies: killing living things, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, gossip, covetousness, ill-will, and wrong view. Zen Master Philip Kapleau wrote in the Awakening to Zen: "In classical Buddhism, actions are not termed 'good' or 'bad,' but rather 'skillful' or 'unskillful.' Skillful actions are those that arise from an awareness of Unity, or nonseparation. Such actions, not overly bound by attachment to thoughts of self and other, are spontaneous, wise, and compassionate. In Buddhist teachings, kusala karma (good karma, good deeds, skillful action) means volitional action that is done in accordance with the Aryan Eightfold Noble Path. So, Kusala karma is not only in accordance with the right action, but it is also always in accordance with the right view, right understanding, right speech, right livelihood, right energy, right concentration and right samadhi. Kusala karmas or good deeds will help a person control a lot of troubles arising from his mind. Inversely, if a person does evil deeds he will receive bad results in this life and the next existence which are suffering. A good man, an honest man, especially one who believes in Buddhist ideas of causality and lives a good life. There are two classes of people in this life, those who are inclined to quarrel and addicted to dispute, and those who are bent to living in harmony and happy in friendliness. The first class can be classified wicked, ignorant and heedless folk. The second class comprised of good, wise and heedful people. The Buddha has made a clear distinction between wickedness and goodness and advises all his disciples not to do evil actions, to perform good ones and to purify their own heart. He knows that it is easy to do evil action. To perform meritorious one far more difficult. But His

disciples should know how to select in between evil and good, because wicked people will go to hell and undergo untold suffering, while good ones will go to Heaven and enjoy peaceful bliss. *There are ten meritorious deeds, or the ten paths of good action according to the Mahayana Buddhism: First*, to abstain from killing, but releasing beings is good. *Second*, to abstain from stealing, but giving is good. *Third*, to abstain from sexual misconduct, but being virtuous is good. *Fourth*, to abstain from lying, but telling the truth is good. *Fifth*, to abstain from speaking double-tongued (two-faced speech), but telling the truth is good. *Sixth*, to abstain from hurtful words (abusive slander), but speaking loving words is good. *Seventh*, to abstain from useless gossiping, but speaking useful words. *Eighth*, to abstain from being greedy and covetous. *Ninth*, to abstain from being angry, but being gentle is good. *Tenth*, to abstain from being attached (devoted) to wrong views, but understand correctly is good. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, chapter ten, the Buddha of the Fragrant Land, Vimalakirti said to Bodhisattvas of the Fragrant Land as follows: “As you have said, the Bodhisattvas of this world have strong compassion, and their lifelong works of salvation for all living beings surpass those done in other pure lands during hundreds and thousands of aeons. Why? Because they achieved ten excellent deeds which are not required in other pure lands.” What are these ten excellent deeds? They are: *First*, using charity (dana) to succour the poor. *Second*, using precept-keeping (sila) to help those who have broken the commandments. *Third*, using patient endurance (ksanti) to subdue their anger. *Fourth*, using zeal and devotion (virya) to cure their remissness. *Fifth*, using serenity (dhyana) to stop their confused thoughts. *Sixth*, using wisdom (prajna) to wipe out ignorance. *Seventh*, putting an end to the eight distressful conditions for those suffering from them. *Eighth*, teaching Mahayana to those who cling to Hinayana. *Ninth*, cultivation of good roots for those in want of merits. *Tenth*, the four Bodhisattva winning devices for the purpose of leading all living beings to their goals (in Bodhisattva development).

Unskillful actions, on the other hand, grow out of the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred or anger, and delusion. As the primary delusion is that of self and other, thoughts and actions that arise from such condition of separation, of separateness we might say, tend to be reactive and self-protective. They can hardly form the basis of skillful life, that is, creative and fulfilling. For example, think of the first item of good character: not to kill but to cherish all life. It is not possible to commit murder unless the thought to take a life has arisen. One must have already seen a person as separate from oneself and one's own self-interest to conceive of him or her as someone to be killed. Out of this seed of separation, this thought in the mind, the deed can happen. Killing is the outward expression of a mind dominated by separation, specifically by anger or hatred. Deeds are thoughts made manifest. From

unskillful thoughts, unskillful or pain-producing acts arise. Almost all action proceeds from thought." Talking about evil deeds, 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. Unwholesome karmas are harmful actions, or conducts in thought, word, or deed (by the body, speech, and mind) to self and others which leads to evil recompense. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: As rust sprung from iron eats itself away when arisen, just like ill deeds lead the doer to a miserable state (Dharmapada 240). *There are ten Evil Actions:* 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. Three in Action of Body (Kaya Karma (skt): *First*, killing, taking the life of any beings, including human or animal. We do not free trapped animals; but, in contrast, we continue to kill and murder innocent creatures, such as fishing, hunting, etc. *Second*, stealing, all forms of acquiring for oneself that which belongs to another. We do not give, donate, or make offerings; but, in contrast, we continue to be selfish, stingy, and stealing from others. *Third*, sexual misconduct, all forms of sex-indulgence, by action or thoughts wants. We do not behave properly and honorably; but, in contrast, we continue to commit sexual misconduct or sexual promiscuity. Four in Action of Mouth (Vac Karma (skt). The evil karma of speech is the mightiest. We must know that evil speech is even more dangerous than fire because fire can only destroy all material possessions and treasures of this world, but the fierce fire of evil speech not only burns all the Seven Treasures of Enlightened beings and all virtues of liberation, but it will also reflect on the evil karma vipaka in the future. *Fourth*, false speech or telling lies or using obscene and lewd words or speech. We do not speak the truth; but, in contrast, we continue to lie and speak falsely. *Fifth*, insulting or coarsening abusive language or abusive slandering. We do not speak soothingly and comfortably; but, in contrast, we continue to speak wickedly and use a double-tongue to cause other harm and disadvantages. *Sixth*, useless gossiping and frivolous chattering. We do not speak kind and wholesome words; but, in contrast, we continue to speak wicked and unwholesome words, i.e., insulting or cursing others. *Seventh*, speaking two-faced speech, to slander or speak with a double-tongue or to speak ill of one friend to another. We do not speak words that are in accordance with the dharma; but, in contrast, we continue to speak ambiguous

talks. Three in Action of Mind (Moras Karma (skt): *Eighth*, greed or covetousness (Libho (skt). We do not know how to desire less and when is enough; but we continue to be greedy and covetous. *Ninth*, hatred or loss of temper profanity (Dosa (skt). We do not have peace and tolerance toward others; but, in contrast, we continue to be malicious and to have hatred. *Tenth*, ignorance (Moha (skt). We do not believe in the Law of Causes and Effects, but in contrast we continue to attach to our ignorance, and refuse to be near good knowledgeable advisors in order to learn and cultivate the proper dharma. In short, Pure Land practitioners should always remember about the three commandments dealing with the body: not to kill, not to steal, and not to commit adultery; the four dealing with the mouth: not to lie, not to insult, not to exaggerate, and not to speak with a double-tongue; the three dealing with the mind: not to be greedy, not to be hatred, and not to be ignorant.

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: The evil-doer grieves in this world and in the next; he grieves in both. He grieves and suffers when he perceives the evil of his own deeds (Dharmapada 15). The virtuous man rejoices in this world, and in the next. He is happy in both worlds. He rejoices and delights when he perceives the purity of his own deeds (Dharmapada 16). The evil man suffers in this world and in the next. He suffers everywhere. He suffers whenever he thinks of the evil deeds he has done. Furthermore he suffers even more when he has gone to a woeful path (Dharmapada 17). The virtuous man is happy here in this world, and he is happy there in the next. He is happy everywhere. He is happy when he thinks of the good deeds he has done. Furthermore, he is even happier when he has gone to a blissful path (Dharmapada 18). Even an evil-doer sees good as long as evil deed has not yet ripened; but when his evil deed has ripened, then he sees the evil results (Dharmapada 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 (Dharmapada 120). 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 (Dharmapada 122).” Some are born in a womb; evil-doers are reborn in hells; the righteous people go to blissful states; the undefiled ones pass away into Nirvana (Dharmapada 126). Neither in the sky, nor in mid-ocean, nor in mountain cave, nowhere on earth where one can escape from the consequences of his evil deeds (Dharmapada 127). A fool does not realize when he commits wrong deeds; by his own deeds the stupid man is tormented, like one is lighting fires wherein he must be burnt one day (Dharmapada 136).

To Have Faith in the Correct Views On the elflessness-Impermanence of All Things Will Help Pushing Away Obstacles to Advance on the Path of Cultivation: Those who have correct views will always see and understand the true meanings of no-self and impermanence in

Buddhist teachings. In Buddhism, the so-called Self is only a conceptual construct and that every individual is in fact composed of a constantly changing collection of “aggregates” (skandha). Meanwhile, no-self means non-existence of a permanent self. The body consists of the five elements and there is no self. Elements exist only by means of union of conditions. There is no eternal and unchangeable substance in them. Talking about impermanence, impermanence is the state of not being permanent, of lasting or existing only for a short time, of changing continually. Physical changes operating from the state of formation, to that of development, decay and disintegration are exact manifestations of the law of transformation. All things in the universe, from the small grain of sand, the human body, to the big one such as the earth, moon and sun are governed by the above law, and as such, must come through these four periods. This process of changes characterizes impermanence. Anitya is one of the three fundamentals of everything existing: Impermanence (Anitya), Suffering (Duhkha) and Non-ego (Anatman).

“No-self” is one of the “three characteristics” (tri-laksana) that the Buddha said apply to all conditioned (samskrita) phenomena, the others being impermanence and unsatisfactoriness or suffering. The doctrine holds that, contrary to the assertions of the brahmanical orthodoxy of the Buddha’s time, there is no permanent, partless, substantial “self” or soul. The brahmanical tradition taught that the essence of every individual is an eternal, unchanging essence (called the atman). The Buddha declared that such an essence is merely a conceptual construct and that every individual is in fact composed of a constantly changing collection of “aggregates” (skandha). No-self also means non-existence of a permanent self. The body consists of the five elements and there is no self. Elements exist only by means of union of conditions. There is no eternal and unchangeable substance in them.

The doctrine of no-self has two main characteristics: selflessness of things (dharma-nairatmya) and selflessness of person (pudgalanairatmya). Sometimes, the teaching of “not-self” causes confusion and misunderstanding. Any time we speak, we do say “I am speaking” or “I am talking”, etc. How can we deny the reality of that “I”? Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the Buddha never asked us to reject the use of the name or term “I”. The Buddha himself still used a word “Tatathata” to refer to himself, no matter what is the meaning of the word, it is still a word or a name. When the Buddha taught about “not-self”, he stressed on the rejection of the idea that this name or term “I” stands for a substantial, permanent and changeless reality. The Buddha said that the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness) were not the self and that the self was not to be found in them. The Buddha’s rejection of the self is a rejection of the belief in a real, independent, permanent entity that is represented by the name or term “I”, for such a permanent entity would have to be independent, permanent,

immutable and impervious to change, but such a permanent entity and/or such a self is nowhere to be found. When Sakyamuni Buddha put forth the notion of “no-self,” he upsets many concepts about life in the universe. He blasted our most firm and widespread conviction, that of a permanent self. Those who understand “not self” know that its function is to overthrow “self,” not to replace it with a new concept of reality. The notion of “not self” is a method, not a goal. If it becomes a concept, it must be destroyed along with all other concepts.

Practitioners should always remember about the No-self of “Body-Mind-Environment”. No-Self means that there is no self, no permanent nature per se and that we are not true masters of ourselves. This point, too, is divided into the no-self body, the no-self mind, and the no-self environment. The no-self body means that this body is illusory, not its own master. It cannot be kept eternally young or prevented from decaying and dying. Even gods and immortals can only postpone death for a certain period of time. The no-self of mind refers to the deluded mind of sentient beings, which has no permanent nature. For example, the mind of greed, thoughts of sadness, anger, love, and happiness suddenly arise and then disappear, there is nothing real. No-self of environment means that our surroundings are illusory, passive and subject to birth and decay. Cities and towns are in time replaced by abandoned mounds, mulberry fields soon give way to the open seas, every single thing changes and fluctuates by the second, one landscape disappears and another takes its place.

The Buddha used the following analysis to prove that the self is nowhere to be found either in the body or the mind. The body is not the self, for if the body were the self, the self would be impermanent, would be subject to change, decay, destruction, and death. Hence the body cannot be the self. The self does not possess the body, in the sense that I possess a car or a television, because the self cannot control the body. The body falls ill, gets tired and old against our wishes. The body has an appearance, which often does not agree with our wishes. Hence in no way does the self possess the body. The self does not exist in the body. If we search our bodies from top to bottom, we can find nowhere locate the so-called “Self”. The self is not in the bone or in the blood, in the marrow or in the hair or spittle. The “Self” is nowhere to be found within the body. The body does not exist in the self. For the body to exist in the self, the self would have to be found apart from the body and mind, but the self is nowhere to be found. The mind is not the self because, like the body, the mind is subject to constant change and is agitated like a monkey. The mind is happy one moment and unhappy the next. Hence the mind is not the self because the mind is constantly changing. The self does not possess the mind because the mind becomes excited or depressed against our wishes. Although we know that certain thoughts are wholesome and certain thoughts

unwholesome, the mind pursues unwholesome thoughts and is different toward wholesome thoughts. Hence the self does not possess the mind because the mind acts independently of the self. The self does not exist in the mind. No matter how carefully we search the contents of our minds, no matter how we search our feelings, ideas, and inclinations, we can nowhere find the self in the mind and the mental states. The mind does not exist in the self because again the self would have to exist apart from the mind and body, but such a self is nowhere to be found.

We should reject the idea of a self for two reasons: 1) As long as we still cling to the self, we will always have to defend ourselves, our property, our prestige, opinions, and even our words. But once we give up the belief in an independent and permanent self, we will be able to live with everyone in peace and pleasure. 2) The Buddha taught: "Understanding not-self is a key to great enlightenment for the belief in a self is synonymous with ignorance, and ignorance is the most basic of the three afflictions (greed, anger, and stupidity). Once we identify, imagine, or conceive ourselves as an entity, we immediately create a schism, a separation between ourselves and the people and things around us. Once we have this conception of self, we respond to the people and things around us with either attachment or aversion. That's the real danger of the belief of a self. Thus, the rejection of the self is not only the key of the end of sufferings and afflictions, but it is also a key to the entrance of the great enlightenment." Zen Practitioners should contemplate "No-self" in every step. Zen practitioners can comprehend these three characteristics by observing closely the mere lifting of the foot and the awareness of the lifting of the foot. By paying close attention to the movements, we see things arising and disappearing, and consequently we see for ourselves the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self nature of all conditioned phenomena.

Meanwhile, impermanence (Anitya) is the state of not being permanent, of lasting or existing only for a short time, of changing continually. Physical changes operating from the state of formation, to that of development, decay and disintegration are exact manifestations of the law of transformation. All things in the universe, from the small grain of sand, the human body, to the big one such as the earth, moon and sun are governed by the above law, and as such, must come through these four periods. This process of changes characterizes impermanence. Anitya is one of the three fundamentals of everything existing: Impermanence (Anitya), Suffering (Duhkha) and Non-ego (Anatman). To understand thoroughly the impermanence of all things, Zen practitioners should contemplate that all things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent

nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will help us let go and at the same time to prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. Buddhism teaches that human beings' bodies are composed of five aggregates, called skandhas in Sanskrit. If the form created by the four elements is empty and without self, then human beings' bodies, created by the unification of the five skandhas, must also be empty and without self. Human beings' bodies are involved in a transformation process from second to second, minute to minute, continually experiencing impermanence in each moment. By looking very deeply into the five skandhas, we can experience the selfless nature of our bodies, our passage through birth and death, and emptiness, thereby destroying the illusion that our bodies are permanent. In Buddhism, no-self is the most important subject for meditation. By meditating no-self, we can break through the barrier between self and other. When we no longer are separate from the universe, a completely harmonious existence with the universe is created. We see that all other human beings exist in us and that we exist in all other human beings. We see that the past and the future are contained in the present moment, and we can penetrate and be completely liberated from the cycle of birth and death. In short, once Buddhist practitioners equipped with correct views and have the ability to see the selflessness and impermanence of all things also means we are able to push away great obstacles of attachments and begin to advance on the very important steps of letting go on our own path of cultivation.

Buddhist practitioners should always mindful that all things are impermanent and have no-self. Let's look at ourselves, we will see that our bodies of today are completely different from those of yesterday. In fact, our body is just like a stream running swiftly, manifesting endlessly in different forms as waves rising and falling, as bubbles forming and popping. The waves and bubbles continuously appear large or small, high or low, clean or unclean, and so on and on so on. However, water has no form, is staying unconditioned, and being unmoved at all times. Buddhist practitioners should always mindful as such so that we can act, speak, and think mindfully and without discrimination. If we are able to do this, we are on the right tract of cultivation. Let's advance firmly on the way to emancipation; and let's not to cling to the world which is full of sufferings and afflictions! "Anitya" is the state of not being permanent, of lasting or existing only for a short time, of changing continually. Physical changes operating from the state of formation, to that of development, decay and disintegration are exact manifestations of the law of transformation. All things in the universe, from the small grain of sand, the human body, to the big one such as the earth, moon and sun are governed by the above law, and as such, must come through these four periods. This process of changes characterizes impermanence. All things are impermanent, their birth, existence, change, and death never resting for a moment. All things in

this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. In most monasteries, at the end of ceremonies, monks and nuns often chant the verse of impermanence.

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

To understand thoroughly the impermanence of all things, Zen practitioners should contemplate that all things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. The Mahaparinirvana Sutra says: "All formations are impermanent; this is the law of appearing and disappearing. When appearing and disappearing disappear, then this stillness is bliss." This means that when there is no appearance or disappearance in our mind, that mind is bliss. This is a mind devoid of all thinking. The Mahaparinirvana Sutra says: "All things are impermanent. This is the law of appearing and disappearing. When appearing and disappearing disappear, then this stillness is bliss." The Diamond Sutra says: "All things that appear are transient. If we view all appearance as nonappearance, then we will see the true nature of all things." The Heart Sutra says: "Form does not differ from emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form. That which form is emptiness, that which emptiness is form." Thus, what is appearing and disappearing? What is impermanence and permanence? What is form and emptiness? In true stillness, in true nature, in true emptiness, there is no appearing or disappearing, no impermanence and permanence, no form and emptiness. The Sixth Patriarch said: "Originally there is nothing at all." When appearing and disappearing disappear, then this stillness is bliss. But in reality, there is no stillness and no bliss. If we view all appearance as nonappearance, then we will see true nature of all things. But there is no true nature and no things.

Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. But there is no emptiness and no form. So when there is no thinking and no speech, already there is no appearing or disappearing, no impermanence or permanence, no form or emptiness. But to say that these things do not exist is incorrect. If we open our mouth, we are wrong. Can we see colors? can we hear sounds? Can we touch things? Is this form or is it emptiness? If we say even one word, we are wrong. And if we say nothing, we are wrong too. Therefore, what can we do? Appearing and disappearing, put it down! Impermanence and permanence, put it down! Form and emptiness, put it down! Spring comes and the snow melts: appearing and disappearing are just like this. The east wind blows the rainclouds west: impermanence and permanence are just like this. When we turn on the lamp, the whole room becomes bright: all truth is just like this. Form is form, emptiness is emptiness.

Impermanence of the body means that the body withers rapidly, soon grows old and debilitated, ending in death. The ancients have lamented: "Oh, that time when we were young and would ride bamboo sticks, pretending they were horses, in the twinkling of an eye, our hair is now spotted with the color of frost." What happened to all those brave and intelligent young men and those beautiful and enchanting women of bygone days? They ended as in the following poem: "Rosy cheeks have faded, heroes have passed away; young students' eyes, too, are weary and sad." Impermanence of the mind means that the mind and thoughts of sentient beings are always changing, at times filled with love or anger, at times happy or sad. Those thoughts, upon close scrutiny, are illusory and false, like water bubbles. Impermanence of the environment means that not only do our surroundings always change and fluctuate, but happiness, too, is impermanent. Succulent food, once swallowed, loses all tastes; an emotional reunion, however, sweet and joyful, ultimately ends in separation; a delightful party soon becomes a thing of past; a good book, too, gradually reaches the last pages. According to the Samyutta Nikaya, volume III, change or impermanence is the essential characteristic of phenomenal existence. We cannot say of anything, animate or inanimate, 'this is lasting' for even while we say, it is undergoing change. The aggregates are compounded and conditioned, and, therefore, ever subject to cause and effect. Unceasingly does consciousness or mind and its factors change, and just as unceasingly, though at a lower rate, the physical body also changes from moment to moment. He who sees clearly that the impermanent aggregates are impermanent, has right understanding. In the Mijjhamaka Sutra, the Buddha gives five striking similes to illustrate the impermanent nature of the five aggregates of clinging. He compares material form or body to a lump of foam, feeling to a bubble of water, perception to a mirage, mental formations or volitional activities to a plantain trunk without heartwood, and consciousness to an illusion. So He asked the monks: "What essence, monks, could there be

in a lump of foam, in a bubble, in a mirage, in a plantain trunk, in an illusion? Whatever material form there be whether past, future or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; low or lofty; far or near; that material form the meditator sees, meditates upon, examines with systematic and wise attention, he thus seeing, meditating upon, and examining with systematic and wise attention, would find it empty, unsubstantial and without essence. Whatever essence, monks, could there be in material form?” And the Buddha speaks in the same manner of the remaining aggregates and asks: “What essence, monks, could there be in feeling, in perception, in mental formation and in consciousness?”

Everything in this world is subject to change and perish; nothing remains constant for even a single moment. The fact of impermanence has been recognized not only in Buddhist thought but elsewhere in the history of ideas. It was the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus who remarked that one cannot step into the same river twice. He meant that everything keeps changing without a pause or the ever-changing and transient nature of things. As a matter of fact, if we watch ourselves, we'll see that we are impermanent. Watch ourselves to see that we are living on a dream. We are changing swiftly and endlessly. Only one day yesterday, we had millions of different bodies, millions different feelings, and millions different minds just like a stream flowing swiftly. Look back and see all those bodies, feelings, and minds just like dreams, like echoes, like mirages. Then, if we look at the day before yesterday, we will be to feel just like millions of lives away. All are like a dream. If we are able to think this way, we will be able to feel that life and death flowing swiftly and endlessly in our whole body.

Human's life is just like that. In fact, human's life is like a dream; it is impermanent like autumn clouds, that birth and death are like a dance; that infant changes to young age and to old age just like morning turns into afternoon, then evening. Look at our body and see it changes every second of life. The growing (becoming old) of a human's life is not different from a flash of lightning. Things around us also keep changing. No one of the things we see around us will last forever, in the same river, the current of yesterday is not the current we see today. Even our minds are constantly subject to change; friends become enemies, enemies become friends. Our possessions are also impermanent, the brand new car we bought in the year of 2000 is no longer a new car in 2022, the shirt we donate to Goodwill Charity today was once liked by us, and so on and so on. Understanding impermanence of existence is important not simply for our cultivation of the Dharma, but also in our daily lives for this understanding is a key to open the door of the ultimate nature of things and also an antidote to anger and attachment. When we see all things are perishable and change every moment, we will not try to attach to them.

***To Have Faith in the Correct Views On Sufferings Will Help
Pushing Away Obstacles to Advance on the Path of Cultivation:***

In Buddhist teachings, right view on sufferings means seeing and understanding fundamental evils inherent in life which give rise to human sufferings. Sakyamuni Buddha is said to have expounded the Four Noble Truths in the Deer Park in Sarnath during his first sermon after attaining Buddhahood. The Buddha organized these ideas into the Fourfold Truth as follows: “Life consists entirely of suffering; suffering has causes; the causes of suffering can be extinguished; and there exists a way to extinguish the cause.” As a matter of fact, after the Great Enlightenment, the Buddha declared His first Discourse at the Deer Park: “Life is nothing but suffering” and “The five aggregates are suffering”. At other time in the Sravasti, the Buddha repeated the same discourse: “I will teach you, Bhiksus, pain and the root of pain. Do you listen to it. And what, Bhiksus, is pain? Body, Bhiksus, is pain, feeling is pain, perception is pain, the activities are pain, and consciousness is pain. That, Bhiksus, is the meaning of pain. And what, Bhiksus, is the root of pain? It is this craving that leads downward to rebirth, along with the lure of lust that lingers longingly now here and there: namely, the craving for sense, the craving for rebirth, the craving to have done with rebirth.” In other words, human beings’ suffering is really the result of the arising of Dependent Origination, also the arising of the Five Aggregates. And thus, it is not the five aggregates, or human beings and the world that cause suffering, but a person’s craving for the five aggregates that causes suffering. Sometimes we have the suffering of pain occurs whenever we are mentally or physically miserable. Sometimes we have physical suffering which includes headaches and scraped knees as well as torment of cancer and heart attacks. Sometimes we have mental suffering occurs whenever we fail to get what we want, when we lose something we are attached to, or when misfortune comes our way. We are sad when our career goal cannot be achieved, we’re depressed when we part from loved ones, we are anxious when we are waiting to obtain a letter from our children, etc... Sometimes we have the suffering of change which indicates that activities we generally regard as pleasurable in fact inevitably change and become painful. When we first buy a new shirt, we like it because it look gorgeous; however, three years later, we may be suffering or feeling uncomfortable when we wear it because it is old and becomes worn out. No matter how much we like a person and we feel happy when we are with that person; however, when we spend too much time with that person, it makes us uncomfortable. Thus, happiness was never inherent in the person we like, but was a product of the interaction between us and that person. The pervasive compounded suffering refers to our situation of having bodies and minds prone to pain. We can become miserable simply by the changing of external conditions. The weather changes and our bodies suffer from the cold; how a

friend treats us changes and we become depressed. Our present bodies and minds compound our misery in the sense that they are the basis for our present problems. Our present bodies are the basis upon which we experience bad health. If we did not have a body that was receptive to pain, we would not fall ill no matter how many viruses and germs we were exposed to. Our present minds are the basis upon which we experience the pain and hurt feelings. If we had minds that were not contaminated by anger, then we would not suffer from the mental anguish of conflict with others. In general, according to Buddhism, there are eight major kinds of suffering: Suffering of Birth, Suffering of old age, Suffering of Disease, Suffering of Death, Suffering due to separation from loved ones, Suffering due to meeting with the uncongenial (meeting with what we hate), Suffering due to unfulfilled wishes, and Suffering due to the raging aggregates.

The Buddha regarded this world as a world of hardship, and taught the ways to cope with it. Then what are the reasons which make it a world of hardship? The first reason, as given by the Buddha is that all things are selfless or egoless, which means that no things, men, animals and inanimate objects, both living and not living, have what we may call their original self or real being. Let us consider man. A man does not have a core or a soul which he can consider to be his true self. A man exists, but he cannot grasp his real being, he cannot discover his own core, because the existence of a man is nothing but an "existence depending on a series of causations." Everything that exists is there because of causations; it will disappear when the effects of the causation cease. The waves on the water's surface certainly exist, but can it be said that a wave has its own self? Waves exist only while there is wind or current. Each wave has its own characteristics according to the combination of causations, the intensity of the winds and currents and their directions, etc. But when the effects of the causations cease, the waves are no more. Similarly, there cannot be a self which stands independent of causations. As long as a man is an existent depending on a series of causations, it is unreasonable for him to try to hold on to himself and to regard all things around him from the self-centered point of view. All men ought to deny their own selves and endeavor to help each other and to look for co-existence, because no man can ever be truly independent. If all things owe their existence to a series of causations, their existence is a conditional one; there is no one thing in the universe that is permanent or independent. Therefore, the Buddha's theory that selflessness is the nature of all things inevitably leads to the next theory that all things are impermanent (*anitya*). Men in general seem to be giving all of their energy to preserving their own existence and their possessions. But in truth it is impossible to discover the core of their own existence, nor is it possible to preserve it forever. Even for one moment nothing can stay unchanged. Not only is it insecure in relation to space but it is also insecure in

relation to time. If it were possible to discover a world which is spaceless and timeless, that would be a world of true freedom, i.e., Nirvana. Men in general seem to be giving all of their energy to preserving their own existence and their possessions. But in truth it is impossible to discover the core of their own existence, nor is it possible to preserve it forever. Even for one moment nothing can stay unchanged. Not only is it insecure in relation to space but it is also insecure in relation to time. If it were possible to discover a world which is spaceless and timeless, that would be a world of true freedom, i.e., Nirvana. If, as the modern physicists assert, space is curved and time is relative, this world of space and time is our enclosed abode from which there is no escape; we are tied down in the cycles of cause and effect. If, as the modern physicists assert, space is curved and time is relative, this world of space and time is our enclosed abode from which there is no escape; we are tied down in the cycles of cause and effect. As long as men cannot discover a world which is not limited by time and space, men must be creatures of suffering. To assert that such a state, unlimited in time and space, is attainable by man is the message of Buddhism. As long as men cannot discover a world which is not limited by time and space, men must be creatures of suffering. To assert that such a state, unlimited in time and space, is attainable by man is the message of Buddhism. Of course, there is no such thing as a limitless time. Even modern physical science does not recognize infinity in time and space. However, the Buddha brought forward his ideal, Nirvana (extinction), following his theories of selflessness and impermanence. Nirvana means extinction of life and death, extinction of worldly desire, and extinction of space and time conditions. This, in the last analysis, means unfolding a world of perfect freedom. Selflessness (no substance) and impermanence (no duration) are the real state of our existence; Nirvana (negatively extinction; positively perfection) is our ideal, that is, perfect freedom, quiescence. In short, once Buddhist practitioners equipped with correct views and have the ability to see the truth of sufferings also means we are able to push away great obstacles of afflictions and begin to advance on the very important steps on our own path of cultivation.

Chapter Ten

Devout Buddhists Always Have A Firm Faith In Emancipation In This Very Life

All the Buddha's teachings recorded in the Pali Canon are aimed at liberating human beings' sufferings and afflictions in this life. They have a function of helping human beings see the way to make arise the skilful thought, to release the opposite evil thought controlling their mind. For example, the five meditative mental factors releasing the five hindrances; compassion releasing ill-will; detachment or greedlessness releasing greediness; wisdom releasing illusion; perception of selflessness, impermanence and suffering releasing perception of selfishness, permanence and pleasure, and so on. The Pure Land Sect believes that during this Dharma-Ending Age, it is difficult to attain enlightenment and emancipation in this very life if one practices other methods without following Pure Land at the same time. If emancipation is not achieved in this lifetime, one's crucial vows will become empty thoughts as one continues to be deluded on the path of Birth and Death. Devoted Buddhists should always be very cautious, not to praise one's school and downplay other schools. Devoted Buddhists should always remember that we all are Buddhists and we all practice the teachings of the Buddha, though with different means, we have the same teachings, the Buddha's Teachings; and the same goal, emancipation and becoming Buddha. To understand Buddhism properly we must begin at the end of the Buddha's career. The year 486 B.C. or thereabouts saw the conclusion of the Buddha's activity as a teacher in India. The death of the Buddha is called, as is well known, 'Nirvana,' or 'the state of the fire blown out.' When a fire is blown out, nothing remain to be seen. So the Buddha was considered to have entered into an invisible state which can in no way be depicted in word or in form. Just prior to his attaining Nirvana, in the Sala grove of Kusinagara, the Buddha spoke to His disciples to the following effect: "Do not wail saying 'Our Teacher has passed away, and we have no one to follow.' What I have taught, the Dharma (ideal) with the disciplinary (Vinaya) rules, will be your teacher after my departure. If you adhere to them and practice them uninterruptedly, is it not the

same as if my Dharma-body (Dharmakaya) remained here forever?” In spite of these thoughtful instructions some of his disciples were expressing a dissenting idea even before his funeral. It was natural, therefore, for the mindful elders to think of calling a council of elders in order to preserve the orthodox teaching of the Buddha. They consulted King Ajatasatru who at once ordered the eighteen monasteries around his capital to be repaired for housing the members of the coming Council of Rajagriha. When the time arrived five hundred selected elders met together. Ananda rehearsed the Dharmas (sutras) while Upali explained the origin of each of the Vinaya rules. There was no necessity of rehearsing the Vinaya rules themselves since they had been compiled during the Buddha’s lifetime for weekly convocation for confessions. At the council a fine collection of the Dharma and the Vinaya was made, the number of Sutras was decided, and the history of the disciplinary rules was compiled. The result of the elders’ activity was acknowledged as an authority by those who had a formalistic and realistic tendency. There were, however, some who differed from them in their opinion. Purana, for instance, was skilled in preaching. Purana was in a bamboo grove near Rajagriha during the council, and, being asked by some layman, is said to have answered: “The council may produce a fine collection. But I will keep to what I heard from my teacher myself. So we may presume that there were some who had idealistic and free-thinking tendencies.

In the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, 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.” For left-home people, basically speaking, all teachings of the Buddha are aimed at releasing human beings’ troubles in this very life. They have a function of helping an individual see the way to make arise the wholesome thoughts to release the opposite evil thoughts. For example, meditation helps releasing hindrances; fixed mind releasing scattered minds that have controlled human minds since the beginninglessness; compassion releasing ill-will; detachment or greedlessness releasing greediness;

the perceptions of selflessness and impermanence releasing the concepts of “self” and “permanence”; wisdom or non-illusion releasing illusion, and so on. However, the cultivation must be done by the individual himself and by his effort itself in the present. As for laypeople, the Buddha expounded very clearly in the Sigalaka Sutta: not to waste his materials, not to wander on the street at unfitting times, not to keep bad company, and not to have habitual idleness, not to act what is caused by attachment, ill-will, folly or fear. In the Five Basic Precepts, the Buddha also explained very clearly: not taking life, not taking what is not given, not committing sexual misconduct, not lying, and not drinking intoxicants. Besides, laypeople should have good relationships of his family and society: between parents and children, between husband and wife, between teacher and student, among relatives and neighbors, between monks, nuns, and laypeople, between employer and employee. These relationships should be based on human love, loyalty, gratitude, sincerity, mutual acceptance, mutual understanding, and mutual respect. If left-home people and laypeople can practice these rules, they are freed from sufferings and afflictions in this very life.

3

Part Three
An Overview & Meanings of
Practice In Buddhist Cultivation
(Phần Ba: Tổng Quan Và Ý Nghĩa Của Hạnh
Trong Tu Tập Phật Giáo)

Chapter Eleven

Summaries of Conducts In Buddhist Teachings

I. An Overview and Meanings of Practices or Conducts in Buddhism:

According to the Pureland Buddhism, practice means one must recite the Amitabha Buddha with the utmost sincerely to the point of achieving one-mind or single-minded recitation in order to establish the unimaginable connections and having the Buddha rescue and deliver the cultivator to the Western Pureland after death. In Buddhism, the function of mental factor intention is to move our mind toward an object, to perceive and realize it. Thus mental factors intention is the basis for all our wishes (wishing in body, speech and mind). Practice also means to cultivate or to start out for bodhi-mind to act out one's vows to save all living beings (all beings possess Tathagata-garbha nature and can become a Buddha; therefore, vow to save them all). According to Buddhism, everywhere and at all time, Buddhist cultivators should always keep the firm conduct in cultivation, our actions must be in accordance with "Prajna" at all time. Worldly people always brag with their mouths, but their minds are always deluded. This is one of the three kinds of Prajna, the prajna or wisdom of meditative enlightenment on reality.

II. Never-Receding Stage In Cultivation:

Non-backsliding means not to give up on or not to grow weary with current position, or not retreating, especially in terms of the Buddhist path of cultivation. When one has reached the level where one does not fall back or non-retrogression is another way of saying one will achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime. One who has reached the realization of emptiness (Tolerance and Non-birth) will never regress from the Buddha or Bodhisattva Paths. Never receding or turning back, always progressing and certainly reaching Nirvana. One who has reached the realization of emptiness (tolerance and non-birth) will never regress from the Buddha or Bodhisattva Paths. Non-regression sometimes simply denotes an advanced stage of aspiration and practice

from which one will never retreat. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter Four, the Buddha said to Maitreya Bodhisattva: “You go to Vimalakirti to inquire after his health on my behalf.” Maitreya replied: “World Honoured One, I am not qualified to call on him and inquire after his health. The reason is that once when I was expounding to the deva-king and his retinue in the Tusita heaven the never-receding stage (of Bodhisattva development into Buddhahood) Vimalakirti came and said to me: ‘Maitreya, when the World Honoured One predicted your future attainment of supreme enlightenment (anuttara-sayak-sambodhi) in one lifetime, tell me in which life, whether in the past, future or present, did or will you receive His prophecy? If it was in your past life, that has gone; if it will be in your future life, that has not yet come; and if it is in your present life, that does not stay. As the Buddha once said: ‘O bhiksus, you are born, are aging and are dying simultaneously at this very moment’; if you received His prophecy in a lifeless (state), the latter is prediction (of your future Buddhahood) nor realization of supreme enlightenment. How then did you receive the prediction of your attainment of Buddhahood in one lifetime? Or did you receive it in the absolute state (thatness or tathata) of either birth or death? If you receive it in the absolute state of birth, this absolute state is uncreated. If you receive it in the absolute state of death, this absolute state does not die. For (the underlying nature of) all living beings and of all things is absolute; all saints and sages are in this absolute state, and so, also are you, Maitreya. So, if you, Maitreya, received the Buddhahood, all living beings (who are absolute by nature) should also receive it. Why? Because that which is absolute is non-dual and is beyond differentiation. If you, Maitreya, realize supreme enlightenment, so should all living beings. Why? Because they are the manifestation of bodhi (enlightenment). If you, Maitreya, win nirvana, they should also realize it. Why? Because all Buddhas know that every living being is basically in the condition of extinction of existence and suffering which is nirvana, in which there can be no further extinction of existence. Therefore, Maitreya, do not mislead the devas because there is neither development of supreme bodhi-mind nor its backsliding. Maitreya, you should instead urge them to keep from discriminating views about bodhi (enlightenment). Why? Because bodhi can be won by neither body nor mind. For bodhi is the state of calmness and extinction of passion (i.e. nirvana) because it wipes out all forms. Bodhi is unseeing, for it keeps from all causes.

Bodhi is non-discrimination, for it stops memorizing and thinking. Bodhi cuts off ideation, for it is free from all views. Bodhi forsakes inversion, for it prevents perverse thoughts. Bodhi puts an end to desire, for it keeps from longing. Bodhi is unresponsive, for it wipes out all clinging. Bodhi complies (with self-nature), for it is in line with the state of suchness. Bodhi dwells (in this suchness), for it abides in (changeless) Dharma-nature (or Dharmata, the underlying nature of all things.) Bodhi reaches this suchness, for it attains the region of reality. Bodhi is non-dual, for it keeps from (both) intellect and its objects. Bodhi is impartial, for it is equal to boundless space. Bodhi is the non-active (wu wei) state, for it is above the conditions of birth, existence and death. Bodhi is true knowledge, for it discerns the mental activities of all living beings. Bodhi does not unite, for it is free from all confrontation. Bodhi disentangles, for it breaks contact with habitual troubles (klesa). Bodhi is that of which the position cannot be determined, for it is beyond form and shape, and is that which cannot be called by name for all names (have no independent nature and so) are void. Bodhi is like the mindlessness of an illusory man, for it neither accepts nor rejects anything. Bodhi is beyond disturbance, for it is always serene by itself. Bodhi is real stillness, because of its pure and clean nature. Bodhi is non-acceptance, for it keeps from causal attachments. Bodhi is non-differentiating, because of its impartiality towards all. Bodhi is without compare, for it is indescribable. Bodhi is profound and subtle, for although unknowing, it knows all.' World Honoured One, when Vimalakirti so expounded the Dharma, two hundred sons of devas realized the patient endurance of the uncreate (anutpattika-dharma-ksanti). This is why I am not qualified to call on him and inquire after his health."

Chapter Twelve

Summaries of Bodhisattva's Practices in Buddhism

I. An Overview of of Bodhisattva's Practices in Buddhism:

Bodhisattva practice (Bodhisattva's practising) according to the tradition of Northern Buddhism. A Bodhisattva must achieve the following Bodhisattva's practices: to vow to devote the mind to bodhi (bodhicita), to practise the four immeasurables, to practise the six Paramitas, and to practise the four all-embracing virtues. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Bodhisattvas are those who were well known for having achieved all the perfections that lead to the great wisdom. They had received instructions from many Buddhas and formed a Dharma-protecting citadel. By upholding the right Dharma, they could fearlessly give the lion's roar to teach sentient beings; so their names were heard in the ten directions. They were not invited but came to the assembly to spread the teaching on the Three Treasures to transmit it in perpetuity. They had overcome all demons and defeated heresies; and their six faculties, karmas of deeds, words and thoughts were pure and clean; being free from the (five) hindrances and the (ten) bonds. They had realized serenity of mind and had achieved unimpeded liberation. They had achieved right concentration and mental stability, thereby acquiring the uninterrupted power of speech. They had achieved all the (six) paramitas: charity (dana), discipline (sila), patience (ksanti), devotion (virya), serenity (dhyana) and wisdom (prajna), as well as the expedient method (upaya) of teaching which completely benefit self and others. However, to them these realizations did not mean any gain whatsoever for themselves, so that they were in line with the patient endurance of the uncreate (anutpattika-dharma-ksanti). They were able to turn the wheel of the Law that never turns back. Being able to interpret the (underlying nature of) phenomena, they knew very well the roots (propensities) of all living beings; they surpassed them all and realized fearlessness. They had cultivated their minds by means of merits and wisdom with which they embellished their physical features which were unsurpassable, thus giving up all earthly adornments. Their towering reputation exceeded the height of Mount Sumeru. Their

profound faith in the uncreated was unbreakable like a diamond. Their treasures of the Dharma illuminated all lands and rained down nectar. Their speeches were profound and unsurpassable. They entered deep into all (worldly) causes, but cut off all heretical views for they were already free from all dualities and had rooted out all (previous) habits. They were fearless and gave the lion's roar to proclaim the Dharma, their voices being like thunder. They could not be gauged for they were beyond all measures. They had amassed all treasures of the Dharma and acted like (skillful) seafaring pilots. They were well versed in the profound meanings of all Dharmas. They knew very well the mental states of all living beings and their comings and goings (within the realms of existence). They had reached the state near the unsurpassed sovereign wisdom of all Buddhas, having acquired the ten fearless powers (dasabala) giving complete knowledge and the eighteen different characteristics (of a Buddha as compared with Bodhisattvas (avenikadharma). Although they were free from (rebirth in) evil existences, they appeared in five mortal realms as royal physicians to cure all ailments, prescribing the right medicine in each individual case, thereby winning countless merits to embellish countless Buddha lands. Each living being derived great benefit from seeing and hearing them, for their deeds were not in vain. Thus they had achieved all excellent merits.

II. A Summary of Practices of Bodhisattvas In the Lotus Sutra:

According to the Lotus Sutra, there are ten practices of respects of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. First, worship and respect all Buddhas. Second, praise the Thus Come Ones. Third, make abundant offerings. Fourth, repent misdeeds and hindrances. Fifth, rejoice at others' merits and virtues. Sixth, request the Buddha to turn the Dharma Wheel. Seventh, request the Buddha to remain in the world. Eighth, follow the teachings of the Buddha at all times. Ninth, accommodate and benefit all sentient beings. Tenth, transfer merits and virtues universally.

III. Bodhisattvas' Conducts and Living Beings' Conducts:

The two words of "Cause and Effect", not only living beings who cannot escape them (cause and effect); even the Buddhas (before becoming enlightened) and Bodhisattvas cannot avoid them either.

However, because Bodhisattvas have far-ranging vision, they avoid creating bad causes and only receive joyful rewards. Living beings, on the other hand, are very short-sighted. Seeing only what is in front of them, they often plant evil causes, and so they must often suffer the bitter retribution. Because the Bodhisattvas are afraid of bad consequences in the future, not only they avoid planting evil-causes or evil karma in the present, but they also diligently cultivate to gradually diminish their karmic obstructions; at the same time to accumulate their virtues and merits, and ultimately to attain Buddhahood. However, sentient beings complete constantly to gather evil-causes; therefore, they must suffer evil effect. When ending the effect of their actions, they are not remorseful or willing to repent. Not only do they blame Heaven and other people, but they continue to create more evil karma in opposition and retaliation. Therefore, enemies and vengeance will continue to exist forever in this vicious cycle.

Chapter Thirteen

Bodhisattvas' Pleasant Practices

I. An Overview and Meanings of A Life in Peace in Buddhism:

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.” Inner peace or tranquility of mind. To quiet the heart or mind or to obtain tranquility of mind. “Anjin” is a Japanese Buddhist term for “Heart-mind in peace.” Peace of mind is a state of consciousness that according to Buddhism, is possible only through the experience of enlightenment. In Zen the practice of sitting meditation is seen as the shortest path to peace of mind. Peace of mind is also a renowned koan, the example 41 in the Wu-Men-Kuan: “Bodhidharma sat facing the wall. The second patriarch, who had been standing in the snow, cut off his own arm and said, ‘The mind of yours student still finds no peace. I entreat you, master, please give it peace.’ Bodhidharma said, ‘Bring your mind here and I’ll give it peace.’ The second patriarch said, ‘I’ve looked for the mind, but finally it can’t be found.’ Bodhidharma said, ‘Then I have given it peace thoroughly!’” According to The Lotus Sutra, there are four means of attaining to a peaceful and happy contentment: to attain a happy contentment by proper direction of the deeds of the body; to attain a happy contentment by the words of the mouth; to attain a happy contentment by the thoughts of the mind; to attain a happy contentment by the will to preach all sutras.

For Buddhist practitioners, especially lay people, living in mindfulness simply means keeping the mind being aware of all activities, both physical and mental. A cultivator who is mindful of his bodily activities becomes aware of his postures: when walking, standing, sitting or lying down. All his bodily activities he does with

mindfulness. In walking to and from, in looking ahead and in looking aside, he applies mindfulness; in bending and stretching he applies mindfulness; in wearing clothes, in eating, drinking, chewing, etc. he applies mindfulness; in walking, standing, sitting, lying down, he applies mindfulness; in keeping awake, speaking, and being silent, he applies mindfulness. The characteristic of mindfulness is non-superficiality. This suggests that mindfulness is penetrative and profound. If we throw a cork into a stream, it simply pops up and down on the surface, floating downstream with the current. If we throw a stone instead, it will immediately sink to the very bottom of the stream. So, too, mindfulness ensures that the mind will sink deeply into the object and not slip superficially past it. The function of mindfulness is to keep the object always in view, neither forgetting it nor allowing it to disappear. When mindfulness is present, the occurring object will be noted without forgetfulness.

II. Bodhisattvas' Pleasant Practices:

First, Pleasant Practice of the Body: To attain a happy contentment by proper direction of the deeds of the body. The Buddha taught the pleasant practice of the body by dividing it into two parts, a Bodhisattva's spheres of action and of intimacy. A Bodhisattva's sphere of action means his fundamental attitude as the basis of his personal behavior. A Bodhisattva is patient, gentle, and agreeable, and is neither hasty nor overbearing, his mind is always unperturbed. Unlike ordinary people, he is not conceited or boastful about his own good works. He must see all things in their reality. He never take a partial view of things. He acts toward all people with the same compassion and never making show of it. The Buddha teaches a Bodhisattva's sphere of intimacy by dividing it into ten areas: *First*, 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. *Second*, 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. *Third*, a Bodhisattva does not resort to brutal sports, such as boxing and wrestling, nor the various juggling performances of

dancers and others. *Fourth*, 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. *Fifth*, 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. *Sixth*, 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. *Seventh*, 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. *Eighth*, 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. *Ninth*, if he preaches the Law to lay women, he does not display his teeth in smile nor let his breast be seen. *Tenth*, he takes no pleasure in keeping young pupils and children by his side. On the contrary, the Buddha admonishes the Bodhisattva ever to prefer meditation and seclusion and also to cultivate and control his mind.

Second, Pleasant Practice of the Mouth of a Bodhisattva:

According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha gave instructions to all Bodhisattvas on Pleasant practice of the mouth as follows: "*First*, a Bodhisattva takes no pleasure in telling of the errors of other people or of the sutras; *second*, he does not despise other preachers; *third*, he does not speak of the good and evil, the merits and demerits of other people, nor does he single out any Sravakas or Pratyeka-buddhas by name, nor does he broadcast their errors and sins; *fourth*, in the same way, he do not praise their virtues, nor does he beget a jealous mind. If he maintains a cheerful and open mind in this way, those who hear the teaching will offer him no opposition. To those who ask difficult questions, he does not answer with the law of the small vehicle but only with the Great vehicle, and he explains the Law to them so that they may obtain perfect knowledge."

Third, Pleasant Practice of the Mind of a Bodhisattva:

According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha gave eight advices to all Bodhisattvas as follows: “*First*, a Bodhisattva does not harbor an envious or deceitful mind. *Second*, he does not slight or abuse other learners of the Buddha-way even if they are beginners, nor does he seek out their excesses and shortcomings. *Third*, if there are people who seek the Bodhisattva-way, he does not distress them, causing them to feel doubt and regret, nor does he say discouraging things to them. *Fourth*, he should not indulge in discussions about the laws or engage in dispute but should devote himself to cultivation of the practice to save all living beings. *Fifth*, he should think of saving all living beings from the sufferings through his great compassion. *Sixth*, he should think of the Buddhas as benevolent fathers. *Seventh*, he should always think of the Bodhisattvas as his great teachers. *Eighth*, he should preach the Law equally to all living beings.”

Fourth, Pleasant Practice of the Vow of a Bodhisattva:

According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha gave instructions to all Bodhisattvas on Pleasant practice of the vow as follows: “The pleasant practice of the vow means to have a spirit of great compassion. A Bodhisattva should beget a spirit of great charity toward both laymen and monks, and should have a spirit of great compassion for those who are not yet Bodhisattvas but are satisfied with their selfish idea of saving only themselves. He also should decide that, though those people have not inquired for, nor believed in, nor understood the Buddha’s teaching in this sutra, when he has attained Perfect Enlightenment through his transcendental powers and powers of wisdom he will lead them to abide in this Law.”

Chapter Fourteen

Cultivation of Bodhisattva's Practices In the Spirit of the Flower Adornment Sutra

I. An Overview and Meanings of Practices or Conducts in Buddhism:

In Buddhism, conduct or behavior means practice. The function of mental factor intention is to move our mind toward an object, to perceive and realize it. Thus mental factors intention is the basis for all our wishes (wishing in body, speech and mind). Practice also means to cultivate or to start out for bodhi-mind to act out one's vows to save all living beings (all beings possess Tathagata-garbha nature and can become a Buddha; therefore, vow to save them all). According to Buddhism, everywhere and at all time, Buddhist cultivators should always keep the firm conduct in cultivation, our actions must be in accordance with "Prajna" at all time. Worldly people always brag with their mouths, but their minds are always deluded. This is one of the three kinds of Prajna, the prajna or wisdom of meditative enlightenment on reality.

II. An Overview of the Maha Vaipulya-Avatamsaka-Sutra:

Buddhavatamsaka Sutra or the Sutra of the Garland of Buddhas. Mahayana sutra that constitutes the basis of the teachings of the Avatamsaka school (Hua-Yen), which emphasizes above all "mutually unobstructed interpenetration." The sutra also teaches that the human mind is the universe itself and is identical with the Buddha. Indeed, the mind, Buddha and all sentient beings are one and the same. This aspects of the Mahayana teaching was especially stressed by the Chinese Zen. The sutra was translated into Chinese by Buddhahadra. Also called the Garland Sutra or the Flower Ornament Sutra. The Sanskrit title is Avatamsaka, but it is Gandavyuha according to Fa-Tsang's commentary on the sixty-fascile Garland Sutra. Avatamsaka means a 'garland,' while in Gandavyuha, ganda means 'a flower of ordinary kind,' and vyuha 'an orderly arrangement' or 'array.' Gandavyuha means 'flower-decoration.' Avatamsaka is one of the profound Mahayana sutras embodying the sermons given by the Buddha immediately following his perfect enlightenment. The Gandavyuha is the Sanskrit title for a text containing the account of Sudhana, the young man, who wishing to find how to

realize the ideal life of Bodhisattvahood, is directed by Manjusri the Bodhisattva to visit spiritual leaders one after another in various departments of life and in various forms of existence, altogether numbering fifty-three. This is the basic text of the Avatamsaka school. It is one of the longest and most profound sutras in the Buddhist Canon and records the highest teaching of Buddha Sakyamuni, immediately after enlightenment. It is traditionally believed that the sutra was taught to the Bodhisattvas and other high spiritual beings while the Buddha was in samadhi. The sutra has been described as the “epitome of Buddhist thought, Buddhist sentiment, and Buddhist experiences” and is quoted by all schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The sutra compares the whole Universe to the realization of Vairocana Buddha. Its basic teaching is that myriad things and phenomena are the oneness of the Universe, and the whole Universe is myriad things and phenomena. After examining the sutra, we find that there were in the beginning many independent sutras which were later compiled into one encyclopaedic collection, as the subject-matters treated in them are all classified under one head, and they came to be known as Avatamsaka. There are three translations of the Avatamsaka-sutra in China: First, 60 books translated by Buddhahadra, who arrived in China around 406 A.D., also known as the East-Chin Sutra or the old sutra. Second, 80 books translated by Siksanda, about 700 A.D., also known as the T’ang Sutra or the new sutra. Third, 40 books translated by Prajna around 800 A.D. This translation also included the Dictionary of Classic by Hui-Yuan in 700 A.D.

III. Cultivation of Bodhisattva's Practices In the Spirit of the Flower Adornment Sutra

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 21 (Ten Practices), There Are Ten Kinds of Practices, Which Are Expounded by the Buddhas of Past, Present and Future: the practice of giving joy, beneficial practice, practice of nonopposition, practice of indomitability, practice of nonconfusion, practice of good manifestation, practice of nonattachment, practice of that which is difficult to attain, practice of good teachings, and practice of truth.

According to The Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, There Are 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. *First*, hearing the Teaching, out of fondness for truth. *Second*, expounding the Teaching to benefit sentient beings. *Third*, getting rid of covetousness, anger, delusion, and fear, by taming their own minds. *Fourth*, action in the realm of desire, to teach beings in that realm. *Fifth*, concentration in the realm of form and formlessness, to foster quick return to noncontamination. *Sixth*, aiming for the meaning of the Teaching, to quickly

attain wisdom. *Seventh*, action in the realm of life, to freely edify sentient beings. *Eighth*, action in all Buddha-lands, honoring all Buddhas. *Ninth*, nirvanic action, not cutting off the continuity of birth and death. *Tenth*, fulfilling all qualities of Buddhahood without giving up application of the principles of Enlightening Beings.

According to the Buddha in The Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, Great Enlightening Beings Have Ten Kinds of Practice Which Help Them Attain the Practice of the Unexcelled Knowledge and Wisdom of Buddhas: *The first practice* is the practice dealing with all sentient beings, to develop them all to maturity. *The second practice* is the practice seeking all truths, to learn them all. *The third practice* is the practice of all roots of goodness, to cause them all to grow. *The fourth practice* is the practice of all concentration, to be single-minded, without distraction. *The fifth practice* is the practice of all knowledge, to know everything. *The sixth practice* is the practice of all cultivations, to be able to cultivate them all. *The seventh practice* is the practice dealing with all Buddha-lands, to adorn them all. *The eighth practice* is the practice dealing with all good companions, respecting and supporting them. *The ninth practice* is the practice dealing with all Buddhas, honoring and serving them. *The tenth practice* is the practice of all supernatural powers, to be able to transform anywhere, anytime to help sentient beings.

Also According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, Great Bodhisattvas Have Ten Qualities: *First*, their meritorious deeds are of universal character and illuminating. *Second*, their attainment of the Samadhi is full of the light of knowledge which is derived from walking the path of righteousness. *Third*, they are able to produce the great ocean of merit. *Fourth*, they are never tired of amassing all kinds of purities. *Fifth*, they ever ready to associate with good friends and attend upon them with reverence. *Sixth*, they are not accumulators of wealth and never hesitate to give up their lives for a good cause. *Seventh*, they are free from the spirit of arrogance and like the great earth treat others impartially. *Eighth*, their hearts being filled with love and compassion; they are always thinking of the welfare of others. *Ninth*, they are always friendly disposed towards all beings in various paths of existence. *Tenth*, they are ever desirous of being admitted into the community of Buddhas.

Also According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, There Are Other Ten Kinds of Cultivation of Great Enlightening Beings' Practices: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 36, Great Enlightening Beings who want to quickly fulfill the practices of enlightening beings should diligently practice these following ten principles: *First*, in their mind they should not abandon sentient beings. *Second*, they should think of Enlightening Beings as Buddhas. *Third*, they should never slander any teachings of the Buddhas. *Fourth*, they should know that there is no end to different lands.

Fifth, they should be profoundly devoted to enlightening practices. *Sixth*, they should not give up the cosmic, spacelike, impartial mind of enlightenment. *Seventh*, they should contemplate enlightenment and enter the power of Buddhas. *Eighth*, they should cultivate unobstructed intellectual and expository powers. *Ninth*, they should teach unenlightened beings tirelessly. *Tenth*, they should live in all worlds without attachment in their minds.

Ten Great Undertakings of Great Enlightening Beings' Perfect Practices: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten great undertakings of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can be imbued with the supremely great knowledge of Buddhas. *First*, should serve and honor all Buddhas. *Second*, should nourish all roots of goodness of enlightening beings. *Third*, after the final extinction of all Buddhas, they should adorn monuments of the Buddhas; offer all kinds of offerings such as: flowers, garlands, incenses, perfumes, aromatic powders, clothes, parasols, pennants, banners. Take up and preserve the true teachings of the Buddhas. *Fourth*, should teach and tame all sentient beings so that they may realize supreme perfect enlightenment. *Fifth*, should adorn all worlds with the supreme adornments of the Buddha-lands. *The sixth great undertaking:* Enlightening beings should develop great compassion; and tirelessly carry out the acts of Enlightening Beings forever in all worlds for the sake of sentient beings. Enlightening Beings should do all of the above until all sentient beings attain the unsurpassed enlightenment. *Seventh*, the Buddhas are infinite, enlightening beings should spend inconceivable eons with each and every Buddha, honoring and making offerings to them; and spend inconceivable eons with all Buddhas, honoring and making offerings to them. *Eighth*, after the passing away of the Buddhas, Enlightening Beings should set up a precious monument for the relics of each one, those monuments to be as high as untold worlds; make effigies of Buddhas in the same way; and present all kinds of precious things for offerings for inconceivable eons without a thought of weariness: banners and pennants, canopies, fragrances, flowers, robes. Why? In order to fulfill the teachings of Buddhas; in order to honor the Buddhas; in order to edify sentient beings; in order to preserve the true teaching; and in order to reveal and expound the teaching. *Ninth*, by these roots of goodness, Enlightening Beings should accomplish unexcelled enlightenment; gain entry into the state of all Buddhas; and be equal in essence to all Buddhas. *Tenth*, Great Enlightening Beings also think once they have attained true awakening. They should expound the truth in all worlds for untold eons, show inconceivable autonomous spiritual powers, and doing all these without weariness and deviating from the truth without weariness, without weariness of body, without weariness of speech, without weariness of mind, and without deviating from the truth.

Chapter Fifteen

Cultivation of Bodhisattvas' Practices of Fearlessness

I. An Overview of Fearlessness In Buddhist Teachings:

An Overview of Fearlessness In Buddhist Teachings:

Fearlessness is one of the eight characteristics of a Buddha's speaking. The gesture (Abhaya-mudra) of Fearlessness of Sakyamuni Buddha right after he attained enlightenment (the right hand is raised to shoulder level with fingers extended and palm turned outward). For Great Bodhisattvas, power of fearlessness which can explain all truths is one of the ten kinds of power possessed by Great Enlightening Beings. Meanwhile, Fearless Bhumi is the position where one feels no fear to greed, anger, ignorance, birth, old age, illness, death. According to The Surangama Sutra, book Six, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva reported to the Buddha about fourteen fearlessnesses as follows: "World Honored One! Using this vajra samadhi of becoming permeated with hearing and cultivating hearing, and use the miraculous strength of effortlessness, because I have a kind regard equally for all living beings in the six paths, I go throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time cause all living beings who encounter bodies of mine to receive the meritorious virtue of fourteen kinds of fearlessness." Great Enlightening Beings are always the bestowers of fearlessness to all beings. When someone encounters disasters or calamities which terrify him, at that moment the Bodhisattva removes his anxieties and sufferings through one's own efforts. Dispelling fear means to give the gift of fearlessness. The giving of fearlessness is the best way that can give a genuine peaceful and happy environment for everyone, because a real state of fearlessness is considered as synonymous with the freedom and bliss without war, dislike, fighting, killing, etc.

Some Bodhisattvas' Typical Fearlessnesses: Great Enlightening Beings have many kinds of fearlessness. The followings are some typical ones: ***Great Bodhisattvas' Four Kinds of Fearlessness:*** *First*, Bodhisattva-fearlessness arises from powers of memory and ability to preach without fear. *Second*, Bodhisattva-fearlessness arises from

powers of moral diagnosis and application of the remedy. *Third*, Bodhisattva-fearlessness arises from powers of ratiocination. *Fourth*, Bodhisattva-fearlessness arises from powers of solving doubts.

II. Cultivation of Bodhisattvas' Fearlessness In the Spirit of the Surangama Sutra:

According to The Surangama Sutra, book Six, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva reported to the Buddha about fourteen fearlessnesses as follows: “World Honored One! Using this vajra samadhi of becoming permeated with hearing and cultivating hearing, and use the miraculous strength of effortlessness, because I have a kind regard equally for all living beings in the six paths, I go throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time cause all living beings who encounter bodies of mine to receive the meritorious virtue of fourteen kinds of fearlessness.” *First*, because I do not contemplate sounds for my own sake, but rather listen to the sounds of those whom I contemplate, I can enable living beings throughout the ten directions who are suffering and in distress to attain liberation by contemplating their sounds. *Second*, since my knowledge and views have turned around and come back, I can make it so that if living beings are caught in a raging fire, the fire will not burn them. *Third*, since contemplation and listening have turned around and come back, I can make it so that if living beings are floundering in deep water, the water cannot drown them. *Fourth*, since false thinking is cut off, and my mind is without thoughts of killing or harming, I can make it so that if living beings enter the territory of ghosts, the ghosts cannot harm them. *Fifth*, since I am permeated with hearing and have brought hearing to accomplishment, so that the six sense-organs have dissolved and returned to become identical with hearing, I can make it so that if living beings are about to be wounded, the knives will break into pieces. I can cause swords of war to have no more effect than if they were to slice into water, or if one were to blow upon light. *Sixth*, when the hearing permeates and the essence is bright, light pervades the Dharma realm, so that absolutely no darkness remains. I am then able to make it so that, though Yakshas, Rakshasas, Kumbhandas, Pischachas, and Putanas may draw near to living beings, the ghosts will not be able to see them. *Seventh*, when the nature of sound completely melts away and contemplation and hearing return and enter, so that I am separate from

false and defiling sense-objects, I am able to make it so that if living beings are confined by cages and fetters, the locks will not hold them. *Eight*, when sound is gone and the hearing is perfected, an all-pervasive power of compassion arises, and I can make it so that if living beings are travelling a dangerous road, thieves will not rob them. *Ninth*, when one is permeated with hearing, one separates from worldly objects, and forms cannot rob one. Then I can make it so that living beings with a great deal of desire can leave greed and desire far behind. *Tenth*, when sound is so pure that there is no defiling object, the sense-organ and the external state are perfectly fused, without any complement and without anything complemented. Then I can make it so that living beings who are full of rage and hate will leave all hatred. *Eleventh*, when the dust has gone and has turned to light, the dharma realm and the body and mind are like crystal, transparent and unobstructed. Then I can make it so that all dark and dull-witted beings whose natures are obstructed, all Atyantikas, are forever free from stupidity and darkness. *Twelfth*, when matter dissipates and return to the hearing, then unmoving in the Bodhimanda I can travel through worlds without destroying the appearance of those worlds. I can make offerings to as many Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions. At the side of each Buddha I become a dharma prince, and I can make it so that childless living beings throughout the dharma realm who wish to have sons, are blessed with meritorious, virtuous, and wise sons. *Thirteenth*, with perfect penetration of the six sense-organs, the light and what is illumined are not two. Encompassing the ten directions, a great perfect mirror stands in the empty treasury of the Thus Come One. I inherit the secret dharma doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions. Receiving them without loss, I am able to make it so that childless living beings throughout the dharma realm who seek daughters are blessed with lovely daughters who are upright, virtuous, and compliant and whom everyone cherishes and respects. *Fourteenth*, in this three-thousand-great-thousand world system with its billions of suns and moons, as many dharma princes as there are grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges rivers appear in the world and cultivate the dharma. They act as models in order to teach and transform living beings. They comply with living beings by means of expedients and wisdom, in different ways for each. However, because I have obtained the perfect penetration of the sense-organ and have

discovered the wonder of the ear-entrance, after which my body and mind subtly and miraculously included all of the dharma realm, I am able to make it so that living beings who uphold my name obtain as much merit and virtue as would be obtained by a person who upheld the names of all those Dharma Princes who are as many as the grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges rivers. World Honored One! There is no difference between the merit of my name and the merit of those other names, because from my cultivation I obtained true and perfect penetration.

Chapter Sixteen

Cultivation of Bodhisattvas' Practices of Fearlessness In the Spirit of the Flower Adornment Sutra

I. An Overview & Meanings of the Avatamsaka Sutra:

Also called the Garland Sutra or the Flower Ornament Sutra. The Sanskrit title is Avatamsaka, but it is Gandavyuha according to Fa-Tsang's commentary on the sixty-fascicle Garland Sutra. Avatamsaka means a 'garland,' while in Gandavyuha, ganda means 'a flower of ordinary kind,' and vyuha 'an orderly arrangement' or 'array.' Gandavyuha means 'flower-decoration.' Avatamsaka is one of the profound Mahayana sutras embodying the sermons given by the Buddha immediately following his perfect enlightenment. The Gandavyuha is the Sanskrit title for a text containing the account of Sudhana, the young man, who wishing to find how to realize the ideal life of Bodhisattvahood, is directed by Manjusri the Bodhisattva to visit spiritual leaders one after another in various departments of life and in various forms of existence, altogether numbering fifty-three. This is the basic text of the Avatamsaka school. It is one of the longest and most profound sutras in the Buddhist Canon and records the highest teaching of Buddha Sakyamuni, immediately after enlightenment. It is traditionally believed that the sutra was taught to the Bodhisattvas and other high spiritual beings while the Buddha was in samadhi. The sutra has been described as the "epitome of Buddhist thought, Buddhist sentiment, and Buddhist experiences" and is quoted by all schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The sutra compares the whole Universe to the realization of Vairocana Buddha. Its basic teaching is that myriad things and phenomena are the oneness of the Universe, and the whole Universe is myriad things and phenomena. After examining the sutra, we find that there were in the beginning many independent sutras which were later compiled into one encyclopaedic collection, as the subject-matters treated in them are all classified under one head, and they came to be known as Avatamsaka. There are three translations of the Avatamsaka-sutra in China: First, 60 books translated by

Buddhabhadra, who arrived in China around 406 A.D., also known as the East-Chin Sutra or the old sutra. Second, 80 books translated by Siksananda, about 700 A.D., also known as the T'ang Sutra or the new sutra. Third, 40 books translated by Prajna around 800 A.D. This translation also included the Dictionary of Classic by Hui-Yuan in 700 A.D.

II. Cultivation of Bodhisattvas' Fearlessness In the Spirit of the Flower Adornment Sutra:

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of fearlessness that Great Enlightening Beings practice. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supreme great fearlessness of Buddhas without giving up the fearlessness of Enlightening Beings. *The first fearlessness* states that Great Enlightening Beings can remember all verbal explanations. Even if Infinite (hundreds of thousands of) people should come from all over and ask them about hundred thousand great principles. They would see nothing difficult to answer about those questions. Their minds become fearless and they ultimately reach the Other Shore of great fearlessness, able to answer any questions and resolve doubts, without any timidity. *The second fearlessness* states that Great Enlightening Beings attain the unimpeded intellectual powers bestowed by Buddha and arrive at the furthest reaches of revelation of the secrets intimated by all speech and writing. They think that even if infinite people should come from ten directions and ask them about infinite doctrines, they would not see anything difficult to answer about those questions. Their minds become fearless and they ultimately reach the Other Shore of great fearlessness. They are able to answer any question and resolve doubts, without timidity. *The third fearlessness* states that Great Enlightening Beings know all things are empty and are without self, nothing pertaining self, without creation or creator, without knower, without life, without soul, without personality, detached from mind, detached from body, detached from sense, detached sense experience; forever leave all views, and their minds are like space. They reflect that they do not see sentient beings in any way harmful to them in term of physical, verbal, or mental action. Enlightening Beings do not see anything as having any essence at all. Therefore their minds become fearless and they ultimately reach the Other Shore of fearlessness.

They are firm, stable, and brave, impossible to discourage or break down. *The fourth fearlessness* states that Enlightening beings are protected and sustained by the power of Buddha. They live according to the conduct of Buddhas. Their action is truthful and never degenerates. They reflect that they do not see any conduct in themselves that would provoke the criticism of others. Therefore their minds become fearless and they teach calmly among the masses. *The fifth fearlessness* states that the physical, verbal, and mental actions of Great Enlightening Beings are immaculate, pure, harmonious, and free from all evils. They reflect that they do not see any physical, verbal, or mental action in them that is blameworthy. Therefore their minds become fearless, and they are able to cause sentient beings to live by the teachings of Buddha. *The sixth fearlessness* states that Great Enlightening Beings are always accompanied and guarded by Powerful thunderbolt-bearers, Celestial rain spirits, Demigods, Celestial musicians, Titans, Indra, Brahma, and the world-guardian gods. All Buddhas watch over them heedfully. They reflect that they do not see that there are any demons, false teachers, or people with set views that can hinder their practice of the path of Enlightening Beings in any way. Therefore their minds become fearless and they ultimately reach the Other Shore of great fearlessness. They become very joyful and carry out the deeds of Enlightening Beings. *The seventh fearlessness* states that Great Enlightening Beings have developed the faculty of recollection and are free from forgetfulness, as approved by Buddhas. They reflect that they do not see any sign of forgetfulness of the ways of expressing the path of attainment of enlightenment as explained by the Buddhas. Therefore their minds become fearless, absorb and hold all Buddhas' true teachings, and carry out the practices of Enlightening Beings. *The eighth fearlessness* states that Great Enlightening Beings have already attained knowledge and skill in means and have consummated the powers of enlightening beings. They always strive to edify all sentient beings. Their aspiration is always focused on perfect enlightenment, yet because of compassion for sentient beings, to perfect sentient beings. They appear to be born in the polluted world of afflictions, noble, with a full retinue, able to satisfy all their desires at will, leading a pleasant happy life. They reflect that although they are together with their family and associates, they do not see anything to be attached to the extent that they give up their cultivation of the ways of Enlightening Beings, such as meditation, liberations, concentrations,

dharani spells, and analytic and expository powers, because Great Enlightening Beings are already free in the midst of all things and have reached the Other Shore. They cultivate the practices of Enlightening Beings and vow never to stop. They do not see any object in the world that can disturb the path of the Enlightening Being. Their minds become fearless, and they ultimately reach the Other Shore of great fearlessness, and by the power of great vows they manifest in all worlds. *The ninth fearlessness* states that by the power of the great determination for omniscience, Great Enlightening Beings never forget the determination for omniscience. They carry on the practices of enlightening beings, riding the Great Vehicle, demonstrate the tranquil comportment of all saints and Individual Illuminates. They reflect that they do not see in themselves any sign of needing to gain emancipation by means of the lesser vehicles of individual salvation. Therefore their mind become fearless and they ultimately reach the Other Shore of great fearlessness, while able to demonstrate to all the paths of all vehicles of liberation, they ultimately fulfill the impartial Great Vehicle. *The tenth fearlessness* states that Great Enlightening Beings always perfect all good and pure qualities, be imbued with virtues, fully develop spiritual powers, ultimately abide in the enlightenment of all Buddhas, fulfill all practices of Enlightening Beings, receive from the Buddhas the prediction of coronation with omniscience, and always teach sentient beings to carry on the path of Enlightening Beings. They reflect that they do not see any sign of even a single sentient being who can be developed to maturity to whom they cannot show the masteries of Buddhas in order to develop them. Therefore their minds become fearless and they ultimately reach the Other Shore of great fearlessness. They do not stop the practices of enlightening beings, do not give up the vows of Enlightening Beings, and show the sphere of Buddhahood to any sentient beings who can learn, in order to teach and liberate them.

Chapter Seventeen

Conducts of Rejoice Over Others' Virtual 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.

Chapter Eighteen

Cultivation In Accordance With Four Disciplinary Processes of Zen

According to the first patriarch Bodhidharma, there are four disciplinary processes for Zen practitioners. ***First, the Requite Hatred.*** 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. ***Second, the Obedient to Karma.*** Being obedient to karma, there is not ‘self’ (atman) in whatever beings that are produced by the interplay of karmic conditions; pain and pleasure we suffer are also the results of our previous action. If I am rewarded with fortune, honor, etc., this is the outcome of my past deeds which, by reason of causation, affect my present life. When the force of karma is exhausted, the result I am enjoying now will disappear; what is then the use of being joyful over it? Gain or loss, let us accept karma as it brings us the one or the other; the spirit itself knows neither increase nor decrease. The wind of gladness does not move it, as it is silently in harmony with the Path. Therefore, this is called ‘being obedient to karma.’ ***Third, Not to Seek After Anything.*** By ‘not seeking after anything’ is meant this: “Men of the world, in eternal confusion, are attached everywhere to one thing or another, which is called seeking. The wise, however, understand the truth and are not like the vulgar. Their minds abide serenely in the uncreated while the body turns about in accordance with the laws of causation. All things are empty and there is nothing

desirable and to be sought after. Wherever there is nothing merit of brightness there follows the demerit of darkness. The triple world there one stays too long is like a house on fire; all that has a body suffers, and who would ever know what is rest? Because the wise are thoroughly acquainted with this truth, they get neer attached to anything that becomes, their thoughts are quieted, they never seek. Says the sutra: 'Wherever there is seeking, there you have sufferings; when seeking ceases you are blessed. Thus we know that not to seek is verily the way to the truth. Therefore, one should not seek after anything.' ***Fourth, Being in Accord with the Dharma.*** By 'being in accord with the Dharma; is meant that the reason in its essence is pure which we call the Dharma, and that this reason is the principle of emptiness in all that is manifested, as it is above defilements and attachments, and as there is no 'self' or 'other' in it. Says the sutra: 'In the Dharma there are no sentient beings, because it is free from the stains of being; in the Dharma there is no Self because it is free from the stain of selfhood. When the wise understand this truth and believe in it, their conduct will be in accordance with the Dharma. As the Dharma in essence has no desire to possess, the wise are ever ready to practise charity with their body, life, property, and they never begrudge, they never know what in ill grace means. As they have a perfect understanding of the threefold nature of emptiness they are above partiality and attachment. Only because of their will to cleanse all beings of their stains, they come among them as of them, but they are not attached to the form. This is known as the inner aspect of their life. They, however, know also how to benefit others, and again how to clarify the path of enlightenment. As with the virtue of charity, so with the other five virtues in the Prajnaparamita. That the wise practise the six virtues of perfection is to get rid of confused thoughts, and yet they are not conscious of their doings. This is called 'being in accord with the Dharma. The practice being in accord with the Dharma. This practice is applied in both the Pure Land and the Zen sects. True Thusness Dharma for the Pure Land When Pure Land Practitioners' mind should always focus on the words "Amitabha Buddha." True Thusness Dharma for the Zen when Zen cultivators' mind should always be in accord with the Thusness, whether they are walking, standing, reclining, or sitting, without leaving the "Mindfulness."

Chapter Nineteen

Attainment of Virtues In Buddhist Cultivation

Buddhists must definitely build up their foundation. It is strict observance of the precepts in order to possess of virtue. According to Buddhism, what is the attainment of no virtues? Attainment of No Virtues means having no firm foundation of cultivation. Some left-home people not only break the Buddhist precepts, but they also use the money donated by lay people not for Buddhist affairs, but for their own family or business. They not only want no cultivation, but they also go against the Buddha's Basic Teachings. What a misfortune for Buddhism! Some people say, "Well, cultivate or not cultivate, eventually everybody will die." Thus, "can people who cultivate avoid death?" Well, everyone will eventually die in accordance with the law of impermanence. However, for true Buddhist cultivators, when the time comes, you die in understanding what is going on, you are totally clear and lucid. Certainly, true Buddhist cultivators will not be afflicted with deep distress and anxiety, but when the time comes they surely die in a peaceful manner. And certainly, when the time comes they know how they came, and they understand how they will go. They are very lucid and unconfused. In the contrary, if you are not a true Buddhist cultivator, you do not cultivate or you just pretend to cultivate, when the time comes you will die in confusion and ignorance, worrying about this and thinking about that. Their mind will not be clear and pure, and they will die with anguish and regret. These people are confused for their whole lives, so that they will extremely muddle when they go. They do not know why they have come, or why they have to go. They are completely confused about where they have come from, and where they will go.

According to the Sekha Sutta in the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha confirmed rules for a noble disciple to possess of virtue. First, guard the doors of his sense-faculties. According to the Samannaphala Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha taught about "a guardian of the sense-door." How does a monk become a guardian of the sense-door? Here a monk, on seeing a visible object

with the eye, does not grasp at its major signs or secondary characteristics. Because greed and sorrow, evil unskilled states, would overwhelm him if he dwelt leaving this eye-faculty unguarded, so he practises guarding it, he protects the eye-faculty, develops restraint of the eye-faculty. On hearing a sound with the ear; on smelling an odour with the nose; on tasting a flavour with the tongue; on feeling an object with the body; on thinking a thought with the mind, he does not grasp at its major signs or secondary characteristics, he develops restraint of the mind-faculty. He experiences within himself the blameless bliss that comes from maintaining this Ariyan guarding of the faculties. Second, be moderate in eating. According to the Sekha Sutta in the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha confirmed his noble disciples on moderating in eating. He must reflect wisely. When he takes food, not taking for amusement, not taking for intoxication, not taking for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness, but only for the endurance and continuance of this body, for enduring discomfort, and for assisting the holy life. He should consider: “Thus I shall terminate old feelings without arousing new feelings and I shall be healthy and blameless and shall live in comfort.” Third, be devoted to wakefulness. According to the Sekha Sutta in the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha confirmed his noble disciples on devotion to wakefulness. During the day, while walking back and forth and sitting, a noble disciple purifies his mind of obstructive states. In the first watch of the night, while back and forth and sitting, he purifies his mind of obstructive states. In the middle watch of the night he lies down on the right side in the lion’s pose with one foot overlapping the other, mindful and fully aware, after noting in his mind the time for rising. After rising, in the third watch of the night, while walking back and forth and sitting, he purifies his mind of obstructive states. Fourth, possess seven good qualities. Seven grounds for commendations a Monk must always think of. According to the Sangiti Sutta, a Monk should always have seven grounds for commendations. Here a monk who is keenly anxious to undertake the training, and wants to persist in this. Here a monk who is keenly anxious to make a close study of the Dhamma, and wants to persist in this. Here a monk who is keenly anxious to get rid of desires, and wants to persist in this. Here a monk who tries to find solitude, and wants to persist in this. Here a monk who arouses energy, and wants to persist in this. Here a monk who develops mindfulness and discrimination, and wants to persist in this. Here a monk who develops penetrative insight, and wants to persist in this. Fifth, pleasant abiding in the meditation. Sixth, always dwell restrained with the Buddhist precepts. Seventh, be perfect in conduct and resort). Eighth, see fear in the slightest faults. Ninth, train by undertaking the training precepts.

Chapter Twenty

The Practices of Self-Mortification & The Middle Path In Buddhist Cultivation

I. An Overview of the Practices of Self-Mortification in Buddhism:

Self-mortification (duskara-carya) means undergoing difficulties, hardships, or sufferings, i.e. burning, tormenting; hence religious austerity, mortification. At the time of the Buddha and until now, there has been a belief in India among many ascetics that purification and final deliverance can be achieved by rigorous self-mortification, and prince Siddhartha decided to test the truth of it. And, at Uruvela he began a determined struggle to subdue his body in the hope that his mind, set free from shackles of the body, might be able to soar to the heights of liberation. He tried his best in the practice of self-mortification. He lived on leaves and roots, on a steadily reduced pittance of food; he wore rags from dust heaps; he slept among corpses of beds of thorns. The utter paucity of nourishment left him a physical wreck. Says the Master: "Rigorous have I been in my ascetic discipline. Rigorous have I been beyond all others. Like wasted, withered reeds became all my limbs..." In such words as these, in later years, having attained to full enlightenment, did the Buddha give His disciples an awe-inspiring description of his early penances. After six long years of practicing of self-mortification, he came to the very door of death, but he found himself no nearer to his goal. The practice of self-mortification became abundantly clear to him by his own experience. He realized that the Path in search of Truth lay in the direction of a search inward into his own mind. Undiscouraged, his still active mind searched for new paths. However, he felt that with a body too weak as his, he could not follow that path with any chance of success. Thus, he abandoned self-mortification (self-tortured) and turned back to normal practices. At that time, the five brothers of Ajnata Kaundinya left him in their disappointment, for they thought that he had given up the effort and had resumed a life of abundance. However, with his firm determination and complete faith in his own purity and strength, without the help from any teacher, and without any

companions, he resolved to make his final effort in complete solitude. On the morning before the day of his Enlightenment while he was seated in meditation under a Bodhi tree, Sujata, the daughter of a rich householder, not knowing whether he was divine or human, offered milk rice to him saying: “Lord, may your aspiration be crowned with success!” This was his last meal prior to his Enlightenment. He sat cross-legged under the Bodhi-tree, which later became known as the “Tree of Enlightenment” or the “Tree of Wisdom” on the bank of the river Neranjara, at Gaya, making the final effort with the inflexible resolution: “Though only my skin and bones remain, and my blood and flesh dry up and wither away, yet I will never rise from this seat until I have attained full enlightenment. So indefatigable in effort, so unflagging in his devotion was he, and so resolute to realize truth and attain full enlightenment. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Neither walking bare footed, nor matted locks, nor dirt, nor fasting, nor lying on the bare ground, nor dust, nor squatting on the heels, can purify a mortal who has not overcome his doubts (Dharmapada 141).”

II. Six Years of Ascetic Practicing of the Buddha: The Starting Point of the Middle Path:

After Prince Siddhartha left the royal palace, left the world of desire in which human beings are living, he wandered in the forest of ascetics. There were many practicing ascetics. The Prince consulted one of the elders: “How can I attain true enlightenment and emancipation?” The elder replied: “We practice asceticism diligently, hoping that upon our death we could be reborn in the heavens to enjoy happiness. We don’t know anything about enlightenment and emancipation.” The elder added: “The way we take to the asceticism is that when we are hungry, we eat grassroots, bark, flowers, and fruits. Sometimes we pour cold water on our heads all day long. Sometimes we sleep by a fire, allowing the body to be baked and tanned. Sometimes we hang ourselves upside down on tree branches. We practice in different ways, the purpose of which is to worship the sun, moon, stars, the running water and the blazing fire.” After listening to the explanations of this elder, the wise Prince knew that they had practically no knowledge of the problems of life and death and they could not even redeem themselves, not to mention saving other sentient beings. The ascetics were merely inflicting sufferings upon themselves. Then Prince Siddhartha came to study with Masters Arada and Udraka. In a short time he mastered everything they had to teach him. But still he was not satisfied. “My teachers are holy people, but what they taught me does not bring an end to all suffering. I must continue to search for the Truth

on my own.” So the Prince decided to relinquish this kind of ascetic life, left the forest and headed towards other places where the hermits were. He came to Gaya Hill to practice asceticism and meditation. The life which the Prince led was very simple. He just ate a little wheat and barley everyday while devoting all his energy to his practice. So his body became thinner by the day. His body lost its radiance and became covered with dust and dirt. Eventually he looked like a living skeleton. But he still refused to give up his practices. After six years of ascetic practice, the Prince could not reach his goal. He realized that it was a mistake to punish his body like that. Finally he realized that the major issue of enlightenment and emancipation could never be achieved through ascetic practicing alone. This is the starting point of the middle path, for in order to find the Truth of enlightenment and emancipation, he must follow a middle path between too much pleasure and too much pain. Later, the Buddha taught: “When discrimination is done away with, the middle way is reached, for the Truth does not lie in the extreme alternatives but in the middle position.” The doctrine of the Middle Path means in the first instance the middle path between the two extremes of optimism and pessimism. Such a middle position is a third extreme, tending neither one way nor the other is what the Buddha wanted to say. The Buddha certainly began with this middle as only one step higher than the ordinary extremes. A gradual ascent of the dialectical ladder, however, will bring us higher and higher until a stage is attained wherein the antithetic onesidedness of ens and non-ens is denied and transcended by an idealistic synthesis. In this case the Middle Path has a similar purport as the Highest Truth.

III. Cultivation On the Middle Path Means Rejection of Pleasures, But Not Rejection of Means of Living & Cultivation:

We are residing in the realm of passions or realm of desire where there exists all kinds of desires. The realm of desire, of sensuous gratification; this world and the six devalokas; any world in which the elements of desire have not been suppressed. The world of desire. The region of the wishes. This is the lowest of the three realms of existence, the other two being rupa-dhatu and arupa-dhatu. It is also the realm in which human live, and it receives its name because desire is the dominant motivation for its inhabitants. Most of us want to do good deeds; however, we are always contradictory ourselves between pleasure and cultivation. A lot of people misunderstand that religion means a denial or rejection of happiness in worldly life. In saying so, instead of being a method for transcending our limitations, religion itself is viewed as one of the heaviest forms of suppression. It's just another form of superstition to be rid of if we really want to be free. The worst thing is that nowadays, many societies

have been using religion as a means of political oppression and control. They believe that the happiness we have here, in this world, is only a temporary, so they try to aim at a so-called “Almighty Creator” to provide them with a so-called eternal happiness. They deny themselves the everyday pleasures of life. They cannot enjoy a meal with all kinds of food, even with vegetarian food. Instead of accepting and enjoying such an experience for what it is, they tie themselves up in a knot of guilt “while so many people in the world are starving and miserable, how dare I indulge myself in this way of life!” This kind of attitude is just mistaken as the attitude of those who try to cling to worldly pleasures. In fact, this just another form of grasping. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that we deny to indulge in worldly pleasures so that we can eliminate “clinging” to make it easy for our cultivation. We will never reject means of life so we can continue to live to cultivate. A Buddhist still eat everyday, but never eats lives. A Buddhist still sleeps but is not eager to sleep round the clock as a pig. A Buddhist still converse in daily life, but not talk in one way and act in another way. In short, sincere Buddhists never reject any means of life, but refuse to indulge in or to cling to the worldly pleasures because they are only causes of sufferings and afflictions.

IV. Moderation In Cultivation In the Middle Path:

Moderation Is One of the Top Priorities in Cultivation in the Middle Path: According to Buddhist teachings, moderation here means to manage, especially relating to provision for material needs. 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.” According to Buddhism, one of the most priorities in practitioners' cultivation is moderation in eating. According to the Sekha Sutta in the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha confirmed his noble disciples on moderating in eating as follows: First, reflecting wisely. Second, when taking food, not taking for amusement, not taking for intoxication, and not taking for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness either, but only for the endurance and continuance of this body, for enduring discomfort, and for assisting the holy life. Third, 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 Zen Master Achaan 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. First, practitioners should practice 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. Second, practitioners should practice 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. Third, practitioners should practice 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 as a parent watches over a child, protects it from its own foolishness, teaches 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.

Always Maintain Moderation in Cultivation: Moderation or self-control means self-mastery, especially control of the senses. Moderation or self-control also means keeping precepts, one of the ten weapons of enlightening beings, for it helps getting rid of all crime. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can annihilate the afflictions, bondage, and compulsion accumulated by all sentient beings in the long night of ignorance. 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 as a parent watches over a child, protects it from its own foolishness, teaches 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. Devout Buddhists, especially lay people, should always remember to tame and control ourselves as a master does a wild elephant or horse, or as the Buddha brings the passions of men under control. To manage, especially relating to provision for material needs. 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."

Moderate and Self-Restraint Create More Strengths for A Buddhist

Cultivator: 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 moderation and self-restraint are thus necessary; in fact, they are the highest kinds of virtue. As in eating and drinking, it is difficult to eat and to drink 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.

In Buddhism, moderation and self-restraint do not mean overdoing in restraining; it means practitioners should be mindful of it throughout the day, but do not overdo it. We still walk, eat, and act naturally, and then develop natural mindfulness of what is going on within ourselves. Not to force our cultivation or to force ourselves into awkward patterns for this is also another form of craving. Patience and endurance are necessary. If we act naturally and are mindful, wisdom will come naturally. The worldly way is outgoing exuberant; the way of the devoted Buddhist's life is restrained and controlled. Constantly work against the grain, against the old habits; eat, speak, and sleep little. If we are lazy, raise energy. If we feel we can not endure, raise patience. If we like the body and feel attached to it, learn to see it as unclean. Virtue or following precepts, and concentration or meditation are aids to the practice. They make the mind calm and restrained. But outward restraint is only a convention, a tool to help gain inner coolness. We may keep our eyes cast down, but still our mind may be distracted by whatever enters our field of vision. Perhaps we feel that this life is too difficult, that we just can not do it. But the more clearly we understand the truth of things, the more incentive we will have. Keep our mindfulness sharp. In daily activity, the important point is intention; know what we are doing and know how we feel about it. Learn to know the mind that clings to ideas of purity and bad karma, burdens itself with doubt and excessive fear of wrongdoing. This, too, is attachment. We must know moderation in our daily needs. Robes need not be of fine material, they are merely to protect the body. Food is merely to sustain us. The Path constantly opposes defilements and habitual desires.

Buddhist practitioners should always remember that sense restraint means restraining oneself. So, sense restraint means to follow our own senses and feelings, this is a proper practice. We should be mindful of it throughout the day. But do not overdo it. Walk, eat, and act naturally, and then develop natural mindfulness of what is going on within ourselves. To force our meditation or force ourselves into awkward patterns is another form of craving. Patience and endurance are necessary. If we act naturally and are mindful, wisdom will come naturally. The Buddha taught about "Restraining oneself" in the Dharmapada Sutra. "He who strictly adorned, lived in peace,

subdued all passions, controlled all senses, ceased to injure other beings, is indeed a holy Brahmin, an ascetic, a bhikshu (Dharmapada 142). Rarely found in this world anyone who restrained by modesty, avoids reproach, as a well-trained horse avoids the whip (Dharmapada 143). Like a well-trained horse, touch by the whip, even so be strenuous and zealous. By faith, by virtue, by effort, by concentration, by investigation of the Truth, by being endowed with knowledge and conduct, and being mindful, get rid of this great suffering (Dharmapada 144). Irrigators guide the water to their fields; fletchers bend the arrow; carpenters bend the wood, the virtuous people control themselves (Dharmapada 145). What should have been done is left undone; what should not have been done is done. This is the way the arrogant and wicked people increase their grief (Dharmapada 292). Those who always earnestly practice controlling of the body, follow not what should not be done, and constantly do what should be done. This is the way the mindful and wise people end all their sufferings and impurities (Dharmapada 293). As an elephant in the battlefield endures the arrows shot from a bow, I shall withstand abuse in the same manner. Truly, most common people are undisciplined (who are jealous of the disciplined) (Dharmapada 320). To lead a tamed elephant in battle is good. To tame an elephant for the king to ride it better. He who tames himself to endure harsh words patiently is the best among men (Dharmapada 321). Tamed mules are excellent; Sindhu horses of good breeding are excellent too. But far better is he who has trained himself (Dharmapada 322). Never by those vehicles, nor by horses would one go to Nirvana. Only self-tamers who can reach Nirvana (Dharmapada 323). It is good to have control of the eye; it is good to have control of the ear; it is good to have control of the nose; it is good to have control of the tongue (Dharmapada 360). It is good to have control of the body; it is good to have control of speech; it is good to have control of everything. A monk who is able to control everything, is free from all suffering (Dharmapada 362). He who controls his hands and legs; he who controls his speech; and in the highest, he who delights in meditation; he who is alone, serene and contented with himself. He is truly called a Bhikshu (Dharmapada 362). Censure or control yourself. Examine yourself. Be self-guarded and mindful. You will live happily (Dharmapada 379). You are your own protector. You are your own refuge. Try to control yourself as a merchant controls a noble steed (Dharmapada 380). One who conquers himself is greater than one who is able to conquer a thousand men in the battlefield (Dharmapada 103). Self-conquest is, indeed, better than the conquest of all other people. To conquer oneself, one must be always self-controlled and disciplined one's action (Dharmapada 104). Neither the god, nor demigod, nor Mara, nor Brahma can win back the victory of a man who is self-subdued and ever lives in restraint (Dharmapada 105)."

Chapter Twenty-One

Twelve Dhutanga Practices

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!

"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, 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. 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. For laypeople, cultivation means to mend your ways, from evil to wholesome (ceasing transgressions and performing good deeds). For monastic monks and nuns, they can cultivate in a temple or becoming a wandering monk or nun with Dhutanga Practices or practices of self-mortification. In the limit of this chapter, we only mention on the Dhutanga Practices.

Dhuto (p) or Dhuta (skt) means the practice of shake off hard practice or discipline of cleanse sins. To get rid of the trials of life; discipline to remove them and attain nirvana. To practise or to cultivate to release from ties to clothing, food, and dwelling. Mendicant conducts include twelve conducts and precepts which those who practice the Dharma of “Food Begging” must accord to. Dhutanga or Mendicant conducts (practices) help practitioners purify the body and mind and free from the desire of food, clothing and shelter. There are twelve kinds of dhuta relating to release from ties to clothing, food, and dwelling. First, garments of cast-off rags. Second, to wear only three garments. Third, eat only food begged. Fourth, eat only breakfast and the main noon meal. Fifth, no food between them (breakfast and the noon meal). Sixth, eat with limited amount, only eat what you have in the begging bowl without asking for more. Seventh, dwelling as a hermit. Eighth, dwelling among tombs. Ninth, dwelling under a tree. Tenth, dwelling under the open sky. Eleventh, dwelling anywhere. Twelfth, sitting and not lying down.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Behaviors of the Saints In Buddhist Point of View

I. Summaries of Noble People & Holy Assemblies In Buddhist Point of View:

Noble People In Buddhist Point of View: In Buddhism, saints or worthy ones mean the Bodhisattva saints who have overcome illusion, from the first stage upwards. To all the saints, or the wise, what is to be ordinarily regarded as an error, that is, this world of particulars, appears neither perverted nor unperverted. The term “noble” or “wise” is equivalent with the Sanskrit term of “Arya”, which means a person who has attained the path of seeing (darsana-marga), the third of the five Buddhist paths. In Mahayana, this means that such a person has had directed experience of emptiness (sunyata). In Buddhism, a “sage” is the one who is wise and good, and is correct in all his characters. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are the four holy ways. First, being content with wearing rags from dust-heaps. Here a monk is content with any old robe, praises such contentment, and does not try to obtain robes improperly or unsuitably. He does not worry if he does not get a robe, and if he does, he is not full of greedy, blind desire, but makes use of it, aware of such dangers and wisely aware of its true purpose. Nor is he conceited about being thus content with any old robe, and he does not disparage others. And one who is thus skilful, not lax, clearly aware and mindful, is known as a monk who is true to the ancient, original Ariyan lineage. Second, being content with any alms-food he may get (similar as in the first paragraph). Third, being content with any old lodging-place or sitting under trees (similar as in the first paragraph). Fourth, entire withdrawal from the world or fond of abandoning (similar as in the first paragraph). According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are four Ariyan modes of speech: retraining from lying, refraining from slandering, refraining from abusing or using rude words, and refraining from idle gossip. There are also four more Ariyan modes of speech: stating that one has not seen, known what one has not seen, stating that one has not heard, known what one has not heard, stating that one has not sensed, known what one has not sensed,

and stating that one has not known, known what one has not known. There are also four more Ariyan modes of speech: stating that one has seen, known what one has seen, stating that one has heard, known what one has heard, stating that one has sensed, known what one has sensed, and stating that one has known, known what one has known.

The special community established by the Buddha was called “The Assembly of the Noble” (Arya-sangha), intended to be the cradle of noble persons. Since the Brahmanical tradition had been firmly established, the race distinction was strictly felt. On that account the Buddha often asserted that in his own community there would be no distinction between Brahmans (priests) and warriors or between masters and slaves. Anyone who joined the Brotherhood would have an equal opportunity for leading and training. The Buddha often argued that the word Arya meant ‘noble’ and we ought not call a race noble or ignoble for there will be some ignoble persons among the so-called Aray and at the same time there will be some noble persons among the so-called Anarya. When we say noble or ignoble we should be speaking of an individual and not of a race as a whole. It is a question of knowledge or wisdom but not of birth or caste. Thus the object of the Buddha was to create a noble personage (arya-pudgala) in the sense of a noble life. The noble community (Arya-sangha) was founded for that very purpose. The noble ideal (Arya-dharma) and the noble discipline (Arya-vinaya) were set forth for the aspiring candidates. The path to be pursued by the noble aspirant is the Noble Eightfold Path (Arya-astangika-marga) and the truth to be believed by the noble is the Noble Fourfold Truth (Catvariarya-satyani). The perfections attained by the noble were the four noble fruitions (Arya-phala) and the wealth to be possessed by the noble was the noble sevenfold wealth (sapta-arya-dhana), all being spiritual qualifications. The careful application of the word Arya to each of the important points of his institution must not be overlooked by a student of Buddhism. The Buddha thus seemed to have endeavored to revive the original meaning of Arya in personality and the daily life of his religious community.

The Holy Assemblies: The holy multitude means the assembly of all the saints, or the sacred. The Bodhisattva saints who have overcome illusion, from the first stage upwards. To all the saints, or the wise, what is to be ordinarily regarded as an error, that is, this world of particulars, appears neither perverted nor unperverted. The special community established by the Buddha was called “The Assembly of the Noble” (Arya-sangha), intended to be the cradle of noble persons. Since the Brahmanical tradition had been firmly established, the race distinction was strictly felt. On that account the Buddha

often asserted that in his own community there would be no distinction between Brahmans (priests) and warriors or between masters and slaves. Anyone who joined the Brotherhood would have an equal opportunity for leading and training. The Buddha often argued that the word Arya meant 'noble' and we ought not call a race noble or ignoble for there will be some ignoble persons among the so-called Arya and at the same time there will be some noble persons among the so-called Anarya. When we say noble or ignoble we should be speaking of an individual and not of a race as a whole. It is a question of knowledge or wisdom but not of birth or caste. Thus the object of the Buddha was to create a noble personage (arya-pudgala) in the sense of a noble life. The noble community (Arya-sangha) was founded for that very purpose. The noble ideal (Arya-dharma) and the noble discipline (Arya-vinaya) were set forth for the aspiring candidates. The path to be pursued by the noble aspirant is the Noble Eightfold Path (Arya-astangika-marga) and the truth to be believed by the noble is the Noble Fourfold Truth (Catvariarya-satyani). The perfections attained by the noble were the four noble fruitions (Arya-phala) and the wealth to be possessed by the noble was the noble sevenfold wealth (sapta-arya-dhana), all being spiritual qualifications. The careful application of the word Arya to each of the important points of his institution must not be overlooked by a student of Buddhism. The Buddha thus seemed to have endeavored to revive the original meaning of Arya in personality and the daily life of his religious community. The holy monk who has achieved higher merit, in contrasted with the ordinary monk (phàm tăng). In Mahayana Buddhism, Manjusri is considered as a holy monk, his image is placed in the center of the monks' assembly room. In Hinayana Buddhism, Kasyapa and Subhuti are considered holy monks, their images are usually placed in the center of the monks' assembly room. There are four sagely Dharma Realms (four kinds of holy men). First, Hearers or Sound Hearers, a direct disciple of the Buddha. Second, Pratyeka buddhas, individual illuminates, or independently awakened, those enlightened to conditions; a Buddha for himself, not teaching others. Third, Bodhisattvas, enlightened Beings. A person who has the state of bodhi, or a would-be-Buddha. Fourth, Buddha, one who has attained the supreme right and balanced state of bodhi. One who turns the wonderful Dharma-wheel. A Buddha is not inside the circle of ten realms, but as he advents among men to preach his doctrine he is now partially included in the "Four Saints."

II. Summaries of Behaviors of the Saints In Buddhist Point of View:

Summaries of Behaviors of the Saints: The term "noble" or "wise" is equivalent with the Sanskrit term of "Arya", which means a person who has attained the path of seeing (darsana-marga), the third of the five Buddhist

paths. In Mahayana, this means that such a person has had directed experience of emptiness (sunyata). In Buddhism, a “sage” is the one who is wise and good, and is correct in all his characters. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are the four holy ways. First, being content with wearing rags from dust-heaps. Here a monk is content with any old robe, praises such contentment, and does not try to obtain robes improperly or unsuitably. He does not worry if he does not get a robe, and if he does, he is not full of greedy, blind desire, but makes use of it, aware of such dangers and wisely aware of its true purpose. Nor is he conceited about being thus content with any old robe, and he does not disparage others. And one who is thus skilful, not lax, clearly aware and mindful, is known as a monk who is true to the ancient, original Ariyan lineage. Second, being content with any alms-food he may get (similar as in the first paragraph). Third, being content with any old lodging-place or sitting under trees (similar as in the first paragraph). Fourth, entire withdrawal from the world or fond of abandoning (similar as in the first paragraph). According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are four Ariyan modes of speech: retraining from lying, refraining from slandering, refraining from abusing or using rude words, and refraining from idle gossip. There are also four more Ariyan modes of speech: stating that one has not seen, known what one has not seen, stating that one has not heard, known what one has not heard, stating that one has not sensed, known what one has not sensed, and stating that one has not known, known what one has not known. There are also four more Ariyan modes of speech: stating that one has seen, known what one has seen, stating that one has heard, known what one has heard, stating that one has sensed, known what one has sensed, and stating that one has known, known what one has known.

The Four Holy Ways: According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are the four holy ways: 1) Wearing rags from dust-heaps: Here a monk is content with any old robe, praises such contentment, and does not try to obtain robes improperly or unsuitably. He does not worry if he does not get a robe, and if he does, he is not full of greedy, blind desire, but makes use of it, aware of such dangers and wisely aware of its true purpose. Nor is he conceited about being thus content with any old robe, and he does not disparage others. And one who is thus skilful, not lax, clearly aware and mindful, is known as a monk who is true to the ancient, original Ariyan lineage. 2) A monk is content with any alms-food he may get (similar as in 1). 3) A monk is content with any old lodging-place or sitting under trees (similar as in 1). 4) Entire withdrawal from the world or fond of abandoning (similar as in 1).

Chapter Twenty-Three

Cultivation of Bodhisattva's Practices In the Spirit of the Surangama Sutra

I. A Summary of the Surangama Sutra:

The Sutra of Heroic One, the sutra emphasizes the power of samadhi, through which enlightenment can be attained and explained the various methods of emptiness meditation through the practice of which everyone can realize enlightenment. It describes the tranquilizing of the mind by exclusion of concepts arising directly or indirectly from sensory experiences, the nature of truth realized in samadhi or deepest contemplation, and the transcendental virtues and powers resulting. Besides, the sutra has a great influence on the development of Mahayana Buddhism in China because it emphasizes the power of samadhi, through which enlightenment can be attained, and explains the various methods of emptiness meditation through the practice of which everyone, whether monks or laypeople, can realize the enlightenment of a Bodhisattva. The sutra was translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva.

II. Cultivation of Bodhisattva's Practices In the Spirit of the Surangama Sutra:

Four Kinds of Wonderfully Perfect Additional Practices:

According to the Surangama Sutra, book Eight, the Buddha reminded Ananda as follows: “Ananda! When these good men have completely purified these forty-one minds, they further accomplish four kinds of wonderfully perfect additional practices.” *First, Level of Heat:* When the enlightenment of a Buddha is just about to become a function of his own mind, it is on the verge of emerging but has not yet emerged, and so it can be compared to the point just before wood ignites when it is drilled to produce fire. Therefore, it is called ‘the level of heat.’ *Second, Level of the Summit:* He continues on with his mind, treading where the Buddhas tread, as if relying and yet not. It is as if he were climbing a lofty mountain, to the point where his body is in space but there remains a slight obstruction beneath him. Therefore it is called

‘the level of the summit.’ *Third, Level of Patience:* When the mind and the Buddha are two and yet the same, he has well obtained the middle way. He is like someone who endures something when it seems impossible to either hold it in or let it out. Therefore it is called ‘the level of patience.’ *Fourth, Level of Being First in the World:* When numbers are destroyed, there are no such designations as the middle way or as confusion and enlightenment; this is called the ‘level of being first in the world.’

Cultivation of Ten Practices of Bodhisattvas In the Surangama

Sutra: In the Surangama Sutra, the Buddha reminded Ananda about the ten necessary activities, or practices of a Bodhisattva. The first practice is the conduct of happiness. The practice of joyful service, or giving joy. The Buddha told Ananda: “Ananda! After these good men have become sons of the Buddha, they are replete with the limitlessly many wonderful virtues of the Thus Come Ones, and they comply and accord with beings throughout the ten directions. This is called the conduct of happiness.” The second practice is the conduct of benefitting. The practice of beneficial service, or beneficial practice. The Buddha told Ananda: “Being well able to accommodate all living beings is called the conduct of benefitting.” The third practice is the conduct of non-opposition. The practice of never resenting, or non-opposition. The Buddha told Ananda: “Enlightening oneself and enlightening others without putting forth any resistance is called the conduct of non-opposition.” The fourth practice is the conduct of endlessness. The practice of indomitability, or without limit in helping others. The Buddha told Ananda: “To undergo birth in various forms continuously to the bounds of the future, equally throughout the three periods of time and pervading the ten directions is called the conduct of endlessness.” The fifth practice is the conduct of freedom from deluded confusion. The practice of nonconfusion. The Buddha told Ananda: “When everything is equally in accord, one never makes mistakes among the various dharma doors. This is called the conduct of freedom from deluded confusion.” The sixth practice is the conduct of wholesome manifestation. The practice of good manifestation, or appearing in any form at will to save sentient beings. The Buddha told Ananda: “Then within what is identical, myriad differences appear; the characteristics of every difference are seen, one and all, in identity. This is called the conduct of wholesome manifestation.” The seventh

practice is the conduct of non-attachment. The practice of nonattachment, or unimpeded practice. The Buddha told Ananda: “This continues until it includes all the dust motes that fill up empty space throughout the ten directions. In each and every mote of dust there appear the worlds of the ten directions. And yet the appearance of worlds do not interfere with one another. This is called the conduct of non-attachment.” The eighth practice is the conduct of veneration. The practice of exalting the paramitas amongst all beings, or the practice of that which is difficult to attain. The Buddha told Ananda: “Everything that appears before one is the foremost paramita. This is called the conduct of veneration.” The ninth practice is the conduct of wholesome Dharma. The practice of good teaching, or perfecting the Buddha-law by complete virtue. The Buddha told Ananda: “With such perfect fusion, one can model oneself after all the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is called the conduct of wholesome dharma.” The tenth practice is the conduct of true actuality. The practice of truth, or manifest in all things the pure, final and true reality. The Buddha told Ananda: “To then be pure and without outflows in each and every way is the primary truth, which is unconditioned, the essence of the nature. This is called the conduct of true actuality.”

Chapter Twenty-Four

Some Other Bodhisattvas' Practices in the Flower Adornment Sutra

Pure Conducts of the Flower Adornment Sutra: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 18, there are ten things which cause the practices of Enlightening Beings to be pure. Once Enlightening Beings have attained purity in practice, they also ten even greater things. *First*, giving up all possessions to satisfy the wishes of sentient beings. *Second*, adhering to pure morality, not transgressing. *Third*, being inexhaustibly gentle and tolerant. *Fourth*, cultivating practices diligently without regressing. *Fifth*, being free from confusion and mental disturbance, through the power of correct mindfulness. *Sixth*, analyzing and comprehending the innumerable teachings. *Seventh*, cultivating all practices without attachment. *Eighth*, being mentally imperturbable, like a great mountain. *Ninth*, extensively liberating living beings, like a bridge. *Tenth*, knowing that all living beings are in essence the same as the Buddhas.

Rejoice Conducts of the Flower Adornment Sutra: According to the Flower Adornment, Chapter 18, there are ten things which Enlightening Beings cause the Buddhas to rejoice. *First*, persevering without regression. *Second*, not begrudging their physical life. *Third*, not seeking profit or support. *Fourth*, knowing all things are like spaces. *Fifth*, be skillful at contemplation, entering into all realms of reality. *Sixth*, knowing the definitive marks of all things. *Seventh*, always invoking great vows. *Eighth*, developing the light of pure tolerant knowledge. *Ninth*, examining one's own virtues without exaggeration or underestimation. *Tenth*, cultivating pure practices in accord with the way of nonstriving. ***Other ten things which Enlightening Beings cause the Buddhas to rejoice:*** abiding securely in nonindulgence, abiding securely in acceptance of nonorigination, abiding securely in great kindness, abiding securely in great compassion, abiding securely in the fulfillment of the transcendent ways, abiding securely in the enlightening practices, abiding securely in great vows, abiding securely in skillful means, abiding securely in

dauntless power, and abiding securely in knowledge and wisdom, observing all things have no abode, like empty space.

Ten Kinds of Conducts of Penetrations of Actions Sentient Beings ***of the Flower Adornment Sutra***: Ten kinds of penetrations of actions of sentient beings (utilized by a great enlightening being) in the Flower Adornment Sutra: *First*, they penetrate all sentient beings' past actions. *Second*, they penetrate all sentient beings' future actions. *Third*, they penetrate all sentient beings' present actions. *Fourth*, they penetrate all sentient beings' good actions. *Fifth*, they penetrate all sentient beings' bad actions. *Sixth*, they penetrate all sentient beings' mental actions. *Seventh*, they penetrate all sentient beings' actions of senses. *Eighth*, they penetrate all sentient beings' actions of understanding. *Ninth*, they penetrate all sentient beings' actions of afflictions and habit energies. *Tenth*, they penetrate all sentient beings' timely and untimely actions of teaching and training.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Practices of Non-movement According to the Platform Sutra

In Buddhist cultivation, cultivation of Bodhisttvas' practices can help practitioners who cultivate in accordance with the Bodhisattva Path to be in line with the patient endurance of the uncreate (anutpattika-dharma-ksanti). They were able to turn the wheel of the Law that never turns back. Being able to interpret the (underlying nature of) phenomena, they knew very well the roots (propensities) of all living beings; they surpassed them all and realized fearlessness. They had cultivated their minds by means of merits and wisdom with which they embellished their physical features which were unsurpassable, thus giving up all earthly adornments. Their towering reputation exceeded the height of Mount Sumeru. According to the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Treasure, the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-Neng, taught: Good Knowing Advisors, one who cultivates non-movement does not notice whether other people are right or wrong, good or bad, or whether they have other faults. That is the non-movement of the self-nature. Good Knowing Advisors, although the body of the confused person may not move, as soon as he opens his mouth he speaks of what is right and wrong about others, of their good points and shortcomings and so, he turns his back on the way. Attachment to the mind and attachment to purity are obstructions to the Way." 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.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Summaries of Some Practices of the Pure Land

I. An Overview of the Pure Land:

In Buddhism, the Pure Land is a paradise where beings can be reborn into through single-minded vow, diligent practice and strong faith. The Pure Land is free of sufferings and hindrances. Therefore, beings born in the Pure Land can cultivate without obstructions towards attaining Buddhahood. The most well-known Pure Land is Amitabha's Western Paradise of Bliss where Amitabha Buddha is the guide and welcomer. Pure Land is one of the schools of Buddhism in China, Japan and Vietnam, which emphasizes devotion to Amitabha Buddha and which believes that through the chanting of his name and by purifying and finally ridding oneself of desire, one can be reborn in the Pure Land. The central doctrine of the Pure Land sects is that all who evoke the name of Amitabha with sincerity and faith in the saving grace of his vow will be reborn in his Pure Land of peace and bliss. The most important meditational practice in the Pure Land sects, therefore, is the constant voicing of the words "Namo Amitabha Buddha." Or "I surrender myself to Amitabha Buddha." The Pure Land sect, whose chief tenet is salvation by faith in Amitabha (Liên Hoa Tông in Japan. In China and Japan, it is also called the Lotus sect, established by Hui-Yuan of the Chin dynasty (317-419), it claims P'u-Hsien (Samantabhadra) as founder. Later, Tan-Lan officially founded the Pure Land (Sukhavativyuha) in the seventh century A.D. under the reign of the T'ang dynasty. In Japan, the Jodo-Shin or Shin sect is one of the twenty largest Buddhist sects. According to the Shin Sect, the recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name is simply an action of gratitude or an expression of thanksgiving, after one's realizing the Buddha's power conferred on one. The Shin School holds the exclusive worship of the Amitabha, not allowing even that of Sakyamuni. This sect has the strict prohibition of prayers in any form on account of personal interests, and the abolition of all disciplinary rules and the priestly or monastic life, thus forming a community of purely lay believers, i.e., householders.

The Pure Land is a dharma-door which is difficult to explain and to believe in, but an easy method to practice and to achieve enlightenment. The Pure Land is the profound Dharma-door which helps practitioners to escape the cycle of births and deaths and to enter deeply into the Buddha-nature, slowly but surely. The Pure Land sect believes that Amitabha himself comes to welcome departing souls of his followers on their calling upon him, but the Jodo Shin-Shu sect in Japan teaches that belief in him at any time ensures rebirth in the Pure Land, independently of calling on him at death. The Pure Land tradition is rooted in the Sukhavati-Vyuha Sutra, as well as several other Pure Land sutras describing how to be reborn in Amitabha's pure land, or the Extremely Blissful Pure Land, or Western Paradise. The Amitabha practice existed in India, although it wasn't as prominent there as in East Asia. In the second century A.D., the Sukhavati-vyuha-Sutra was translated into Chinese, and in the early sixth century it became very popular. This practice fit in very well with cultures of some of East Asian countries, i.e. China, Korea, Japan, Viet Nam, especially in China and Vietnam, where Taoist practice revolved around attaining longevity, and since Amitabha Buddha is the same as Amitayus, Buddha of Infinite Life, people became interested in the Pure Land practice. Similarly, the Taoist concern with longevity was transferred to seeking rebirth in Amitabha's Pure Land. The practice of reciting "dharani" (efficacious syllables) was already popular in northern China, making it easy for people to switch to chanting Amitabha's name. The conditions enabled people to easily adopt the Pure Land practice. In addition, times were hard in China, and people welcomed a technique which is simple and direct. Pure Land wasn't presented as an elitist practice, but one that everyone, the illiterate as well as the scholarly, could participate in. The long-term goal of this practice is to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. The immediate goal is to be reborn in Sukhavati, the Blissful Pure Land, in the next life. Because this Pure Land is not included in the six realms of cyclic existence, so once beings are reborn there, they will definitely attain enlightenment and will never be reborn in cyclic existence again.

II. Summaries of Some Practices of the Pure Land:

Four Practices of Buddha Recitation: Sentient beings usually differ in preferences and innate capacities. Therefore, although they

may engage in the common practice of Buddha Recitation, they are bound to differ somewhat in their practice. For this reason, ancient masters have summarized four types of practice: Zen-Pure Land; Sutra Recitation-Pure Land; Esotericism-Pure Land; Exclusive Pure Land Practice. In China, the Pure Land Patriarch Shan-Tao taught diligent Buddha Recitation alone, which is designed to help those of limited or moderate capacities and belong to the exclusive Pure Land practice. While Master Yung-Ming's method, totalling of 108 in all, aims specifically to encourage those of the highest capacity, and belongs to the Perfect Practice. The first category of cultivators comprises those who engage primarily in Buddha Recitation but practice Zen as well. They are said to practice Zen-Pure Land, also called dual practice of Zen and Pure Land. Here, rebirth in the Pure Land is the principal goal, while seeing the True Nature and becoming enlightened to the Way is a secondary matter which depends on the individual practitioner's good roots and conditions. The second category comprises those whose main practice is Buddha Recitation with Sutra Recitation as an ancillary practice. They are said to practice Sutra Recitation-Pure Land. As for the sutras chanted, some prefer the Diamond Sutra or the Amitabha Sutra, while others prefer the Avatamsaka Sutra or Lotus Sutra, or else individual chapters, such as the "Avalokitesvara Chapter" in the Lotus Sutra (chapter 25), or the Chapter on Samantabhadra's Practices and Vows in the Avatamsaka Sutra (chapter 40). The third category is composed of those who engage in Buddha Recitation as their primary practice and Mantra Recitation as an ancillary one. They follow the practice of Esotericism-Pure Land. The mantras vary with the practitioner and include such dharani as the Great Compassion Mantra, the Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara Dharani, the Rebirth Dharani, etc... The fourth category of cultivators comprises those who practice Buddha Recitation diligently and exclusively without cultivating other methods. Within this group, those of high capacities practice the sixteen Meditations as taught in the Meditation Sutra, while the great majority only practice oral recitation of the Buddha's name. The Pure Land Patriarch Shan-Tao taught diligent Buddha Recitation alone, which is designed to help those of limited or moderate capacities and belong to the exclusive Pure Land practice. Master Yung-Ming's method, totalling of 108 in all, aims specifically to encourage those of the highest capacity, and belongs to the Perfect Practice.

The Method of Sundry Practices: Countless sentient beings will be reborn in the Pure Land, their numbers exceeding even the innumerable rain drops. However, according to Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm in *The Pure Land Buddhism in Theory and Practice*, sentient beings who seek rebirth in the Pure Land are not limited to those weary of the sufferings in the realm of the Five Turbidities, there are also those who compassionately wish to save sentient beings in the Saha World, and those who look upward to the goal of Buddhahood and downward to the salvation of deluded sentient beings throughout the worlds of the ten directions. Whether their vows and aspirations are low or high, once they are reborn in the Pure Land, all derive the same benefits; none will ever retrogress and will ultimately achieve Buddhahood and help sentient beings. Ancient masters once said: “The Pure Land method is extremely lofty, profound and wonderful; only the Buddhas can really fathom its depth. This is why even those great Bodhisattvas who have reached the level of Equal Enlightenment still vow to be reborn there. Even “One-life Bodhisattvas” or those who will become Buddhas in their next lifetime must remain there to study and practice. Such Mahayana texts as the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, the Maharatnakuta Sutra, etc., all extol the Pure Land and discuss rebirth there. There are three categories of rebirth in the Pure Land. ***First, Rebirth through Mind-power:*** According to the Maharatnakuta Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha told Maitreya Bodhisattva: “There are ten minds cannot be developed by ordinary people, nor those who lack virtue and beset by afflictions. For someone to attain one of these ten frames of Mind while seeking rebirth in the Pure Land and yet fail to be reborn is simply impossible.” ***Second, Rebirth through the power of accumulated merits:*** According to the Meditation Sutra states: “Those who wish to be reborn in the land of Ultimate Bliss, must cultivate the three-fold goodness. These are the efficient causes for the pure actions of all the Buddhas of the three worlds, past, present and future. They should be filial toward their parents and support them; serve and respect their teachers and elders; be of compassionate heart and abstain from doing harm; and cultivate the ten virtuous actions. They should accept and hold on to their refuge in the Three Jewels; perfectly observe all moral precepts and not lower their dignity nor neglect ceremonial observances. They should awaken in their Minds a longing for Bodhi, deeply believe in the principle of

cause and effect, recite Mahayan sutras, persuade and encourage other practitioners. Furthermore, those who perform good deeds, carrying them out to perfection and transferring the merits with a Mind of faith and vows, can all achieve rebirth as well. These meritorious acts include erecting temples, stupas and statues of the Buddhas, worshipping the Buddhas, burning incense, offering flowers, donating pennants and other decorations to Buddhist temples, making offerings of food to the clergy, practicing charity, etc... **Third, Rebirth through the power of vows:** The “Sundry Practices” is the method in which the cultivator engages in many practices seeking rebirth in the Pure Land. Thus, in the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra advises and urges the youth Sudhana (Good Wealth) and the Ocean-Wide Great Assembly to seek rebirth through the Ten Great Vows. Each Vow contains the clause: “When the realm of empty space is exhausted, my Vows will be exhausted. But because the realm of empty space is inexhaustible, my Vows will never end. In the same way, when the realm of living beings, the karma of living beings, and the afflictions of living beings are exhausted, my Vows will be exhausted. But the realms of living beings, the karma of living beings, and the afflictions of living beings are inexhaustible. Therefore, my Vows are inexhaustible. They continue in thought after thought without cease. My body, mouth and mind never tire of doing these deeds. At the time of death, when all family and possessions are left behind and all faculties disintegrate, only these great vows will follow close behind, and in an instant, the practitioner will be reborn in the Pure Land. **Fourth, Achieving rebirth through spiritual power:** In 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.

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Part Four
An Overview & Meanings of Vow
In Buddhist Cultivation
(Phần Bốn: Tổng Quan Và Ý Nghĩa Của Nguyện
Trong Tu Tập Phật Giáo)

Chapter Twenty-Seven

An Overview & Meanings of Resolve in Buddhism

“Prani (Praniddhana)” is a Sanskrit term for “Aspiration”. In general, this term refers to the fulfillment of religious vows and developing a correct attitude toward religious practice. A bodhisattva vow, which is the first step on the way to enlightenment. A vow to oneself as self-dedication, usually bodhisattva vows above to seek Bodhi and below to save beings or to save all beings before benefiting from his own enlightenment or entering into nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism, “Praniddhana” is the seventh in the tenfold list of Paramitas that a Bodhisattva cultivates during the path to Buddhahood. Vow is something that comes from the heart and soul, a deep rooted promise, swearing to be unrelenting in seeking to attain a goal. This is having a certain mind-set or something one wishes to achieve and never give up until the objective is realized. Thus, there should be absolutely no reason whatsoever that should cause one to regress or give up that vow or promise. Sincere Buddhists should vow to follow the teachings to cultivate to become Buddhas, then to use the magnificent Dharma of enlightenment of the Buddhas and vow to give them to all sentient beings to abandon their ignorance to cross over to enlightenment, to abandon delusion to follow truths. According to the Pureland Buddhism, Vow is to wish sincerely, praying to find liberation from the sufferings of this saha World, to gain rebirth to the peaceful Ultimate Bliss World. According to the Pure Land Sect, devout Buddhists should make vow to benefit self and others, and to fulfil the vow so as to be born in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. This is the third of the five doors or ways of entering the Pure Land. Devoted Buddhists should always vow: “Awaken mind with a longing for Bodhicitta, deeply believe in the law of Cause and Effect, recite Mahayana sutras, encourage other cultivators and save other sentient beings.”

The power of vows eradicates heavy karma, wipes away all illnesses of mind and body at their karmic source, subdues demons and can move gods and humans to respect. Thus, devoted Buddhists should be issued from the realm of the Buddha-teaching, always accomplish the preservation of the Buddha-teaching, vow to sustain the lineage of

Buddhas, be oriented toward rebirth in the family of Buddhas, and seek omniscient knowledge. All Buddhists want to cross the sea of sufferings and afflictions while vows are like a boat which can carry them across the sea of birth and death to the other shore of Nirvana. Some Buddhists learn to practice special vows from Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, Medicine Buddha or Amitabha Buddha, etc. This is good, but these vows are still their special vows. We must make our own vows. When set up our own vows that means we have our own aim to reach in cultivation. Besides, once we have made our vows, even if we want to slack off in our cultivation, we won't dare, because the vows were already sealed in our mind.

According to the Pure Land Sect, there are two main aspects to making the joyous vows of "rescuing oneself and others." The first is that the practitioner should clearly realize the goal of rebirth; and the second is that the practitioner wants to ensure of rebirth in the Pure Land. The goal of our cultivation is to seek escape from suffering for him/herself and all sentient beings. He/She should think thus: 'My own strength is limited, I am still bound by karma; moreover, in this evil, defiled life, the circumstances and conditions leading to afflictions are overpowering. That is why other sentient beings and myself are drowning in the river of delusion, wandering along the evil paths from time immemorial. The wheel of birth and death is spinning without end; how can I find a way to rescue myself and others in a safe, sure manner? There is but one solution, it is to seek rebirth in the Pure Land, draw close to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and relying on the supremely auspicious environment of that realm, engaging in cultivation and attain the Tolerance of Non-Birth. Only then can I enter the evil world to rescue sentient beings. The Treatise on Rebirth states: "To develop the Bodhi-Mind is precisely to seek Buddhahood; to seek Buddhahood is to develop the Mind of rescuing sentient beings; and the Mind of rescuing sentient beings is none other than the Mind that gathers all beings and helps them achieve rebirth in the Pure Land. Moreover, to ensure rebirth, we should perfect two practices; first is abandoning the three things that hinder enlightenment, second is abiding by the three things that foster enlightenment. How can we abandon the things that hinder enlightenment and abide by the things that foster enlightenment? It is precisely by seeking rebirth in the Western Pure Land, remaining constantly near the Buddhas and cultivating the Dharmas until Tolerance of Non-Birth is reached. At

that point, we may sail the boat of great vows at will, enter the sea of Birth and Death and rescue sentient beings with wisdom and compassion ‘adapting to conditions but fundamentally unchanging,’ free and unimpeded. The practitioner must abandon the three things that hinder enlightenment: the mind of seeking our own peace and happiness, ego-grasping and attachment to our own bodies. The practitioner should follow the path of wisdom and leave all such thoughts far behind; the mind of abandoning and failing to rescue sentient beings from suffering. The practitioner should follow the path of compassion and leave all such thoughts far behind; the mind of exclusively seeking respect and offerings, without seeking ways to benefit sentient beings and bring them peace and happiness. The practitioner should follow the path of expédients and leave all such thoughts far behind. The practitioner must obtain the three things that foster enlightenment: 1) Undeiled Pure Mind of not seeking personal happiness, that is enlightenment is the state of undeiled purity. If we seek after personal pleasure, body and Mind are deiled and obstruct the path of enlightenment. Therefore, the undeiled Pure Mind is called consonant with enlightenment. 2) Pure Mind at Peace, or the mind that seeks to rescue all sentient beings from suffering. This is because Bodhi is the undeiled Pure Mind which gives peace and happiness to sentient beings. If we are not rescuing sentient beings and helping them escape the sufferings of Birth and death, we are going to counter to Bodhi path. Therefore, a Mind focussed on saving others, bringing them peace and happiness, is call consonant with enlightenment. 3) A ‘Blissful Pure Mind,’ or the mind that seeks to help sentient beings achieve Great Nirvana. Because Great Nirvana is the ultimate, eternally blissful realm. If we do not help sentient beings achieve it, we obstruct the Bodhi path. Hence the Mind which seeks to help sentient beings attain eternal bliss is called consonant with enlightenment. The cultivator should contemplate the wholesome characteristics of the Pure Land and auspicious features of Amitabha Buddha: The cultivator should contemplate the auspicious features of Amitabha Buddha. Amitabha Buddha possesses a resplendent, golden Reward Body, replete with 84,000 major characteristics, each characteristic having 84,000 minor auspicious signs, each sign beaming 84,000 rays of light which illuminate the entire Dharma Realm and gather in those sentient beings who recite the Buddha’s name. The Western Pure Land is adorned with seven treasures, as explained in the Pure Land sutras. In addition, when practicing charity, keeping the precepts and performing all kinds of good deeds, Pure Land practitioners should always dedicate the merits toward rebirth in the Pure Land for themselves and all other sentient beings.

Besides, practitioners should also vow to attain bodhi, and save all beings to the other shore. The Bodhisattva pranidhana was inspired by his recognition of the terrible suffering of the world. There are four magnanimous Vows or

four all-encompassing vows, while Amitabha Buddha has forty-eight vows. According to Mahayana tradition, there are three great Bodhisattvas: Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, and Samantabhadra who represent respectively the great compassion, wisdom and vows of all Buddhas. In the vows of Bodhisattvas, the compassionate zeal of the ideal Bodhisattva whose only concern in life is to relieve the pains and burdens of all sentient beings, and to bestow upon them true happiness through the achievement of Buddhahood. A Bodhisattva is aspirant of the achievement of perfect wisdom in a gruesome world of beings that know no solution because of the frame of their unresisting mind. The Bodhisattva has perfect insight into the conditioned world. It is because of the luminosity which he bears toward all out of his boundless openness. The “Sundry Practices” is the method in which the cultivator engages in many practices seeking rebirth in the Pure Land. Thus, in the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra advises and urges the youth Sudhana (Good Wealth) and the Ocean-Wide Great Assembly to seek rebirth through the Ten Great Vows. Each Vow contains the clause: “When the realm of empty space is exhausted, my Vows will be exhausted. But because the realm of empty space is inexhaustible, my Vows will never end. In the same way, when the realm of living beings, the karma of living beings, and the afflictions of living beings are exhausted, my Vows will be exhausted. But the realms of living beings, the karma of living beings, and the afflictions of living beings are inexhaustible. Therefore, my Vows are inexhaustible. They continue in thought after thought without cease. My body, mouth and mind never tire of doing these deeds. At the time of death, when all family and possessions are left behind and all faculties disintegrate, only these great vows will follow close behind, and in an instant, the practitioner will be reborn in the Pure Land. Besides, practitioners should be filial toward their parents and support them; serve and respect their teachers and elders; be of compassionate heart and abstain from doing harm; and cultivate the ten virtuous actions. They should accept and hold on to their refuge in the Three Jewels; perfectly observe all moral precepts and not lower their dignity nor neglect ceremonial observances. They should awaken in their Minds a longing for Bodhi, deeply believe in the principle of cause and effect, recite Mahayana sutras, persuade and encourage other practitioners. Furthermore, those who perform good deeds, carrying them out to perfection and transferring the merits with a Mind of faith and vows, can all achieve rebirth as well. These meritorious acts include erecting temples, stupas and statues of the Buddhas, worshipping the Buddhas, burning incense, offering flowers, donating pennants and other decorations to Buddhist temples, making offerings of food to the clergy, practicing charity, etc.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Summaries of Bodhisattva's Vows in Buddhism

According to The Studies in The Lankavatara Sutra, written by Zen Master D.T. Suzuki, according to his transcendental insight into the truth of things, the Bodhisattva knows that it is beyond all eradicates and not at all subject to any form of description, but his heart full of compassion and love for all beings who are unable to step out of the dualistic whirlpools of “becoming” or not becoming,” he directs his vows towards their salvation and emancipation. His own heart is free from such attachments as are ordinarily cherished by the unemancipated, but that which feels persists, for his insight has not destroyed this, and hence his Purvapranidhana, his Upayakausalya, his Nirmanakaya. Yet all that he does for the maturity of all beings in response to their needs, is like the moon reflection in water, showing himself in all forms and appearances he preaches to them on the Dharma. His activity is what is in Mahayana phraseology called “Anabhogacarya,” deeds that are effortless, effectless, and purposeless. When the Bodhisattva enters upon the first stage called Joy or Pramudita, in the career of his spiritual discipline, he makes the following solemn vows, ten in number, which, flowing out of his most earnest determined will, are as all-inclusive as the whole universe, extending to the extremity of space itself, reaching the end of time, exhausting all the number of kalpas or ages, and functioning uninterruptedly as long as there is the appearance of a Buddha.

The first vow is to honour and serve all the Buddhas, one and all without a single exception. The second vow is to work for the preservation and perpetuation of the teaching of all the Buddhas. The third vow is to be present at the appearance of each Buddha, wherever and whenever it may be. The fourth vow is to practice the proper conduct of Bodhisattvahood which is wide and measureless, imperishable and free from impurities, and to extend the Virtues of Perfection (paramitas) towards all beings. The fifth vow is to induce all beings in the most comprehensive sense of the term to turn to the teaching of the Buddhas so that they may find their final abode of peace in the wisdom of the all-wise ones. The sixth vow is to have an

inner perception of the universe, wide and inexhaustible, in all its possible multitudinousness. The seventh vow is to realize the most closely interpenetrating relationship of each and all, of all and each, and to make everyland of beings immaculate as a Buddha-land. The eighth vow is to be united with all the Bodhisattvas in oneness of intention, to become intimately acquainted with the dignity, understanding, and psychic condition of the Tathagatas, so that the Bodhisattva can enter any society of beings and accomplish the Mahayana which is beyond thought. The ninth vow is to evolve the never-receding wheel whereby to carry out his work of universal salvation, by making himself like unto the great lord of medicine or wish-fulfilling gem. The tenth vow is to realize the great supreme enlightenment in all the worlds, by going through the stages of Buddhahood, and fulfilling the wishes of all beings with one voice, and while showing himself to be in Nirvana, not to cease from practicing the objects of Bodhisattvahood.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Summaries of Bodhisattvas’ General Vows in Buddhism

I. An Overview of Bodhisattvas’ General Vows in Buddhism:

As mentioned above, vow is something that comes from the heart and soul, a deep rooted promise, swearing to be unrelenting in seeking to attain a goal. This is having a certain mind-set or something one wishes to achieve and never give up until the objective is realized. Thus, there should be absolutely no reason whatsoever that should cause one to regress or give up that vow or promise. Sincere Buddhists should vow to follow the teachings to cultivate to become Buddhas, then to use the magnificent Dharma of enlightenment of the Buddhas and vow to give them to all sentient beings to abandon their ignorance to cross over to enlightenment, to abandon delusion to follow truths. According to the Pureland Buddhism, Vow is to wish sincerely, praying to find liberation from the sufferings of this saha World, to gain rebirth to the peaceful Ultimate Bliss World.

In Buddhism, universal vows common to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, e.g. the four magnanimous vows and the ten great vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva; in contrast with specific vows, e.g. forty-eight of Amitabha.

II. Summaries of Bodhisattvas’ General Vows in Buddhism: Bodhisattvas’ General Vows

1) Four Magnanimous Vows: The magnanimous Vows mean the four universal vows of a Buddha or Bodhisattva (four magnanimous Vows or four all-encompassing vows). The four great vows are basically a Mahayana reinterpretation of the Four Holy Truths. In addition to ending one’s own suffering, one vows to end the suffering of all living beings. In addition to eliminating one’s own afflictions, one vows to end the inexhaustible afflictions of all living beings. In addition to learning only the single Dharma-door necessary for one’s own enlightenment, one vows to learn all the Dharma-doors, so that one can teach all living beings appropriately. Rather than being satisfied with reaching the stage of the Arhat, one vows to become a Buddha. However, it is not enough just to recite the vows. You have to return the light and think them over: The vows say that I will save countless number of beings.

Have I done so? If I have, it should still be the same as if I had not saved them. Why? It is said that the Thus Come One saves all living beings, and yet not a single living being has been saved. This means that even though you have saved quite a few numbers of living beings, but do not attach to the mark of saving living beings. According to the Mahayana, the four great magnanimous vows, that are part of the Bodhisattva vow as they recited three times successively in a Zen monastery after ending the practice of sitting meditation. These vows are also recited at the end of any Buddhist ceremonies. *First, Vow to save all living beings without limits:* Sentient beings are numberless (countless), I vow to save them all. According to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng Sutra, good knowing advisors, did all of you not just say, “I vow to take across the limitless beings? What does it mean? You should remember that it is not Hui-Neng who takes them across. Good Knowing Advisors, the ‘living beings’ within your mind are deviant and confused thoughts, deceitful and false thoughts, unwholesome thoughts, jealous thoughts, vicious thoughts: and these thoughts are ‘living beings’ The self-nature of each one of them must take itself across. That is true crossing over. What is meant by ‘the self-nature taking across?’ It is to take across by means of right views the living beings of deviant views, affliction, and delusion within your own mind. Once you have right views, use Prajna Wisdom to destroy the living beings of delusion, confusion, and falsehood. Each one takes itself across. Enlightenment takes confusion across, wisdom takes delusion across, goodness takes evil across. Such crossing over is a true crossing. *Second, Vow to put an end to all passions and delusions, though innumerable:* Afflictions (annoyances) are inexhaustible (endless), I vow to end (cut) them all. Also according to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng Sutra, ‘I vow to cut off the inexhaustible afflictions.’ That is to use the Prajna Wisdom of your own self-nature to cast out the vain and false thoughts in your mind. *Third, Vow to study and learn all methods and means without end:* Schools and traditions are manifold, I vow to study them all—The teachings of Dharma are boundless, I vow to learn them all. Also according to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng Sutra, ‘I vow to study the immeasurable Dharma-door.’ You must see your own nature and always practice the right Dharma. That is true study. *Fourth, Vow to become perfect in the supreme Buddha-law:* The Buddha-Way (Truth) is supreme (unsurpassed) , I vow to complete (realize) it. Also according to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng Sutra, ‘I vow to realize the supreme Buddha Way,’ and with humble mind to always practice the true and proper. Separate yourself from both confusion and enlightenment, and always give rise to Prajna. When you cast out the true and the false, you see your nature and realize the Buddha-way at the very moment it is spoken of. Always be mindful; cultivate the Dharma that possesses the power of this vow.”

2) Bodhisattva Hui-Neng and the four all-encompassing vows, according to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng Sutra: *First, I vow to take across the limitless living beings of my own mind:* Good Knowing Advisors, did all of you not just say, “I vow to take across the limitless beings? What does it mean? You should remember that it is not Hui-Neng who takes them across. Good Knowing Advisors, the ‘living beings’ within your mind are deviant and confused thoughts, deceitful and false thoughts, unwholesome thoughts, jealous thoughts, vicious thoughts: and these thoughts are ‘living beings’ The self-nature of each one of them must take itself across. That is true crossing over. What is meant by ‘the self-nature taking across?’ It is to take across by means of right views the living beings of deviant views, affliction, and delusion within your own mind. Once you have right views, use Prajna Wisdom to destroy the living beings of delusion, confusion, and falsehood. Each one takes itself across. Enlightenment takes confusion across, wisdom takes delusion across, goodness takes evil across. Such crossing over is a true crossing. *Second, I vow to cut off the inexhaustible afflictions of my own mind:* Further, ‘I vow to cut off the inexhaustible afflictions.’ That is to use the Prajna Wisdom of your own self-nature to cast out the vain and false thoughts in your mind. *Third, I vow to study the immeasurable Dharma-doors of my own nature:* Further, ‘I vow to study the immeasurable Dharma-door.’ You must see your own nature and always practice the right Dharma. That is true study. *Fourth, I vow to realize the supreme Buddha Way of my own nature:* Further, ‘I vow to realize the supreme Buddha Way,’ and with humble mind to always practice the true and proper. Separate yourself from both confusion and enlightenment, and always give rise to Prajna. When you cast out the true and the false, you see your nature and realize the Buddha-way at the very moment it is spoken of. Always be mindful; cultivate the Dharma that possesses the power of this vow.”

3) Ten inexhaustible vows: Ten Inexhaustible Vows (Dasanishthapada-skt) to be made by the Bodhisattva at the Stage of Joy. The vows are called “inexhaustible” because their objectives are of such nature. Because all the ten worlds will never come to an end, and as long as they continue to exist, the Bodhisattva will never put forward his great vows with energy and determination. The first world is the world of beings. The second world is this world. The third world is the space. Fourth, the world where Dharma prevails. The fifth world is the Nirvana-world. The sixth world is the world where the Buddha is born. The Seventh world is the world of Tathagata-knowledge. The eighth world is the world as the object of thought. Ninth, the world as the object of Buddha-knowledge. Tenth, the world where this worldly life, the Dharma and the Buddha-knowledge are evolved.

4) Ten Bodhisattvas' Vows: According to The Studies in The Lankavatara Sutra, written by Zen Master D.T. Suzuki, according to his transcendental

insight into the truth of things, the Bodhisattva knows that it is beyond all eradicates and not at all subject to any form of description, but his heart full of compassion and love for all beings who are unable to step out of the dualistic whirlpools of “becoming” or not becoming,” he directs his vows towards their salvation and emancipation. His own heart is free from such attachments as are ordinarily cherished by the unemancipated, but that which feels persists, for his insight has not destroyed this, and hence his Purvapranidhana, his Upayakaushalya, his Nirmanakaya. Yet all that he does for the maturity of all beings in response to their needs, is like the moon reflection in water, showing himself in all forms and appearances he preaches to them on the Dharma. His activity is what is in Mahayana phraseology called “Anabhogacarya,” deeds that are effortless, effectless, and purposeless. When the Bodhisattva enters upon the first stage called Joy or Pramudita, in the career of his spiritual discipline, he makes the following solemn vows, ten in number, which, flowing out of his most earnest determined will, are as all-inclusive as the whole universe, extending to the extremity of space itself, reaching the end of time, exhausting all the number of kalpas or ages, and functioning uninterruptedly as long as there is the appearance of a Buddha. The first vow is to honour and serve all the Buddhas, one and all without a single exception. The second vow is to work for the preservation and perpetuation of the teaching of all the Buddhas. The third vow is to be present at the appearance of each Buddha, wherever and whenever it may be. The fourth vow is to practice the proper conduct of Bodhisattvahood which is wide and measureless, imperishable and free from impurities, and to extend the Virtues of Perfection (paramitas) towards all beings. The fifth vow is to induce all beings in the most comprehensive sense of the term to turn to the teaching of the Buddhas so that they may find their final abode of peace in the wisdom of the all-wise ones. The sixth vow is to have an inner perception of the universe, wide and inexhaustible, in all its possible multitudinousness. The seventh vow is to realize the most closely interpenetrating relationship of each and all, of all and each, and to make everyland of beings immaculate as a Buddha-land. The eighth vow is to be united with all the Bodhisattvas in oneness of intention, to become intimately acquainted with the dignity, understanding, and psychic condition of the Tathagatas, so that the Bodhisattva can enter any society of beings and accomplish the Mahayana which is beyond thought. The ninth vow is to evolve the never-receding wheel whereby to carry out his work of universal salvation, by making himself like unto the great lord of medicine or wish-fulfilling gem. The tenth vow is to realize the great supreme enlightenment in all the worlds, by going through the stages of Buddhahood, and fulfilling the wishes of all beings with one voice, and while showing himself to be in Nirvana, not to cease from practicing the objects of Bodhisattvahood.

Chapter Thirty

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva's Ten Vows

The Universal Virtue Bodhisattva, one of the five Dhyani-Bodhisattvas or the All-Compassionate One of perfect Activity. "He Who Is All-Pervadingly Good" or "He whose Beneficence Is Everywhere." One of the most important Bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism. He also embodies calm action, compassion, and deep-seated wisdom. He is venerated as the protector of all those who teach the dharma and is regarded as an embodiment of the wisdom of essential sameness and difference. He often appears riding a white six-tusked elephant (the elephant being noted for its tranquility and wisdom) with Manjusri on the (right) side of Sakyamuni. He is also called Universal sagacity, or lord of the fundamental law, the dhyana, and the practice of all Buddhas. He represents the fundamental law, and is the patron of the Lotus Sutra and its devotees, and has close connection with the Hua-Yen Sutra. His region is in the east. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is also an important figure of the Mahayana Buddhism. As a Bodhisattva in early Mahayana texts, he is said to be the protector of those who propagate the Dharma, and he often portrayed with Vairocana. Iconographically, he is often shown riding on a white elephant with six tusks, and he commonly holds a lotus, a wish-fulfilling jewel, or a scroll. In Vajrayana he is often said to be the "primordial buddha" (Adi-Buddha) and the embodiment of the "truth body" (Dharma-kaya). In tantric depictions, he has dark blue skin (symbolic of emptiness) and is commonly shown in sexual embrace with his consort Samantabhadri. According to the Lotus Sutra, Chapter Universal Door, Bodhisattva Samantabhadra's ten vows: *First is to worship and respect all Buddhas*: By the vow to pay reverence to all the Buddhas is meant that a Bodhisattva will pay reverence to an inconceivable number of Buddhas in the past, present and future with his pure body, speech and mind. He will salute every one of them without feeling fatigue until the end of the universe. *Second is to make praise to The Thus Come Ones*: By the vow to praise all the Tathagatas is meant that a Bodhisattva will always praise an innumerable number of Tathagatas in the past, present and future. A Bodhisattva will

present himself before each one of these Buddhas with a deep understanding and a clear perception. The ocean of merits of the Tathagata will then be praised with an exquisite and eloquent tongue, each tongue expressing a sea of inexhaustible voices, and each voice articulating a sea of words in every form possible. A Bodhisattva will go on to praise the Buddhas without feeling fatigue and without cessation until the end of the world. *Third is to practice profoundly (vastly) the giving offerings:* To cultivate the giving of offerings by the vow to make all kinds of offerings to the Buddhas is meant that a Bodhisattva will always make offerings to an inconceivable number of Buddhas in the past, present, and future. The offering consists of flowers, wreaths, music, umbrellas, garments, and all kinds of incense and ointment, and many other things, and all these offerings in such a large quantity as is equal to clouds or to a mountain. A Bodhisattva will also burn before every one of the innumerable Buddhas all sorts of oil in such a measure as compares to an ocean. But of all the offerings one could thus make to a Buddha the best is that of the Dharma, which is to say, disciplining oneself according to the teaching, benefiting all beings, accepting all beings, suffering pains for all beings, maturing every root of goodness, carrying out all the works of a Bodhisattva, and at the same time not keeping himself away from the thought of enlightenment. The material offerings, no matter how big, are not equal even to an infinitesimal fraction of the moral offerings (dharma-puja), because all Buddhas are born of moral offerings, because these are the true offerings, because the practicing of the Dharma means the perfection of an offering one could make to a Buddha. A Bodhisattva will continuously make offerings to every one of the innumerable Buddhas without feeling fatigue. *Fourth is to repent and reform all karmic hindrances (faults):* The vow to repent all one's own sins (committed by oneself) and thereby to get rid of one's karma-hindrance is necessary because whatever sins committed by us are due to our greed, anger, and ignorance done by the body, speech, and mind. Now we make full confession and repent. According to the Buddha, all these sins, if they were really substantial, are thought to have filled the universe to its utmost ends and even over-flowing. Now a Bodhisattva vows to repent without reserve from the depth of his heart, vowing that such sins will never be committed again by him, for from now on, he will always abide in the pure precepts amass every sort of merit. And of this he will never get tired even to the end of the world. *Fifth is to*

rejoice and follow in merit and virtue: To compliantly rejoice in merit and virtue by the vow to rejoice and follow the merit and virtue is meant that a Bodhisattva should always be in sympathy with all beings for whatever good things they think, or feel, or do. All the Buddhas had gone through untold hardships before they attained full enlightenment. Since their first awakening of the thought of enlightenment, they never hesitated to accumulate all the merit that tended towards the attainment of the goal of their life, they never raised a thought of egotism even when they had to sacrifice their life and all that belonged to them. Now a Bodhisattva vows to feel a sympathetic joy for all these doings of the Buddhas. He does this not only with the Buddhas, but for every possible deed of merit, however significant, executed by any being in the path of existence, of any class of truth-seekers. A Bodhisattva with this vow will never be tired of putting it into practice till the end of the world. *Sixth is to request that the Dharma wheel be turned:* To request the turning of the Dharma Wheel by the vow that a Bodhisattva will ask every one of the inconceivable number of Buddhas to revolve the Wheel of the Dharma, without feeling tired and without cease until the end of the world. *Seventh is to request that the Buddha remain in the world:* Request the Buddhas dwell in the world, a Bodhisattva vows to ask every one of the inconceivable number of Buddhas not to enter into Nirvana if any is so disposed. He will ask this even of any Bodhisattvas, Arhats, Sravakas, or Pratyekabuddhas; for he wishes these superior beings to continue to live in the world and keep on benefitting all beings. He will keep requesting this until the end of the world. *Eighth is to follow the Buddha's teaching always:* To follow the Buddhas in study, a Bodhisattva vows to learn from the life of a Buddha who in this Saha World ever since his awakening of the thought of enlightenment have never ceased from exercising himself ungrudgingly, not even sparing his own life, for the sake of universal salvation. His reverential attitude towards the Dharma had been such as to make paper of his skin, a brush of his bones, and ink of his blood wherewith he copied the Buddhist sutras to the amount of Mount Sumeru. He cared not even for his life, how much less much less for the throne, for the palaces, gardens, villages, and other external things! By practicing every form of mortification he finally attained supreme enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree. After this, he manifested all kinds of psychical powers, all kinds of transformations, all aspects of the Buddha-body, and placed himself sometimes among Bodhisattvas,

sometimes among Sravakas, and Pratyekabuddhas, sometimes among Kshatriyas, among Brahmans, householders, lay-disciples, and sometimes among Devas, Nagas, human beings, and non-human-beings. Whenever he has found, he preached with perfect eloquence, with a voice like thunder, in order to bring all beings into maturity according to their aspirations. Finally, he showed himself as entering into Nirvana. All these phases of the life of a Buddha, the Bodhisattva is determined to learn as models for his own life. A Bodhisattva should always follow the Buddha's teaching without feeling tired, until the end of the world. *Ninth is to constantly accord with all living beings:* To vow to forever accord with living beings. In this universe, life manifests itself in innumerable forms, each one differing from another in the way of its birth, in form, in the duration of life, in name, in mental disposition, in intelligence, in aspiration, in inclination, in demeanor, in garment, in food, in social life, in the mode of dwelling, etc. However, no matter different they are, the Bodhisattva vows to live in accordance with the laws that govern everyone of these beings in order to serve them, to minister to their needs, to revere them as his parents, as his teachers, or Arahts, or as Tathagatas, making no distinction among them in this respect. If they are sick, he will be a good physician for them; if they go astray, he will show them the right path; if they are sunk in poverty, he will supply them with a treasure; thus uniformly giving benefits to all beings according to their needs, because a Bodhisattva is convinced that by serving all beings, he is serving all the Buddhas, that by revering all beings, by making them glad, he is revering and gladdening all the Buddhas. A great compassion heart is the substance of Tathagatahood and it is because of all beings that this compassionate heart is awakened, and because of this compassionate heart the thought of enlightenment is awakened, and because of this awakening supreme enlightenment is attained. A Bodhisattva vows to forever accord with all beings without feeling tired until the end of the world. *Tenth is to transfer all merit and virtue universally:* To universally transfer all merit and virtue. Whatever merits the Bodhisattva acquires by paying sincere respect to all the Buddhas and also by practicing all kinds of meritorious deeds as above mentioned, they will all be turned over to the benefits of all beings in the entire universe. He will thus turn all his merits towards making beings feel at ease, free from diseases, turn away from evil doings, practice all deeds of goodness, so that every possible evil may be

suppressed and the right road to Nirvana be opened for the gods and men. If there be any beings who are suffering the results of their evil karma committed in the past, the Bodhisattva will be ready to sacrifice himself and bear the pains for the miserable creatures in order to release them from karma and finally make them realize supreme enlightenment. A Bodhisattva vows to transfer all merit and virtue universally without feeling tired until the end of the world. Bodhisattva Samantabhadra is an important figure of the Mahayana Buddhism. As a Bodhisattva in early Mahayana texts, he is said to be the protector of those who propagate the Dharma, and he often portrayed with Vairocana. Iconographically, he is often shown riding on a white elephant with six tusks, and he commonly holds a lotus, a wish-fulfilling jewel, or a scroll. In Vajrayana he is often said to be the “primordial buddha” (Adi-Buddha) and the embodiment of the “truth body” (Dharma-kaya). In tantric depictions, he has dark blue skin (symbolic of emptiness) and is commonly shown in sexual embrace with his consort Samantabhadri. In Buddhism, Samantabhadra embodies calm action, compassion, and deep-seated wisdom. He is usually depicted astride a white elephant (the elephant is being noted for its tranquility and wisdom), sitting in attendance on the right of the Buddha; while Manjusri Bodhisattva, with his delusion-cutting vajra sword in one hand, sits on the back of a lion on the Buddha’s left side. Manjusri represents awakening, that is, the sudden realization of the lion’s vigor is symbolic. When the knowledge acquired through ‘awakening’ is employed for the benefit of mankind, Samantabhadra’s compassion is manifesting itself. Accordingly, each of the Bodhisattvas is an arm of the Buddha, representing respectively, Oneness or Equality and manyness.

According to Buddhism, Bodhisattvas are said to have issued from the life and vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, and have ten outstanding qualifications. *First*, they are unattached in their conduct because they are able to expand themselves in all the Buddha-lands. *Second*, they manifest innumerable bodies because they can go over wherever there are Buddhas. *Third*, they are in possession of an unimpeded and unspoiled eyesight because they can perceive the miraculous transformations of all the Buddhas. *Fourth*, they are able to visit anywhere without being bound to any one locality because they never neglect appearing in all places where the Buddhas attain to their enlightenment. *Fifth*, they are in possession of a limitless light because

they can illumine the ocean of all the Buddha-truths with the light of their knowledge. *Sixth*, they have an inexhaustible power of eloquence through eternity because their speech has no taint. *Seventh*, they abide in the highest wisdom which knows no limits like space because their conduct is pure and free from taints. *Eighth*, they have no fixed abode because they reveal themselves personally in accordance with the thoughts and desires of all beings. *Ninth*, they are free from obscurities because they know that there are rally no beings, no soul-substances in the world of being. *Tenth*, they are in possession of transcendental knowledge which is as vast as space because they illumine all the Dharmadhatus with their nets of light.

Chapter Thirty-One

An Overview of Bodhisattvas' Special Vows in Buddhism

As mentioned above, vow is something that comes from the heart and soul, a deep rooted promise, swearing to be unrelenting in seeking to attain a goal. This is having a certain mind-set or something one wishes to achieve and never give up until the objective is realized. Thus, there should be absolutely no reason whatsoever that should cause one to regress or give up that vow or promise. Sincere Buddhists should vow to follow the teachings to cultivate to become Buddhas, then to use the magnificent Dharma of enlightenment of the Buddhas and vow to give them to all sentient beings to abandon their ignorance to cross over to enlightenment, to abandon delusion to follow truths. According to the Pureland Buddhism, Vow is to wish sincerely, praying to find liberation from the sufferings of this saha World, to gain rebirth to the peaceful Ultimate Bliss World. Special vow, as the forty-eight of Amitabha, or the twelve of Yao-Shih-Fo (Bhaisajya), as contrast with general vows taken by all Bodhisattvas. According to the Mahayana-sutralankara, vow is both the cause and the result of the Thought of Enlightenment. The production of the Thought of Enlightenment is possible even through paying homage to the Buddha at a stupa, whereas it is obligatory for one to meet a Buddha in order to make the formal Resolve. A Bodhisattva must have the following eight conditions to fulfill his Resolve: First, the aspirant should be a human being. Second, the aspirant should be a male. Third, the aspirant should have sufficiently developed spiritually to become an Arahan in this very life. Fourth, the aspirant should be a recluse at the time of the declaration. Fifth, the aspirant should make the resolution personally before a statue of Buddha. Sixth, the aspirant should possess the jhanas. Seventh, the aspirant should be prepared to sacrifice even his life. Eighth, the resolution has to be absolutely firm.

Chapter Thirty-Two

The Twelve Great Vows of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara has, since the time without beginning, been a Buddha with the name of True Dharma Light. While residing in the Land of Eternal Stillness, because of Her boundless concern and compassion, She also appears in all lands and realms. Standing beside Amitabha Buddha, She also manifests Herself everywhere, as Buddha, Bodhisattva, Arhat, Pratyeka Buddha, or takes the form of various beings along the Six Paths in the Dharma Realm of the ten directions. She accomplishes whatever deeds are of benefit to sentient beings and takes whatever form is necessary to rescue them and teach them the Dharma. Like Buddhas, Bodhisattvas are very numerous. Among the creations of the mythological imagination of the Buddhism of Faith, Avalokitesvara is the most outstanding. By the power of his magic, and by his infinite care and skill in his “salvation of all those who are suffering.” A Sanskrit term for “Lord who Looks Down.” A Bodhisattva who stands on the left side of Amitabha Buddha. This is the most important Bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism. He is the embodiment of compassion (karuna), which along with wisdom (prajna) is one of the two main characteristics of the awakened mind of a Buddha. His name literally means “the Lord who Look Down,” implying that he views the sufferings and afflictions of sentient beings with compassion. He figures prominently in many Mahayana sutras, e.g., several Perfection of Wisdom sutras, the Sukhavati-Vyuha, in which he is said to be one of the Bodhisattvas in the Pure Land of Amitabha, and the Saddharma-Pundarika, which has an entire chapter in which he is the main figure. In this sutra, he is described as the savior of beings in trouble. It is said that by merely remembering his name with devotion one can be saved in times of distress. In early East Asian Buddhist depictions, up to the early Sung Dynasty, he is portrayed as a male, but since at least the tenth century the image of a female in a white robe (Pai-I-Kuan-Yin) has predominated in East Asia. In Tibet Avalokitesvara *Spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug* is viewed as the country’s patron deity, one of physical emanations is the Dalai Lamas incarnational line. Furthermore, he is one of the eight great Bodhisattvas in Mahayana traditional Buddhism, and one whose activities involve the active practice of compassion in saving sentient beings. The mantra of “Om Mani Pad mi Hum” is directly associated with Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. In Tibetan Buddhism, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is considered to be the main patron Bodhisattva, and the Dalai Lama is viewed as his incarnate manifestation. According to Eitel in *The Dictionary of Chinese-English Buddhist Terms*, Avalokitesvara is one who

contemplates the world's sounds, originally represented as a male, the images are now generally those of a female figure. The meaning of the term is in doubt. Kuan-Yin is one of the triad of Amitabha, is represented on his left, and is also represented as crowned with Amida; but there are as many as thirty-two different forms of Kuan-Yin, sometimes with a bird, a vase, a willow wand, a pearl, a thousand eyes and hands, etc. and when as bestower of children, carrying a child. The island of P'u-T'o (Potala) is the chief center of Kuan-Yin worship, where she is the protector of all in distress, especially of those who go to sea. Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra devoted to Kuan-Yin, and is the principal scriptures of the cult. Kuan-Yin is sometimes confounded (bị lầm lẫn) with Amitabha and Maitreya. According to other Buddhist sources, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is one of the four greatest important Bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism. He is a Bodhisattva of Great Compassion and Observer of the Sounds of the World. He is also known as the Contemplator of Self-Mastery. He is the disciple and future successor of Amitabha Buddha in the Western Pure Land. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva also has various titles such as: Kuan-Yin, Kuan-Yin Bodhisattva, Regarder or Observer of the world's sounds or cries (sounds that enlighten the world), the Sovereign Beholder of the world, the Sovereign Beholder, not associated with sounds or cries, One Thousand Hands and Eyes Bodhisattva, and so on. World Voice-Seeing Bodhisattva, one of the great bodhisattvas of the Mahayana Buddhism. Avalokitesvara contemplates the sound of the world. She can manifest herself in any conceivable form to bring help wherever it is needed. Bodhisattva of compassion and deep listening. Also called Kuan Shi Yin, the Bodhisattva of compassion. One of the three Pure Land Sages (Buddhas and Bodhisattvas). The others being Buddha Amitabha and Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta. Among Buddhism mythological works, works on Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva are the most outstanding. By the power of his magic, and by his infinite care and skill he affords safety to those who are anxious. The word Avalokitesvara is a compound of the word "ishvara" means "Lord or Sovereign," and of "avalokita" which means he who looks down with compassion, i.e., on beings suffering in this world. According to Edward Conze in *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, Avalokitesvara personifies compassion. The texts and images suggest that in India one may distinguish three stages in his development. At first, he is a member of a trinity, consisting of Amitayus, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. This Trinity has many counterparts in Iranian religion, i.e., in the Mithras cult and Zervanism, a Persian religion which recognized Infinite Time (Zervan Akarana=Amita-ayus) as the fundamental principle. Assimilated by Buddhism, Avalokitesvara becomes a great Bodhisattva, so great that he is nearly as perfect as a Buddha. He possesses a great miraculous power to help in all kinds of dangers and difficulties. In the second stage, Avalokitesvara acquires a number of cosmic

functions and features. He holds the world in his hand, he is immensely big, 800,000 myriads of miles, each of the pores of his skin conceals a world system. He is the Lord and Sovereign of the world. From his eyes come the sun and the moon, from his mouth the winds, from his feet the earth. In all these respects, Avalokitesvara resembles the Hindu God, Brahma. Finally, in the third stage, at a time when the magical elements of Buddhism come to the fore, he becomes a great magician who owes his power to his mantras, and he adopts many of the characteristics of Siva. This is the Tantric Avalokitesvara. Avalokitesvara, the "Bodhisattva who Looks Down" on us with compassion, is one of the most popular Mahayana Bodhisattvas. Revered as the embodiment of compassion, he is frequently depicted with eleven heads and 1,000 arms, all of which are used in his dispensation of aid. Avalokitesvara is an attendant of the Buddha Amitabha, who rules over Sukhavati, the Pure Land of the West. Amitabha is one of the most important of the many Buddhas who resides in the different Buddha fields of Mahayana Buddhism. Avalokitesvara finds many ways to help, not least by assuming a variety of forms, including those of a disciple, a monk, a god or a Tara. According to Tibetan Buddhism, Tara, an important female bodhisattva in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, was born from a teardrop of his compassion, and the Dalai Lamas are sometimes said to be successive reincarnations of Avalokitesvara. The cult of Avalokitesvara has inspired some of the most beautiful works of religious art in Asian Buddhism. In the 10th century, Chinese Buddhists started painting images of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva with ten arms. Four of these ten arms hold the sun, moon, a mace and a trident; and the remaining six are in the distinctive gesture (mudra) of giving, banishing fear and offering. According to Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is often depicted with one thousand hands, each hand containing its own eye, to indicate the vows and powers of the Bodhisattva to see all those suffering in the world and reach into the world and pull them out of their suffering. The texts and the images suggest that in India one may distinguish three stages in his development. At first, he is a member of a Trinity, consisting of Amitayus, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthama-prapta (the one who has attained great strength). This Trinity has many counterparts in Iranian religion, i.e., in the Mithras cult in Zervanism, a Persian religion which recognized Infinite Time (Zervan Akarana=Amitayus) as the fundamental principle. Assimilated by Buddhism, Avalokitesvara becomes a great Bodhisattva, so great that he is nearly as perfect as a Buddha. He possesses a great miraculous power to help in all kinds of dangers and difficulties. In the second stage, Avalokitesvara acquires a number of cosmic functions and features. He "holds the world in his hand," he is immensely big-- "800,000 myriads of miles"-- "each of the pores of his skin conceals a world system." He is the Lord and Sovereign of the world. From his eyes come the sun and the moon, from his mouth the winds, from his feet the earth. In all

these respects Avalokitesvara resembles the Hindu God, Brahma. Finally, in the third stage, at a time when the magical elements of Buddhism come to the fore, he becomes a great magician who owes his power to his mantras, and he adopts many of the characteristics of Shiva. This is the Tantric Avalokitesvara.

Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara can be described as a single moon in the sky appears in ten thousand rivers and lakes. From the oceans to the tiniest dewdrops, wherever there is limpid water, the moon appears. However, if the water is turbid or muddy, the image of the moon will be blurred or hidden. Our Mind-Nature is similar to the water. If sentient beings concentrate singlemindedly on the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, She employs all kinds of expedients, favorable and unfavorable, hidden or overt, to bring them benefits. If, on the other hand, the cultivator is not utterly sincere and singleminded in his recitation, his mind-water will be turbid and it will be difficult for him to obtain a response. Moreover, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara's methods are boundless and all-encompassing. She preaches every kind of method to teach and transform sentient beings in accordance with their individual capacities and nature, without insisting on any particular Dharma method. Therefore, Her approach is called "Universal Door." Besides, she also has twelve specific vows to save sentient beings. ***The First Great Vow:*** Namo, the Greatly Enlightened, well known for great spiritual freedom, the Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow of immense propagation. ***The Second Great Vow:*** Namo, single-minded in liberation, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to often dwell in Southern Ocean. ***The Third Great Vow:*** Namo, the dweller of Saha World, the Underworld, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to follow the prayer sounds of sentient beings to alleviate pains and sufferings. ***The Fourth Great Vow:*** Namo, the destroyer of evil spirits and demons, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to eliminate dangers. ***The Fifth Great Vow:*** Namo, the holy water bottle and willow branch, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to provide comfort and purification of sentient beings' minds with sweet holy water. ***The Sixth Great Vow:*** Namo, the greatly compassionate and forgiving Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow often to carry out conducts with complete fairness and equality. ***The Seventh Great Vow:*** Namo, in all times without abandonment, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to try to eliminate the three realm. ***The Eighth Great Vow:*** Namo, Potala Mountain, essential to worship, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to break from the bondage of shackles and chains to find liberation. ***The Ninth Great Vow:*** Namo, the creator of the dharma-vessel traveling the ocean of sufferings, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to rescue and aid all sentient beings. ***The Tenth Great Vow:*** Namo, the holder of flags and parasols, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to protect and deliver sentient beings to the Western Pure Land. ***The eleventh Great Vow:*** Namo, the world of the Infinite Life Buddha, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to have Amitabha Buddha give the prophecy of Buddhahood. ***The Twelfth Great Vow:*** Namo, the incomparable adorning body in the three worlds, Avalokitesvara Tathagata's vow to complete the twelve vows to rescue sentient beings.

Chapter Thirty-Three

The Twelve Vows of Bhaishajya-Guru-Buddha

According to The Medicine Buddha Sutra, the Buddha said to Manjusri Bodhisattva: “East of this world, past countless Buddha-lands, more numerous than the grains of sand in ten Ganges Rivers, there exists a world called Pure Lapis Lazuli. The Buddha of that world is called the Medicine Buddha Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata, Arhat, the Perfectly Enlightened, Perfect in Mind and Deed, Well Gone, Knower of the World, Unsurpassed Being, Tamer of Passions, Teacher of Gods and Men, Buddha, World Honoured One. When the World Honoured Medicine Buddha was treading the Bodhisattva path, he solemnly made Twelve Great Vows to grant sentient beings whatever they desired. Sakyamuni Buddha confirmed Manjusri Bodhisattva: “I cannot possibly describe them all, not even if I were to speak for an eon or more. However, this Buddha-land is utterly pure. You will find no temptations, no Evil Paths nor even cries of suffering there.” The Medicine Buddha Sutra also stresses on the merits and virtues of Bhaisaya-Guru and encourages sentient beings to have faith in this Buddha so that they can be reborn in the Eastern Paradise; however, the sutra never denies the Western Paradise. Sakyamuni Buddha told Manjusri in the Medicine Buddha Sutra as follows: “There are living beings who don’t distinguish good from evil, who indulge in greed and stinginess, and who know nothing of giving or its rewards. They are stupid, ignorant, and lack the foundation of faith. They accumulate much wealth and many treasures and ardently guard them. When they see a beggar coming, they feel displeased. When they have to practice an act of charity that does not benefit themselves, they feel as though they were cutting a piece of flesh from their body, and they suffer deep and painful regret. There are other innumerable avaricious and miserly living beings who hoard money and necessities that they don’t use even for themselves, how much less for their parents, wives, or servants, or for beggars! At the end of their lives, such beings will be reborn among the hungry ghosts or animals. If they heard the name of that Buddha, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, in their former human existence, and they recall that Tathagata’s name for the

briefest moment while they are in the evil destinies, they will immediately be reborn in the human realm. Moreover, they will remember their past lives and will dread the sufferings of the evil destinies. They will not delight in worldly pleasures, but will rejoice in giving and praise others who give. They will not begrudge giving whatever they have. Gradually, to those who come to beg, they will be able to give away their own head, eyes, hands, and even their entire body, to say nothing of their money and property! These beings will drift endlessly in the realms of hells, ghosts or animal, but they have a chance to hear His name. There are beings who, although they study under the Tathagata, nonetheless violate the precepts. Others, although they do not violate the precepts, nonetheless, transgress the rules and regulations. Others, although they do not violate the precepts or rules and regulations, nonetheless destroy their own proper views, nonetheless neglect learning, so they are unable to understand the profound meaning of the Sutras that the Buddha speaks. Others, although they are learned, nonetheless give rise to overweening pride. Shadowed by overweening pride, they justify themselves and disparage others, slander the Proper Dharma, and join the retinue of demons. Such fools act on their misguided views and further, cause immeasurable millions of beings to fall into pits of great danger. These beings will drift endlessly in the realms of the hells, hungry ghosts, and animals. But if they hear the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, they will be able to renounce their evil practices and cultivate wholesome Dharmas, and thereby avoid falling into the evil destinies. If those who have fallen into the evil destinies because they could not renounce their evil practices and cultivate wholesome Dharmas, by the awesome power of the past vows of that Tathagata, get to hear his name for only a moment, then after they pass out of that existence, they will be reborn again as human beings. They will hold proper views and will be ever vigorous. Their minds will be regulated and joyful, enabling them to renounce their families and leave the householder's life. They will take up and maintain study of the Tathagata's Dharma without any violation. They will understand profound meanings and yet be free from overweening pride. They will not slander the Proper Dharma and will never join the ranks of demons. They will progressively cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and will soon bring them to perfection. There are sentient beings who harbor stinginess, greed and jealousy, who praise themselves and disparage

others, they will fall into the three evil destinies for countless thousands of years where they will undergo intense suffering. After undergoing intense suffering, at the end of their lives they will be reborn in the world as oxen, horses, camels, and donkeys that are constantly beaten, afflicted by thirst and hunger, and made to carry heavy burdens along the roads. Or they may be reborn among lowly people, as slaves or servants who are always ordered around by others and who never for a moment have freedom. If such beings, in their former lives as humans, heard the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and by this good cause are able to remember it and sincerely take refuge with that Buddha, then, by means of the Buddha's spiritual power, they will be liberated from all sufferings. They will be endowed with keen faculties, and they will be wise and erudite (learn broadly). They will always seek the supreme Dharmas and encounter good friends. They will eternally sever the nets of demons and smash the shell of ignorance. They will dry up the river of afflictions and be liberated from birth, old age, sickness, death, anxiety, grief, suffering, and vexation (depression). There are beings who delight in perversity and engage in legal dispute, bringing troubles to others as well as themselves. In their actions, speech, and thoughts, they create and increase evil karma. They are never willing to benefit or forgive others, they scheme to harm one another instead. They pray and bow to the spirits of the mountains, forests, trees, and graves. They kill living beings in order to make sacrifices of blood and flesh to the Yaksa and Raksasa ghosts. They write down the names of their enemies and make images of them, and then they bewitch those names and images with evil mantras. They summon paralysis ghosts, or command corpse-raising ghosts to kill or injure their enemies. However, if the victims hear the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, then all those evil things will lose their power to do harm. The evildoers will become kind to one another. They will attain benefit, peace, and happiness and no longer cherish thoughts of malice, affliction, or enmity. Everyone will rejoice and feel content with what they have. Instead of encroaching upon each other, they seek to benefit one another. There are people among the fourfold assembly of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas, as well as other good men and women of pure faith, who accept and uphold the eight precepts either for one year or for three months, practicing and studying them. With these good roots, they may

vow to be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss where the Buddha of Limitless Life dwells, to hear the Proper Dharmas, but their resolve may not be firm. However, if they hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, then as the end of their lives draws near, before them will appear eight great Bodhisattvas, whose names are: Manjusri, Avalokitesvara (the one who observes the sounds of the world), Great Strength Bodhisattva, Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva, Jewelled Udumbara Flower, Medicine King, Medicine Superior, and Maitreya Bodhisattva. Those eight great Bodhisattvas will appear in space to show them the way, and they will naturally be born by transformation in that land, amid precious flowers. Or they may be born in the Heavens due to this cause. Although reborn in the heavens, their original good roots will not be exhausted and so they will not fall into the evil destinies again. When their life in the heavens ends, they will be born among people again. They may be wheel-turning kings, reigning over the four continents with awesome virtue and ease, bringing uncountable hundreds of thousands of living beings to abide in the practice of the ten good deeds. Or they may be born as ksatriyas, Brahmans, laymen, or sons of honorable families. They will be wealthy, with storehouses filled to overflowing. Handsome in appearance, they will be surrounded by a great retinue of relatives. They will be intelligent and wise, courageous and valiant, like great and awesome knights. If a woman hears the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and sincerely cherishes it, in the future she will never be born as a female.

According to The Medicine Buddha Sutra, the Buddha said to Manjusri Bodhisattva: "East of this world, past countless Buddha-lands, more numerous than the grains of sand in ten Ganges Rivers, there exists a world called Pure Lapis Lazuli. The Buddha of that world is called the Medicine Buddha Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata, Arhat, the Perfectly Enlightened, Perfect in Mind and Deed, Well Gone, Knower of the World, Unsurpassed Being, Tamer of Passions, Teacher of Gods and Men, Buddha, World Honoured One. When the World Honoured Medicine Buddha was treading the Bodhisattva path, he solemnly made Twelve Great Vows to grant sentient beings whatever they desired. Sakyamuni Buddha confirmed Manjusri Bodhisattva: "I cannot possibly describe them all, not even if I were to speak for an eon or more. However, this Buddha-land is utterly pure. You will find

no temptations, no Evil Paths nor even cries of suffering there.” ***The First great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme, Perfect Enlightenment, my brilliant rays will radiate to all beings or to shine upon all beings with the light from my body, illuminating infinite, countless boundless realms. This body will be adorned with the Thirty-Two Marks of Greatness and Eighty Auspicious Characteristics. Furthermore, I will enable all sentient beings to become just like me. ***The Second Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, my body, inside and out, will radiate far and wide the clarity and flawless purity of lapis lazuli. This body will be adorned with superlative virtues and dwell peacefully in the midst of a web of light more magnificent than the sun or moon. The light will awaken the minds of all beings dwelling in darkness, enabling them to engage in their pursuits according to their wishes. ***The Third Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will, with infinite wisdom and skillful means, provide all sentient beings with an inexhaustible quantity of goods to meet their material needs. They will never want for anything. ***The Fourth Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will set all who follow heretical ways upon the path to Enlightenment. Likewise, I will set those who follow the Sravaka and Pratyeka-Buddha ways onto the Mahayana path. ***The Fifth Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will help all the countless sentient beings who cultivate the path of morality in accordance with my Dharma to observe the rules of conduct (Precepts) to perfection, in conformity with the Three Root Precepts. Even those guilty of disparaging or violating the Precepts will regain their purity upon hearing my name, and avoid descending upon the Evil Paths. ***The Sixth Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, sentient beings with imperfect bodies, whose senses are deficient, who are ugly, stupid, blind, deaf, mute, crippled, hunchbacked, leprous, insane or suffering from various other illnesses, will, upon hearing my name, acquire well-formed bodies, endowed with intelligence, with all senses intact. They will be free of illness and suffering. ***The Seventh Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, sentient beings afflicted with various illnesses, with no one to help them, nowhere to turn, no

physicians, no medicine, no family, no home, who are destitute and miserable, will, as soon as my name passes through their ears, be relieved of all their illnesses. With mind and body peaceful and contented, they will enjoy home, family and property in abundance and eventually realize Unsurpassed Supreme Enlightenment. ***The Eighth Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, those women who are extremely disgusted with ‘hundred afflictions that befall women’ and wish abandon their female form, will, upon hearing my name, all be reborn as men. They will be endowed with noble features and eventually realize Unsurpassed Supreme Enlightenment. ***The Ninth Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will help all sentient beings escape from the demons’ net and free themselves from the bonds of heretical paths. Should they be caught in the thicket of wrong views, I will lead them to correct views, gradually inducing them to cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and swiftly realize Supreme, Perfect Enlightenment. ***The Tenth Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, those sentient beings who are shackled, beaten, imprisoned, condemned to death or otherwise subjected to countless miseries and humiliations by royal decree, and who are suffering in body and mind from this oppression, need only hear my name to be freed from all these afflictions, thanks to the awesome power of my merits and virtues. ***The Eleventh Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, if sentient beings who are tormented by hunger and thirst, to the point of creating evil karma in their attempts to survive, should succeed in hearing my name, recite it singlemindedly and hold fast to it, I will first satisfy them with most exquisite food and drink. Ultimately, it is through the flavor of the Dharma that I will establish them in the realm of peace and happiness. ***The Twelfth Great Vow:*** I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, if sentient beings who are utterly destitute, lacking clothes to protect them from mosquitos and flies, heat and cold, and are suffering day and night, should hear my name, recite it singlemindedly and hold fast to it, their wishes will be fulfilled. They will immediately receive all manner of exquisite clothing, precious adornments, flower garlands and incense powder, and will enjoy music and entertainment to their heart’s content.

Chapter Thirty-Four

Forty-Eight Amitabha Vows

The forty-eight vows of Amitabha that he would not enter into his final nirvana or heaven, unless all beings share it. The vows which Amitabha Buddha made while still engaged in Bodhisattva practice as Bodhisattva Dharmakara. According to Longer Amitabha Sutra, Bodhisattva Dharmakara wished to create a splendid Buddha land in which he would live when he attained Buddhahood. Also according to Amitabha Sutra (The Sutra of Infinite Life), Amitabha Buddha is foremost. This is because of the power of his vows. This power is so great that when you singlemindedly recite “Nam Mo Amitabha Buddha,” after death you can be reborn in the Western Pure Land, and become a Buddha from there. All you need to do is recite the Buddha’s name. These are original vows of Dharmakara, the would-be Buddha, or even to Sakyamuni Buddha himself, is fully expressed in the forty-eight vows in the text. Vows numbered 12 and 13 refer to the Infinite Light and the Infinite Life. “If he cannot get such aspects of Infinite Light and Life, he will not be a Buddha.” If he becomes a Buddha he can constitute a Buddha Land as he likes. A Buddha, of course, lives in the ‘Nirvana of No Abode,’ and hence he can live anywhere and everywhere. His vow is to establish the Land of Bliss for the sake of all beings. An ideal land with adornments, ideal plants, ideal lakes for receiving all pious aspirants. The eighteenth vow which is regarded as most important, promises a birth in His Land of Bliss to those who have a perfect reliance on the Buddha, believing with serene heart and repeating the Buddha’s name. The nineteenth vow promises a welcome by the Buddha himself on the eve of death to those who perform meritorious deeds. The twentieth vow further indicates that anyone who repeats his name with the object of winning a rebirth in His Land will also be received. **First**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if there would still be the planes (realms) of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, and animals in my land (When I become a Buddha, if, in my land, there are still the planes of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, or animals, I will not ultimately take up supreme enlightenment). **Second**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any

sentient beings, especially the devas and humans from my land would fall to the three miserable planes (realms) of existence in other lands. **Third**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the sentient beings, especially the devas and humans in my land would not be endowed with a complexion of genuine gold. **Fourth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if there would be such distinctions as good and ugly appearances among the sentient beings in my land, especially among the devas and humans. **Fifth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would fail to achieve the power to remember the past lives of himself and others, even events that happened hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of kalpas ago. **Sixth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would not be endowed with the deva-eye, enabling him to see hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of Buddha-lands. **Seventh**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would fail to obtain the deva-ear, enabling him to hear the Dharma expounded by another Buddha hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of leagues away. **Eighth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would not be endowed with the power of knowing others' minds, so that he would not know the mentalities of the sentient beings in hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of other Buddha-lands. **Ninth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would fail to achieve the perfect mastery of the power to appear anywhere at will, so that he would not be able to traverse hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of Buddha-lands in a flash of thought. **Tenth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would entertain even a single the notion of "I" and "mine." **Eleventh**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would not certainly achieve supreme enlightenment and realize great nirvana. **Twelfth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if my light would be so limited as to be unable to illuminate hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads (or any number) of Buddha-lands.

Thirteenth, I shall not attain enlightenment if my life span would be limited to even hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of kalpas, or any countable number of kalpas. **Fourteenth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if anyone would be able to know number of Sravakas in my land. Even if all sentient beings and Pratyekabuddhas in a billion-world universe exercised their utmost counting power to count together for hundreds of thousands of years, they would not be able to know it. **Fifteenth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land would have a limited life span, except those who are born due to their vows. **Sixteenth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my lands, especially the devas and humans, would have a bad reputation. **Seventeenth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if my land would not be praised and acclaimed by innumerable Buddhas in countless Buddha-lands. **Eighteenth**, when I realize supreme enlightenment, there will be sentient beings in the Buddha-lands who, after hearing my name, dictate their good roots to be born in my land in thought after thought. Even if they had only ten such thoughts, they will be born in my land, except for those who have performed karmas leading to Uninterrupted Hell and those who speak ill of the true Dharma or saints. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain enlightenment. **Nineteenth**, when I become a Buddha, I shall appear with an assembly of monks at the deathbeds of sentient beings of other Buddha-lands who have brought forth bodhicitta, who think of my land with a pure mind, and who dedicate their good roots to birth in the Land of Utmost Bliss. I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if I would fail to do so. **Twentieth**, when I become a Buddha, all the sentient beings in countless Buddha-lands, who, having heard my name and dedicated their good roots to be born in the Land of Utmost Bliss, will be born there. Otherwise, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. **Twenty-first**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any bodhisattva in my land would fail to achieve the thirty-two auspicious signs. **Twenty-second**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any Bodhisattvas in my land on their way to great bodhi would fail to reach the stage of being only one lifetime away from Buddhahood. This excludes those Bodhisattvas with great vows who wear the armor of vigor for the sake of sentient beings; who strive to do beneficial deeds and cultivate great nirvana; who perform the deeds of a Bodhisattva throughout all

Buddha-lands and make offerings to all Buddhas, the Tathagatas; and who establish as many sentient beings as the sands of the Ganges in supreme enlightenment. This also excludes those who seek liberation by following the path of Samantabhadra, devoting themselves to Bodhisattvas' practices even more than those who have attained the stage of being only one lifetime away from Buddhahood. *Twenty-third*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the Bodhisattvas in my land would not, by the awesome power of the Buddha, be able to make offerings to countless hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of Buddhas in other Buddha-lands every morning return to their own land before mealtime. *Twenty-fourth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the Bodhisattvas in my land would not possess every variety of offering they need to plant good roots in various Buddha-lands. *Twenty-fifth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the Bodhisattvas in my land would not be skilled in expounding the essence of the Dharma in harmony with all-knowing wisdom. *Twenty-sixth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the Bodhisattvas in my land would not have enormous strength of a Narayana. *Twenty-seventh*, when I become a Buddha, no one will be able to describe completely the articles of adornment in my land; even one with the deva-eye will not be able to know all their varieties of shape, color, and brilliance. If anyone could know and describe them all, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Twenty-eighth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if in my land there would be Bodhisattvas with inferior roots of virtue who could not know the numerous kinds of trees, four hundred thousand leagues high, which will abound in my land. *Twenty-ninth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if those sentient beings in my land who read and recite sutras and explain them to others would not acquire superb eloquence. *Thirtieth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any Bodhisattva in my land would be unable to achieve limitless eloquence. *Thirty-first*, when I become a Buddha, my land will be unequalled in brightness and purity; it will clearly illuminate countless, numberless Buddha-lands, inconceivable in number, just as a clear mirror reveals one's features. If this would not be so, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Thirty-second*, when I become a Buddha, there will be innumerable kinds of incense on land and in air within the borders of my land, and there will be hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of

myriads of precious censers, from which will rise the fragrance of the incense, permeating all of space. The incense will be superior to the most cherished incense of humans and gods, and will be used as an offering to Tathagatas and Bodhisattvas. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Thirty-third*, when I become a Buddha, sentient beings in countless realms, inconceivable and unequalled in number, throughout the ten directions who are touched by the awesome light of the Buddha will feel more secure and joyful in body and mind than other humans or gods. Otherwise, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Thirty-fourth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if Bodhisattvas in countless Buddha-lands, inconceivable and unequalled in number, would not realize the truth of non-arising and acquire dharanis after they hear my name. *Thirty-fifth*, when I become a Buddha, all the women in numberless Buddha-lands, inconceivable and unequalled in number, who, after hearing my name, acquire pure faith, bring forth bodhicitta, and are tired of the female body, will rid themselves of the female body in their future lives. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment (I refuse to enter into final nirvana or final joy until every woman who calls on my name rejoices in enlightenment and who, hating her woman's body, has ceased to be reborn as a woman). *Thirty-sixth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if Bodhisattvas in countless Buddha-lands, inconceivable and unequalled in number, who attain doctrine of non-arising after hearing my name would fail to cultivate superb, pure conduct until they attain great bodhi. *Thirty-seventh*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if, when I become a Buddha, humans and gods would not pay homage to all the Bodhisattvas of numberless Buddha-lands who, after hearing my name, prostrate themselves in obeisance to me and cultivate the deeds of Bodhisattva with a pure mind. *Thirty-eighth*, when I become a Buddha, sentient beings in my land will obtain the clothing they need as soon as they think of it, just as a man will be spontaneously clad in a monastic robe when the Buddha says, "Welcome, monk!" If this would not be the case, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Thirty-ninth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land would not at birth obtain the necessities of life and become secure, pure, and blissful in mind, like a monk who has ended all defilements. *Fortieth*, when I become a Buddha, if sentient beings in my land wish to see

other superbly adorned, pure Buddha-lands, these lands will immediately appear to them among the precious trees, just as one's face appears in a clear mirror. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. **Forty-first**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in any other Buddha-lands, after hearing my name and before attaining bodhi, would be born with incomplete organs or organs restricted in function. **Forty-second**, when I become a Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands, after hearing my name, will be able to know distinctly the name of superb samadhis. While in remaining in samadhi, they will be able to make offerings to countless, numberless Buddhas, inconceivable and unequaled in number, in a moment, and will be able to realize great samadhis instantly. If this would not be the case, I shall not attained supreme enlightenment. **Forty-third**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if, when I become Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands who has heard my name would not be born in a noble family after death. **Forty-fourth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if when become a Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands would not immediately cultivate the Bodhisattva practices, become purified and joyful, abide in equality, and possess all good roots after he hears my name. **Forty-fifth**, when I become a Buddha, Bodhisattvas in other Buddha-lands will achieve the Samadhi of Equality after hearing my name and will, without regression, abide in this samadhi and make constant offerings to an innumerable, unequaled number of Buddhas until those Bodhisattvas attain bodhi. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. **Forty-sixth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if Bodhisattvas in my land would not hear at will the Dharma they wish to hear. **Forty-seventh**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if, when I become a Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands would regress from the path to supreme enlightenment after he hears my name. **Forty-eighth**, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if, when I become a Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands would not acquire the first, the second or the third realization as soon as he heard my name, or would not instantly attain nonregression with regard to Buddha-Dharmas.

5

Part Five
Roles of Faith-Practice-Vow
In Buddhist Cultivation
(Phần Năm: Vai Trò Của Tín-Hạnh-Nguyện
Trong Tu Tập Phật Giáo)

Chapter Thirty-Five

Faith Plays An Important Role In Buddhist Cultivation

I. An Overview and Meanings of Faith in Buddhism:

Faith (Sraddha-skt) 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). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. In Buddhism, doubt means having no faith that is directed towards the Four Truths, the Three Jewels, cause and effect, and so on. When we are in doubt in the Three Jewel, we cannot advance in our path of cultivation. When we doubt the law of cause and effect, we will not hesitate to create karmas. When we are in doubt in the four truths, it is extremely difficult for us to attain liberation. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. While practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. And vow means to wish to attain Buddhahood or to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiều Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, with point of view from the Pureland, practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. This means to recite often the virtuous name “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without distraction and without chaos throughout one’s life. The Pure Land followers believe that “Vow” is with each thought that arises, there is a “love and yearning” to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World, and with each thought, there is a “wish and prayer” To achieve a place in the nine-levels of Golden Lotus. In these three components of faith, practice, and vow, it is absolutely essential for the Pureland cultivator to have all three; however, vow is the most important. The Great

Master Ou-I, the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism taught: “If Faith and Vow are solidified, when nearing death, it is possible to gain rebirth by reciting the Buddha’s name in ten recitations. In contrast, no matter how much one recites Buddha, if Faith and Vow are weak and deficient, then this will result only in reaping the merits and blessings in the Heavenly or Human realms.” However, this teaching only applies to beings with higher faculties. As for us, beings with low faculties, thin blessings and heavy karmas; if we wish to gain rebirth to the Ultimate Bliss World, we must have Faith, Practices and Vow. In other words, we must carry out both parts of Theory and Practice.

According to Buddhism, “Faith” regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. The question is to what place, faith is placed in Buddhism? Faith in Buddhism is totally different from faith in other religions. While other religions confirm that to believe means to be saved. Faith in Buddhism, in the contrary, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge, and there is nothing to do with “to believe means to be saved” in Buddhism. In Buddhism, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge that taking the three refuges and cultivating in accordance with the Buddha’s Teachings. Sincere Buddhists do not only believe in the Buddha as the noblest of Teachers, in the Buddhist Doctrines preached by Him, and in His Sangha Order, but practice His precepts in daily life. In Buddhism, there exists no “blind faith.” In no circumstances the term “believe or be damned” survives in Buddhism. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Nothing should be accepted merely on the grounds of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. We must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumors; nor writings by sages, merely because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a Deva; nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our own teachers or masters. We are to believe when the writing doctrine or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness. In other words, everything should be carefully weighed, examined and judged according to

whether it is true or false in the light of one convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected immediately, but left for further consideration.” However, according to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. Also according to Buddhism, the religious life which is evolved from faith in the teaching of others. It is that of the unintellectual type, in contrast with those whose intelligence is sharp, their religious life is evolved from practice on the teaching of others. In Buddhism, 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).

II. Faith Play An Important Role In Buddhist Cultivation:

The Important Role of Faith in Buddhism: As mentioned above, faith always plays an important role in Buddhist cultivation. Without a firm faith on Buddhist True Faith, practitioners will easily fall into the wrong views of Externalists (Outsiders). It is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharmas (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). A basic belief in Buddhism is that the world is filled with sufferings and afflictions that are caused by the desires, angers and ignorance, pride, doubt, and wrong views. If the above mentioned troubles could be removed, then the sufferings and afflictions would naturally end. However, removing the above mentioned troubles does not mean that we chase after worldly pleasures, nor does it means pessimism. According to the Buddha, most of daily life’s troubles are caused by attachment. We get angry, we worry, and we become greedy and complain bitterly. All these causes of unhappiness, tension, stubbornness and sadness are due to attachment. Thus if we want to end sufferings and afflictions, we must end attachment, no exception. However, to end attachment is not easy for in order to end attachment we must conquest ourselves. Thus the Buddha taught in the Dharmapada Sutra: “The greates of conquests is not the subjugation of others but of the self. Even though a man conquers thousands of men in battle, he who conquers himself is the

greatest of conquerors.” In fact, the ultimate goal of a Buddhist is to look inward to find his own Buddha and not outward. Thus, the goal of a Buddhist is the development of self-dependency, the ability to set oneself free of sufferings and afflictions. Buddhism is strongly against a blind belief on other forces of salvation with no basic factors. The Buddha always reminded his disciples: “You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it.”

With Buddhism, to believe religion without understanding it thoroughly, it's a blind faith, or it's not different from superstition. Even though understanding but understanding without finding to see if it's right or wrong, in accordance or not in accordance with truth, with reality, it's also a form of superstition or wrong belief. Believe that when you sow a seed of hot-pepper, you will have a hot-pepper tree and eventually you will reap hot-pepper fruit. However, even though you have already sown the seed of hot-pepper, but you realize that you don't like to eat fruit that is hot, you stop fertilizing and watering the hot-pepper tree, the tree will wither and die, and will not produce any fruit. Similarly, if you know an action is bad and unwholesome, you refuse to act, of course you will not receive any bad or unwholesome consequence. The Buddha refuses to believe that whatever happens to a person, either good or bad, is due to chance, fate or fortune. Everything that happens has a specific cause or causes and there must be some tight relationships between the cause and the effect. Those who want to believe in Buddhism should not rush to become a Buddhist with the wrong understanding or blind belief in Buddhism. You should take your time to do more researches, to ask questions, and to consider carefully before making your final decision. Religions that worship god have always considered reason and wisdom as the enemy of faith and dogma for them there exist only “believe” or “not believe” and nothing else. In fact, if we accept that there exists a so-called almighty god, we cannot accept any of the findings of modern science; neither Darwin's science of biological evolution nor the theories of the nature and evolution of the universe coming from modern physics. They believe that a so-called creator god invented humankind and the universe all at once and that these three realms of god, man and universe, all are separate. However, modern science agrees with what the Buddha taught almost twenty-six centuries ago, and proves that the universe as

one infinite process of change. Furthermore, the belief of salvation by god caused a serious danger to the whole world, especially from the first century to the end of the nineteenth century, for those who believe in the salvation of god believe that they must impose salvation on others. For this reason, Catholic countries sent their troops and priests all over the world to save others by force. And as a result, millions of people got killed or slaughtered and subjugated in the name of god. Buddhism is in contrast with other religions that believe in god. Buddhism teaches that one must develop wisdom. However, wisdom in Buddhism is not simply believing in what we are told or taught. True wisdom is to directly see and understand for ourselves. With this wisdom, people will have an open mind that listens to others' points of view rather than being closed-minded; people will also carefully examine facts that contradicts their belief rather than blindly believing. Sincere Buddhists never believe in the law of eternity. The Buddha accepts the law of impermanence or change and denies the existence of eternal substances. Matter and spirit are false abstractions that, in reality, are only changing factors or dharmas which are connected and which arise in functional dependence on each other. Thus, Buddhist faith means that the devotee accepts the Buddha as a Teacher and a Guide, His doctrine as way of life, and the Sangha community as the exemplars of this way of life. According to Buddhist point of view in faith, everyone is completely free to make his own choice in faith, no one has the right to interfere with other people's choice. Let's take a close look in the Buddha's teaching in the Kalama Sutra: "Nothing should be accepted merely on the ground of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. Everything should be weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one's own true benefits. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected but left for further considerations." Therefore, we see clearly that Buddhism is based on personal experience, rationalism, practice, morality, and insight. There is no need to propitiate gods or masters. There is no blind adherence to a faith, rigid dogmas, rituals, scriptures, or myths. The Buddha always confirmed his disciples that a salvation can only be gained by man and by man only during his life without the least help from a so-called god or gods.

The Buddha taught us to try to recognize truth, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness,

and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. Furthermore, Buddhists do not believe in god because there does not seem to be any concrete evidence to support this idea. Who can answer questions on god? Who is god? Is god masculine or feminine or neuter? Who can provide ample evidence with real, concrete, substantial or irrefutable facts to prove the existence of god? So far, no one can. Buddhists suspend judgment until such evidence is forthcoming. Besides, such belief in god is not necessary for a really meaningful and happy life. If you believe that god make your life meaningful and happy, so be it. But remember, more than two-thirds of the world do not believe in god and who can say that they don't have a meaningful and happy life? And who dare to say that those who believe in god, all have a meaningful and happy life? If you believe that god help you overcome disabilities and difficulties, so be it. But Buddhists do not accept the theological concept of salvation. In the contrary, based on the Buddha's own experience, he showed us that each human being had the capacity to purify the body and the mind, develop infinitive love and compassion and perfect understanding. He shifted the gods and heavens to the self-heart and encouraged us to find solution to our problems through self-understanding. Finally, such myths of god and creation concept has been superseded by scientific facts. Science has explained the origin of the universe completely without recourse to the god-idea.

Buddhism considers human's liberation the priority. Once the Buddha was asked by a monk named Malunkya-putta, whether the world was eternal or not eternal, whether the world was finite or infinite, whether the soul was one thing and the body another, whether a Buddha existed after death or did not exist after death, and so on, and so on. The Buddha flatly refused to discuss such metaphysics, and instead gave him a parable. "It is as if a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and yet he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know by what man I was wounded,' or 'I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know of what the arrow with which I was wounded was made.'" As a practical man he should of course get himself treated by the physician at once, without demanding these unnecessary details which would not help him in the least. This was the attitude of the Buddha toward the metaphysical speculation which do not in any way help improve ourselves in our

cultivation. The Buddha would say, “Do not go by reasoning, nor by argument.” Besides, Buddhism does not accept such practices as fortune telling, wearing magic charms for protection, fixing lucky sites for building, prophesying and fixing lucky days, etc. All these practices are considered useless superstitions in Buddhism. However, because of greed, fear and ignorance, some Buddhists still try to stick to these superstitious practices. As soon as people understand the Buddha’s teachings, they realize that a pure heart can protect them much better than empty words of fortune telling, or wearing nonsense charms, or ambiguous chanted words and they are no longer rely on such meaningless things. In Buddhism, liberation is a motto which heightens (elevates) the unfettered spirit beyond the irrational wall of conventional restriction in which the faith of each individual must be chosen by that individual and by no one else. However, the Buddha always emphasized “Try to understand thoroughly before believing, even with my teachings, for acting freely and without knowing the real meaning of whatever you act sometimes you unintentionally destroy valuable traditions of yourselves. This is the same as a diamond being thrown into the dirt.” The Buddha continued to advise: “When you do anything you should think of its consequence.” Nowadays, more than 2,500 years after the Buddha’s time, all scientists believe that every event that takes place in the world is subject to the law of cause and effect. In other words, cause is the activity and effect is the result of the activity. The Buddha described the world as an unending flux of becoming. All is changeable, continuous transformation, ceaseless mutation, and a moving stream. Everything exists from moment to moment. Everything is recurring rotation of coming into being and then passing out of existence. Everything is moving from formation to destruction, from birth to death. The matter of material forms are also a continuous movement or change towards decay. This teaching of the impermanent nature of everything is one of the most important points of view of Buddhism. Nothing on earth partakes of the character of absolute reality. That is to say there will be no destruction of what is formed is impossible. Whatever is subject to origination is subject to destruction. Change is the very constituent of reality. In daily life, things move and change between extremes and contrasts, i.e., rise and fall, success and failure, gain and loss, honor and contempt, praise and blame, and so on. No one can be sure that a “rise” does not follow with a “fall”, a success does not follow with a failure, a gain with a loss, an

honor with a contempt, and a praise with a blame. To thoroughly understand this rule of change or impermanence, Buddhists are no longer dominated by happiness, sorrow, delight, despair, disappointment, satisfaction, self-confidence and fear.

In the noble teachings of the Buddha, it is honesty, kindness, understanding, patience, generosity, forgiveness, loyalty and other good qualities that truly protect us and give us true happiness and prosperity. A man who possesses the above mentioned characteristics, that man is travelling on the Path to the Buddha's Land. It is true that Buddhahood cannot be found outside. It has no limit and not be confined in the East, West, South or North. It is in fact, in every man's mind. In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Once upon a time, there was a father who was very old and death was hovering on him. He had a little son and wanted him to be well off in the future. He hid a very valuable diamond between the hems of his son's shirt and then gave him some advice. After his father's passing away, the son forgot completely about the hidden diamond. He became poor, wandering here and there to beg for help, met with nothing but refusal. One day, he suddenly remembered about the hidden treasure left by his father, from thence he became a rich man and no longer depended on others for help."

Most of us are agreed to the fact that among all living beings, human beings are unique beings who can understand what we are and what we should be. Compared to other beings, man is most complete and superior not only in the mentality and thinking, but also in the ability of organization of social life. Human beings' life cannot be substituted nor repeated nor determined by someone else. Once we are born in this world, we have to live our own life, a meaningful and worth living life. Thus the ancient said: "Man is the most sacred and superior animal." And the Buddha taught in the Upasaka Sutra: "In all beings, man is endowed with all necessary faculties, intelligence. Besides man's conditions are not too miserable as those beings in hell, not too much pleasure as those beings in heaven. And above all, man's mind is not so ignorant as that of the animals." So man has the ability to build and improve his own life to the degree of perfection.

Superstitions & Dead Buddhism: As mentioned above, faith always plays an important role in Buddhist cultivation. Without a firm faith on Buddhist True Faith, practitioners will easily fall into the

wrong views of Superstitions & Dead Buddhism. Superstitions mean strange principles and unorthodox theories. 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., don't belong to the Buddhist teachings. Buddhism means wisdom. And, 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 the background and superstitious beliefs and rituals become predominant. Besides, those who practice 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, they are no better than those who have superstitious beliefs. They are followers of a kind of Dead Buddhism, for they themselves cause the young people to have their view the Buddhist pagoda is a nursing home, a place especially reserved for the elderly, those who lack self-confidence or who are superstitious. Furthermore, there exists a dead Buddhism when the Buddhadharma is only in talking, not in practice. It's not enough to say that we believe in the Buddha; it's better not to know the Buddhadharma than knowing it only for talking. Time flies really fast like a flying arrow, and days and months fly by like a shuttlecock. The water waves follow one after another. Life is passing quickly in the same manner. Impermanence avoids nobody, youth is followed by old age moment after moment, and we gradually return to the decay and extinction of old age and death, leaving no trace or shadow. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that if we merely believe in Buddhism without practicing, it's no better than believing in a dead Buddhism. It's like going into a restaurant and reading the menu to enjoy ourselves without ordering any food for eating. It does not benefit us in the least. Thus, we should always bear in mind that if the Way is not put in practice, it's a dead or dead-end Way; if the virtue is not achieved by cultivating, it's not a real virtue. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Do not have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Do not believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Do not believe

in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly.”

III. Ten Kinds of Bodhisattvas' Faith:

As mentioned above, faith always plays an important role in Buddhist cultivation. Without a firm faith on Buddhist True Faith, practitioners will easily fall into the wrong views of Externalists (Outsiders). Faith is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharma (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt.

1) Ten Kinds of Indestructible Bodhisattvas' Faith: Indestructible faiths are firm and indestructible beliefs. According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of indestructible faith of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supreme indestructible faith of great knowledge of Buddhas: indestructible faith in all Buddhas, in all Buddhas' teachings, in all wise and holy mendicants; in all enlightening beings, in all genuine teachers, in all sentient beings, in all great vows of enlightening beings, in all practices of enlightening beings, in honoring and serving all Buddhas, and in the skillful mystic techniques of enlightening beings.

2) Ten Grades of Bodhisattva's Faith: In the Surangama Sutra, book Eight, the Buddha reminded Ananda about the ten grades of Bodhisattva faith: the mind that resides in faith and faith which destroys illusions, remembrance (unforgetfulness or the mind that resides in mindfulness), zealous progress or the mind that resides in vigor, wisdom or the mind resides in wisdom, settled firmness on concentration or the mind that resides in samadhi, non-retrogression or the mind that resides in irreversibility, protection of the Truth or the mind that resides in protecting the Dharma, reflexive powers or the mind that resides in Making Transferences, the nirvana mind in

effortlessness or the mind that resides in precepts, action at will in anything in anywhere or the mind that resides in vows.

IV. In Faith-Practice-Vow, Faith Plays An Important Role in Cultivation in the Pure Land:

According to Most Venerable Thích Thiên Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, he emphasized that to have Faith is to believe in the following six elements: 1) What is self-faith or faith in one's self? This is to have faith that everything is created within one's mind; therefore, if a practitioner recites Buddha, then, absolutely, Buddha will receive him or her. 2) What is faith in others? This is to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. 3) What is it to have faith in causation? This is to believe that reciting Buddha is the action or cause for gaining rebirth and enlightenment. 4) What is it to believe in effect? To believe in effect means to believe that in the matter of gaining rebirth and attaining Buddhahood as the end result, or the consequence of reciting Buddha. 5) What is it to have faith in practice? To faith faith in practice means to believe in the existence of the Western Pureland and that the forms and characteristics in the Ultimate Bliss World that the Buddha spoke of it in the sutras are all true. It exists just as this Saha World really exists. 6) What is it to have faith in theory? This is to believe that "all theories are within the mind;" thus, the mind encompasses all the infinite Buddha Lands in the ten directions. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Do not have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Do not believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Do not believe in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly." In short, practitioners should believe that the Saha World is filled with sufferings; believe that the Western Pure Land is filled with immense joy; believe that ordinary beings full of evil karma, you cannot, realistically, rely on own strength or your

self-power alone to eliminate delusion completely, realize the Truth and escape Birth and Death in this very lifetime; believe that Amitabha Buddha has made a profound and lofty Vow: any sentient being who recites His name with utmost faith and sincerity, seeking rebirth in His land will, at the time of death, be received and guided to the Pure Land.

In other words, faith (Sraddha-skt) plays an extremely important role in Buddhism. It is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharma (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. In Buddhism, doubt means having no faith that is directed towards the Four Truths, the Three Jewels, cause and effect, and so on. When we are in doubt in the Three Jewel, we cannot advance in our path of cultivation. When we doubt the law of cause and effect, we will not hesitate to create karmas. When we are in doubt in the four truths, it is extremely difficult for us to attain liberation. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. While practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. And vow means to wish to attain Buddhahood or to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiền Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, with point of view from the Pureland, practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. This means to recite often the virtuous name “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without distraction and without chaos throughout one’s life. The Pure Land followers believe that “Vow” is with each thought that arises, there is a “love and yearning” to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World, and with each thought, there is a “wish and prayer” To achieve a place in the nine-levels of Golden Lotus. In these three components of faith, practice, and vow, it is absolutely essential for the Pureland cultivator to have all three; however, vow is the most important. The Great Master Ou-I, the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism taught: “If Faith and Vow are solidified, when nearing death, it is possible to gain

rebirth by reciting the Buddha's name in ten recitations. In contrast, no matter how much one recites Buddha, if Faith and Vow are weak and deficient, then this will result only in reaping the merits and blessings in the Heavenly or Human realms." However, this teaching only applies to beings with higher faculties. As for us, beings with low faculties, thin blessings and heavy karmas; if we wish to gain rebirth to the Ultimate Bliss World, we must have Faith, Practices and Vow. In other words, we must carry out both parts of Theory and Practice.

V. Practitioners and Faith in the Cultivation of Buddha Recitation:

As mentioned above, faith always plays an important role in Buddhist cultivation. Without a firm faith on Buddhist True Faith, practitioners will easily fall into the wrong views of Externalists (Outsiders). Faith is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharmas (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. The religious life which is evolved from faith in the teaching of others. It is that of the unintellectual type, in contrast with those whose intelligence is sharp, their religious life is evolved from practice on the teaching of others.

1) Five Faiths in the Pure Land: Faith means an attitude of belief in the Buddha and his teachings, and devote oneself to cultivate those teachings. Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is

always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. There are five kinds of faith in the Pure Land: First, Faith in others: What is faith in others? This is to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. Second, Faith in causation: What is it to have faith in causation? This is to believe that reciting Buddha is the action or cause for gaining rebirth and enlightenment. Third, Faith in effect: What is it to believe in effect? To believe in effect means to believe that in the matter of gaining rebirth and attaining Buddhahood as the end result, or the consequence of reciting Buddha. Fourth, Faith in practice: What is it to have faith in practice? To have faith in practice means to believe in the existence of the Western Pureland and that the forms and characteristics in the Ultimate Bliss World that the Buddha spoke of it in the sutras are all true. It exists just as this Saha World really exists. Fifth, Faith in theory: What is it to have faith in theory? This is to believe that “all theories are within the mind;” thus, the mind encompasses all the infinite Buddha Lands in the ten directions.

2) *Six Elements in Faith:* According to Most Venerable Thích Thiên Tâm in *The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism*, he emphasized that to have Faith is to believe in the following six elements: First, Self-Faith or faith in self. What is self-faith or faith in one's self? This is to have faith that everything is created within one's mind; therefore, if a practitioner recites Buddha, then, absolutely, Buddha will receive him or her. Second, Faith in Others or trust others. What is faith in others? This is to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. Third, Faith in Causation or to believe in the cause. What is it to have faith in causation? This is to believe that reciting Buddha is the action or cause for gaining rebirth and enlightenment. Fourth, Faith in Effect or faith in the result. What is it to believe in effect? To believe in effect means to believe that in the matter of gaining rebirth and attaining Buddhahood as the end result, or the consequence of reciting Buddha. Fifth, Faith in Practice. What is it to have faith in practice? To

faith faith in practice means to believe in the existence of the Western Pureland and that the forms and characteristics in the Ultimate Bliss World that the Buddha spoke of it in the sutras are all true. It exists just as this Saha World really exists. Sixth, Faith in Theory. What is it to have faith in theory? This is to believe that “all theories are within the mind;” thus, the mind encompasses all the infinite Buddha Lands in the ten directions.

3) Faith-Interpretation-Performance-Evidence: All Buddhist teachings are expedient. Thus, it can be said that rebirth in the Pure Land depends on four conditions of Faith-Interpretation-Performance-Evidence, or on two conditions of Faith and Vows, or even one condition of Faith, as the one contains all and all is contained in the one. The formula to be used depends on the audience and the time. The aim is to enable sentient beings to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land as a middle point toward Buddhahood. Faith, interpretation, performance, and evidence or realization of the fruit of Buddha’s doctrine. The Pure Land Sect believes that during this Dharma-Ending Age, it is difficult to attain enlightenment and emancipation in this very life if one practices other methods without following Pure Land at the same time. If emancipation is not achieved in this lifetime, one’s crucial vows will become empty thoughts as one continues to be deluded on the path of Birth and Death. Devoted Buddhists should always be very cautious, not to praise one’s school and downplay other schools. Devoted Buddhists should always remember that we all are Buddhists and we all practice the teachings of the Buddha, though with different means, we have the same teachings, the Buddha’s Teachings; and the same goal, emancipation and becoming Buddha. Faith (belief) regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. Interpretation means the awakening is to achieve a level of insight and understanding equal to that of the Buddha through Zen meditation or Buddha recitation. Awakening is to see one’s nature, to comprehend the true nature of things, or the Truth. However, only after becoming a Buddha can one be said to have attained Supreme Enlightenment or attained the Way. According to the Pureland Buddhism, practice means one must recite the Amitabha Buddha with the utmost sincerity to the point of achieving one-mind or single-minded recitation in order to establish the unimaginable connections and having the Buddha rescue and deliver the cultivator to the Western Pureland after death.

Great Master Shan-Tao taught: “If you wish to study meaning to understand the Dharma, you should study all Dharmas, from the mundane level to the level of the Buddhas. However, if you want to engage in 'practice,' you should choose a method compatible with the Truth as well as your own capacities and level and then concentrate on it earnestly. Only then can you reap benefits swiftly. Otherwise, even if you spend many eons, you will not be able to escape Birth and Death.” Knowledge derived from any sources but memory, i.e., knowledge from perception, from feelings, from sensing, etc. Devoted cultivators should always remember that to have “proof of rebirth in the Pure Land” does not mean that you know the day and time you will die, or see some so-called auspicious signs for externalists can guess such thing. Real “proof of rebirth in the Pure Land” is that from now on we must be earnest in our cultivation, practicing Zen in the morning, performing good deeds at noon, and reciting Amitabha Buddha’s name at night.

4) Pure Land Practitioners: Faith in Others-Other Power and Self-Power: Faith in others means to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. The power or strength of another (external power, power of another), especially that of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, obtained through faith in Mahayana salvation. The Pure Land sect believes that those who continually recite the name of Amitabha Buddha, at the time of death, will be reborn in his Pure Land. Tariki is associated with Pure Land traditions, which is based on the notion that “in the final dharma age, sentient beings are no longer capable of bringing about their own salvations (liberations), and so must rely on the saving grace of Amitabha Buddha.” Tariki is commonly opposed to “Jiriki” or “own power,” which involves engaging in meditation and other practices aimed at the attainment of liberation. Tariki is said by the Pure Land traditions to be an “easy path,” since one is saved by the power of Amitabha Buddha, while “Jiriki” is a “difficult path” because it relies on personal efforts. Those who believe in other power (reliance of the power or strength of another), especially that of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, rely on faith in Mahayana salvation. This is the only guideline for those who trust to salvation by faith, contrasted with those who seek salvation by works, or by their own strength. According to Masters Chih-I and T’ien-Ju in the Pure Land Buddhism, with regard to other-power, if anyone believes in the power of Amitabha Buddha’s compassionate vow to rescue sentient beings and then develops the Bodhi-Mind, cultivates the Buddha Remembrance (Recitation) Samadhi, grows weary of his temporal, impure body in the Triple Realm, practices charity, upholds the precepts and performs other meritorious deeds, dedicating all the merits and virtues to rebirth in the Western Pure Land, his aspirations and the Buddha’s

response will be in accord. Relying thus on the Buddha's power, he will immediately achieve rebirth. In 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang said: "As far as the Consciousness, Zen and Sutra Studies methods are concerned, even if you pursue them all your life, you will find it difficult to grasp their profound essence. Even if you do, you will have to sever delusive karma completely to escape Birth and Death. When speaking of this, I fear that your dream will not come true and will remain just that, a dream!" Thus, in my compendium, I frequently refer to the sutras and commentaries that should be read, how to go about reading them and the difficulty of benefitting from the Consciousness, Zen and Sutra Studies methods. This is because the Pure Land method calls upon the compassionate power of Amitabha Buddha or other power, while other methods rely on self-power, self-cultivation alone.

5) *Practitioners and Faith in Buddha Recitation:* According to Buddhism, "Faith" regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. The question is to what place, faith is placed in Buddhism? Faith in Buddhism is totally different from faith in other religions. While other religions confirm that to believe means to be saved. Faith in Buddhism, in the contrary, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge, and there is nothing to do with "to believe means to be saved" in Buddhism. In Buddhism, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge that taking the three refuges and cultivating in accordance with the Buddha's Teachings. Sincere Buddhists do not only believe in the Buddha as the noblest of Teachers, in the Buddhist Doctrines preached by Him, and in His Sangha Order, but practice His precepts in daily life. In Buddhism, there exists no "blind faith." In no circumstances the term "believe or be damned" survives in Buddhism. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Nothing should be accepted merely on the grounds of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. We must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumors; nor writings by sages, merely because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a Deva; nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our own teachers or masters. We are to believe when the writing doctrine or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness. In other words, everything should be carefully weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one's convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected immediately, but left for further consideration." 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). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. In Buddhism, doubt means having no faith that is directed towards the Four Truths, the Three Jewels, cause and effect, and so on. When we are in doubt in the Three Jewel, we cannot advance in our path of cultivation. When we doubt the law of cause and effect, we will not hesitate to create karmas. When we are in doubt in the four truths, it is extremely difficult for us to attain liberation. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. While practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. And vow means to wish to attain Buddhahood or to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, with point of view from the Pureland, practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. This means to recite often the virtuous name “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without distraction and without chaos throughout one’s life. The Pure Land followers believe that “Vow” is with each thought that arises, there is a “love and yearning” to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World, and with each thought, there is a “wish and prayer” To achieve a place in the nine-levels of Golden Lotus. In these three components of faith, practice, and vow, it is absolutely essential for the Pureland cultivator to have all three; however, vow is the most important. The Great Master Ou-I, the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism taught: “If Faith and Vow are solidified, when nearing death, it is possible to gain rebirth by reciting the Buddha’s name in ten recitations. In contrast, no matter how much one recites Buddha, if Faith and Vow are weak and deficient, then this will result only in reaping the merits and blessings in the Heavenly or Human realms.” However, this teaching only applies to beings with higher faculties. As for us, beings with low faculties, thin blessings and heavy karmas; if we wish to gain rebirth to the Ultimate Bliss World, we must have Faith, Practices and Vow. In other words, we must carry out both parts of Theory and Practice. For Pure Land practitioners, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name.

Chapter Thirty-Six

Zen Practitioners 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 believe from the depths of his heart, his belief produces power. His faith cannot be said to be true until he attains such a mental state. 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.

Chapter Thirty-Seven

Roles of Faith in the Pure Land School

I. A Summary of the Dharma Door of Buddha Recitation:

The doctrine or wisdom of Buddha regarded as the door (method) to enlightenment. The teaching of the Buddha. The meaning is that the dharma is something like a gate, because through it sentient beings attain the enlightenment. As the living have 84,000 delusions, so the Buddha provides 84,000 methods of dealing with them. Knowing that the spiritual level of sentient beings is totally different from one another, the Buddha had allowed his disciples to choose any suitable Dharma they like to practice. A person can practice one or many dharmas, depending on his physical conditions, his free time, since all the dharmas are closely related. Practicing Buddhist Dharma requires continuity, regularity, faith, purpose and determination. Laziness and hurriedness are signs of failure. There is only one path leading to Enlightenment, but, since people differ greatly in terms of health, material conditions, intelligence, character and faith, the Buddha taught more than one path leading to different stages of attainment such as stage of Hearers, that of Pratyeka-buddhas, that of Bodhisattvas, that of laymen, and that of monks and nuns. All of these ways are ways to the Buddhahood. Nobody can reach final attainment without following a path, and no enlightenment can be reached without studying, understanding and practicing. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm in Pure Land Buddhism in Theory and Practice, Buddha Recitation does not consist of oral recitation alone, but also includes contemplation and meditation.

The true intention of Sakyamuni Buddha, when He appeared in the world to preach the Dharma and rescue sentient beings, was for all beings to escape Birth and Death and attain Enlightenment immediately. However, because sentient beings were all of differing capacities and thus could not entirely meet His transcendental expectations, so the Buddha resorted to one expedient after another, all of them adapted to the individual capacities of sentient beings. To those of the highest capacities, the Buddha taught the path of the Buddhas, showing them the Self-Nature directly so that they might

attain Buddhahood in one lifetime, as in the case of Sudhana in the Avatamsaka Sutra or the Dragon Princess in the Lotus Sutra. To those of more modest capacities, the Buddha taught the Bodhisattva, Pratyeka Buddha and Arhat paths, so that they might reach Buddhahood through step-by-step cultivation. To those of still lower capacities, the Buddha taught the Five Precepts and the Ten Virtues. In 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang said: "These methods, high or low, some leading to swift liberation, others to gradual liberation, are all different. However, they all require self-power and deep cultivation to escape from the cycle of Birth and Death and reach the Self-Nature. If even a trace delusion of views or delusion of thought remains, the root of Birth and Death cannot be extirpated. This being the case, even if the cultivator's powers of concentration and wisdom are profound, he will continue to revolve in the cycle of Birth and Death. Only at the level of the Arhats are the roots of Birth and Death completely severed. However, transcending Birth and Death is merely the small fruit of the Arhats; the cultivator must still aim for the path of Great Bodhi, relying on his Vow to be reborn in the worlds of the ten directions. He may then cultivate the six paramitas and the ten thousand conducts, in order to achieve Buddhahood and rescue sentient beings. In this manner, he will gradually achieve the fifty-two stages of Bodhisattvahood, up to the level of Wonderful Enlightenment, before finally reaching Buddhahood." Pure Land practitioners should always keep in mind that in the midst of this Dharma-Ending Age, there are very few good spiritual advisors, while the capacities of sentient beings are limited. It is difficult enough to find someone who is awakened to the Way, not to mention one who has truly attained Enlightenment? Knowing that sentient beings would find it extremely difficult to achieve liberation by relying on self-power alone, Sakyamuni Buddha taught, in addition to other methods, the special approach of Pure Land. With this method, as long as their Faith and Vows are true and earnest, even those who have committed the Five Grave Offenses or the Ten Evil Acts, may, on the verge of death, when the mark of the hells appear, follow the advice of a good spiritual advisor and recite the Buddha's name one to ten times; then, thanks to the compassionate power of Amitabha Buddha, even they will be received and guided to the Pure Land, not to mention those who practice wholesome deeds and do not commit transgressions! 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 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. Besides, 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 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang said: "To receive true benefits in this very life, the practitioner should follow the Pure Land method, reciting the Buddha's name with Faith and Vows, seeking rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Escape from the realms of Birth and Death will then be assured. Otherwise, not only will those who have not received the true transmission of the Dharma fail to achieve liberation, even those who have received it will have no hope of achieving liberation! This is because to receive the true transmission of the Dharma is to awaken to the Way, but not to attain Enlightenment. Only by attaining Enlightenment, at the Arhat level or above, will you escape the cycle of Birth and Death. Awakening to the Way is still within that cycle. Cultivating other methods requires severance of karmic obstructions and attainment of the Truth before you can escape Birth and Death. With the Pure Land method, you need only recite the Buddha's name with deep Faith and earnest Vows, while ceasing transgressions and performing good deeds, thus engaging simultaneously in the main and subsidiary practices in order to be assured of rebirth in the Western Pure Land. In fact, the highest level of rebirth will be achieved. Not only are those who have perfected Pure Land practice assured of rebirth, even those guilty of the Five Grave Offenses and the Ten Evil Acts can also achieve it, as long as, on the verge of death, they awaken, become utterly ashamed of their transgressions, grow frightened and recite the Buddha's name in utmost sincerity. This is because Amitabha Buddha has great, all-embracing compassion and considers it His calling to rescue sentient beings. Anyone who sincerely seeks His assistance will be gathered and rescued. This is called 'taking one's karma along to the Pure Land, through the power of Amitabha

Buddha.' In this Dharma-Ending Age, if you cultivate other methods, abandoning the Dharma Door or Pure Land, you can only reap merits and blessings in the celestial and human realms or sow the causes and conditions of liberation in future eons. This is because few in this day and age truly have the strength to sever all karmic obstructions. Therefore, the roots of Birth and Death continue to exist. Under these circumstances, how can you prevent the dream-like seeds of Birth and Death from sprouting anew?" According to the Pure Land School, the more diligently the cultivator engages in wholesome conduct and the deeper his power of concentration, the higher his level of rebirth will be. He will see Amitabha Buddha soon after rebirth and be able to hear the wonderful Dharma. Therefore, even those who have awakened the Way, severed delusion and attained the Truth should dedicate all merits toward rebirth in the Pure Land, seeking perfect attainment of the Dharma Body and swift attainment of Buddhahood. Despite its loftiness, the Pure Land Dharma Door is a very easy method of cultivation. For this reason, not only do ordinary beings find it difficult to believe, but cultivators of the Two Vehicles (Theravada followers) also harbor doubts. This applies even to Bodhisattvas at the expedient level. Only those who have sown the wholesome seeds of Pure Land in previous lives as well as the higher level Bodhisattvas can truly have firm and deep Faith in it.

According to the Pure Land School, Buddha recitation means to repeat the name of a Buddha audibly or inaudibly, or visualization of the Buddha's auspicious marks. It is to say to depend upon or dependence on the Amitabha Buddha, who confers his strength on all who seek it and upholds them; it implies prayer, because of obtaining the Buddha's power and transferring it to others. In general it means to aid or to support. By the aid of Buddha to enter the Pure Land. Sentient beings are reborn in the Pure Land owing to the assistance of the following Buddhas; the guidance of our original teacher, Sakyamuni Buddha, and his teachings, and the welcoming and escorting of Amitabha Buddha. 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. According to the “Uninterrupted Cultivation” method of the the Second Patriarch of Chinese Pureland Buddhism, the Great Venerable Master Sen-Tao, in order for recitation to be considered a “Singlemindedness Buddha Recitation,” it is necessary to have the following criteria: body must often prostrate to Amitabha Buddha, and not prostrate in a random or disorderly way; mouth must often recite the virtuous name of Amitabha Buddha, and not recite in a random and disorderly way; and mind must often think of Amitabha Buddha, and not think in a random and disorderly way. There are many different methods of Buddha Recitation, such as oral recitation of Amitabha Buddha’s name; visualization or contemplation of Amitabha Buddha’s auspicious marks and those enlightening beings of the Pure Land; cultivation of Practices of the ten great vows of Samantabhadra, and so on. In fact, Buddha Recitation is one of the most important koans for Buddhist cultivators. The koan of Buddha Recitation uses the invocation of Amitabha Buddha as a koan. At the very moment the name is uttered, it must be the focal point in respect to which all doubts and delusions are laid aside. At the same time you ask “Who is this person reciting the Amitabha’s name?” When you rely steadily on the koan, all illusions and confused thoughts will be broken down the way knotted threads are cut. When there is no longer any place for them to reappear, it is like the shining sun in the sky. When illusion does not arise and delusions disappear, the mind is all calm and transparent. 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.” 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.”

II. An Overview of Faith in the Pure Land School:

According to Buddhism, “Faith” regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. The question is to what place, faith is placed in Buddhism? Faith in Buddhism is totally different from faith in other religions. While other religions confirm that to believe means to be saved. Faith in Buddhism, in the contrary, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge, and there is nothing to do with “to believe means to be saved” in Buddhism. In Buddhism, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge that taking the three refuges and cultivating in accordance with the Buddha’s Teachings. Sincere Buddhists do not only believe in the Buddha as the noblest of Teachers, in the Buddhist Doctrines preached by Him, and in His Sangha Order, but practice His precepts in daily life. In Buddhism, there exists no “blind faith.” In no circumstances the term “believe or be damned” survives in Buddhism. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Nothing should be accepted merely on the grounds of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. We must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumors; nor writings by sages, merely because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a Deva; nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our own teachers or masters. We are to believe when the writing doctrine or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness. In other words, everything should be carefully weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected immediately, but left for further consideration.”

III. Practitioners and Faith in Buddha Recitation:

1) *Five Faiths in the Pure Land:* Faith means an attitude of belief in the Buddha and his teachings, and devote oneself to cultivate those teachings. Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees,

appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. There are five kinds of faith in the Pure Land: **First**, Faith in others: What is faith in others? This is to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. **Second**, Faith in causation: What is it to have faith in causation? This is to believe that reciting Buddha is the action or cause for gaining rebirth and enlightenment. **Third**, Faith in effect: What is it to believe in effect? To believe in effect means to believe that in the matter of gaining rebirth and attaining Buddhahood as the end result, or the consequence of reciting Buddha. **Fourth**, Faith in practice: What is it to have faith in practice? To have faith in practice means to believe in the existence of the Western Pureland and that the forms and characteristics in the Ultimate Bliss World that the Buddha spoke of it in the sutras are all true. It exists just as this Saha World really exists. **Fifth**, Faith in theory: What is it to have faith in theory? This is to believe that “all theories are within the mind;” thus, the mind encompasses all the infinite Buddha Lands in the ten directions.

2) *Six Elements in Faith*: According to Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, he emphasized that to have Faith is to believe in the following six elements: **First**, Self-Faith or faith in self. What is self-faith or faith in one's self ? This is to have faith that everything is created within one's mind; therefore, if a practitioner recites Buddha, then, absolutely, Buddha will receive him or her. **Second**, Faith in Others or trust others. What is faith in others? This is to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. **Third**, Faith in Causation or to believe in the cause. What is it to have faith in causation? This is to believe that reciting Buddha is the action or cause for gaining rebirth and enlightenment. **Fourth**, Faith in Effect or faith in the

result. What is it to believe in effect? To believe in effect means to believe that in the matter of gaining rebirth and attaining Buddhahood as the end result, or the consequence of reciting Buddha. **Fifth**, Faith in Practice. What is it to have faith in practice? To have faith in practice means to believe in the existence of the Western Pureland and that the forms and characteristics in the Ultimate Bliss World that the Buddha spoke of it in the sutras are all true. It exists just as this Saha World really exists. **Sixth**, Faith in Theory. What is it to have faith in theory? This is to believe that “all theories are within the mind;” thus, the mind encompasses all the infinite Buddha Lands in the ten directions.

3) *Faith-Interpretation-Performance-Evidence*: All Buddhist teachings are expedient. Thus, it can be said that rebirth in the Pure Land depends on four conditions of Faith-Interpretation-Performance-Evidence, or on two conditions of Faith and Vows, or even one condition of Faith, as the one contains all and all is contained in the one. The formula to be used depends on the audience and the time. The aim is to enable sentient beings to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land as a middle point toward Buddhahood. Faith, interpretation, performance, and evidence or realization of the fruit of Buddha’s doctrine. The Pure Land Sect believes that during this Dharma-Ending Age, it is difficult to attain enlightenment and emancipation in this very life if one practices other methods without following Pure Land at the same time. If emancipation is not achieved in this lifetime, one’s crucial vows will become empty thoughts as one continues to be deluded on the path of Birth and Death. Devoted Buddhists should always be very cautious, not to praise one’s school and downplay other schools. Devoted Buddhists should always remember that we all are Buddhists and we all practice the teachings of the Buddha, though with different means, we have the same teachings, the Buddha’s Teachings; and the same goal, emancipation and becoming Buddha. Faith (belief) regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. **Faith** means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. **Interpretation** means the awakening is to achieve a level of insight and understanding equal to that of the Buddha through Zen meditation or Buddha recitation. Awakening is to see one’s nature, to comprehend the true nature of things, or the Truth. However, only after becoming a Buddha can one be said to have attained Supreme Enlightenment or attained the Way. According to the Pureland Buddhism, **practice** means one must recite the Amitabha Buddha with the utmost sincerity to the point of achieving one-mind or single-minded

recitation in order to establish the unimaginable connections and having the Buddha rescue and deliver the cultivator to the Western Pureland after death. Great Master Shan-Tao taught: “If you wish to study meaning to understand the Dharma, you should study all Dharmas, from the mundane level to the level of the Buddhas. However, if you want to engage in ‘practice,’ you should choose a method compatible with the Truth as well as your own capacities and level and then concentrate on it earnestly. Only then can you reap benefits swiftly. Otherwise, even if you spend many eons, you will not be able to escape Birth and Death.” Knowledge derived from any sources but memory, i.e., knowledge from perception, from feelings, from sensing, etc. Devoted cultivators should always remember that to have **“proof of rebirth in the Pure Land”** does not mean that you know the day and time you will die, or see some so-called auspicious signs for externalists can guess such thing. Real “proof of rebirth in the Pure Land” is that from now on we must be earnest in our cultivation, practicing Zen in the morning, performing good deeds at noon, and reciting Amitabha Buddha’s name at night.

4) *Pure Land Practitioners: Faith in Others-Other Power and Self-Power:* Faith in others means to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. The power or strength of another (external power, power of another), especially that of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, obtained through faith in Mahayana salvation. The Pure Land sect believes that those who continually recite the name of Amitabha Buddha, at the time of death, will be reborn in his Pure Land. Tariki is associated with Pure Land traditions, which is based on the notion that “in the final dharma age, sentient beings are no longer capable of bringing about their own salvations (liberations), and so must rely on the saving grace of Amitabha Buddha.” Tariki is commonly opposed to “Jiriki” or “own power,” which involves engaging in meditation and other practices aimed at the attainment of liberation. Tariki is said by the Pure Land traditions to be an “easy path,” since one is saved by the power of Amitabha Buddha, while “Jiriki” is a “difficult path” because it relies on personal efforts. Those who believe in other power (reliance of the power or strength of another), especially that of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, rely on faith in Mahayana salvation. This is the only guideline for those who trust to salvation by faith, contrasted with those who seek salvation by works, or by their own strength. According to Masters Chih-I and T’ien-Ju in the Pure Land Buddhism, with regard to other-power, if anyone believes in the power of Amitabha Buddha’s compassionate vow to rescue sentient beings and then develops the Bodhi-Mind, cultivates the Buddha Remembrance (Recitation) Samadhi, grows weary of his temporal, impure body in the Triple Realm, practices charity, upholds the precepts and performs other meritorious

deeds, dedicating all the merits and virtues to rebirth in the Western Pure Land, his aspirations and the Buddha's response will be in accord. Relying thus on the Buddha's power, he will immediately achieve rebirth. In 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang said: "As far as the Consciousness, Zen and Sutra Studies methods are concerned, even if you pursue them all your life, you will find it difficult to grasp their profound essence. Even if you do, you will have to sever delusive karma completely to escape Birth and Death. When speaking of this, I fear that your dream will not come true and will remain just that, a dream!" Thus, in my compendium, I frequently refer to the sutras and commentaries that should be read, how to go about reading them and the difficulty of benefitting from the Consciousness, Zen and Sutra Studies methods. This is because the Pure Land method calls upon the compassionate power of Amitabha Buddha or other power, while other methods rely on self-power, self-cultivation alone.

5) *Practitioners and Faith in Buddha Recitation:* According to Buddhism, "Faith" regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. The question is to what place, faith is placed in Buddhism? Faith in Buddhism is totally different from faith in other religions. While other religions confirm that to believe means to be saved. Faith in Buddhism, in the contrary, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge, and there is nothing to do with "to believe means to be saved" in Buddhism. In Buddhism, faith means acceptance in the believe and knowledge that taking the three refuges and cultivating in accordance with the Buddha's Teachings. Sincere Buddhists do not only believe in the Buddha as the noblest of Teachers, in the Buddhist Doctrines preached by Him, and in His Sangha Order, but practice His precepts in daily life. In Buddhism, there exists no "blind faith." In no circumstances the term "believe or be damned" survives in Buddhism. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Nothing should be accepted merely on the grounds of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. We must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumors; nor writings by sages, merely because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a Deva; nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our own teachers or masters. We are to believe when the writing doctrine or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness. In other words, everything should be carefully weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one's convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be

rejected immediately, but left for further consideration.” 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). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. In Buddhism, doubt means having no faith that is directed towards the Four Truths, the Three Jewels, cause and effect, and so on. When we are in doubt in the Three Jewel, we cannot advance in our path of cultivation. When we doubt the law of cause and effect, we will not hesitate to create karmas. When we are in doubt in the four truths, it is extremely difficult for us to attain liberation. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. While practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. And vow means to wish to attain Buddhahood or to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, with point of view from the Pureland, practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. This means to recite often the virtuous name “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without distraction and without chaos throughout one’s life. The Pure Land followers believe that “Vow” is with each thought that arises, there is a “love and yearning” to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World, and with each thought, there is a “wish and prayer” To achieve a place in the nine-levels of Golden Lotus. In these three components of faith, practice, and vow, it is absolutely essential for the Pureland cultivator to have all three; however, vow is the most important. The Great Master Ou-I, the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism taught: “If Faith and Vow are solidified, when nearing death, it is possible to gain rebirth by reciting the Buddha’s name in ten recitations. In contrast, no matter how much one recites Buddha, if Faith and Vow are weak and deficient, then this will result only in reaping the merits and blessings in the Heavenly or Human realms.” However, this teaching only applies to beings with higher faculties. As for us, beings with low faculties, thin blessings and heavy karmas; if we wish to gain rebirth to the Ultimate Bliss World, we must have Faith, Practices and Vow. In other words, we must carry out both parts of Theory and Practice. For Pure Land practitioners, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name.

Chapter Thirty-Eight

Bodhisattvas' Practice Plays An Important Role In Buddhist Cultivation

I. An Overview of of Bodhisattva's Practices in Buddhism:

Conduct or practice plays an extremely important role in Buddhism for conduct or behavior means practice. In Buddhism, the function of mental factor intention is to move our mind toward an object, to perceive and realize it. Thus mental factors intention is the basis for all our wishes (wishing in body, speech and mind). Practice also means to cultivate or to start out for bodhi-mind to act out one's vows to save all living beings (all beings possess Tathagata-garbha nature and can become a Buddha; therefore, vow to save them all). According to Buddhism, everywhere and at all time, Buddhist cultivators should always keep the firm conduct in cultivation, our actions must be in accordance with "Prajna" at all time. In Buddhist cultivation, cultivation of Bodhisttvas' practices can help practitioners who cultivate in accordance with the Bodhisattva Path to be in line with the patient endurance of the uncreate (anutpattika-dharma-ksanti). They were able to turn the wheel of the Law that never turns back. Being able to interpret the (underlying nature of) phenomena, they knew very well the roots (propensities) of all living beings; they surpassed them all and realized fearlessness. They had cultivated their minds by means of merits and wisdom with which they embellished their physical features which were unsurpassable, thus giving up all earthly adornments. Their towering reputation exceeded the height of Mount Sumeru.

II. Bodhisattvas' Practice Plays An Important Role In Buddhist Cultivation:

***According to the Lotus Sutra, There Are Ten Practices of
Respects of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva:*** *First*, worship and respect all Buddhas. *Second*, praise the Thus Come Ones. *Third*, make abundant offerings. *Fourth*, repent misdeeds and hindrances. *Fifth*, rejoice at others' merits and virtues. *Sixth*, request the Buddha to turn

the Dharma Wheel. *Seventh*, request the Buddha to remain in the world. *Eighth*, follow the teachings of the Buddha at all times. *Ninth*, accommodate and benefit all sentient beings. *Tenth*, transfer merits and virtues universally. ***Ten Principles of Universally Good Which Enlightening Beings Have According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38:*** *First*, vowing to live through all future ages. *Second*, vowing to serve and honor all Budhas of the future. *Third*, vowing to settle all sentient beings in the practice of Universally Good Enlightening Beings. *Fourth*, vowing to accumulate all roots of goodness. *Fifth*, vowing to enter all ways of transcendence. *Sixth*, vowing to fulfill all practices of Enlightening Beings. *Seventh*, vowing to adorn all worlds. *Eighth*, vowing to be born in all Buddha-lands. *Ninth*, vowing to carefully examine all things. *Tenth*, vowing to attain supreme enlightenment in all Buddha-lands.

In the Surangama Sutra, the Buddha Reminded Ananda About the Ten Necessary Activities, or Practices of a Bodhisattva: *The first practice is the conduct of happiness:* The practice of joyful service, or giving joy. The Buddha told Ananda: “Ananda! After these good men have become sons of the Buddha, they are replete with the limitlessly many wonderful virtues of the Thus Come Ones, and they comply and accord with beings throughout the ten directions. This is called the conduct of happiness.” *The second practice is the conduct of benefitting:* The practice of beneficial service, or beneficial practice. The Buddha told Ananda: “Being well able to accommodate all living beings is called the conduct of benefitting.” *The third practice is the conduct of non-opposition:* The practice of never resenting, or non-opposition. The Buddha told Ananda: “Enlightening oneself and enlightening others without putting forth any resistance is called the conduct of non-opposition.” *The fourth practice is the conduct of endlessness:* The practice of indomitability, or without limit in helping others. The Buddha told Ananda: “To undergo birth in various forms continuously to the bounds of the future, equally throughout the three periods of time and pervading the ten directions is called the conduct of endlessness.” *The fifth practice is the conduct of freedom from deluded confusion:* The practice of nonconfusion. The Buddha told Ananda: “When everything is equally in accord, one never makes mistakes among the various dharma doors. This is called the conduct of freedom from deluded confusion.” *The sixth practice is the conduct of*

wholesome manifestation: The practice of good manifestation, or appearing in any form at will to save sentient beings. The Buddha told Ananda: “Then within what is identical, myriad differences appear; the characteristics of every difference are seen, one and all, in identity. This is called the conduct of wholesome manifestation.” *The seventh practice is the conduct of non-attachment:* The practice of nonattachment, or unimpeded practice. The Buddha told Ananda: “This continues until it includes all the dust motes that fill up empty space throughout the ten directions. In each and every mote of dust there appear the worlds of the ten directions. And yet the appearance of worlds do not interfere with one another. This is called the conduct of non-attachment.” *The eighth practice is the conduct of veneration:* The practice of exalting the paramitas amongst all beings, or the practice of that which is difficult to attain. The Buddha told Ananda: “Everything that appears before one is the foremost paramita. This is called the conduct of veneration.” *The ninth practice is the conduct of wholesome Dharma:* The practice of good teaching, or perfecting the Buddha-law by complete virtue. The Buddha told Ananda: “With such perfect fusion, one can model oneself after all the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is called the conduct of wholesome dharma.” *The tenth practice is the conduct of true actuality:* The practice of truth, or manifest in all things the pure, final and true reality. The Buddha told Ananda: “To then be pure and without outflows in each and every way is the primary truth, which is unconditioned, the essence of the nature. This is called the conduct of true actuality.”

Chapter Thirty-Nine

Vow Plays An Important Role In Buddhist Cultivation

I. An Overview & Meanings of Resolve in Buddhism:

Resolve or aspiration refers to the fulfillment of religious vows and developing a correct attitude toward religious practice. A bodhisattva vow, which is the first step on the way to enlightenment. A vow to oneself as self-dedication, usually bodhisattva vows above to seek Bodhi and below to save beings or to save all beings before benefiting from his own enlightenment or entering into nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism, “Praniddhana” is the seventh in the tenfold list of Paramitas that a Bodhisattva cultivates during the path to Buddhahood. Vow is something that comes from the heart and soul, a deep rooted promise, swearing to be unrelenting in seeking to attain a goal. This is having a certain mind-set or something one wishes to achieve and never give up until the objective is realized. Thus, there should be absolutely no reason whatsoever that should cause one to regress or give up that vow or promise. Sincere Buddhists should vow to follow the teachings to cultivate to become Buddhas, then to use the magnificent Dharma of enlightenment of the Buddhas and vow to give them to all sentient beings to abandon their ignorance to cross over to enlightenment, to abandon delusion to follow truths. Devoted Buddhists should always vow: “Awaken mind with a longing for Bodhicitta, deeply believe in the law of Cause and Effect, recite Mahayana sutras, encourage other cultivators and save other sentient beings.”

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give them to all sentient beings to abandon their ignorance to cross over to enlightenment, to abandon delusion to follow truths. According to the Pureland Buddhism, Vow is to wish sincerely, praying to find liberation from the sufferings of this saha World, to gain rebirth to the peaceful Ultimate Bliss World. According to the Pure Land Sect, devout Buddhists should make vow to benefit self and others, and to fulfil the vow so as to be born in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. This is the third of the five doors or ways of entering the Pure Land. Devoted Buddhists should always vow: “Awaken mind with a longing for Bodhicitta, deeply believe in the law of Cause and Effect, recite Mahayana sutras, encourage other cultivators and save other sentient beings.”

The power of vows eradicates heavy karma, wipes away all illnesses of mind and body at their karmic source, subdues demons and can move gods and humans to respect. Thus, devoted Buddhists should be issued from the realm of the Buddha-teaching, always accomplish the preservation of the Buddha-teaching, vow to sustain the lineage of Buddhas, be oriented toward rebirth in the family of Buddhas, and seek omniscient knowledge. All Buddhists want to cross the sea of sufferings and afflictions while vows are like a boat which can carry them across the sea of birth and death to the other shore of Nirvana. Some Buddhists learn to practice special vows from Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, Medicine Buddha or Amitabha Buddha, etc. This is good, but these vows are still their special vows. We must make our own vows. When set up our own vows that means we have our own aim to reach in cultivation. Besides, once we have made our vows, even if we want to slack off in our cultivation, we won't dare, because the vows were already sealed in our mind.

II. Roles of Cultivation of Bodhisattvas' Vows In the Spirit of the Flower Adornment Sutra:

Vow plays an important role in Buddhist cultivation for resolve or aspiration refers to the fulfillment of religious vows and developing a correct attitude toward religious practice. A bodhisattva vow, which is the first step on the way to enlightenment A vow to oneself as self-dedication, usually bodhisattva vows above to seek Bodhi and below to save beings or to save all beings before benefiting from his own enlightenment or entering into nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism,

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First, Roles of Cultivation of Ten Principles of Universally Good of Enlightening Beings: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten principles of Universally Good which Enlightening Beings have. *First*, vowing to live through all future ages. *Second*, vowing to serve and honor all Buddhas of the future. *Third*, vowing to settle all sentient beings in the practice of Universally Good Enlightening Beings. *Fourth*, vowing to accumulate all roots of goodness. *Fifth*, vowing to enter all ways of transcendence. *Sixth*, vowing to fulfill all practices of Enlightening Beings. *Seventh*, vowing to adorn all worlds. *Eighth*, vowing to be born in all Buddha-lands. *Ninth*, vowing to carefully examine all things. *Tenth*, vowing to attain supreme enlightenment in all Buddha-lands.

Second, Roles of Cultivation of Ten Pure Vows of Great Enlightening Beings: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 18, there are ten pure vows of Enlightening Beings: *First*, vow to develop living beings to maturity, without wearying. *Second*, vow to fully practice all virtues and purify all worlds. *Third*, vow to serve the enlightened, always engendering honor and respect. *Fourth*, vow to keep and protect the true teaching, not begrudging their lives. *Fifth*, vow to observe with wisdom and enter the lands of the Buddhas. *Sixth*, vow to be of the same essence as all Enlightening Beings. *Seventh*, vow to enter the door of realization of Thusness and comprehend all things. *Eighth*, vow that those who see them will develop faith and all be benefited. *Ninth*, vow to stay in the world forever by spiritual power. *Tenth*, vow to fulfill the practice of Universal Good and master the knowledge of all particulars and all ways of liberation.

Third, Roles of Cultivation of Ten Kinds of Unimpeded Function Relating to Vows of Great Enlightening Beings: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of unimpeded function relating to vows of Great Enlightening Beings: *First*, make the vows of all Enlightening Beings

their own vows. *Second*, manifest themselves attaining enlightenment by the power of the vow of attaining of enlightenment of all Buddhas. *Third*, attain supreme perfect enlightenment themselves in accordance with the sentient beings they are teaching. *Fourth*, never end their great vows, throughout all eons, without bounds. *Fifth*, detaching from the body of discriminating consciousness and not clinging to the body of knowledge, they manifest all bodies by free will. *Sixth*, give up their own bodies to fulfill the aspirations of others. *Seventh*, edify all sentient beings without giving up their great vows. *Eighth*, cultivate the deeds of Enlightening Beings in all ages, yet their great vows never end. *Ninth*, manifest the attainment of true enlightenment in a minute point (a pore), pervade all Buddha-lands by the power of vowing, and show this to each and every sentient beings in untold worlds. *Tenth*, explain a phrase of teaching, throughout all universes, raising great clouds of true teaching, flashing the lightning of liberation, booming the thunder of truth, showering the rain of elixir of immortality, fulfilling all sentient beings by the power of great vows.

Fourth, Roles of Cultivation of Ten Inexhaustible Vows (Dasanishthapada (skt): Ten Inexhaustible Vows to be made by the Bodhisattva at the Stage of Joy. The vows are called “inexhaustible” because their objectives are of such nature. Because all the ten worlds will never come to an end, and as long as they continue to exist, the Bodhisattva will never put forward his great vows with energy and determination. *The first world* is the world of beings. *The second world* is this world. *The third world* is the space. *Fourth*, the world where Dharma prevails. *The fifth world* is the Nirvana-world. *The sixth world* is the world where the Buddha is born. *The Seventh world* is the world of Tathagata-knowledge. *The eighth world* is the world as the object of thought. *Ninth*, the world as the object of Buddha-knowledge. *The tenth world* is the world where this worldly life, the Dharma and the Buddha-knowledge are evolved.

Fifth, Roles of Cultivation of Ten Principles (abiding) Which Help Enlightening Beings to Fulfill Their Great Vows: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 18, there are ten principles (abiding) which help Enlightening Beings to fulfill their great vows. When Enlightening Beings fulfill these vows, they will attain ten inexhaustible treasures. *First*, never wearying in mind. *Second*, preparing great adornments. *Third*, remembering the superlative will power of enlightening beings. *Fourth*, when hearing about the Buddha-lands, vowing to be born in them all. *Fifth*, keep their profound determination everlasting. *Sixth*, vowing to develop all living beings fully. *Seventh*, staying through all ages without considering it troublesome. *Eighth*, accepting all suffering without aversion. *Ninth*, having no craving or attachment to any pleasures. *Tenth*, always diligently protecting the unexcelled teaching.

Chapter Forty

Roles of Faith, Practice, and Vow In Cultivation According to the Pure Land

I. Faith, Practice, and Vow According to the Pure Land:

According to Most Venerable Thích Thiên Tâm in *The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism*, he emphasized that to have Faith is to believe in the following six elements: 1) What is self-faith or faith in one's self? This is to have faith that everything is created within one's mind; therefore, if a practitioner recites Buddha, then, absolutely, Buddha will receive him or her. 2) What is faith in others? This is to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. 3) What is it to have faith in causation? This is to believe that reciting Buddha is the action or cause for gaining rebirth and enlightenment. 4) What is it to believe in effect? To believe in effect means to believe that in the matter of gaining rebirth and attaining Buddhahood as the end result, or the consequence of reciting Buddha. 5) What is it to have faith in practice? To faith faith in practice means to believe in the existence of the Western Pureland and that the forms and characteristics in the Ultimate Bliss World that the Buddha spoke of it in the sutras are all true. It exists just as this Saha World really exists. 6) What is it to have faith in theory? This is to believe that "all theories are within the mind;" thus, the mind encompasses all the infinite Buddha Lands in the ten directions. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Do not have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Do not believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Do not believe in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly."

Faith, Vows and Practice form the cornerstone of Pure Land School. If these three conditions are fulfilled, rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss will be achieved. Practitioners should pay particular attention to Faith and Vows, and wish wholeheartedly to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land, and not as a celestial being or Dharma Master, however awakened, as these are still within the realm of Birth and Death. Only then will practitioners' Faith and Vows reach Amitabha Buddha so His Compassionate Vow may embrace you. Generally speaking, the tenets of the Pure Land method are Faith, Vows, and Practice. Only with true Faith and earnest Vows can Practice be assiduous and pure. However, the most common problem of ordinary people is to be diligent and earnest when catastrophe strikes but lax and remiss in normal times. According to Great Master Yin-Kuang, the Thirteenth Patriarch of Chinese Pure Land School, this is a truth as solid as steel, even if a thousand Buddhas were to appear on earth, it would not change. Only by firmly believing in this truth will you have a destiny in the Western Pure Land. In "Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang," the Pure Land method embraces people of all capacities, gathering in those of high as well as low capacities. It is the great Dharma of the Tathagata, whereby He provides an expedient enabling both sages and ordinary beings to achieve liberation from Birth and Death and reach the stage of non-retrogression in this very lifetime. Not to believe in and practice this sublime, special Dharma is truly regrettable, a great pity indeed! The main tenets of Pure Land are Faith, Vows and Practice. ***The first criterion is Faith:*** You should believe that the Saha World is filled with sufferings; believe that the Western Pure Land is filled with immense joy; believe that ordinary beings full of evil karma, you cannot, realistically, rely on own strength or your self-power alone to eliminate delusion completely, realize the Truth and escape Birth and Death in this very lifetime; believe that Amitabha Buddha has made a profound and lofty Vow: any sentient being who recites His name with utmost faith and sincerity, seeking rebirth in His land will, at the time of death, be received and guided to the Pure Land. ***The second criterion is Vow:*** You should aspire to transcend this world and achieve rebirth in that Ultimately Blissful Land as soon as possible. ***The third criterion is Practice:*** You should practice Buddha Recitation in all earnestness and sincerity, without a moment's lapse, paying respect and reciting morning and evening

before the altar. You can establish an intensive or leisurely schedule depending on your own circumstances. Living in current period is no different from lying peacefully on a huge pile of dried wood under which a fire has already started. Though it has not yet reached the body, in no time flames and smoke will cover everything, leaving no possibility of escape. If you are indifferent or careless, remiss in seeking help through reciting the Buddha's name, your understanding and perception are shallow indeed! Pure Land practitioners should keep in mind that the main tenets of the Pure Land method are Faith, Vows and Practice. Like a three-legged incense burner, if it lacks one leg, it cannot stand. If you, practitioners, diligently practiced Buddha Recitation and have no more doubts about the first criterion of Faith. However, if you still attach to the idea that there is a dichotomy between Vows and Practice, you cannot have complete understanding and synthesis. Thus, within the unimpeded, perfect and wonderful Dharma, there suddenly arise numerous impediments and obstacles, causing the bright moon, adorned with ten thousand halos of Elder Master Ch'e-Wu, Chien-Mi and Ou-I to pull apart and divide. All this is due simply to a fine silk thread before your eyes. How regrettable! The true Pure Land practitioner always fully combines the three criteria of Faith, Vows and Practice during recitation. He is like an infant longing for his mother. When, lonely and crying, he searches for her, he certainly never lacks Faith or the desire (Vow) to see her. According to the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism, the Great Master Ou-I: "Achieving rebirth in the Pure Land depends entirely on Faith and Vows, while the level of rebirth depends on the depth of practice. If Faith and Vow are solidified, when nearing death, it is possible to gain rebirth by reciting the Buddha's name in ten recitations. In contrast, no matter how much one recites Buddha, if Faith and Vow are weak and deficient, then this will result only in reaping the merits and blessings in the Heavenly or Human realms." However, this teaching only applies to beings with higher faculties. As for us, beings with low faculties, thin blessings and heavy karmas; if we wish to gain rebirth to the Ultimate Bliss World, we must have Faith, Practices and Vow. In other words, we must carry out both parts of Theory and Practice. Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. According to The Pureland

Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. According to the Pureland Buddhism, practice means one must recite the Amitabha Buddha with the utmost sincerity to the point of achieving one-mind or single-minded recitation in order to establish the unimaginable connections and having the Buddha rescue and deliver the cultivator to the Western Pureland after death. There are two kinds of practices: Practice based on the teaching of Dharma, and practice based on belief. According to the point of view from the Pureland, practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. This means to recite often the virtuous name “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without distraction and without chaos throughout one’s life. Vow is something that comes from the heart and soul, a deep rooted promise, swearing to be unrelenting in seeking to attain a goal. This is having a certain mind-set or something one wishes to achieve and never give up until the objective is realized. Thus, there should be absolutely no reason whatsoever that should cause one to regress or give up that vow or promise. Sincere Buddhists should vow to follow the teachings to cultivate to become Buddhas, then to use the magnificent Dharma of enlightenment of the Buddhas and vow to give them to all sentient beings to abandon their ignorance to cross over to enlightenment, to abandon delusion to follow truths. According to the Pureland Buddhism, Vow is to wish sincerely, praying to find liberation from the sufferings of this saha World, to gain rebirth to the peaceful Ultimate Bliss World. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiên Tâm in *The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism*, with point of views of the Pureland, vow is with each thought that arises, there is a “love and yearning” to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World, and with each thought, there is a “wish and prayer” To achieve a place in the nine-levels of Golden Lotus. In these three components of faith, practice, and vow, it is absolutely essential for the Pureland cultivator to have all three; however, vow is the most important. The Buddha’s Original Vows refer to the Amitabha Buddha’s Forty-eight Great Vows, which He made while He was still a Maha-Bodhisattva named Dharma Store (Dharmakara) cultivating for Buddhahood. One of His vows was if any sentient being recites His name from ten to one hundred times upon death, He will come and deliver that being to the

Ultimate Bliss World. In all of His vows, He always ended with the same line: “If this does not happen, I vow not to attain the Ultimate Enlightenment.” That was in the past, the Dharma Store Maha-Bodhisattva is now a Buddha (Amitabha Buddha); thus, this means his vows have all come true. Anyone who has Faith, Vow, and Practice is guaranteed to gain rebirth to His Pureland. According to Buddhism, the relative truth, or the truth of the unreal, which is subject to change, manifests ‘stillness but is always illuminating,’ which means that it is immanent in everything. Pure Land thinkers accepted the legitimacy of conventional truth as an expression of ultimate truth and as a vehicle to reach Ultimate Truth. This method of basing on form helps cultivators reach the Buddhahood, which is formless.

II. In Faith-Practice-Vow, Faith Plays An Important Role in Cultivation in the Pure Land:

Faith (Sradha-skt) 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). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. In Buddhism, doubt means having no faith that is directed towards the Four Truths, the Three Jewels, cause and effect, and so on. When we are in doubt in the Three Jewel, we cannot advance in our path of cultivation. When we doubt the law of cause and effect, we will not hesitate to create karmas. When we are in doubt in the four truths, it is extremely difficult for us to attain liberation. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. While practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. And vow means to wish to attain Buddhahood or to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiệu Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, with point of view from the Pureland, practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. This means

to recite often the virtuous name “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without distraction and without chaos throughout one’s life. The Pure Land followers believe that “Vow” is with each thought that arises, there is a “love and yearning” to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World, and with each thought, there is a “wish and prayer” To achieve a place in the nine-levels of Golden Lotus. In these three components of faith, practice, and vow, it is absolutely essential for the Pureland cultivator to have all three; however, vow is the most important. The Great Master Ou-I, the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism taught: “If Faith and Vow are solidified, when nearing death, it is possible to gain rebirth by reciting the Buddha’s name in ten recitations. In contrast, no matter how much one recites Buddha, if Faith and Vow are weak and deficient, then this will result only in reaping the merits and blessings in the Heavenly or Human realms.” However, this teaching only applies to beings with higher faculties. As for us, beings with low faculties, thin blessings and heavy karmas; if we wish to gain rebirth to the Ultimate Bliss World, we must have Faith, Practices and Vow. In other words, we must carry out both parts of Theory and Practice.

III. Pure Land Practitioners and Pleasant Practice of the Vow:

According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha gave instructions to all Bodhisattvas on Pleasant practice of the vow as follows: “The pleasant practice of the vow means to have a spirit of great compassion. A Bodhisattva should beget a spirit of great charity toward both laymen and monks, and should have a spirit of great compassion for those who are not yet Bodhisattvas but are satisfied with their selfish idea of saving only themselves. He also should decide that, though those people have not inquired for, nor believed in, nor understood the Buddha’s teaching in this sutra, when he has attained Perfect Enlightenment through his transcendental powers and powers of wisdom he will lead them to abide in this Law.” According to the Pure Land Sect, devout Buddhists should make vow to benefit self and others, and to fulfil the vow so as to be born in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. This is the third of the five doors or ways of entering the Pure Land. Devoted Buddhists should always vow: “Awaken mind with a longing for Bodhicitta, deeply believe in the law of Cause and Effect, recite Mahayana sutras, encourage other cultivators and save other sentient beings.” Vow is something that

comes from the heart and soul, a deep rooted promise, swearing to be unrelenting in seeking to attain a goal. This is having a certain mind-set or something one wishes to achieve and never give up until the objective is realized. Thus, there should be absolutely no reason whatsoever that should cause one to regress or give up that vow or promise. Sincere Buddhists should vow to follow the teachings to cultivate to become Buddhas, then to use the magnificent Dharma of enlightenment of the Buddhas and vow to give them to all sentient beings to abandon their ignorance to cross over to enlightenment, to abandon delusion to follow truths. According to the Pureland Buddhism, Vow is to wish sincerely, praying to find liberation from the sufferings of this saha World, to gain rebirth to the peaceful Ultimate Bliss World. The power of vows eradicates heavy karma, wipes away all illnesses of mind and body at their karmic source, subdues demons and can move gods and humans to respect. Thus, devoted Buddhists should be issued from the realm of the Buddha-teaching, always accomplish the preservation of the Buddha-teaching, vow to sustain the lineage of Buddhas, be oriented toward rebirth in the family of Buddhas, and seek omniscient knowledge. All Buddhists want to cross the sea of sufferings and afflictions while vows are like a boat which can carry them across the sea of birth and death to the other shore of Nirvana. Some Buddhists learn to practice special vows from Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, Medicine Buddha or Amitabha Buddha, etc. This is good, but these vows are still their special vows. We must make our own vows. When set up our own vows that means we have our own aim to reach in cultivation. Besides, once we have made our vows, even if we want to slack off in our cultivation, we won't dare, because the vows were already sealed in our mind. According to the Pure Land Sect, there are two main aspects to making the joyous vows of "rescuing oneself and others." The practitioner should clearly realize the goal of rebirth: *First, the practitioner should clearly realize the goal of rebirth:* The goal of our cultivation is to seek escape from suffering for him/herself and all sentient beings. He/She should think thus: 'My own strength is limited, I am still bound by karma; moreover, in this evil, defiled life, the circumstances and conditions leading to afflictions are overpowering. That is why other sentient beings and myself are drowning in the river of delusion, wandering along the evil paths from time immemorial. The wheel of birth and death is spinning without end;

how can I find a way to rescue myself and others in a safe, sure manner? There is but one solution, it is to seek rebirth in the Pure Land, draw close to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and relying on the supremely auspicious environment of that realm, engaging in cultivation and attain the Tolerance of Non-Birth. Only then can I enter the evil world to rescue sentient beings. The Treatise on Rebirth states: “To develop the Bodhi-Mind is precisely to seek Buddhahood; to seek Buddhahood is to develop the Mind of rescuing sentient beings; and the Mind of rescuing sentient beings is none other than the Mind that gathers all beings and helps them achieve rebirth in the Pure Land. *Second, ensure of rebirth in the Pure Land:* Moreover, to ensure rebirth, we should perfect two practices; first is abandoning the three things that hinder enlightenment, second is abiding by the three things that foster enlightenment. How can we abandon the things that hinder enlightenment and abide by the things that foster enlightenment? It is precisely by seeking rebirth in the Western Pure Land, remaining constantly near the Buddhas and cultivating the Dharmas until Tolerance of Non-Birth is reached. At that point, we may sail the boat of great vows at will, enter the sea of Birth and Death and rescue sentient beings with wisdom and compassion ‘adapting to conditions but fundamentally unchanging,’ free and unimpeded. What causes Abandoning the three things that hinder enlightenment? The Mind of seeking our own peace and happiness, ego-grasping and attachment to our own bodies. The practitioner should follow the path of wisdom and leave all such thoughts far behind. The Mind of abandoning and failing to rescue sentient beings from suffering. The practitioner should follow the path of compassion and leave all such thoughts far behind. The Mind of exclusively seeking respect and offerings, without seeking ways to benefit sentient beings and bring them peace and happiness. The practitioner should follow the path of expedients and leave all such thoughts far behind. What causes Obtaining the three things that foster enlightenment? Undefined Pure Mind: The ‘Undefined Pure Mind’ of not seeking personal happiness, that is enlightenment is the state of undefiled purity. If we seek after personal pleasure, body and Mind are defiled and obstruct the path of enlightenment. Therefore, the undefiled Pure Mind is called consonant with enlightenment. Pure Mind at Peace: The ‘Pure Mind at Peace,’ rescuing all sentient beings from suffering. This is because Bodhi is the undefiled Pure Mind which gives peace and happiness to sentient beings. If we are not rescuing sentient beings and helping them escape the sufferings of Birth and death, we are going to counter to Bodhi path. Therefore, a Mind focussed on saving others, bringing them peace and happiness, is call consonant with enlightenment. Blissful Pure Mind: A ‘Blissful Pure Mind,’ seeking to help sentient beings achieve Great Nirvana.

Because Great Nirvana is the ultimate, eternally blissful realm. If we do not help sentient beings achieve it, we obstruct the Bodhi path. Hence the Mind which seeks to help sentient beings attain eternal bliss is called consonant with enlightenment. Next, Pure Land cultivators should contemplate the wholesome characteristics of the Pure Land and auspicious features of Amitabha Buddha: **First**, Contemplate the auspicious features of Amitabha Buddha: Pure Land cultivators should contemplate the auspicious features of Amitabha Buddha. Amitabha Buddha possesses a resplendent, golden Reward Body, replete with 84,000 major characteristics, each characteristic having 84,000 minor auspicious signs, each sign beaming 84,000 rays of light which illuminate the entire Dharma Realm and gather in those sentient beings who recite the Buddha's name. **Second**, Pure Land cultivators should contemplate the wholesome characteristics in the Western Pure Land: The Western Pure Land is adorned with seven treasures, as explained in the Pure Land sutras. In addition, when practicing charity, keeping the precepts and performing all kinds of good deeds, Pure Land practitioners should always dedicate the merits toward rebirth in the Pure Land for themselves and all other sentient beings. Finally, Practitioners of Buddha Recitation should vow to be reborn in the Pure Land:

I vow that at the moment of death, there will be no obstacles
 Amitabha Buddha will welcome from afar
 Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara will shower sweet dew on my head
 Bodhisattva Mahastham-prapta will bring
 a lotus blossom for my feet.
 In a split second, I will leave the turbid world
 Reaching the Pure Land in the time it takes to extend my arms.
 When the lotus blossom opens, I will see Amitabha,
 the compassionate
 Hearing the profound dharma, I will be enlightened
 And reach tolerance of non-birth
 I will then return to the Saha World,
 without leaving the Pure Land
 Through all kinds of expedients, I will help sentient beings
 Always taking earthly toil as Buddha work
 This is my vow, please accept it
 And help me fulfill it in the future.

IV. Cultivation of Faith-Practice-Vow According to the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism, the Great Master Ou-I:

According to the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism, the Great Master Ou-I: "If Faith and Vow are solidified, when nearing death, it is possible to gain rebirth by reciting the Buddha's name in ten recitations. In contrast, no

matter how much one recites Buddha, if Faith and Vow are weak and deficient, then this will result only in reaping the merits and blessings in the Heavenly or Human realms.” However, this teaching only applies to beings with higher faculties. As for us, beings with low faculties, thin blessings and heavy karmas; if we wish to gain rebirth to the Ultimate Bliss World, we must have Faith, Practices and Vow. In other words, we must carry out both parts of Theory and Practice. Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. According to the Pureland Buddhism, practice means one must recite the Amitabha Buddha with the utmost sincerely to the point of achieving one-mind or single-minded recitation in order to establish the unimaginable connections and having the Buddha rescue and deliver the cultivator to the Western Pureland after death. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, with point of view from the Pureland, practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. This means to recite often the virtuous name “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without distraction and without chaos throughout one’s life. Vow is something that comes from the heart and soul, a deep rooted promise, swearing to be unrelenting in seeking to attain a goal. This is having a certain mind-set or something one wishes to achieve and never give up until the objective is realized. Thus, there should be absolutely no reason whatsoever that should cause one to regress or give up that vow or promise. Sincere Buddhists should vow to follow the teachings to cultivate to become Buddhas, then to use the magnificent Dharma of enlightenment of the Buddhas and vow to give them to all sentient beings to abandon their ignorance to cross over to enlightenment, to abandon delusion to follow truths. According to the Pureland Buddhism, Vow is to wish sincerely, praying to find liberation from the sufferings of this saha World, to gain rebirth to the peaceful Ultimate Bliss World. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, with point of views of the Pureland, vow is with each thought that arises, there is a “love and yearning” to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World, and with each thought, there is a “wish and prayer” To achieve a place in the nine-levels of Golden Lotus. In these three components of faith, practice, and vow, it is absolutely essential for the Pureland cultivator to have all three; however, vow is the most important.

Chapter Forty-One

Roles of Practitioners' Practices & Vows on the Path of Cultivation Which Is In Accordance With the Bodhisattva Ideal

After mighty and terrible struggles with himself, the Buddha had conquered in his body all those natural defects and human appetites and desires that prevent our ability of seeing the truth. He had to overcome all the bad influences of the sinful world around Him. Like a soldier fighting desperately in battle against many enemies, He struggled like a hero who conquers, he eventually gained his objects. So, after cultivation in accordance with the Bodhisattvas' Path for many many lives, the Buddha eventually confirmed that the Bodhisattvas' Path itself is the only path leading practitioners who follow the Bodhisattva Ideal to bodhi and Buddhahood. In Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha taught: "Doers of what is hard are the Bodhisattvas, the great beings who have set out to win supreme enlightenment. They do not wish to attain their own private Nirvana. On the contrary, they have surveyed the highly painful world of being, but they do not tremble at birth-and-death. They have set out for the benefit of the world, for the peace and happiness of the world. They have resolved, and yet desirous to win supreme enlightenment, they do not tremble at birth and death. They have set out for the benefit of the world, for the ease of the world, out of pity for the world. They have resolved: 'We will become a shelter for the world, a refuge for all beings, the world's place of rest, the final belief of all beings, islands of the world, lights of the world, leaders of the world, the world's means of salvation. According to Buddhism, a Bodhisattva is an enlightener of sentient beings. For Bodhisattvas' ideal, he or she usually vows to take the enlightenment that he has been certified as having attained and the wisdom that he has uncovered to enlighten all other sentient beings. A Bodhisattva's job is not easy at all. Though his appearance is not rare as that of a Buddha, but it is extremely difficult for a Bodhisattva to appear, and it is also extremely difficult for ordinary people to encounter a real Bodhisattva. According to the Buddha in The Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, Detachment from the World, Great

Enlightening Beings have ten ways of entry into the state of Enlightening Beings: *First*, entering into fundamental vows. *Second*, entering into practices. *Third*, entering into precepts. *Fourth*, entering into ways of transcendence. *Fifth*, entering into attainment. *Sixth*, entering into different undertakings. *Seventh*, entering into various understanding. *Eighth*, entering into adornment of Buddha-lands. *Ninth*, entering into the command of spiritual powers. *Tenth*, entering into manifestation of incarnation. Devout Buddhists should always remember that entering the state of mind of a Nirvana as the Buddha taught does not mean to renounce the world and to enter into a temple as a monk or nun, but it means to enter into practicing well-being exercises that are linked to established daily life patterns, makes our lives more peaceful. Devout Buddhists should always remember the goal of any Buddhist cultivator is to achieve self-enlightening, that is examining with one's own intelligence, and not depending upon another; enlightening or awakening of others, then achieve the final accomplishment, to go beyond the cycle of births and deaths, that is to reach the state of mind of a Nirvana right in this very life. These are the very ideal of Bodhisattvas. In other words, the ideal path of a Bodhisattva is to benefit self and benefit others, leading to Buddhahood; and above to seek bodhi, below to transform all beings. Practitioners who cultivate the Bodhisattva's Practices will always try to find ways to fearlessly break the false and make manifest the right. Practitioners must always live and cultivate forty Bodhisattvas' Minds In the Brahma-Net Sutra. Besides, practitioners also cultivate the Bodhicitta, cultivate things that lead the mind to the cutting off of all affairs. Practitioners also meditate on four kinds of mindfulness on a daily basis to lead the mind to a peaceful state where there exists no more sufferings and afflictions. On this path, contemplation of the Sunyata contributes a great deal to the perfection of the aim of the Bodhisattva Ideal of practitioners.

(A) Concepts of the Bodhisattva Ideal & Cultivation in Buddhism

According to Buddhism, Bodhisattva is a Sanskrit term for an Enlightened Being. This is the one whose essence is bodhi whose

wisdom is resulting from direct perception of Truth with the compassion awakened thereby. Enlightened being who is on the path to awakening, who vows to forego complete enlightenment until he or she helps other beings attain enlightenment. A Sanskrit term which means “Awakening being” or a “being of enlightenment,” or “one whose essence is wisdom,” or “a being who aspires for enlightenment.” This is the ideal of Mahayana Buddhism. The beginning of the bodhisattva’s career is marked by the dawning of the “mind of awakening” (Bodhi-citta), which is the resolve to become a Buddha in order to benefit others. So, Bodhisattva is considered as a human being with his own karmas at his very birth as all other creatures, but he can be able to get rid of all his inner conflicts, including bad karmas and sufferings, and external crises, including environments, calamities and other dilemma, can change this unfortunate situation and can make a peaceful, prosperous and happy world for all to live in together by using his effort and determination in cultivating a realistic and practical way without depending on external powers. In Mahayana literature, this is commonly followed by a public ceremony of a vow to attain Buddhahood (Pranidhana) in order to benefit other sentient beings. That is to say: “Above to seek bodhi, below to save (transform) beings.” This is one of the great vows of a Bodhisattva. After that point the bodhisattva pursues the goal of Buddhahood by progressively cultivating the six, sometimes ten, “perfections” (Paramita): generosity, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom. The two primary qualities in which the Bodhisattva trains are compassion and wisdom, and when the perfections are fully cultivated and compassion and wisdom developed to their highest level, the Bodhisattva becomes a Buddha. The Bodhisattva path is commonly divided into ten levels (Bhumi). The term Bodhisattva is not, however, confined solely to Mahayana Buddhism: in Theravada, Sakyamuni Buddha is referred to as “Bodhisatta” (Bodhisattva) in the past lives described in the Jatakas, during which he is said to have gradually perfected the good qualities of a Buddha. In the Mahayana sense, however, the Bodhisattva concept is an explicit rejection of Nikaya Buddhism’s ideal religious paradigm, the Arhat. In Mahayana the Arhat is characterized as limited and selfish, concerned only with personal salvation, in contrast to the Bodhisattva, who works very hard for all sentient beings. So the term “Bodhisattva” in general, means a “Bodhi being”. It denotes a being who is destined to obtain fullest Enlightenment or Buddhahood.

According to the Digha Nikaya, literally, a “Bodhisattva” means one who is an intellectual, or one who is resolved or maintained only to the paths that lead to enlightenment. Several centuries after the Buddha’s parinirvana, Bodhisattva is one of the most important ideas of Mahayana Buddhists. However, the concept was not a sole creation of the Mahayana. The term “Bodhisattva” had been mentioned in the Pali Canon and it stems from the original Pali Buddhism which is used more or less exclusively to designate Sakyamuni Buddha prior to His Enlightenment. According to Sarvastivada school, “Bodhisattva” is defined as a person who is certain to become a Buddha. He is a person who is born of wisdom and protected and served by the wise. According to the Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita, nothing real is meant by the word “Bodhisattva,” because a Bodhisattva trains himself in non-attachment to all dharmas. For the Bodhisattva, the great being awakes in non-attachment to full enlightenment in the sense that he understands all the dharmas, because he has enlightenment as his aim, an enlightened being. In short, a Bodhisattva is an enlightener of sentient beings. He usually vows to take the enlightenment that he has been certified as having attained and the wisdom that he has uncovered to enlighten all other sentient beings. A Bodhisattva’s job is not easy at all. Though his appearance is not rare as that of a Buddha, but it is extremely difficult for a Bodhisattva to appear, and it is also extremely difficult for ordinary people to encounter a real Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva is a Mahasattva as defined in Sanscrit language. ‘Maha’ means ‘great’ and ‘sattva’ means either ‘being’ or ‘courage’. Nagarjuna gives a number of reasons why Bodhisattvas are called ‘great beings’. It is because they achieve a great work, stand at the head of a great many beings, activate great friendliness and great compassion, save a great number of beings. The Tibetans translate Mahasattvas as ‘great spiritual hero’ and their aspirations are truly on a heroic scale. They desire to discipline all beings everywhere, to serve and honor all the Buddhas everywhere. They want to retain firmly in their minds all the teachings of the Buddhas, to have a detailed knowledge of all the Buddha-fields to comprehend all the assemblies which anywhere gather around a Buddha, to plunge into the thoughts of all beings, to remove their defilements and to fathom their potentialities. In other words, Mahasattva is like Bodhisattva who will be able to eliminate all his bad karmas and sufferings and will show the emancipation way to all beings with all skills by his compassion. A

Bodhisattva is the one who benefits himself to help others. A great creature, having a great or noble essence, or being. Mahasattva is a perfect bodhisattva, greater than any other being except a Buddha. Also great being is one with great compassion and energy, who brings salvation to all living beings. In the beginning of the *Astasahasrika Prajna paramita*, the Buddha explained the meaning of 'Mahasattva' (great being) when Subhuti asked about it. The Buddha says that a Bodhisattva is called 'a great being' in the sense that he will demonstrate Dharma so that the great errors should be forsaken, such erroneous views as the assumption of a self, a being, a living soul, a person, of becoming, of not becoming, of annihilation, of eternity, of individuality, etc. According to the *Saddharmapundarika Sutra*, Mahasattvas have good qualities and method of practice paramita and under many hundred thousands of Buddhas had planted the roots of goodness. In the Theravada Buddhism, a Bodhisattva is a person in the school of the elders who is desirous of acquiring the characteristics of a perfect being, the enlightened one. It appears as such in the Pali Nikayas. The accomplishment of such a state makes him content. But the ideal of Mahayana induces him to greater effort based on dynamic activity to help other beings attain ultimate bliss; before that he does not lay ore to save beings from the state of suffering. Not satisfied with his own mitigation of desire some actions that make him subjected to malice and all kind of craving, he strives up on helping all other beings to overcome their afflictions. While the Buddha reminded Mahamati in the *Lankavatara Sutra* as follows: "Oh Mahamati, the distinction between the Bodhisattva and the Two Vehicles is emphasized, as the latter are unable to go up further than the sixth stage where they enter into Nirvana. At the seventh stage, the Bodhisattva goes through an altogether new spiritual experience known as *anabhogacarya*, which may be rendered "a purposeless life." But , supported by the majestic power of the Buddhas, which enters into the great vows first made by the Bodhisattva as he started in his career, the latter now devises various methods of salvation for the sake of his ignorant and confused fellow-beings. But from the absolute point of view of the ultimate truth in the *Lankavatara Sutra*, attained by the Bodhisattva, there is no such graded course of spirituality in his life; for here is really no gradation (*krama*), no continuous ascension (*kramanusandhi*), but the truth (*dharma*) alone which is imageless (*nirabhasa*), and detached altogether from discrimination. According to the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, the

Buddha told Maitreya, “You should know that there are two categories of Bodhisattvas: those who prefer proud words and a racy style, and those who are not afraid (of digging out) the profound meanings which they can penetrate. Fondness of proud words and a racy style denotes the superficiality of a newly initiated Bodhisattva; but he who, after hearing about the freedom from infection and bondage as taught in profound sutras, is not afraid of their deep meanings which he strives to master, thereby developing a pure mind to receive, keep, read, recite and practise (the Dharma) as preached is a Bodhisattva who has trained for a long time. Maitreya, there are two classes of newly initiated Bodhisattvas who cannot understand very deep Dharmas: those who have not heard about profound sutras and who, giving way to fear and suspicion, cannot keep them but indulge in slandering them, saying: ‘I have never heard about them; where do they come from?’, and those who refuse to call on, respect and make offerings to the preachers of profound sutras or who find fault with the latter; these are two classes of newly initiated Bodhisattvas who cannot control their minds when hearing the deep Dharma, thereby harming themselves. Maitreya, further, there are two categories of Bodhisattvas who harm themselves and fail to realize the patient endurance of the uncreate in spite of their belief and understanding of the deep Dharma: they are (firstly) those who belittle newly initiated Bodhisattva and do not teach and guide them; and (secondly) those who, despite their faith in the deep Dharma, still give rise to discrimination between form and formlessness.” After hearing the Buddha expound the Dharma, Maitreya said: “World Honoured One, I have not heard all this before. As you have said, I shall keep from these evils and uphold the Dharma of supreme enlightenment which the Tathagata has collected during countless aeons. In future, if there are virtuous men and women who seek for Mahayana, I shall see to it that this sutra will be placed in their hands, and shall use transcendental power to make them remember it so that they can receive, keep, read, recite and proclaim it widely.

Some 200 or 300 years after the Buddha’s death, a new variation of the Buddhist ideal began to emerge. Dissatisfied with the seemingly limited goal of the arhat, this new vision emphasized the Bodhisattva as the highest aspiration for all. A Bodhisattva is a being who resolves to become a fully enlightened Buddha and who dedicates his efforts to helping other sentient beings to attain salvation. These compassionate beings figure predominantly in the Mahayana tradition; indeed, the

most distinguishing feature of Mahayana Buddhism may be its advocacy of the Bodhisattva as the vehicle to liberation. The Bodhisattva follows a long and arduous path, often described as having ten stages and spanning many lives at the end of which he attains complete Buddhahood. The Mahayana is thus able to consider a host of Bodhisattvas, at different stages along the path, as intervening in the lives of sentient beings. An advanced Bodhisattva, for example, can create “Buddha-Fields,” to which humans can aspire to be reborn by devotion and righteousness. The notion of the Bodhisattva is at times combined with the doctrine of the “Three Bodies” of the Buddha. This theory maintains that the ultimate form of Buddhahood and the true nature of things is the “Body of Dharma” itself (Dharmakaya). The Body of Dharma is revealed progressively by two other bodies: the “Enjoyment Body” (Sambhogakaya), a subtle form perceptible only to those advanced in the path, and the “Transformation Body” (Nirmanakaya), a physical form apparent to all. According to this scheme, Gautama was merely a Transformation Body, an apparition of ultimate Buddhahood. Other Bodhisattvas, who are Enjoyment Bodies, can also teach and intervene through transformation and apparition. Important Mahayana Bodhisattvas include Avalokitesvara; Manjusri, who personifies great wisdom and is often represented holding a sword, which he uses to cut through the veil of ignorance; and Maitreya, “The Kindly One,” who will be the next Buddha and who, after attaining Buddhahood, will send the next Transformation Body to teach on earth. Other great Buddhist teachers are sometimes associated with Bodhisattvas, and are even seen as their incarnations. One of these is Nagarjuna, who was an abbot at the Buddhist university of Nalanda in the second century A.D. Nagarjuna is considered the founder of the Madhyamaka, a school of Buddhist philosophy that was active in Buddhist India. Madhyamaka greatly influenced certain forms of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, such as Zen, and still flourishes today in Tibet.

In Tibetan, Bodhisattva is translated as “Heroic Being.” The heroic quality of the Bodhisattva is brought out by the Prajnaparamita: “Suppose a hero, endowed with great accomplishments, had gone out with his mother, father, sons, and daughters. By some set of circumstances, they would get into a huge wild forest. The foolish among them would be greatly frightened. The hero would, however, fearlessly say to them ‘Do not be afraid! I will speedily take you out of

this great and terrible jungle, and bring you to safety.’ Since he is fearless, vigorous, exceedingly tender, compassionate, courageous and resourceful, it does not occur to him to take himself alone out of the jungle, leaving his relatives behind. Against the Arhat, Mahayana Buddhism claimed that we must take the whole of the creation with us to enlightenment, that we cannot just abandon any beings, as all beings are as near to us as our relatives are. What a man should do is to make no discrimination between himself and others, and to wait until he had helped everybody into Nirvana before loosing himself into it. The Mahayanists thus claimed that the Arhat had not aimed high enough. According to the Mahayana Buddhism, the ideal man, the aim of the Buddhist effort, was not the rather self-centered, cold and narrow-minded Arhat, but the all compassionate Bodhisattva, who abandoned the world, but not the beings in it. Wisdom had been taught as the highest quality for an Arhat, and compassion as a subsidiary virtue; but to a Bodhisattva, compassion came to rank as equal with wisdom. While the wisdom of an Arhat had been fruitful in setting free in himself. What there was to be set free, it was rather sterile in ways and means of helping ordinary people. The Bodhisattva would be a man who does not only set himself free, but who is also skilful in devising means for bringing out and maturing the latent seeds of enlightenment in others.

According to Buddhist history, after mighty and terrible struggles with himself, the Buddha had conquered in his body all those natural defects and human appetites and desires that prevent our ability of seeing the truth. He had to overcome all the bad influences of the sinful world around Him. Like a soldier fighting desperately in battle against many enemies, He struggled like a hero who conquers, he eventually gained his objects. He also discovered supportive conditions leading practitioners who follow the Bodhisattva Ideal to bodhi and Buddhahood. Thirty-Seven Bodhisattvas' Conducts (Conditions) Leading to Bodhi or Thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment comprise of four right efforts, four sufficiencies, four foundations of mindfulness, five faculties, five powers, seven limbs of enlightenments, and the eightfold noble path. According to the Prajna-paramita-sutra, the Buddha taught: “Doers of what is hard are the Bodhisattvas, the great beings who have set out to win supreme enlightenment. They do not wish to attain their own private Nirvana. On the contrary, they have survey the highly painful world of being, but they do not tremble at

birth-and-death. They have set out for the benefit of the world, for the peace and happiness of the world. They have resolved, and yet desirous to win supreme enlightenment, they do not tremble at birth and death. They have set out for the benefit of the world, for the ease of the world, out of pity for the world. They have resolved: 'We will become a shelter for the world, a refuge for all beings, the world's place of rest, the final belief of all beings, islands of the world, lights of the world, leaders of the world, the world's means of salvation.

According to the Mahayana Buddhism, the ideal of the Bodhisattva was partly due to social pressure on the Order, but to a great extent it was inherent in the practice of the 'Unlimited,' which had trained the monks not to discriminate between themselves and others. As we saw, Buddhism has at its disposal two methods by which it reduces the sense of separateness on the part of individuals. The one is the culture of the social emotions, or sentiments, such as loving-kindness (friendliness) and compassion. The other consists in acquiring the habit of regarding whatever one thinks, feels or does as an interplay of impersonal forces, called 'Dharmas,' weaning oneself slowly from such ideas as 'I' or 'mine' or 'self.' There is a logical contradiction between the method of wisdom, which sees no persons at all, but only Dharmas, and the method of the 'Unlimited' which cultivates relations to people as persons. The meditation on Dharmas dissolves other people, as well as oneself, into a conglomeration of impersonal and instantaneous dharmas. It reduces our manhood into 5 heaps, or pieces, plus a label. If there is nothing in the world except bundles of Dharmas, as cold and as impersonal as atoms, instantaneously perishing all the time, there is nothing which friendliness and compassion could work on. One cannot wish well to a Dharma which is gone by the time one has come to wish it well, nor can one pity a Dharma, say a 'mind-object,' or a 'sight-organ,' or a 'sound-consciousness.' In those Buddhist circles where the method of Dharmas was practiced to a greater extent than the 'Unlimited,' it led to a certain dryness of mind, to aloofness, and to lack of human warmth. The true task of the Buddhist is to carry on with both contradictory methods at the same time. As the method of Dharmas leads to boundless expansion of the self, because one identifies oneself with more and more living beings. As the method of wisdom explodes the idea that there are any persons at all in the world, so the method of the 'Unlimited' increases the awareness of the personal problems of more and more persons. How then does the

Mahayana resolve this contradiction? The Buddhist philosophers differs from philosophers bred in the Aristotelean tradition in that they are not frightened but delighted by a contradiction. They deal with this, as with other contradictions, by merely stating it in an uncompromising form, and then they leave it at that. According to the Diamond Sutra: "Here, oh! Subhuti! A Bodhisattva should think thus 'As many beings as there are in the universe of beings, be they being egg-born, or from a womb, or moisture-born, or miraculously born; be they with form, or without; be they with perception, without perception, or with neither perception nor no-perception, as far as any conceivable universe of beings is conceived; all these should be led by me into Nirvana, into that realm of Nirvana which leaves nothing behind. And yet, although innumerable beings have thus been led to Nirvana, no being at all has been led to Nirvana. And why? If in a Bodhisattva the perception of a 'being' should take place, he would not be called an 'enlightenment-being' or a Bodhisattva.'"

The ideal of the Bodhisattva was partly due to social pressure on the Sangha Order, but to a great extent it was inherent in the practice of the unlimited, which had trained the monks not to discriminate between themselves and others. As we saw, Buddhism has at its disposal two methods by which it reduces the sense of separateness on the part of individuals. The one is the culture of the social emotions, or sentiments, such as friendliness and compassion. The other consists in acquiring the habit of regarding whatever one thinks, feels or does as an interplay of impersonal forces, called Dharma, weaning oneself slowly from such ideas as 'I' or 'mine' or 'self'. There is a logical contradiction between the method of wisdom, which sees no person at all, but only Dharmas, and the method of the Unlimited which cultivates relations to people as persons. The meditation on Dharmas dissolves other people, as well as oneself, into a conglomeration of impersonal and instantaneous dharmas. It reduces our manhood into five heaps, or pieces, plus a label. If there is nothing in the world except bundles of Dharmas, as cold and as impersonal as atoms. Instantaneously perishing all the time, there is nothing which friendliness and compassion could work on. One cannot wish well to a Dharma which is gone by the time one has come to wish it well, nor can one pity a Dharma, say a 'mind-object,' or a 'sight-organ,' or a 'sound-consciousness.' In those Buddhist traditions where the method of Dharmas was practiced to a greater extent than the Unlimited, it led

to a certain dryness of mind, to aloofness, and to lack of human warmth. The true task of a Buddhist is to carry on with both contradictory methods at the same time. As the method of Dharmas leads to boundless contraction of the self because everything is emptied out of it, so the method of Unlimited leads to a boundless expansion of the self because one identifies oneself with more and more living beings. As the method of wisdom explodes the idea that there are any persons at all in the world, so the method of the Unlimited increases the awareness of the personal problems of more and more persons.

In short, the Bodhisattva ideal originated from Mahayana Buddhism, but the term Bodhisattva is not confined solely to Mahayana Buddhism. In Theravada, Sakyamuni Buddha is referred to as “Bodhisatta” (Bodhisattva) in the past lives described in the Jatakas, during which he is said to have gradually perfected the good qualities of a Buddha. In the Mahayana sense, however, the Bodhisattva concept is an explicit rejection of Nikaya Buddhism’s ideal religious paradigm, the Arhat. In Mahayana the Arhat is characterized as limited and selfish, concerned only with personal salvation, in contrast to the Bodhisattva, who works very hard for all sentient beings. The beginning of the bodhisattva’s career is marked by the dawning of the “mind of awakening” (Bodhi-citta), which is the resolve to become a Buddha in order to benefit others. So, Bodhisattva is considered as a human being with his own karmas at his very birth as all other creatures, but he can be able to get rid of all his inner conflicts, including bad karmas and sufferings, and external crises, including environments, calamities and other dilemma, can change this unfortunate situation and can make a peaceful, prosperous and happy world for all to live in together by using his effort and determination in cultivating a realistic and practical way without depending on external powers. In Mahayana literature, this is commonly followed by a public ceremony of a vow to attain Buddhahood (Pranidhana) in order to benefit other sentient beings. That is to say: “Above to seek bodhi, below to save (transform) beings.” This is one of the great vows of a Bodhisattva. After that point the bodhisattva pursues the goal of Buddhahood by progressively cultivating the six, sometimes ten, “perfections” (Paramita): generosity, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom. The two primary qualities in which the Bodhisattva trains are compassion and wisdom, and when the perfections are fully cultivated

and compassion and wisdom developed to their highest level, the Bodhisattva becomes a Buddha.

Characteristics Bodhisattva Ideal: The Bodhisattva seeks supreme enlightenment not for himself alone but for all sentient beings. A Bodhisattva is a Mahayanist, whether monk or layman, above is to seek Buddhahood, below is to save sentient beings (he seeks enlightenment to enlighten others). Bodhisattva is the person who makes the six paramitas (lục độ) their field of sacrificial saving work and of enlightenment. The main objective of Bodhisattva Ideal is salvation of all beings. Four infinite characteristics of a bodhisattva are kindness (từ), pity (bi), joy (hỷ), self-sacrifice (xả). Bodhisattva is a person, either a monk, a nun, a layman or a laywoman, who is in a position to attain Nirvana as a Sravaka or a Pratyekabuddha, but out of great compassion for the world, he or she renounces it and goes on suffering in samsara for the sake of others. He or she perfects himself or herself during an incalculable period of time and finally realizes and becomes a Samyaksambuddha, a fully enlightened Buddha. He or she discovers the Truth and declares it to the world. His or her capacity for service to others is unlimited. Bodhisattva has in him Bodhicitta and the inflexible resolve. There are two aspects of Bodhicitta: Transcendental wisdom (Prajna) and universal love (Karuna). The inflexible resolve means the resolve to save all sentient beings, Bodhisattva Ideal always have three main characteristics: *First*, Bodhisattvas who hope to be reborn to help sentient beings must retain the seed of existence. According to the Vijnaptimatratasiddhi Sastra, a Bodhisttva retains the obstacle of defilement to sustain his vow to be reborn into the samsara world. However, he is reborn, fully mindful and conscious of whatever place where he chooses to be reborn. In fact, he is not contaminated by the defilements owing to the fact that he has stayed with the view of pratityasanutpada for a long time, there is the “guarding of defilements”. *Second*, a Bodhisattva always has the “Four Immeasurable Minds” known as maitri, karuna, mudita and upeksha, which are not to be viewed in discreteness or in isolation. Maitri is the center of the others, and the remaining three are its corelation. Maitri is the basis of Karuna. It stands for love, respect and care for all lives. It is concreteness of loving kindness based on the feeling that just as our life is precious to us, so also is the life of others. Mudita is altruistic sympathetic joy. It is happiness in the happiness of all. It is a

consequence of Karuna. Upeksha is the prerequisite of Karuna. It stands for compassion to all beings. It also means equanimity of mind apart from partiality. *Third*, on the Bodhisattva's Path, with the development of Bodhicitta, Bodhisattvas always practice the paramitas. In other words, the Path from sentient beings to Bodhisattvas and the realization of complete fulfillment of Enlightenment, Bodhisattvas must always try to practice all the paramitas.

***(B) Practitioners' Practices on the Path of
Cultivation Which Is In Accordance
With the Bodhisattva Ideal***

I. An Overview of Bodhisattvas' Conducts:

According to Buddhist teachings, Bodhisattva practice (Bodhisattva's practising) according to the tradition of Northern Buddhism. A Bodhisattva must achieve the following Bodhisattva's practices: to vow to devote the mind to bodhi (bodhicitta), to practise the four immeasurables, to practise the six Paramitas, and to practise the four all-embracing virtues. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Bodhisattvas are those who were well known for having achieved all the perfections that lead to the great wisdom. They had received instructions from many Buddhas and formed a Dharma-protecting citadel. By upholding the right Dharma, they could fearlessly give the lion's roar to teach sentient beings; so their names were heard in the ten directions. They were not invited but came to the assembly to spread the teaching on the Three Treasures to transmit it in perpetuity. They had overcome all demons and defeated heresies; and their six faculties, karmas of deeds, words and thoughts were pure and clean; being free from the (five) hindrances and the (ten) bonds. They had realized serenity of mind and had achieved unimpeded liberation. They had achieved right concentration and mental stability, thereby acquiring the uninterrupted power of speech. They had achieved all the (six) paramitas: charity (dana), discipline (sila), patience (ksanti), devotion (virya), serenity (dhyana) and wisdom (prajna), as well as the expedient method (upaya) of teaching which completely benefit self and others. However, to them these realizations did not mean any gain whatsoever for themselves, so that they were in line with the patient

endurance of the uncreate (anutpattika-dharma-ksanti). They were able to turn the wheel of the Law that never turns back. Being able to interpret the (underlying nature of) phenomena, they knew very well the roots (propensities) of all living beings; they surpassed them all and realized fearlessness. They had cultivated their minds by means of merits and wisdom with which they embellished their physical features which were unsurpassable, thus giving up all earthly adornments. Their towering reputation exceeded the height of Mount Sumeru. Their profound faith (in the uncreate) was unbreakable like a diamond. Their treasures of the Dharma illuminated all lands and rained down nectar. Their speeches were profound and unsurpassable. They entered deep into all (worldly) causes, but cut off all heretical views for they were already free from all dualities and had rooted out all (previous) habits. They were fearless and gave the lion's roar to proclaim the Dharma, their voices being like thunder. They could not be gauged for they were beyond all measures. They had amassed all treasures of the Dharma and acted like (skillful) seafaring pilots. They were well versed in the profound meanings of all Dharmas. They knew very well the mental states of all living beings and their comings and goings (within the realms of existence). They had reached the state near the unsurpassed sovereign wisdom of all Buddhas, having acquired the ten fearless powers (dasabala) giving complete knowledge and the eighteen different characteristics (of a Buddha as compared with Bodhisattvas (avenikadharma). Although they were free from (rebirth in) evil existences, they appeared in five mortal realms as royal physicians to cure all ailments, prescribing the right medicine in each individual case, thereby winning countless merits to embellish countless Buddha lands. Each living being derived great benefit from seeing and hearing them, for their deeds were not in vain. Thus they had achieved all excellent merits.

II. Living & Cultivating In Accordance With Bodhisattvas' Practices Also Means Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Bodhisattva Ideal:

According to the ideal of Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana Buddhism, the beginning of the bodhisattva's career is marked by the dawning of the "mind of awakening" (Bodhi-citta), which is the resolve to become a Buddha in order to benefit others. So, Bodhisattva is considered as a

human being with his own karmas at his very birth as all other creatures, but he can be able to get rid of all his inner conflicts, including bad karmas and sufferings, and external crises, including environments, calamities and other dilemmas, can change this unfortunate situation and can make a peaceful, prosperous and happy world for all to live in together by using his effort and determination in cultivating a realistic and practical way without depending on external powers. In Mahayana literature, this is commonly followed by a public ceremony of a vow to attain Buddhahood (Pranidhana) in order to benefit other sentient beings. That is to say: “Above to seek bodhi, below to save (transform) beings.” This is one of the great vows of a Bodhisattva. After that point the bodhisattva pursues the goal of Buddhahood by progressively cultivating the six, sometimes ten, “perfections” (Paramita): generosity, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom, and so on. This is the way of living and cultivating of practitioners who are traveling on the journey to find the Bodhisattva Within.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 21 (Ten Practices), There Are Ten Kinds of Practices, Which Are Expounded by the Buddhas of Past, Present and Future: the practice of giving joy, beneficial practice, practice of nonopposition, practice of indomitability, practice of nonconfusion, practice of good manifestation, practice of nonattachment, practice of that which is difficult to attain, practice of good teachings, and practice of truth.

According to The Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, There Are 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. *First*, hearing the Teaching, out of fondness for truth. *Second*, expounding the Teaching to benefit sentient beings. *Third*, getting rid of covetousness, anger, delusion, and fear, by taming their own minds. *Fourth*, action in the realm of desire, to teach beings in that realm. *Fifth*, concentration in the realm of form and formlessness, to foster quick return to noncontamination. *Sixth*, aiming for the meaning of the Teaching, to quickly attain wisdom. *Seventh*, action in the realm of life, to freely edify sentient beings. *Eighth*, action in all Buddha-lands, honoring all Buddhas. *Ninth*, nirvanic action, not cutting off the continuity of birth and death. *Tenth*, fulfilling all qualities of Buddhahood without giving up application of the principles of

Enlightening Beings. *According to the Buddha in The Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, Great Enlightening Beings Have Ten Kinds of Practice Which Help Them Attain the Practice of the Unexcelled Knowledge and Wisdom of Buddhas:* The first practice is the practice dealing with all sentient beings, to develop them all to maturity. The second practice is the practice seeking all truths, to learn them all. The third practice is the practice of all roots of goodness, to cause them all to grow. The fourth practice is the practice of all concentration, to be single-minded, without distraction. The fifth practice is the practice of all knowledge, to know everything. The sixth practice is the practice of all cultivations, to be able to cultivate them all. The seventh practice is the practice dealing with all Buddha-lands, to adorn them all. The eighth practice is the practice dealing with all good companions, respecting and supporting them. The ninth practice is the practice dealing with all Buddhas, honoring and serving them. The tenth practice is the practice of all supernatural powers, to be able to transform anywhere, anytime to help sentient beings. *Also According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, Great Bodhisattvas Have Ten Qualities:* First, their meritorious deeds are of universal character and illuminating. Second, their attainment of the Samadhi is full of the light of knowledge which is derived from walking the path of righteousness. Third, they are able to produce the great ocean of merit. Fourth, they are never tired of amassing all kinds of purities. Fifth, they ever ready to associate with good friends and attend upon them with reverence. Sixth, they are not accumulators of wealth and never hesitate to give up their lives for a good cause. Seventh, they are free from the spirit of arrogance and like the great earth treat others impartially. Eighth, their hearts being filled with love and compassion; they are always thinking of the welfare of others. Ninth, they are always friendly disposed towards all beings in various paths of existence. Tenth, they are ever desirous of being admitted into the community of Buddhas. *According to the Lotus Sutra, There Are Ten Practices of Respects of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva:* First, worship and respect all Buddhas. Second, praise the Thus Come Ones. Third, make abundant offerings. Fourth, repent misdeeds and hindrances. Fifth, rejoice at others' merits and virtues. Sixth, request the Buddha to turn the Dharma Wheel. Seventh, request the Buddha to remain in the world. Eighth, follow the teachings of the Buddha at all times. Ninth, accommodate and benefit

all sentient beings. *Tenth*, transfer merits and virtues universally. ***Ten Principles of Universally Good Which Enlightening Beings Have According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38:*** *First*, vowing to live through all future ages. *Second*, vowing to serve and honor all Budhas of the future. *Third*, vowing to settle all sentient beings in the practice of Universally Good Enlightening Beings. *Fourth*, vowing to accumulate all roots of goodness. *Fifth*, vowing to enter all ways of transcendence. *Sixth*, vowing to fulfill all practices of Enlightening Beings. *Seventh*, vowing to adorn all worlds. *Eighth*, vowing to be born in all Buddha-lands. *Ninth*, vowing to carefully examine all things. *Tenth*, vowing to attain supreme enlightenment in all Buddha-lands.

In the Surangama Sutra, the Buddha Reminded Ananda About the Ten Necessary Activities, or Practices of a Bodhisattva: *The first practice is the conduct of happiness:* The practice of joyful service, or giving joy. The Buddha told Ananda: “Ananda! After these good men have become sons of the Buddha, they are replete with the limitlessly many wonderful virtues of the Thus Come Ones, and they comply and accord with beings throughout the ten directions. This is called the conduct of happiness.” *The second practice is the conduct of benefitting:* The practice of beneficial service, or beneficial practice. The Buddha told Ananda: “Being well able to accommodate all living beings is called the conduct of benefitting.” *The third practice is the conduct of non-opposition:* The practice of never resenting, or non-opposition. The Buddha told Ananda: “Enlightening oneself and enlightening others without putting forth any resistance is called the conduct of non-opposition.” *The fourth practice is the conduct of endlessness:* The practice of indomitability, or without limit in helping others. The Buddha told Ananda: “To undergo birth in various forms continuously to the bounds of the future, equally throughout the three periods of time and pervading the ten directions is called the conduct of endlessness.” *The fifth practice is the conduct of freedom from deluded confusion:* The practice of nonconfusion. The Buddha told Ananda: “When everything is equally in accord, one never makes mistakes among the various dharma doors. This is called the conduct of freedom from deluded confusion.” *The sixth practice is the conduct of wholesome manifestation:* The practice of good manifestation, or appearing in any form at will to save sentient beings. The Buddha told Ananda: “Then within what is identical, myriad differences appear; the

characteristics of every difference are seen, one and all, in identity. This is called the conduct of wholesome manifestation.” *The seventh practice is the conduct of non-attachment*: The practice of nonattachment, or unimpeded practice. The Buddha told Ananda: “This continues until it includes all the dust motes that fill up empty space throughout the ten directions. In each and every mote of dust there appear the worlds of the ten directions. And yet the appearance of worlds do not interfere with one another. This is called the conduct of non-attachment.” *The eighth practice is the conduct of veneration*: The practice of exalting the paramitas amongst all beings, or the practice of that which is difficult to attain. The Buddha told Ananda: “Everything that appears before one is the foremost paramita. This is called the conduct of veneration.” *The ninth practice is the conduct of wholesome Dharma*: The practice of good teaching, or perfecting the Buddha-law by complete virtue. The Buddha told Ananda: “With such perfect fusion, one can model oneself after all the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is called the conduct of wholesome dharma.” *The tenth practice is the conduct of true actuality*: The practice of truth, or manifest in all things the pure, final and true reality. The Buddha told Ananda: “To then be pure and without outflows in each and every way is the primary truth, which is unconditioned, the essence of the nature. This is called the conduct of true actuality.”

According to the Lotus Sutra, There Are Ten Practices of Respects of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva: *First*, worship and respect all Buddhas. *Second*, praise the Thus Come Ones. *Third*, make abundant offerings. *Fourth*, repent misdeeds and hindrances. *Fifth*, rejoice at others’ merits and virtues. *Sixth*, request the Buddha to turn the Dharma Wheel. *Seventh*, request the Buddha to remain in the world. *Eighth*, follow the teachings of the Buddha at all times. *Ninth*, accommodate and benefit all sentient beings. *Tenth*, transfer merits and virtues universally. ***Ten Principles of Universally Good Which Enlightening Beings Have According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38***: *First*, vowing to live through all future ages. *Second*, vowing to serve and honor all Buddhas of the future. *Third*, vowing to settle all sentient beings in the practice of Universally Good Enlightening Beings. *Fourth*, vowing to accumulate all roots of goodness. *Fifth*, vowing to enter all ways of transcendence. *Sixth*, vowing to fulfill all practices of Enlightening Beings. *Seventh*, vowing

to adorn all worlds. *Eighth*, vowing to be born in all Buddha-lands. *Ninth*, vowing to carefully examine all things. *Tenth*, vowing to attain supreme enlightenment in all Buddha-lands.

Besides, According to the Lotus Sutra, There Are Four Bodhisattvas' Pleasant Practices: First, Pleasant Practice of the Body:

To attain a happy contentment by proper direction of the deeds of the body. The Buddha taught the pleasant practice of the body by dividing it into two parts, a Bodhisattva's spheres of action and of intimacy. A Bodhisattva's sphere of action means his fundamental attitude as the basis of his personal behavior. A Bodhisattva is patient, gentle, and agreeable, and is neither hasty nor overbearing, his mind is always unperturbed. Unlike ordinary people, he is not conceited or boastful about his own good works. He must see all things in their reality. He never take a partial view of things. He acts toward all people with the same compassion and never making show of it. The Buddha teaches a Bodhisattva's sphere of intimacy by dividing it into ten areas: First, 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. Second, 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. Third, a Bodhisattva does not resort to brutal sports, such as boxing and wrestling, nor the various juggling performances of dancers and others. Fourth, 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. Fifth, 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. Sixth, 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. Seventh, 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. Eighth, 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. Ninth, if he preaches the Law to lay women, he does not display his teeth in smile nor let his breast be seen. Tenth, he takes no pleasure in keeping young pupils and children by his side. On the contrary, the Buddha admonishes the Bodhisattva ever to prefer meditation and seclusion and also to cultivate and control his mind.

Second, Pleasant Practice of the Mouth of a Bodhisattva: According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha gave instructions to all Bodhisattvas on Pleasant practice of the mouth as follows: "First, a Bodhisattva takes no pleasure in telling of the errors of other people or of the sutras; second, he does not despise other preachers; third, he does not speak of the good and evil, the merits and demerits of other people, nor does he single out any Sravakas or Pratyeka-buddhas by name, nor does he broadcast their errors and sins; fourth, in the same way, he do not praise their virtues, nor does he beget a jealous mind. If he maintains a cheerful and open mind in this way, those who hear the teaching will offer him no opposition. To those who ask difficult questions, he does not answer with the law of the small vehicle but only with the Great vehicle, and he explains the Law to them so that they may obtain perfect knowledge." *Third, Pleasant Practice of the Mind of a Bodhisattva:* According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha gave eight advices to all Bodhisattvas as follows: "*First*, a Bodhisattva does not harbor an envious or deceitful mind. *Second*, he does not slight or abuse other learners of the Buddha-way even if they are beginners, nor does he seek out their excesses and shortcomings. *Third*, if there are people who seek the Bodhisattva-way, he does not distress them, causing them to feel doubt and regret, nor does he say discouraging things to them. *Fourth*, he should not indulge in discussions about the laws or engage in dispute but should devote himself to cultivation of the practice to save all living beings. *Fifth*, he should think of saving all living beings from the sufferings through his great compassion. *Sixth*, he should think of the Buddhas as benevolent fathers. *Seventh*, he should always think of the Bodhisattvas as his great teachers. *Eighth*, he should preach the Law equally to all living beings." *Fourth, Pleasant Practice of the Vow of a Bodhisattva:* According to the Lotus

Sutra, the Buddha gave instructions to all Bodhisattvas on Pleasant practice of the vow as follows: “The pleasant practice of the vow means to have a spirit of great compassion. A Bodhisattva should beget a spirit of great charity toward both laymen and monks, and should have a spirit of great compassion for those who are not yet Bodhisattvas but are satisfied with their selfish idea of saving only themselves. He also should decide that, though those people have not inquired for, nor believed in, nor understood the Buddha’s teaching in this sutra, when he has attained Perfect Enlightenment through his transcendental powers and powers of wisdom he will lead them to abide in this Law.”

III. Living and Cultivating With the Fearlessness In Buddhist Teachings Is Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Bodhisattva Ideal:

An Overview of the Spirit of Fearlessness In Buddhist Teachings:

Fearlessness is one of the eight characteristics of a Buddha’s speaking. The gesture (Abhaya-mudra) of Fearlessness of Sakyamuni Buddha right after he attained enlightenment (the right hand is raised to shoulder level with fingers extended and palm turned outward). For Great Bodhisattvas, power of fearlessness which can explain all truths is one of the ten kinds of power possessed by Great Enlightening Beings. Meanwhile, Fearless Bhumi is the position where one feels no fear to greed, anger, ignorance, birth, old age, illness, death. According to The Surangama Sutra, book Six, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva reported to the Buddha about fourteen fearlessnesses as follows: “World Honored One! Using this vajra samadhi of becoming permeated with hearing and cultivating hearing, and use the miraculous strength of effortlessness, because I have a kind regard equally for all living beings in the six paths, I go throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time cause all living beings who encounter bodies of mine to receive the meritorious virtue of fourteen kinds of fearlessness.” Great Enlightening Beings are always the bestowers of fearlessness to all beings. When someone encounters disasters or calamities which terrify him, at that moment the Bodhisattva removes his anxieties and sufferings through one’s own efforts. Dispelling fear means to give the gift of fearlessness. The giving of fearlessness is the best way that can give a genuine peaceful and happy environment for

everyone, because a real state of fearlessness is considered as synonymous with the freedom and bliss without war, dislike, fighting, killing, etc.

Some Bodhisattvas' Typical Fearlessnesses: Great Enlightening Beings have many kinds of fearlessness. The followings are some typical ones: *Great Bodhisattvas' Four Kinds of Fearlessness:* *First*, Bodhisattva-fearlessness arises from powers of memory and ability to preach without fear. *Second*, Bodhisattva-fearlessness arises from powers of moral diagnosis and application of the remedy. *Third*, Bodhisattva-fearlessness arises from powers of ratiocination. *Fourth*, Bodhisattva-fearlessness arises from powers of solving doubts.

Cultivation With the Bodhisattva Ideal By Living & Cultivating In Accordance With Fearlessnesses in Buddhist Scriptures: (See Chapter 15 & 16).

IV. Living & Cultivating With Bodhisattvas' Practices in Purity Means Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Bodhisattva Ideal:

According to Buddhism, practitioners who live and cultivate with Bodhisattvas' practices which are in accordance with the Bodhisattva Ideal will surely attain Bodhisattvas' purity in this very life, right at this moment and right here. According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, chapter 36, there are ten kinds of purity. When Great Enlightening Beings are living by ten principles, they are able to embody ten kinds of purity. First, purity of comprehension of the most profound truth. Second, purity of association with good associates. Third, purity of preserving the Buddha teachings. Fourth, purity of comprehension of the realm of space. Fifth, purity of profound penetration of the realm of reality. Sixth, purity of observation of infinite minds. Seventh, purity of having the same roots of goodness as all Enlightening Beings. Eighth, purity of observation of past, present and future. Ninth, purity of nonattachment to the various ages. Tenth, purity of practice of all Buddha Dharmas of all Enlightening Beings. Also according to the Flower Adornment Sutra, chapter 38, there are ten kinds of purity attained by great Enlightening Beings who arouse ten kinds of spirit. First, purity of profound determination, reaching the ultimate end without corruption. Second, purity of physical embodiment, appearing according to need. Third, purity of voice, comprehending all speech.

Fourth, purity of intellectual powers, skillfully explaining boundless Buddha teachings. Fifth, purity of wisdom, getting rid of the darkness of all delusion. Sixth, purity of taking on birth, being imbued with the power of freedom of Enlightening Beings. Seventh, purity of company, having fully developed the roots of goodness of sentient beings they worked with the past. Eighth, purity of rewards, having removed all obstructions caused by past actions. Ninth, purity of great vows, being one in essence with all Enlightening Beings. Tenth, purity of practices, riding the vehicle of Universal Good to emancipation. There are also other ten kinds of purity attained by great Enlightening Beings: purity of determination, purity of cutting through doubts, purity of detachment from views, purity of perspective, purity of the quest for omniscience, purity of intellectual powers, purity of fearlessness, purity of living by the knowledge of all Enlightening Beings, purity of accepting all the guidelines of behavior of Enlightening Beings, purity of full development of the felicitous characteristics, pure qualities, and all fundamental virtues of unexcelled enlightenment.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, there are ten kinds of pure benevolence of great enlightening beings. Enlightening beings who abide by these can attain the supreme, vast, pure benevolence of Buddhas. First, impartial pure benevolence, caring for all sentient beings without discrimination. Second, helpful pure benevolence, bringing happiness by whatever they do. Third, pure benevolence taking care of people in the same way as oneself, ultimately bringing about emancipation from birth and death. Fourth, pure benevolence not abandoning the world, the mind always focused on accumulating roots of goodness. Fifth, pure benevolence able to bring liberation, causing all sentient beings to annihilate all afflictions. Sixth, pure benevolence generating enlightenment, inspiring all sentient beings to seek omniscience. Seventh, pure benevolence unobstructed by the world, radiating great light illuminating everywhere equally. Eighth, pure benevolence filling space, reaching everywhere to save sentient beings. Ninth, pure benevolence focused on truth, realizing the truth of Thusness. Tenth, pure benevolence without object, entering enlightening beings's detachment from life.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of pure compassion of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these attain the supremely great compassion of Buddhas. First, pure compassion without companion, as

they make their determination independently. Second, tireless pure compassion, not considering it troublesome to endure pain on behalf of all sentient beings. Third, pure compassion taking on birth in difficult situations, for the purpose of liberating sentient beings. Fourth, pure compassion taking on birth on pleasant conditions, to show impermanence. Fifth, pure compassion for the sake of wrongly fixated sentient beings, never give up their vow of universal liberation. Sixth, pure compassion not clinging to personal pleasure, giving happiness to all sentient beings. Seventh, pure compassion not seeking reward, purifying their mind. Eighth, pure compassion able to remove delusion by explaining the truth. The ninth pure compassion. All Bodhisattvas conceive great compassion for sentient beings because they know all things are in essence pure and have no clinging or irritation; and suffering is experienced because of afflictions of adventitious defilements. This is called essential purity, as they explain to them the principle of undefiled pure light. The tenth pure compassion. All Bodhisattvas know that all phenomena are like the tracks of birds in the sky. They also know that sentient beings' eyes are clouded by delusion and they cannot clearly realize this. Observing this, Enlightening Beings conceive great compassion, called true knowledge, which teaches sentient beings nirvana.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of pure joy of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supremely great pure joy of Buddhas. First, the pure joy of aspiring to enlightenment. Second, the pure joy of relinquishing all possessions. Third, the pure joy of not rejecting undisciplined sentient beings but teaching them and maturing them. Fourth, the pure joy of being able to tolerate evil-doing sentient beings and vowing to save and liberate them. Fifth, the pure joy of giving one's life in search of truth, without regret. Sixth, the pure joy of giving up sensual pleasures and always taking pleasure in truth. Seventh, the pure joy of including sentient beings to give up material pleasures and always take pleasure in truth. Eighth, the pure joy of cosmic equanimity tirelessly honoring and serving all Buddhas they see. Ninth, the pure joy of teaching all sentient beings to enjoy meditations, liberations and concentrations, and freely enter and emerge from them. The tenth pure joy includes gladly carrying out all austere practices that accord with the way of Enlightening Beings and

realizing the tranquil, imperturbable supreme calmness and wisdom of the sages.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of pure equanimity of enlightening beings. Enlightening beings who abide by these can attain the supremely pure equanimity of Buddhas. First, not becoming emotionally attached to sentient beings who honor and support them. Second, not being angered at sentient beings who slight and revile them. Third, always being in the world, but not being affected by the vicissitudes (greed, hatred, anger, pride, wrong views, killing, stealing, adultery, etc) of worldly things. Fourth, instructing sentient beings who are fit for the Teaching at the appropriate times, while not conceiving aversion for sentient beings who are not fit for the Teaching. Fifth, not seeking the states of learning or nonlearning of the two lesser vehicles. Sixth, always being aloof from all desires that are conducive to afflictions. Seventh, not praising the two lesser vehicles' aversion to birth and death. The eighth pure joy includes avoiding worldly talks, talk that is not nirvana, talk that is not dispassionate, talk that is not according to truth, talk that disturbs others, talk of individual salvation, and talks that obstruct the Path of enlightening beings. The ninth pure joy includes waiting for the appropriate times to teach sentient beings whose faculties are mature and have developed mindfulness and precise awareness, but do not yet know the supreme truth and waiting for the appropriate times to teach sentient beings whom the enlightening being has already instructed in the past, but who cannot be tamed until the enlightening being reaches Buddhahood. The tenth pure joy includes not considering people as higher or lower, being free from grasping and rejection, being aloof from all kinds of discriminatory notions, always being rightly concentrated by penetrating truth and attaining tolerance.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of pure giving of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these ten principles can accomplish the supreme, pure, magnanimous giving of Buddhas. Pure charity in which the giver expects no return, nor fame, nor blessing in this world, but only desire to sow Nirvana-seed, one of the two kinds of charity. First, impartial giving, not discriminating among sentient beings. Second, giving according to wishes, satisfying others. Third, unconfused giving, causing benefit to be gained. Fourth, giving appropriately, knowing superior, mediocre, and inferior. Fifth, giving without dwelling, not

seeking reward. Sixth, open giving, without clinging attachment. Seventh, total giving, being ultimately pure. Eighth, giving dedicated to enlightenment, transcended the created and the uncreated. Ninth, giving teach to sentient beings, never abandoning them, even to the site of enlightenment. Tenth, giving with its three spheres pure, observing the giver, receiver, and gift with right awareness, as being like space.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of pure discipline of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supreme flawless pure discipline of Buddhas. First, pure discipline of the body, guarding themselves from evil deeds. Second, pure discipline of speech, getting rid of faults of speech. Third, pure discipline of mind, forever getting rid of greed, hatred, and false views. Fourth, pure discipline of not destroying any subjects of study, being honorable leaders among people. Fifth, pure discipline of preserving the aspiration for enlightenment, not liking the lesser vehicles of individual salvation. Sixth, pure discipline of preserving the regulations of the Buddha, greatly fearing even minor offenses. Seventh, pure discipline of secret protection, skillfully drawing out undisciplined sentient beings. Eighth, pure discipline of not doing any evil, vowing to practice all virtuous principles. Ninth, pure discipline of detachment all views of existence, having no attachment to precepts. Tenth, pure discipline of protecting all sentient beings, activating great compassion.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of pure tolerance of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain all Buddhas' supreme tolerance of truth, understanding without depending on another. First, pure tolerance calmly enduring slander and vilification, to protect sentient beings. Second, pure tolerance calmly enduring weapons, to protect self and others. Third, pure tolerance not arousing anger and viciousness, the mind being unshakable. Fourth, pure tolerance not attacking the low, being magnanimous when above. Fifth, pure tolerance saving all who come for refuge, giving up one's own life. Sixth, pure tolerance free from conceit, not slighting the uncultivated. Seventh, pure tolerance not becoming angered at injury, because of observation of illusoriness. Eighth, pure tolerance not revenging offenses, because of not seeing self and other. Ninth, pure tolerance not following afflictions, being detached from all objects. Tenth, pure

tolerance knowing all things have no origin, in accord with the true knowledge of Enlightening Beings, entering the realm of universal knowledge without depending on the instruction of another.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of pure energy of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supreme great energy of Buddhas. First, the physical energy, which includes attending Buddhas, enlightening beings, teachers, and elders, honoring fields of blessings, and never retreating. The second pure energy is the pure verbal energy, which includes extensively explaining to others whatever teachings they learn without wearying, and praising the virtues of Buddhahood without wearying. Third, pure mental energy, able to enter and exit the following without cease: kindness, compassion, joy, equanimity, meditation, liberations and concentrations. The fourth pure energy is the pure energy of honesty, which includes being free from deceptiveness, flattery, deviousness, and dishonesty and not regressing in any efforts. The fifth pure energy is the pure energy of determination on increasing progress which includes always intent on seeking higher and higher knowledge and aspiring to embody all good and pure qualities. The sixth pure energy is the unwasteful pure energy, which includes embodying charity, morality, tolerance, learning, and diligence and continuing to practice these unceasingly until enlightenment. Seventh, pure energy conquering all demons, able to exterminate greed, hatred, delusion, false views, and all other bonds and veils of afflictions. The eighth pure energy is the pure energy of fully developing the light of knowledge, which includes being carefully observant in all actions, consummating them all, preventing later regret, and attaining all the unique qualities of Buddhahood. The ninth pure energy is the pure energy without coming or going, which includes attaining true knowledge, entering the door of the realm of reality, body, speech and mind all impartial, understanding forms are formless and having no attachments. The tenth pure energy is the pure energy developing the light of Teaching which includes transcending all stages, attaining the coronation of Buddhas, with uncontaminated body manifesting the appearances of death and birth, leaving home and attaining enlightenment, teaching and passing away, fulfilling such tasks of Universal Good.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of pure meditation of Great Enlightening Beings.

Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supreme pure meditation of Buddhas. First, pure meditation always gladly leaving home, giving up all possessions. Second, pure meditation finding genuine good companions, to teach the right way. Third, pure meditation living in the forest enduring wind and rain and so on, being detached from self and possessions. Fourth, pure meditation leaving clamorous sentient beings, always enjoying tranquil silence. Fifth, pure meditation with harmonious mental activity, guarding the senses. Sixth, pure meditation with wind and cognition silent, impervious to all sounds and nettles of meditational concentration. The seventh pure meditation includes being aware of the methods of the Path of enlightenment and contemplating them all and actually realizing them. The eighth pure meditation includes pure meditation detached from clinging to its experiences, and neither grasping nor rejecting the realm of desire. The ninth pure meditation includes being awakening psychic knowledge and knowing the faculties and natures of all sentient beings. The tenth Pure meditation includes freedom of action, entering into the concentration of Buddhas, and knowing there is no self.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 33, there are ten kinds of ultimate purity of all Buddhas. First, all Buddhas' past great vows are ultimately pure. Second, the religious conduct maintained by all Buddhas is ultimately pure. Third, all Buddhas' separation from the confusion of worldly beings is ultimately pure. Fourth, all Buddhas' adorned lands are ultimately pure. Fifth, all Buddhas' followings are ultimately pure. Sixth, all Buddhas' families are ultimately pure. Seventh, all Buddhas physical characteristics and refinements are ultimately pure. Eighth, the nondefilement of the reality-body of all Buddhas is ultimately pure. Ninth, all Buddhas' omniscient knowledge, without obstruction, is ultimately pure. Tenth, all Buddhas' liberation, freedom, accomplishment of their tasks, and arrival at completion are ultimately pure.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, chapter 18, there are ten kinds of purity Enlightening Beings attain when they persist in nonindulgence. First, acting in accord with what they say. Second, consummation of attention and discernment. Third, abiding in deep concentration without torpor or agitation. Fourth, gladly seeking Buddha-teachings without flagging. Fifth, contemplating the teaching heard according to reason, fully developing skillfully flexible knowledge. Sixth, entering deep meditation and attaining psychic powers of Buddhas. Seventh, their minds are equanimous, without

sense of high or low status. Eighth, in regard to superior, middling, and inferior types of beings, their minds are unobstructed and like the earth, they benefit all equally. Ninth, if they see any beings who have even once made the determination for enlightenment, they honor and serve them as teachers. Tenth, they always respect, serve, and support their preceptors and tutors, and all Enlightening Beings, wise friends and teachers. Also according to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of pure wisdom of great enlightening beings. Enlightening beings who abide by these can attain the unobstructed great wisdom of Buddhas. First, pure wisdom knowing all causes, not denying consequences. Second, pure wisdom knowing all conditions, not ignoring combination. Third, pure wisdom knowing nonannihilation and nonpermanence, comprehending interdependent origination truly. Fourth, pure wisdom extracting all views, neither grasping nor rejecting characteristics of sentient beings. Fifth, pure wisdom observing the mental activities of all sentient beings, knowing they are illusory. Pure wisdom with vast intellectual power, distinguishing all truths and being unhindered in dialogue. Seventh, pure wisdom unknowable to demons, false teachers, or followers of the vehicles of individual salvation, deeply penetrating the knowledge of all Buddha. The eighth pure wisdom includes seeing the subtle reality body of all Buddhas, seeing the essential purity of all sentient beings, seeing that all phenomena are quiescent, seeing that all lands are the same as space, and knowing all characteristics without impediment. The ninth Pure wisdom includes all powers of mental command, analytic abilities, liberative means are ways of transcendence; fostering the attainment of all supreme knowledge. The tenth Pure wisdom includes instantly uniting with adamant knowledge, comprehending the equality of all things, and attaining the most honorable knowledge of all things.

(C) Living & Cultivating In Accordance With Bodhisattva's Vows Means Following the Bodhisattva Ideal

I. An Overview of Bodhisattvas' Vows:

The fundamental vow of a Mahayana Bodhisattva to save all sentient beings from delusion. According to The Studies in The Lankavatara Sutra, written by Zen Master D.T. Suzuki, according to his transcendental insight into the truth of things, the Bodhisattva knows that it is beyond all eradicates and not at all subject to any form of description, but his heart full of compassion and love for all beings who

are unable to step out of the dualistic whirlpools of “becoming” or not becoming,” he directs his vows towards their salvation and emancipation. His own heart is free from such attachments as are ordinarily cherished by the unemancipated, but that which feels persists, for his insight has not destroyed this, and hence his Purvapranidhana, his Upayakaushalya, his Nirmanakaya. Yet all that he does for the maturity of all beings in response to their needs, is like the moon reflection in water, showing himself in all forms and appearances he preaches to them on the Dharma. His activity is what is in Mahayana phraseology called “Anabhogacarya,” deeds that are effortless, effectless, and purposeless. When the Bodhisattva enters upon the first stage called Joy or Pramudita, in the career of his spiritual discipline, he makes the following solemn vows, ten in number, which, flowing out of his most earnest determined will, are as all-inclusive as the whole universe, extending to the extremity of space itself, reaching the end of time, exhausting all the number of kalpas or ages, and functioning uninterruptedly as long as there is the appearance of a Buddha.

For us, all Buddhists, each Buddha had been, for a long period before his enlightenment, vowed to be a Bodhisattva. But why does a Bodhisattva have such a vow? Why does he want to undertake such infinite labor? For Bodhisattvas' ideal is the good of others, for they want to become capable of pulling others out of this great flood of sufferings and afflictions. But what personal benefit does he find in the benefit of others? In Bodhisattvas' ideal, the benefit of others is his own benefit. Who could believe that? It is true that people devoid of pity and who think only of themselves, find it hard to believe in the altruism of the Bodhisattva. But compassionate people can easily do so. In short, a Bodhisattva is an enlightener of sentient beings. For Bodhisattvas' ideal, he or she usually vows to take the enlightenment that he has been certified as having attained and the wisdom that he has uncovered to enlighten all other sentient beings. Let's follow the wonderful examples of the Buddha, a soldier fighting desperately in battle against many enemies, He struggled like a hero who conquers, he eventually gained his objects. He also discovered supportive conditions leading practitioners who follow the Bodhisattva Ideal to bodhi and Buddhahood. Truly speaking, a Bodhisattva's job is not easy at all. Though his appearance is not rare as that of a Buddha, but it is extremely difficult for a Bodhisattva to appear, and it is also extremely

difficult for ordinary people to encounter a real Bodhisattva. Devout Buddhists should always remember that entering the state of mind of a Nirvana as the Buddha taught does not mean to renounce the world and to enter into a temple as a monk or nun, but it means to enter into practicing well-being exercises that are linked to established daily life patterns, makes our lives more peaceful. Devout Buddhists should always remember the goal of any Buddhist cultivator is to achieve self-enlightening, that is examining with one's own intelligence, and not depending upon another; enlightening or awakening of others, then achieve the final accomplishment, to go beyond the cycle of births and deaths, that is to reach the state of mind of a Nirvana right in this very life. These are the very ideal of Bodhisattvas!!!

II. Living & Cultivating In Accordance With Bodhisattva's Vows Means Following the Bodhisattva Ideal:

As mentioned in previous chapters, the Bodhisattva follows a path of Bodhisattva Ideal which very long and extremely arduous, and spanning many lives at the end of which he attains complete Buddhahood. On this path, Living & Cultivating in Accordance With Bodhisattva's Vows contribute a great part in the attainment of the fruit of Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva seeks supreme enlightenment not for himself alone but for all sentient beings. A Bodhisattva is a Mahayanist, whether monk or layman, above is to seek Buddhahood, below is to save sentient beings (he seeks enlightenment to enlighten others). Bodhisattva is the person who makes Living & Cultivating in Accordance With Bodhisattva's Vows their field of sacrificial saving work and of enlightenment. The main objective of Bodhisattva Ideal is salvation of all beings. Beside Living & Cultivating in Accordance With Bodhisattva's Vows, the inflexible resolve means the resolve to save all sentient beings, Bodhisattva Ideal always have three other characteristics: First, Bodhisattvas who hope to be reborn to help sentient beings must retain the seed of existence. According to the Vijnaptimatratasiddhi Sastra, a Bodhisttva retains the obstacle of defilement to sustain his vow to be reborn into the samsara world. However, he is reborn, fully mindful and conscious of whatever place where he chooses to be reborn. In fact, he is not contaminated by the defilements owing to the fact that he has stayed with the view of pratityasanutpada for a long time, there is the “guarding of

defilements”. Second, a Bodhisattva always has the “Four Immeasurable Minds” known as maitri, karuna, mudita and upeksha, which are not to be viewed in discreteness or in isolation. Maitri is the center of the others, and the remaining three are its correlation. Maitri is the basis of Karuna. It stands for love, respect and care for all lives. It is concreteness of loving kindness based on the feeling that just as our life is precious to us, so also is the life of others. Mudita is altruistic sympathetic joy. It is happiness in the happiness of all. It is a consequence of Karuna. Upeksha is the prerequisite of Karuna. It stands for compassion to all beings. It also means equanimity of mind apart from partiality. Third, on the Bodhisattva’s Path, with the development of Bodhicitta, Bodhisattvas always practice the paramitas. In other words, the Path from sentient beings to Bodhisattvas and the realization of complete fulfillment of Enlightenment, Bodhisattvas must always try to practice all the paramitas.

It should be reminded that after mighty and terrible struggles with himself, the Buddha had conquered in his body all those natural defects and human appetites and desires that prevent our ability of seeing the truth. He had to overcome all the bad influences of the sinful world around Him. Like a soldier fighting desperately in battle against many enemies, He struggled like a hero who conquers, he eventually gained his objects. So, after cultivation in accordance with the Bodhisattvas’ Path for many many lives, the Buddha eventually confirmed that the Bodhisattvas’ Path itself is the only path leading practitioners who follow the Bodhisattva Ideal to bodhi and Buddhahood. In Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha taught: “Doers of what is hard are the Bodhisattvas, the great beings who have set out to win supreme enlightenment. They do not wish to attain their own private Nirvana. On the contrary, they have surveyed the highly painful world of being, but they do not tremble at birth-and-death. They have set out for the benefit of the world, for the peace and happiness of the world. They have resolved, and yet desirous to win supreme enlightenment, they do not tremble at birth and death. They have set out for the benefit of the world, for the ease of the world, out of pity for the world. They have resolved: ‘We will become a shelter for the world, a refuge for all beings, the world’s place of rest, the final belief of all beings, islands of the world, lights of the world, leaders of the world, the world’s means of salvation.

The journey from man to Buddha still demands continuous efforts with right understanding and practice. Devout Buddhists should always remember the goal of any Buddhist cultivator is to achieve self-enlightening, that is examining with one's own intelligence, and not depending upon another; enlightening or awakening of others, then achieve the final accomplishment, to go beyond the cycle of births and deaths, that is to reach the state of mind of a Nirvana right in this very life. According to Buddhist teachings, any practitioners who want to begin the journey on the Path of the Bodhisattva Ideal, they should first be always living and cultivating in Accordance With Bodhisattva's Vows.

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Cultivation of Four Magnanimous Vows: The magnanimous Vows mean the four universal vows of a Buddha or Bodhisattva (four magnanimous Vows or four all-encompassing vows). The four great vows are basically a Mahayana reinterpretation of the Four Holy Truths. In addition to ending one's own suffering, one vows to end the suffering of all living beings. In addition to eliminating one's own afflictions, one vows to end the inexhaustible afflictions of all living beings. In addition to learning only the single Dharma-door necessary for one's own enlightenment, one vows to learn all the Dharma-doors, so that one can teach all living beings appropriately. Rather than being satisfied with reaching the stage of the Arhat, one vows to become a Buddha. However, it is not enough just to recite the vows. You have to return the light and think them over: The vows say that I will save countless number of beings. Have I done so? If I have, it should still be the same as if I had not saved them. Why? It is said that the Thus Come One saves all living beings, and yet not a single living being has been saved. This means that even though you have saved quite a few numbers of living beings, but do not attach to the mark of saving living beings. According to the Mahayana, the four great magnanimous vows, that are part of the Bodhisattva vow as they recited three times successively in a Zen monastery after ending the practice of sitting meditation. These vows are also recited at the end of any Buddhist ceremonies. *First, Vow to save all living beings without limits:* Sentient beings are numberless (countless), I vow to save them all. According to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng Sutra, good knowing advisors, did all of you not just say, "I vow to take across the limitless beings? What does it mean? You should remember that it is not Hui-Neng who takes them across. Good Knowing Advisors, the 'living beings' within your mind are deviant and confused thoughts, deceitful and false thoughts, unwholesome thoughts, jealous thoughts, vicious thoughts: and these thoughts are 'living beings' The self-nature of each one of them must take itself across. That is true crossing over. What is meant by 'the self-nature taking across?' It is to take across by means of right views the living beings of deviant views, affliction, and delusion within your own mind. Once you have right views, use Prajna

Wisdom to destroy the living beings of delusion, confusion, and falsehood. Each one takes itself across. Enlightenment takes confusion across, wisdom takes delusion across, goodness takes evil across. Such crossing over is a true crossing. *Second, Vow to put an end to all passions and delusions, though innumerable:* Afflictions (annoyances) are inexhaustible (endless), I vow to end (cut) them all. Also according to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng Sutra, 'I vow to cut off the inexhaustible afflictions.' That is to use the Prajna Wisdom of your own self-nature to cast out the vain and false thoughts in your mind. *Third, Vow to study and learn all methods and means without end:* Schools and traditions are manifold, I vow to study them all. The teachings of Dharma are boundless, I vow to learn them all. Also according to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng Sutra, 'I vow to study the immeasurable Dharma-door.' You must see your own nature and always practice the right Dharma. That is true study. *Fourth, Vow to become perfect in the supreme Buddha-law:* The Buddha-Way (Truth) is supreme (unsurpassed), I vow to complete (realize) it. Also according to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng Sutra, 'I vow to realize the supreme Buddha Way,' and with humble mind to always practice the true and proper. Separate yourself from both confusion and enlightenment, and always give rise to Prajna. When you cast out the true and the false, you see your nature and realize the Buddha-way at the very moment it is spoken of. Always be mindful; cultivate the Dharma that possesses the power of this vow."

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Cultivation of Ten Bodhisattvas' Vows:

According to The Studies in The Lankavatara Sutra, written by Zen Master D.T. Suzuki, a Bodhisattva has ten original vows: *The first vow:* To honour and serve all the Buddhas, one and all without a single exception. *The second vow:* To work for the preservation and perpetuation of the teaching of all the Buddhas. *The third vow:* To be present at the appearance of each Buddha, wherever and whenever it may be. *The fourth vow:* To practice the proper conduct of Bodhisattvahood which is wide and measureless, imperishable and free from impurities, and to extend the Virtues of Perfection (paramitas) towards all beings. *The fifth vow:* To induce all beings in the most comprehensive sense of the term to turn to the teaching of the Buddhas so that they may find their final abode of peace in the wisdom of the all-wise ones. *The sixth vow:* To have an inner perception of the universe, wide and inexhaustible, in all its possible multitudinousness. *The seventh vow:* To realize the most closely interpenetrating relationship of each and all, of all and each, and to make everyland of beings immaculate as a Buddha-land. *The eighth vow:* To be united with all the Bodhisattvas in oneness of intention, to become intimately acquainted with the dignity, understanding, and psychic condition of the Tathagatas, so that the Bodhisattva can enter any society of beings and accomplish the Mahayana which is beyond thought. *The ninth vow:* To evolve the never-receding wheel whereby to carry out his work of

universal salvation, by making himself like unto the great lord of medicine or wish-fulfilling gem. *The tenth vow:* To realize the great supreme enlightenment in all the worlds, by going through the stages of Buddhahood, and fulfilling the wishes of all beings with one voice, and while showing himself to be in Nirvana, not to cease from practicing the objects of Bodhisattvahood.

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Cultivation of Ten Inexhaustible Vows (Dasanishthapada (skt): Ten Inexhaustible Vows to be made by the Bodhisattva at the Stage of Joy. The vows are called “inexhaustible” because their objectives are of such nature. Because all the ten worlds will never come to an end, and as long as they continue to exist, the Bodhisattva will never put forward his great vows with energy and determination. *The first world* is the world of beings. *The second world* is this world. *The third world* is the space. *Fourth*, the world where Dharma prevails. *The fifth world* is the Nirvana-world. *The sixth world* is the world where the Buddha is born. *The Seventh world* is the world of Tathagata-knowledge. *The eighth world* is the world as the object of thought. *Ninth*, the world as the object of Buddha-knowledge. *The tenth world* is the world where this worldly life, the Dharma and the Buddha-knowledge are evolved.

III. Cultivation of Vows in the Bodhisattva Ideal In the Spirit of the Flower Adornment Sutra:

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Living & Cultivating In Accordance With Ten Principles of Universally Good of Enlightening Beings: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten principles of Universally Good which Enlightening Beings have. *First*, vowing to live through all future ages. *Second*, vowing to serve and honor all Budhas of the future. *Third*, vowing to settle all sentient beings in the practice of Universally Good Enlightening Beings. *Fourth*, vowing to accumulate all roots of goodness. *Fifth*, vowing to enter all ways of transcendence. *Sixth*, vowing to fulfill all practices of Enlightening Beings. *Seventh*, vowing to adorn all worlds. *Eighth*, vowing to be born in all Buddha-lands. *Ninth*, vowing to carefully examine all things. *Tenth*, vowing to attain supreme enlightenment in all Buddha-lands. Besides, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva foremost in practice in Mahayana Buddhism. Bodhisattva who personifies the transcendental practices and vows of the Buddhas, usually depicted seated on a six-tusked elephant (six paramitas). He is best known for his ten great vows which we recite every day in Daily reciting Sutra. Day dedicated to His manifestation (to a Buddha's vital spirit) is the fourteenth day of the month. There are other ten vows of conduct of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. First, worship and respect all Buddhas. Second, praise the Thus Come Ones. Third, make abundant offerings. Fourth, repent misdeeds and hindrances. Fifth, rejoice at others' merits and virtues.

Sixth, request the Buddha to turn the Dharma Wheel. Seventh, request the Buddha to remain in the world. Eighth, follow the teachings of the Buddha at all times. Ninth, accommodate and benefit all sentient beings. Tenth, transfer merits and virtues universally.

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Living & Cultivating In Accordance With Ten Pure Vows of Great Enlightening Beings: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 18, there are ten pure vows of Enlightening Beings: *First*, vow to develop living beings to maturity, without wearying. *Second*, vow to fully practice all virtues and purify all worlds. *Third*, vow to serve the enlightened, always engendering honor and respect. *Fourth*, vow to keep and protect the true teaching, not begrudging their lives. *Fifth*, vow to observe with wisdom and enter the lands of the Buddhas. *Sixth*, vow to be of the same essence as all Enlightening Beings. *Seventh*, vow to enter the door of realization of Thusness and comprehend all things. *Eighth*, vow that those who see them will develop faith and all be benefited. *Ninth*, vow to stay in the world forever by spiritual power. *Tenth*, vow to fulfill the practice of Universal Good and master the knowledge of all particulars and all ways of liberation.

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Living & Cultivating In Accordance With Ten Kinds of Unimpeded Function Relating to Vows of Great Enlightening Beings: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of unimpeded function relating to vows of Great Enlightening Beings: *First*, make the vows of all Enlightening Beings their own vows. *Second*, manifest themselves attaining enlightenment by the power of the vow of attaining of enlightenment of all Buddhas. *Third*, attain supreme perfect enlightenment themselves in accordance with the sentient beings they are teaching. *Fourth*, never end their great vows, throughout all eons, without bounds. *Fifth*, detaching from the body of discriminating consciousness and not clinging to the body of knowledge, they manifest all bodies by free will. *Sixth*, give up their own bodies to fulfill the aspirations of others. *Seventh*, edify all sentient beings without giving up their great vows. *Eighth*, cultivate the deeds of Enlightening Beings in all ages, yet their great vows never end. *Ninth*, manifest the attainment of true enlightenment in a minute point (a pore), pervade all Buddha-lands by the power of vowing, and show this to each and every sentient beings in untold worlds. *Tenth*, explain a phrase of teaching, throughout all universes, raising great clouds of true teaching, flashing the lightning of liberation, booming the thunder of truth, showering the rain of elixir of immortality, fulfilling all sentient beings by the power of great vows.

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Living & Cultivating In Accordance With Ten Principles (abiding) Which Help Enlightening Beings to Fulfill Their Great Vows: According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 18, there are ten principles (abiding) which help Enlightening Beings to fulfill their great vows. When Enlightening Beings fulfill these vows, they will attain ten inexhaustible

treasuries. *First*, never wearying in mind. *Second*, preparing great adornments. *Third*, remembering the superlative will power of enlightening beings. *Fourth*, when hearing about the Buddha-lands, vowing to be born in them all. *Fifth*, keep their profound determination everlasting. *Sixth*, vowing to develop all living beings fully. *Seventh*, staying through all ages without considering it troublesome. *Eighth*, accepting all suffering without aversion. *Ninth*, having no craving or attachment to any pleasures. *Tenth*, always diligently protecting the unexcelled teaching.

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Living & Cultivating In Accordance With Ten Kinds of Adamantine Mind of Commitment to Universal Enlightenment:

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of adamantine mind of commitment to universal enlightenment. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the indestructible supreme spiritual knowledge of Buddhas. *The first adamantine mind of commitment to universal enlightenment* states that Enlightening Beings think all truths are boundless and inexhaustible. They should realize these truths thoroughly by means of knowledge comprehending past, present and future. *The second adamantine mind* states that there are infinite sentient beings even on a point the size of a hairtip, to say nothing of in all universe. No matter how many sentient beings, they should calm them and liberate them by means of unexcelled nirvana. *The third adamantine mind* states that the worlds of the ten directions are measureless, limitless, inexhaustible; they shall adorn them all with the finest adornments of the Buddha-lands, with all the adornments being truly real. *The fourth adamantine mind* states that sentient beings are measureless, boundless, limitless, inexhaustible. Enlightening Beings should dedicate all roots of goodness to them and illumine them with the light of unexcelled knowledge. *The fifth adamantine mind* states that the Buddhas are infinite, boundless, unlimited, inexhaustible. Enlightening beings should dedicate the roots of goodness, they plant to offer to them. They cause those roots of goodness to reach everywhere, with no lack. After that they will attain unexcelled complete perfect enlightenment. *The sixth adamantine mind* states that seeing all Buddhas and hearing their teachings Enlightening Beings become very joyful, not attach to their own bodies or to the bodies of Buddhas. They understand the body of a Buddha is neither real nor unreal; neither existent nor nonexistent, not of a particular nature, not without nature, not material, not immaterial, not form, not formless, not born, not extinct, really without existence yet not destroying existence, cannot be grasped through any nature or characteristic at all. *The seventh adamantine mind* states that if any one should revile or beat Enlightening Beings, cut off their hands or feet, gouge out their eyes, or even cut off their heads, Enlightening Beings are able to bear it all and never become angry or vicious as a result of this. They cultivate the practices of Enlightening Beings for countless eons, and taking care of

sentient beings, never abandoning them. Why? Enlightening Beings have already observed all things to be nondual, their minds are undisturbed. They can give up their own bodies and endure those pains. *The eighth adamant mind* states that the ages of the future are infinite, boundless, inexhaustible, limitless. They should travel the path of Enlightening Beings throughout those ages in one world and teaching sentient beings. Do the same in all worlds in the space of the cosmos, without fright or fear. This is the way the path of Enlightening Beings should be in principle, cultivated for the sake of all sentient beings. *The ninth adamant mind* states that unexcelled complete perfect enlightenment is based on the mind. If the mind is pure and clear, one can fulfill all roots of goodness and will surely attain freedom in enlightenment. If they wish to attain supreme consummate enlightenment, they can do so at will. If they wish to annihilate all grasping of objects, they can do that at will. Yet they do not annihilate because they want to reach the ultimate end of enlightenment of the Buddhas. They also do not immediately realize supreme enlightenment, in order to fulfill their original vow to carry out the practice of enlightening beings through all worlds and enlighten sentient beings. *The tenth adamant mind* states that Enlightening Beings know Buddha is ungraspable, Enlightenment is ungraspable, Enlightening Beings are ungraspable, all things are ungraspable, sentient beings are ungraspable, the mind is ungraspable, action is ungraspable, the past is ungraspable, the future is ungraspable, the present is ungraspable, all worlds are ungraspable, and the created and uncreated are ungraspable. Knowing this, Enlightening Beings dwell in quiescence, dwell in profundity, dwell in silent extinction, dwell in noncontention, dwell in speechlessness, dwell in nonduality, dwell in incomparability, dwell in essence, dwell in truth, dwell in liberation, dwell in nirvana, and dwell in absolute reality. Yet they do not give up any of their great vows, do not give up the will for omniscience, do not give up the deeds of Enlightening Beings, do not give up teaching sentient beings, do not give up the transcendent ways, do not give up taming sentient beings, do not give up serving Buddhas, do not give up explaining truth, do not give up adorning the world. Why? Because Great Enlightening Beings have made their great vows. Though they comprehend the characteristics of all things, their great kindness and compassion increase. They cultivate measureless virtues. Their minds do not abandon sentient beings, because while things have no absolute existence, ordinary or ignorant beings do not realize this. Enlightening Beings are committed to enlightening them so that they clearly comprehend the nature of things. All Buddhas rest peacefully in quiescence, yet by great compassion they teach in the world ceaselessly. Reflecting on this, Enlightening Beings will not abandon sentient beings, not abandon great compassion. They have already develop great commitment and have vowed to certainly benefit all sentient beings. They accumulate all roots of goodness;

persist in appropriate dedication; develop profound wisdom, accommodate all sentient beings, and be impartial toward all sentient beings. They speak truthfully, without falsehood; vow to give all sentient beings the supremely great teaching; vow to perpetuate the lineage of all Buddhas. As long as all sentient beings are not yet liberated, are not yet enlightened, and have not yet realized Buddhahood, the Enlightening Beings' great undertaking is not completed and they will not give up great compassion.

IV. Cultivation of Vows in the Bodhisattva Ideal In the Spirit of the Mahayana Buddhism (Northern Buddhism):

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Living & Cultivating of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's Twelve Vows: Avalokitesvara is one who contemplates the sound of the world. He is one of the four great bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism. Three other bodhisattvas are Samantabhadra, Kshitigarbha and Manjushri. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva can manifest herself in any conceivable form to bring help wherever it is needed. Bodhisattva of compassion and deep listening. Also called Kuan Shi Yin, the Bodhisattva of compassion. In more recent presentations, Kuan-Shi Yin is often depicted with feminine features. In China and Vietnam, Kuan Yin is sometimes considered as a thousand-armed, and thousand-eyed Bodhisattva. Somewhere in Vietnam, Kuan Yin is painted as a mother with a child in her one arm. Nevertheless, we often see pictures of Quan Yin standing on clouds, riding on a dragon, or standing on a cliff in high seas, waiting to save (rescue) shipwrecked victims. There are still a great number of legends of Kuan Yin for each locality has its own legend. Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra devoted to Kuan-Yin, and is the principal scriptures of the cult. Kuan-Yin is sometimes confounded (bị lầm lẫn) with Amitabha and Maitreya. Avalokitesvara is a Sanskrit term for "Lord who looks down." A Bodhisattva who stands on the left side of Amitabha Buddha. This is the most important Bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism. He is the embodiment of compassion (karuna), which along with wisdom (prajna) is one of the two main characteristics of the awakened mind of a Buddha. His name literally means "the Lord who Look Down," implying that he views the sufferings and afflictions of sentient beings with compassion. He figures prominently in many Mahayana sutras, e.g., several Perfection of Wisdom sutras, the Sukhavati-Vyuha, in which he is said to be one of the Bodhisattvas in the Pure Land of Amitabha, and the Saddharma-Pundarika, which has an entire chapter in which he is the main figure. In this sutra, he is described as the savior of beings in trouble. It is said that by merely remembering his name with devotion one can be saved in times of distress. In early East Asian Buddhist depictions, up to the early Sung Dynasty, he is portrayed as a male, but since at least the tenth century the image of a female in a white robe (Pai-I-Kuan-Yin) has predominated in East Asia. In Tibet Avalokitesvara Spyan ras

gzugs dbang phyug is viewed as the country's patron deity, one of physical emanations is the Dalai Lamas incarnational line. Furthermore, he is one of the eight great Bodhisattvas in Mahayana traditional Buddhism, and one whose activities involve the active practice of compassion in saving sentient beings. The mantra of "Om Mani Pad mi Hum" is directly associated with Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. In Tibetan Buddhism, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is considered to be the main patron Bodhisattva, and the Dalai Lama is viewed as his incarnate manifestation.

According to Eitel in *The Dictionary of Chinese-English Buddhist Terms*, Avalokitesvara is one who contemplates the world's sounds, originally represented as a male, the images are now generally those of a female figure. The meaning of the term is in doubt. Kuan-Yin is one of the triad of Amitabha, is represented on his left, and is also represented as crowned with Amida; but there are as many as thirty-three different forms of Kuan-Yin, sometimes with a bird, a vase, a willow wand, a pearl, a thousand eyes and hands, etc. and when as bestower of children, carrying a child. The island of P'u-T'o (Potala) is the chief center of Kuan-Yin worship, where she is the protector of all in distress, especially of those who go to sea. Avalokitesvara is the Bodhisattva of Universal Compassion whom Vietnamese and Chinese call Kuan Shi Yin. He is the Great Compassionate One or the Bodhisattva of all embracing love and benevolence. He is one of the most important bodhisattva of the Mahayana. He who hears the sound of suffers to save them. Avalokitesvara represents "Great Compassion" and limitless understanding, saving those who seek for help by calling his name or turning to him at times of extreme danger or when encountering calamities. In folk belief, Avalokitesvara also protects from natural catastrophe and grants blessings to children. He plays a central role in the devotional practices of all Buddhist sects. Although originally male, Kuan-Yin has become a feminine figure in the popular imagination in Asia.

According to Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is often depicted with one thousand hands, each hand containing its own eye, to indicate the vows and powers of the Bodhisattva to see all those suffering in the world and reach into the world and pull them out of their suffering. According to other Buddhist sources, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is one of the four greatest important Bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism. He is a Bodhisattva of Great Compassion and Observer of the Sounds of the World. He is also known as the Contemplator of Self-Mastery. He is the disciple and future successor of Amitabha Buddha in the Western Pure Land. According to other Buddhist sources, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is one of the four greatest important Bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism. He is also known as the Contemplator of Self-Mastery. He is the disciple and future successor of Amitabha Buddha in the Western Pure Land. In the Surangama Sutra, book Six, the Buddha asked Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva about perfect penetration,

and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva reported to the Buddha as follows: “World Honored One! From the gateway of ear, I obtained perfect and illumining samadhi. The conditioned mind was at ease, and therefore I entered the appearance of the flow, and obtaining samadhi, I accomplished Bodhi. World Honored One! That Buddha, the Thus Come One, praised me as having obtained well the Dharma-door of perfect penetration. In the great assembly he bestowed a prediction upon me and the name, Kuan-Shih-Yin. There are various titles of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva: Regarder or Observer of the world’s sounds or cries (sounds that enlighten the world), Kuan-Yin Bodhisattva, the Sovereign Beholder, not associated with sounds or cries, the Sovereign Beholder, not associated with sounds or cries, Tara or the sakti or female energy of the masculine Avalokitesvara, One Thousand Hands and Eyes Bodhisattva, Kuan Yin with efficacious responses, Kuan-Yin Gandharaja, Kuan-Yin gazing at the moon in the water (the unreality of all phenomena), and Kuan-Yin with the willow-branch (one of the thirty-three Kuan-Yins).

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva has twelve vows as follows: *The first vow:* Namó, the Greatly Enlightened, well known for great spiritual freedom, the Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow of immense propagation. *The second vow:* Namó, single-minded in liberation, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to often dwell in Southern Ocean. *The third vow:* Namó, the dweller of Saha World, the Underworld, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to follow the prayer sounds of sentient beings to alleviate pains and sufferings. *The fourth vow:* Namó, the destroyer of evil spirits and demons, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to eliminate dangers. *The fifth vow:* Namó, the holy water bottle and willow branch, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to provide comfort and purification of sentient beings’ minds with sweet holy water. *The sixth vow:* Namó, the greatly compassionate and forgiving Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow often to carry out conducts with complete fairness and equality. *The seventh vow:* Namó, in all times without abandonment, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to try to eliminate the three realm. *The eighth vow:* Namó, Potala Mountain, essential to worship, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to break from the bondage of shackles and chains to find liberation. *The ninth vow:* Namó, the creator of the dharma-vessel traveling the ocean of sufferings, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to rescue and aid all sentient beings. *The tenth vow:* Namó, the holder of flags and parasols, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to protect and deliver sentient beings to the Western Pure Land. *The eleventh vow:* Namó, the world of the Infinite Life Buddha, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to have Amitabha Buddha give the prophecy of Buddhahood. *The twelfth vow:* Namó, the incomparable adorning body in the three worlds, Avalokitesvara Tathagata’s vow to complete the twelve vows to rescue sentient beings.

Avalokitesvara, the “Bodhisattva who Looks Down” on us with compassion, is one of the most popular Mahayana Bodhisattvas. Revered as the embodiment of compassion, he is frequently depicted with eleven heads and 1,000 arms, all of which are used in his dispensation of aid. Avalokitesvara is an attendant of the Buddha Amitabha, who rules over Sukhavati, the Pure Land of the West. Amitabha is one of the most important of the many Buddhas who resides in the different Buddha fields of Mahayana Buddhism. Avalokitesvara finds many ways to help, not least by assuming a variety of forms, including those of a disciple, a monk, a god or a Tara. According to Tibetan Buddhism, Tara, an important female bodhisattva in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, was born from a teardrop of his compassion, and the Dalai Lamas are sometimes said to be successive reincarnations of Avalokitesvara. The cult of Avalokitesvara has inspired some of the most beautiful works of religious art in Asian Buddhism. In the 10th century, Chinese Buddhists started painting images of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva with ten arms. Four of these ten arms hold the sun, moon, a mace and a trident; and the remaining six are in the distinctive gesture (mudra) of giving, banishing fear and offering. According to Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is often depicted with one thousand hands, each hand containing its own eye, to indicate the vows and powers of the Bodhisattva to see all those suffering in the world and reach into the world and pull them out of their suffering.

Nowadays, Avalokitesvara is worshipped in different countries around the world. World Voice-Seeing Bodhisattva, one of the great bodhisattvas of the Mahayana Buddhism. Avalokitesvara contemplates the sound of the world. She can manifest herself in any conceivable form to bring help wherever it is needed. Bodhisattva of compassion and deep listening. Also called Kuan Shi Yin, the Bodhisattva of compassion. One of the three Pure Land Sages (Buddhas and Bodhisattvas). The others being Buddha Amitabha and Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta (Đại Thế Chí Bồ Tát). Among Buddhist mythological works, works on Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva are the most outstanding. By the power of his magic, and by his infinite care and skill he affords safety to those who are anxious. The word Avalokitesvara is a compound of the word “ishvara” means “Lord or Sovereign,” and of “avalokita” which means he who looks down with compassion, i.e., on beings suffering in this world. According to Edward Conze in *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, Avalokitesvara personifies compassion. The texts and images suggest that in India one may distinguish three stages in his development. At first, he is a member of a trinity, consisting of Amitayus, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. This Trinity has many counterparts in Iranian religion, i.e., in the Mithras cult and Zervanism, a Persian religion which recognized Infinite Time (Zervan Akarana=Amita-ayus) as the

fundamental principle. Assimilated by Buddhism, Avalokitesvara becomes a great Bodhisattva, so great that he is nearly as perfect as a Buddha. He possesses a great miraculous power to help in all kinds of dangers and difficulties. At first, he is a member of a trinity, consisting of Amitayus, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. This Trinity has many counterparts in Iranian religion, i.e., in the Mithras cult and Zervanism, a Persian religion which recognized Infinite Time (Zervan Akarana=Amita-ayus) as the fundamental principle. Assimilated by Buddhism, Avalokitesvara becomes a great Bodhisattva, so great that he is nearly as perfect as a Buddha. He possesses a great miraculous power to help in all kinds of dangers and difficulties. In the second stage, Avalokitesvara acquires a number of cosmic functions and features. He holds the world in his hand, he is immensely big, 800,000 myriads of miles, each of the pores of his skin conceals a world system. He is the Lord and Sovereign of the world. From his eyes come the sun and the moon, from his mouth the winds, from his feet the earth. In all these respects, Avalokitesvara resembles the Hindu God, Brahma. Finally, in the third stage, at a time when the magical elements of Buddhism come to the fore, he becomes a great magician who owes his power to his mantras, and he adopts many of the characteristics of Siva. This is the Tantric Avalokitesvara.

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Living & Cultivating of Twelve Vows of Bhaishajya-Guru-Buddha: According to The Medicine Buddha Sutra, the Buddha said to Manjusri Bodhisattva: "East of this world, past countless Buddha-lands, more numerous than the grains of sand in ten Ganges Rivers, there exists a world called Pure Lapis Lazuli. The Buddha of that world is called the Medicine Buddha Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata, Arhat, the Perfectly Enlightened, Perfect in Mind and Deed, Well Gone, Knower of the World, Unsurpassed Being, Tamer of Passions, Teacher of Gods and Men, Buddha, World Honoured One. **When the World Honoured Medicine Buddha was treading the Bodhisattva path,** He solemnly made Twelve Great Vows to grant sentient beings whatever they desired. The First great Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme, Perfect Enlightenment, my brilliant rays will radiate to all beings or to shine upon all beings with the light from my body, illuminating infinite, countless boundless realms. This body will be adorned with the Thirty-Two Marks of Greatness and Eighty Auspicious Characteristics. Furthermore, I will enable all sentient beings to become just like me. The Second Great Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, my body, inside and out, will radiate far and wide the clarity and flawless purity of lapis lazuli. This body will be adorned with superlative virtues and dwell peacefully in the midst of a web of light more magnificent than the sun or moon. The light will awaken the minds of all beings dwelling in darkness, enabling them to engage in their pursuits according to their wishes. The Third Great Vow: I vow that in

a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will, with infinite wisdom and skillful means, provide all sentient beings with an inexhaustible quantity of goods to meet their material needs. They will never want for anything. The Fourth Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will set all who follow heretical ways upon the path to Enlightenment. Likewise, I will set those who follow the Sravaka and Pratyeka-Buddha ways onto the Mahayana path. The Fifth Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will help all the countless sentient beings who cultivate the path of morality in accordance with my Dharma to observe the rules of conduct (Precepts) to perfection, in conformity with the Three Root Precepts. Even those guilty of disparaging or violating the Precepts will regain their purity upon hearing my name, and avoid descending upon the Evil Paths. The Sixth Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, sentient beings with imperfect bodies, whose senses are deficient, who are ugly, stupid, blind, deaf, mute, crippled, hunchbacked, leprous, insane or suffering from various other illnesses, will, upon hearing my name, acquire well-formed bodies, endowed with intelligence, with all senses intact. They will be free of illness and suffering. The Seventh Great Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, sentient beings afflicted with various illnesses, with no one to help them, nowhere to turn, no physicians, no medicine, no family, no home, who are destitute and miserable, will, as soon as my name passes through their ears, be relieved of all their illnesses. With mind and body peaceful and contented, they will enjoy home, family and property in abundance and eventually realize Unsurpassed Supreme Enlightenment. The Eighth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, those women who are extremely disgusted with 'hundred afflictions that befall women' and wish abandon their female form, will, upon hearing my name, all be reborn as men. They will be endowed with noble features and eventually realize Unsurpassed Supreme Enlightenment. The Ninth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will help all sentient beings escape from the demons' net and free themselves from the bonds of heretical paths. Should they be caught in the thicket of wrong views, I will lead them to correct views, gradually inducing them to cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and swiftly realize Supreme, Perfect Enlightenment. The Tenth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, those sentient beings who are shackled, beaten, imprisoned, condemned to death or otherwise subjected to countless miseries and humiliations by royal decree, and who are suffering in body and mind from this oppression, need only hear my name to be freed from all these afflictions, thanks to the awesome power of my merits and virtues. The Eleventh Great Vow: I vow that in a future life,

when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, if sentient beings who are tormented by hunger and thirst, to the point of creating evil karma in their attempts to survive, should succeed in hearing my name, recite it singlemindedly and hold fast to it, I will first satisfy them with most exquisite food and drink. Ultimately, it is through the flavor of the Dharma that I will establish them in the realm of peace and happiness. The Twelfth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme Enlightenment, if sentient beings who are utterly destitute, lacking clothes to protect them from mosquitos and flies, heat and cold, and are suffering day and night, should hear my name, recite it singlemindedly and hold fast to it, their wishes will be fulfilled. They will immediately receive all manner of exquisite clothing, precious adornments, flower garlands and incense powder, and will enjoy music and entertainment to their heart's content. Sakyamuni Buddha confirmed Manjusri Bodhisattva: "I cannot possibly describe them all, not even if I were to speak for an eon or more. However, this Buddha-land is utterly pure. You will find no temptations, no Evil Paths nor even cries of suffering there."

The Bodhisattva Ideal in Living & Cultivating With Forty-Eight Vows of Bodhisattva Dharmakara (Amitabha Buddha): Sakyamuni Buddha Himself Who Describes Dharmakara Bodhisattva: Jewel Treasury (Dharmakara) Bodhisattva, name of Amitabha Buddha when he still was a Bhikkhu. We've already seen that the Amitabha or Amutayus (Infinite Light or Infinite Life) is a Buddha idealized from the historical Buddha Sakyamuni. If the Buddha is purely idealized he will be simply the Infinite in principle. The Infinite will then be identical with Thusness. The Infinite if depicted in reference to space, will be the Infinite Light, and if depicted in reference to time, the Infinite Life. This is Dharmakaya or the Ideal. This Dharmakaya is the Sambhoga-kaya (the Reward-body or body of enjoyment), if the Buddha is viewed as a Buddha "coming down to the world." If he is viewed as a Bodhisattva going up to the Buddhahood, he is a would-be Buddha like the toiling Bodhisattva Sakyamuni. It is Sakyamuni Buddha himself who describes in the Sukhavati-vyuha the activities of the would-be Buddha, Dharmakara as it had been his former existence. The vow, original to the would-be Buddha or even Sakyamuni Buddha himself, is fully expressed in forty-eight items in Amitabha Sutra. Vows 12 and 13 refer to the Infinite Light and Infinite Life. "If he cannot get such aspects of Infinite Light and Infinite Life he will not be a Buddha." If he becomes a Buddha he can constitute a Buddha Land as he likes. A Buddha, of course, lives in the Nirvana of No Abode, and hence he can live anywhere and everywhere. His vow is to establish the Land of Bliss for the sake of all beings. An ideal land with adornments, ideal plants, ideal lakes or what not is all for receiving pious aspirants. The eighteenth vow which is regarded as most important, promises a birth in his Land of Bliss to

those who have a perfect reliance on the Buddha, believing with serene heart and repeating the Buddha's name. The nineteenth vow promises a welcome by the Buddha himself on the eve of death to those who perform meritorious deeds. The twentieth vow further indicates that anyone who repeats his name with the goal of winning a birth in his Land will also be received. Pure Land practitioners should always remember though the eighteenth vow expects sole reliance on the Buddha, but the nineteenth and twentieth vows depend on practitioners' own actions, the former on meritorious deeds and the later on repetition of the Buddha's name without complete reliance on the Buddha's power.

Amitabha Buddha is a transhistorical Buddha venerated by all Mahayana schools (T'ien T'ai, Esoteric, Zen, Pure Land, etc). Amitabha Buddha is the most commonly used name for the Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. A transhistorical Buddha venerated by all Mahayana schools. He presides over the Western Pure Land where anyone can be reborn through utterly sincere recitation of His name, particularly at the time of death. Amitabha Buddha who is the main object of devotion in the the Pure Land School of Buddhism in China, Japan, Vietnam and Korea. While all other schools of Mahayana insist on self-enlightenment, these schools teach sole reliance on the Buddha's power. This tradition holds that people who recite his name with a sincere faith are reborn in Sukhavati. In Japan, the most important practice for achieving this is recitation of the "Nembutsu" or "Namo Amida Butsu." In China, "Namo A-mi-to-fo." And in Vietnam, "Nam Mô A Di Đà Phật." These all have the same meaning: "Praise to Amitabha Buddha." According to Amitabha's eighteenth vow, anyone who invokes Amitabha's name ten times, or desires rebirth in Sukhavati ten times, will surely be reborn there. This is often referred to as an "easy practice," because it is based on faith and repetition of recitation of the formula "Namo Amitabha Buddha," rather than on difficult meditational practices. The cult of Amitabha shows strong Iranian influence, and began about the first years of Christian Era. Amitabha is the Buddha of Infinite (Amita) Light (abha) and his kingdom is in the West. He is known as Amitayus, because his life-span (ayuh) is infinite (amita). A great number of texts are devoted to Amitabha. The best known among them is the Sukhavati-vyūha, the Array of the Happy Land, which describes his Paradise, its origin and structure. The Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life, name of a mythical Buddha, the presiding Buddha of the Western Paradise worshipped in Pure Land Buddhism. Most often he is seated in the middle of a lotus blossom, symbol of purity. He often appears together with Avalokitesvara on his left hand and Mahasthamaprapta on his right hand (Amitabha is seated and the two Bodhisattvas stand).

According to Prof. Junjiro Takakusu in *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, Amita-peitism in Japan, as represented by the Pure Land School

of Fa-Ran, the Shingon of Shin-Ran, and Shih-Tsung of I-Bien shows a unique aspect of Buddhism. While all other schools of Mahayana insist on self-enlightenment, these schools teach sole reliance on the Buddha's power. The Buddha of all other exoteric schools is Sakyamuni, while the Buddha of these schools is Amita, or Amitabha, or Amitayus. The critical division of the Buddha's teaching adopted by Fa-Ran was into the two doctrines of the Holy Path and the Pure Land, originally proposed by T'ao-Ch'o of China in 645 A.D. The former is the difficult way to traverse while the latter is the easy way to travel defined by Nagarjuna. There is another division which was proposed by Vasubandhu and elucidated by T'ao-Ch'o, that is, the ways of self-power and another's power. Another's power here means the power of Amitabha Buddha, not any other's power. Those who pursue the Holy Path can attain Buddhahood in this world, if they are qualified, while other just want to seek rebirth in the Pure Land and attain the Buddhahood there.

Different Titles of Amitabha Buddha: Amitabha Buddha has a lot of titles, among them include: First, Amitabha Tathagata. Second, Measureless Brightness of Tathagata (Buddha of Boundless Light or Buddha of Unlimited Light). Amitabha is a Sanskrit term for "Limitless Light." A Buddha who is said to preside over the western paradise of Sukhavati, a realm in which beings born there are assured of attaining Buddhahood in that lifetime. The conditions of the paradise are optimal for practice of Buddhism, in accordance with Amitabha's former vows. Third, Limitless Brightness of Tathagata. Amitabha Buddha of light that is immeasurable, boundless, irresistible, pure, joy, wisdom, unceasing, surpassing thought, ineffable, Surpassing sun and moon. Fourth, No Fear Brightness of Tathagata (Buddha of Irresistible Light). The all pervasive light or glory of Amitabha Buddha. Fifth, No Objection Brightness of Tathagata (Buddha of Incomparable Light). Amitabha Buddha of light that is incomparable. Sixth, Volcano King Brightness of Tathagata (Buddha of Flame-King Light or Yama), the fifth of the twelve shining Buddhas. Seventh, Purification Brightness of Tathagata (Buddha of Pure Light), the pure, shining body or appearance of the Amitabha Buddha. Eighth, Joyful and Detached Brightness of Tathagata (Buddha of Joyous Light). Ninth, Brightness of Knowledge and Favour of Tathagata (Buddha of Wisdom Light). Tenth, Brightness of Difficult Privacy of Tathagata (Buddha of Unconceivable Light). Eleventh, Perpetual Brightness of Tathagata (Buddha of Unending Light). Twelfth, Brightness of Non-Proclamation of Tathagata (Buddha of Indescribable Light). Thirteenth, Brightness of Super Sun and Moon of Tathagata (Buddha of Light Surpassing that of Sun and Moon). Fourteenth, Buddha of Boundless Age (Life), an alternative manifestation of Amitabha Buddha, who is particularly associated with longevity. He is usually depicted with red skin and holding a begging-bowl containing the elixir of immortality. This Buddha, in a lifetime during which he was a monk named Dharmakara,

had his vows to create a realm that would be the ideal training ground for beings aspiring to Buddhahood. Amitabha Buddha is usually depicted as sitting with a vessel of nectar of immortality in his hands. Fifteenth, Buddha of Infinite King of Sweet-Dew: Sweet-Dew King. In its implication of immortality is a name of Amitabha (connected with him are the Mantra of Ambrosia, the Mantra of Ambrosial Dharani, Ten Mantras of Ambrosia, Sutra of Ambrosia).

The Unlimited Light and Boundless Life Buddha Vowed to Radiate Treasure of His Wisdom-Virtue-Enlightenment to All Lands: Amitabha vowed to become the source of unlimited Light and Boundless Life, freeing and radiating the treasure of his wisdom and virtue, enlightening all lands and emancipating all suffering people. These are ten of the most important vows in the Amitabha's forty-eight vows. As we have seen that the Amitabha or Amitayus, or Infinite Light and Infinite Life, is a Buddha realized from the historical Buddha Sakyamuni. If the Buddha is purely idealized he will be simply the Infinite in principle. The Infinite will then be identical with Thusness. The Infinite, if depicted in reference to space, will be the Infinite Light, and if depicted in reference to time, the Infinite Life. He always vows in the Pure Land, there will be no inferior modes or evil path of existence; in the Pure Land, there will be no women, as all women who are reborn there will transform at the moment of death into men; there will be no differences in appearance there, every being is to have 32 marks of perfection; every being in the Pure Land possesses perfect knowledge of all past existences; every being possesses a Divine eye; every being possesses a Divine Ear; every being possesses the ability to move about by supernatural means; every being possesses the ability to know the thoughts of others; all beings of the worlds in all ten directions, upon hearing the name of Amitabha, will arouse Bodhicitta and vow to be reborn in the Western Pure Land after death. Amitabha and all saints will appear at the moment of their death to all beings who have aroused Bodhicitta through hearing his name (this is the most important vow). All beings who through hearing his name have directed their minds toward rebirth in his Pure Land and have accumulated wholesome karmic merits will be reborn in the Western Paradise. After rebirth in the Pure Land, only one further rebirth will be necessary before entry into Nirvana, no more falling back into lower paths. The vows which Amitabha Buddha made while still engaged in Bodhisattva practice as Bodhisattva Dharmakara. According to Longer Amitabha Sutra, Bodhisattva Dharmakara wished to create a splendid Buddha land in which he would live when he attained Buddhahood. Because according to the Longer Amitabha Sutra or the Infinite Life Sutra, in his previous lifetimes, Amitabha Buddha has made forty-eight profound, all-encompassing vows. The general tenor of these vows is best exemplified in the eighteenth and eleventh vows. Sentient beings in the Saha World recite

Amitabha Buddha's name with a wish to be reborn in the Pure Land because Amitabha Buddha has adorned the Western Pure Land with forty-eight lofty Vows. These vows (particularly the eighteenth Vow of "welcoming and escorting") embrace all sentient beings, from Bodhisattvas to common beings full of evil transgressions.

The Western Land of Bliss: Sukhavati means the Western Land of Amitabha Buddha, the highest joy, name of the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha in the west. The Western Paradise which is outside the triple realm and beyond samsara and retrogression. The Western Paradise is one of the most important of the Buddha-fields to appear in the Mahayana. Amitabha Buddha created the Pure Land by his karmic merit. The cult of Amitabha shows strong Iranian influences, and began about the same time. Amitabha is the Buddha of Infinite (Amita) Light (abha) and his kingdom is in the West. He is also known as Amitayus, because his lifespan (ayuh) is infinite amita). The Pure Land sect believes that through faithful devotion to Amitabha and through recitation of his name, one can be reborn there and lead a blissful life until entering Nirvana. Amitabha Buddha with Pratyaveksana-jnana, the wisdom derived from wisdom of profound insight (ý thức), or discrimination, for exposition and doubt-destruction; corresponds to water, and is associated with Amitabha and the west. According to the T'ien-T'ai and Shingon, Amita is superior over the five Wisdom Buddhas (Dhyani-Buddhas), even though he governs the Western Quarter, not the center. Of the five Wisdom Buddhas, Amitabha of the West may be identical with the central Mahavairocana, the Buddha of homo-cosmic identity. Amitabha's original vows, his attainment of Buddhahood of Infinite Light and Life, and his establishment of the Land of Bliss are all fully described in the Sukhavati text. The Western Pure Land is also called the Happy Land. Name of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, or the Pure Land of Amitabha in the West. A Sanskrit term for "Joyous Land." The paradise of Amitabha Buddha. This is the Pure Land in the west of Amitabha Buddha, said to be located in the west, one of the most important Buddha fields to appear in the Mahayana. By his karmic merit, Buddha Amitabha created and reigned in this Pure Land. The Pure Land sect believes that through faithful devotion to Amitabha and through reciting his name, after death, one can be reborn in the Western Paradise to continue a blissful life until entering nirvana. It is the central focus of the religious practice of the "Pure Land" schools in East Asia, which believe that it is a place in which the conditions are optimal for the attainment of Buddhahood. This idea is connected with the prevalent notion that this is the final of the degeneration of the dharma, in which the capacities of humans have degenerated to such an extent that it is no longer possible to gain salvation (liberation) through one's own efforts. Thus, the wiser course of action is to cultivate toward rebirth in Sukhavati, so that one may attain Buddhahood in one's next lifetime. The

wondrous qualities of this paradise are described in several texts, most popularly the Sukhavati-Vyuha-Sutra, Smaller and Larger. Sukhavati means the Western Land of Amitabha Buddha, the highest joy, name of the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha in the west. The Western Paradise which is outside the triple realm and beyond samsara and retrogression. The Western Paradise is one of the most important of the Buddha-fields to appear in the Mahayana. Amitabha Buddha created the Pure Land by his karmic merit. The Pure Land sect believes that through faithful devotion to Amitabha and through recitation of his name, one can be reborn there and lead a blissful life until entering Nirvana. Pure Land, Paradise of the West, presided over by Amitabha. The environment and conditions of the Western Pure Land are most exalted. That realm provides sentient beings with many more advantageous circumstances than other Pure Lands, which ordinary beings in the Triple World cannot fully understand. The environment of the Western Pure Land is exalted, and can awaken the yearning and serve as a focus for sentient beings. The conditions of the Western Pure Land are unfathomable and wonderful and can help those who are reborn to progress easily and swiftly along the path of enlightenment. For these reasons, although there are many common residence Pure Lands in the ten directions, only the Western Pure Land possesses all auspicious conditions in full. This is why sutras and commentaries point toward rebirth in the Western Pure Land. The Western Paradise to which Amitabha is the guide and welcomer. In China, Japan, and Vietnam, Amitabha Buddha has been much more popular than any other Buddha. In India he seems never to have occupied such an overtowering position, although Hui-Je, a Chinese pilgrim, who visited India between 702 and 719, reports that everyone spoke to him about Amitabha Buddha and his Paradise.

According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, the Buddha reminded Ratna-rasi Bodhisattva about Bodhisattvas' Pure Lands as follows: The straightforward mind is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he realizes Buddhahood, beings who do not flatter will be reborn in his land. The profound mind is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he realizes Buddhahood living beings who have accumulated all merits will be reborn there. The Mahayana (Bodhi) mind is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood all living beings seeking Mahayana will be reborn there. Charity (dana) is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood living beings who can give away (to charity) will be reborn there. Discipline (sila) is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he realizes Buddhahood living beings who have kept the ten prohibitions will be reborn there. Patience (ksanti) is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood living beings endowed with the thirty-two excellent physical marks will be reborn there. Devotion (virya) is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood living beings who are diligent in their performance of meritorious

deeds will be reborn there. Serenity (dhyana) is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood living beings whose minds are disciplined and unstirred will be reborn there. Wisdom (prajna) is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood living beings who have realized samadhi will be reborn there. The four boundless minds (catvari apramanani) are the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood living beings who have practiced and perfected the four infinities: kindness, compassion, joy and indifference, will be reborn there. The four persuasive actions (catuh-samgraha-vastu) are the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood living beings who have benefited from his helpful persuasion will be reborn there. The expedient methods (upaya) of teaching the absolute truth are the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood living beings conversant with upaya will be reborn there. The thirty-seven contributory states to enlightenment (bodhipaksika-dharma) are the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood living beings who have successfully practiced the four states of mindfulness (smṛtyu-paṣṭhana), the four proper lines of exertion (samyakpra-hana), the four steps towards supramundane powers (rddhipada), the five spiritual faculties (panca indriyani), the five transcendental powers (panca balani), the seven degrees of enlightenment (sapta bodhyanga) and the eightfold noble path (asta-marga) will be reborn in his land. Dedication (of one's merits to the salvation of others) is the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood his land will be adorned with all kinds of meritorious virtues. Preaching the ending of the eight sad conditions is the Buddhahood his land will be free from these evil states. To keep the precepts while refraining from criticizing those who do not in the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood his country will be free from people who break the commandments. The ten good deeds are the Bodhisattva's pure land, for when he attains Buddhahood he will not die young, he will be wealthy, he will live purely, his words are true, his speech is gentle, his encourage will not desert him because of his conciliatoriness, his talk is profitable to others, and living beings free from envy and anger and holding right views will be reborn in his land. So, Ratna-rasi, because of his straightforward mind, a Bodhisattva can act straightforwardly; because of his straightforward deeds, he realizes the profound mind; because of his profound mind his thoughts are kept under control; because of his controlled thoughts, his acts accord with the Dharma (he has heard); because of his deeds in accord with the Dharma, he can dedicate his merits to the benefit of others; because of this dedication, he can make use of expedient methods (upaya); because of his expedient methods, he can bring living beings to perfection; because he can bring them to perfection, his Buddha land is pure; because of his pure Buddha land, his preaching of the Dharma is pure; because of his pure preaching, his wisdom is

pure; because of his pure wisdom, his mind is pure, and because of his pure mind, all his merits are pure. Therefore, Ratna-rasi, if a Bodhisattva wants to win the pure land, he should purify his mind and because of his pure mind, the Buddha land is pure.”

Forty-Eight Vows of Bodhisattva Dharmakara (Amitabha Buddha): The forty-eight vows of Amitabha that he would not enter into his final nirvana or heaven, unless all beings share it. The vows which Amitabha Buddha made while still engaged in Bodhisattva practice as Bodhisattva Dharmakara. According to Longer Amitabha Sutra, Bodhisattva Dharmakara wished to create a splendid Buddha land in which he would live when he attained Buddhahood. Also according to Amitabha Sutra (The Sutra of Infinite Life), Amitabha Buddha is foremost. This is because of the power of his vows. This power is so great that when you singlemindedly recite “Nam Mo Amitabha Buddha,” after death you can be reborn in the Western Pure Land, and become a Buddha from there. All you need to do is recite the Buddha’s name. These are original vows of Dharmakara, the would-be Buddha, or even to Sakyamuni Buddha himself, is fully expressed in the forty-eight vows in the text. Vows numbered 12 and 13 refer to the Infinite Light and the Infinite Life. “If he cannot get such aspects of Infinite Light and Life, he will not be a Buddha.” If he becomes a Buddha he can constitute a Buddha Land as he likes. A Buddha, of course, lives in the ‘Nirvana of No Abode,’ and hence he can live anywhere and everywhere. His vow is to establish the Land of Bliss for the sake of all beings. An ideal land with adornments, ideal plants, ideal lakes for receiving all pious aspirants. The eighteenth vow which is regarded as most important, promises a birth in His Land of Bliss to those who have a perfect reliance on the Buddha, believing with serene heart and repeating the Buddha’s name. The nineteenth vow promises a welcome by the Buddha himself on the eve of death to those who perform meritorious deeds. The twentieth vow further indicates that anyone who repeats his name with the object of winning a rebirth in His Land will also be received. *First*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if there would still be the planes (realms) of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, and animals in my land (When I become a Buddha, if, in my land, there are still the planes of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, or animals, I will not ultimately take up supreme enlightenment). *Second*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings, especially the devas and humans from my land would fall to the three miserable planes (realms) of existence in other lands. *Third*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the sentient beings, especially the devas and humans in my land would not be endowed with a complexion of genuine gold. *Fourth*, I shall not attend supreme enlightenment if there would be such distinctions as good and ugly appearances among the sentient beings in my land, especially among the deva and humans. *Fifth*, I shall not attain supreme

enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would fail to achieve the power to remember the past lives of himself and others, even events that happened hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of kalpas ago. *Sixth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would not be endowed with the deva-eye, enabling him to see hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of Buddha-lands. *Seventh*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would fail to obtain the deva-ear, enabling him to hear the Dharma expounded by another Buddha hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of leagues away. *Eighth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would not be endowed with the power of knowing others' minds, so that he would not know the mentalities of the sentient beings in hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of other Buddha-lands. *Ninth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would fail to achieve the perfect mastery of the power to appear anywhere at will, so that he would not be able to traverse hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of Buddha-lands in a flash of thought. *Tenth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would entertain even a single the notion of "I" and "mine." *Eleventh*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land, especially the devas and humans, would not certainly achieve supreme enlightenment and realize great nirvana. *Twelfth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if my light would be so limited as to be unable to illuminate hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads (or any number) of Buddha-lands. *Thirteenth*, I shall not attain enlightenment if my life span would be limited to even hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of kalpas, or any countable number of kalpas. *Fourteenth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if anyone would be able to know number of Sravakas in my land. Even if all sentient beings and Pratyeka-buddhas in a billion-world universe exercised their utmost counting power to count together for hundreds of thousands of years, they would not be able to know it. *Fifteenth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land would have a limited life span, except those who are born due to their vows. *Sixteenth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my lands, especially the devas and humans, would have a bad reputation. *Seventeenth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if my land would not be praised and acclaimed by innumerable Buddhas in countless Buddha-lands. *Eighteenth*, when I realize supreme enlightenment, there will be sentient beings in the Buddha-lands who, after hearing my name, dictate their good roots to be born

in my land in thought after thought. Even if they had only ten such thoughts, they will be born in my land, except for those who have performed karmas leading to Uninterrupted Hell and those who speak ill of the true Dharma or saints. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain enlightenment. *Nineteenth*, when I become a Buddha, I shall appear with an assembly of monks at the deathbeds of sentient beings of other Buddha-lands who have brought forth bodhicitta, who think of my land with a pure mind, and who dedicate their good roots to birth in the Land of Utmost Bliss. I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if I would fail to do so. *Twentieth*, when I become a Buddha, all the sentient beings in countless Buddha-lands, who, having heard my name and dedicated their good roots to be born in the Land of Utmost Bliss, will be born there. Otherwise, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Twenty-first*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any bodhisattva in my land would fail to achieve the thirty-two auspicious signs. *Twenty-second*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any Bodhisattvas in my land on their way to great bodhi would fail to reach the stage of being only one lifetime away from Buddhahood. This excludes those Bodhisattvas with great vows who wear the armor of vigor for the sake of sentient beings; who strive to do beneficial deeds and cultivate great nirvana; who perform the deeds of a Bodhisattva throughout all Buddha-lands and make offerings to all Buddhas, the Tathagatas; and who establish as many sentient beings as the sands of the Ganges in supreme enlightenment. This also excludes those who seek liberation by following the path of Samantabhadra, devoting themselves to Bodhisattvas' practices even more than those who have attained the stage of being only one lifetime away from Buddhahood. *Twenty-third*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the Bodhisattvas in my land would not, by the awesome power of the Buddha, be able to make offerings to countless hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of Buddhas in other Buddha-lands every morning return to their own land before mealtime. *Twenty-fourth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the Bodhisattvas in my land would not possess every variety of offering they need to plant good roots in various Buddha-lands. *Twenty-fifth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the Bodhisattvas in my land would not be skilled in expounding the essence of the Dharma in harmony with all-knowing wisdom. *Twenty-sixth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if the Bodhisattvas in my land would not have enormous strength of a Narayana. *Twenty-seventh*, when I become a Buddha, no one will be able to describe completely the articles of adornment in my land; even one with the deva-eye will not be able to know all their varieties of shape, color, and brilliance. If anyone could know and describe them all, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Twenty-eighth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if in my land there would be Bodhisattvas with inferior roots of virtue who could not know the numerous

kinds of trees, four hundred thousand leagues high, which will abound in my land. *Twenty-ninth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if those sentient beings in my land who read and recite sutras and explain them to others would not acquire superb eloquence. *Thirtieth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any Bodhisattva in my land would be unable to achieve limitless eloquence. *Thirty-first*, when I become a Buddha, my land will be unequalled in brightness and purity; it will clearly illuminate countless, numberless Buddha-lands, inconceivable in number, just as a clear mirror reveals one's features. If this would not be so, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Thirty-second*, when I become a Buddha, there will be innumerable kinds of incense on land and in air within the borders of my land, and there will be hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of myriads of precious censers, from which will rise the fragrance of the incense, permeating all of space. The incense will be superior to the most cherished incense of humans and gods, and will be used as an offering to Tathagatas and Bodhisattvas. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Thirty-third*, when I become a Buddha, sentient beings in countless realms, inconceivable and unequalled in number, throughout the ten directions who are touched by the awesome light of the Buddha will feel more secure and joyful in body and mind than other humans or gods. Otherwise, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Thirty-fourth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if Bodhisattvas in countless Buddha-lands, inconceivable and unequalled in number, would not realize the truth of non-arising and acquire dharanis after they hear my name. *Thirty-fifth*, when I become a Buddha, all the women in numberless Buddha-lands, inconceivable and unequalled in number, who, after hearing my name, acquire pure faith, bring forth bodhicitta, and are tired of the female body, will rid themselves of the female body in their future lives. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment (I refuse to enter into final nirvana or final joy until every woman who calls on my name rejoices in enlightenment and who, hating her woman's body, has ceased to be reborn as a woman). *Thirty-sixth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if Bodhisattvas in countless Buddha-lands, inconceivable and unequalled in number, who attain doctrine of non-arising after hearing my name would fail to cultivate superb, pure conduct until they attain great bodhi. *Thirty-seventh*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if, when I become a Buddha, humans and gods would not pay homage to all the Bodhisattvas of numberless Buddha-lands who, after hearing my name, prostrate themselves in obeisance to me and cultivate the deeds of Bodhisattva with a pure mind. *Thirty-eighth*, when I become a Buddha, sentient beings in my land will obtain the clothing they need as soon as they think of it, just as a man will be spontaneously clad in a monastic robe when the Buddha says, "Welcome, monk!" If this would not be the case, I shall not

attain supreme enlightenment. *Thirty-ninth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in my land would not at birth obtain the necessities of life and become secure, pure, and blissful in mind, like a monk who has ended all defilements. *Fortieth*, when I become a Buddha, if sentient beings in my land wish to see other superbly adorned, pure Buddha-lands, these lands will immediately appear to them among the precious trees, just as one's face appears in a clear mirror. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Forty-first*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if any sentient beings in any other Buddha-lands, after hearing my name and before attaining bodhi, would be born with incomplete organs or organs restricted in function. *Forty-second*, when I become a Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands, after hearing my name, will be able to know distinctly the name of superb samadhis. While in remaining in samadhi, they will be able to make offerings to countless, numberless Buddhas, inconceivable and unequalled in number, in a moment, and will be able to realize great samadhis instantly. If this would not be the case, I shall not attained supreme enlightenment. *Forty-third*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if, when I become Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands who has heard my name would not be born in a noble family after death. *Forty-fourth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if when become a Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands would not immediately cultivate the Bodhisattva practices, become purified and joyful, abide in equality, and possess all good roots after he hears my name. *Forty-fifth*, when I become a Buddha, Bodhisattvas in other Buddha-lands will achieve the Samadhi of Equality after hearing my name and will, without regression, abide in this samadhi and make constant offerings to an innumerable, unequalled number of Buddhas until those Bodhisattvas attain bodhi. If this would not be the case, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment. *Forty-sixth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if Bodhisattvas in my land would not hear at will the Dharma they wish to hear. *Forty-seventh*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if, when I become a Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands would regress from the path to supreme enlightenment after he hears my name. *Forty-eighth*, I shall not attain supreme enlightenment if, when I become a Buddha, any Bodhisattva in any other Buddha-lands would not acquire the first, the second or the third realization as soon as he heard my name, or would not instantly attain nonregression with regard to Buddha-Dharmas.

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