



# *The Compendium of Pure Land Buddhism*

*A collection of spiritual essays, poems and translations of rare Pure Land Buddhist works.*

*By Brian Bye Sheng Chung*

鍾佰晟

## Preface

In 2003, when I was only 10, I encountered Master Chin Kung's Dharma channel by chance while playing with the remote. This lucky coincidence introduced my whole family to his teachings, and from then on, my parents and I became interested in Pure Land Buddhism. For the next several years, we donated, printed sutras, listened to his lecture recordings, and recited the Buddha's name.

In spring of 2014, I joined an online Buddhist course, instructed by a Princeton University professor, titled Buddhism and Modern Psychology. In the lively forum discussions with Buddhists of diverse traditions, as well as people who had just begun to study Buddhism, I wrote nearly a thousand posts sharing what I had learned in the past decade from Master Chin Kung. After the course finished, I became interested in translating rare Pure Land Buddhist texts into English, so that more people could benefit from the wisdom embodied within them.

Towards the end of 2014, I started studying the Treatise of Response and Retribution in earnest, and after noticing that most translations of the text were at least a century old, decided to create a modern translation with commentary of the Treatise. From then on, I started what would later be a 7 year long journey of translating and sharing the Pure Land Dharma. In 2016, I was even requested by a Vietnamese Upasika, through Upasaka Andy Kao (of Queensland), to translate a supportive chanting guidebook (The Last Rites of Amitabha) for the benefit of the elderly residents of a care home. It was one of the most rewarding moments of my life. Further surprises came in 2018 and 2020. In 2018, classical composer Jordan Grigg composed a full orchestral symphony based on my poem (inspired by the Infinite Life Sutra), the Odyssey of Dharmakara.

In 2020, a talented translator, John Scot Walker, contacted me after encountering some of my work, and asked me to suggest a good Pure Land Buddhist text for him to translate. I immediately introduced him to the Upasaka Xia Lian Ju version of the Infinite Life Sutra (無量壽經 會集本), which at that time did not have a full English translation. He emailed me his work in progress over the course of the year, and I offered advice and support. Exactly one year later, he emailed me the fully completed translation, in excellent verse form, of Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra. The first complete English translation in history. He also gave me the honor of writing the foreword. Such a miracle was surely the blessing of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This translation is included at the back. Moreover, my translation of Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra was published by Manyroads E-magazine in September of the same year.

Upon my father's request, I decided to compile all my translations, as well as other works (such as essays, posts, musical score and poetry), into one compendium, to preserve them and benefit future generations.

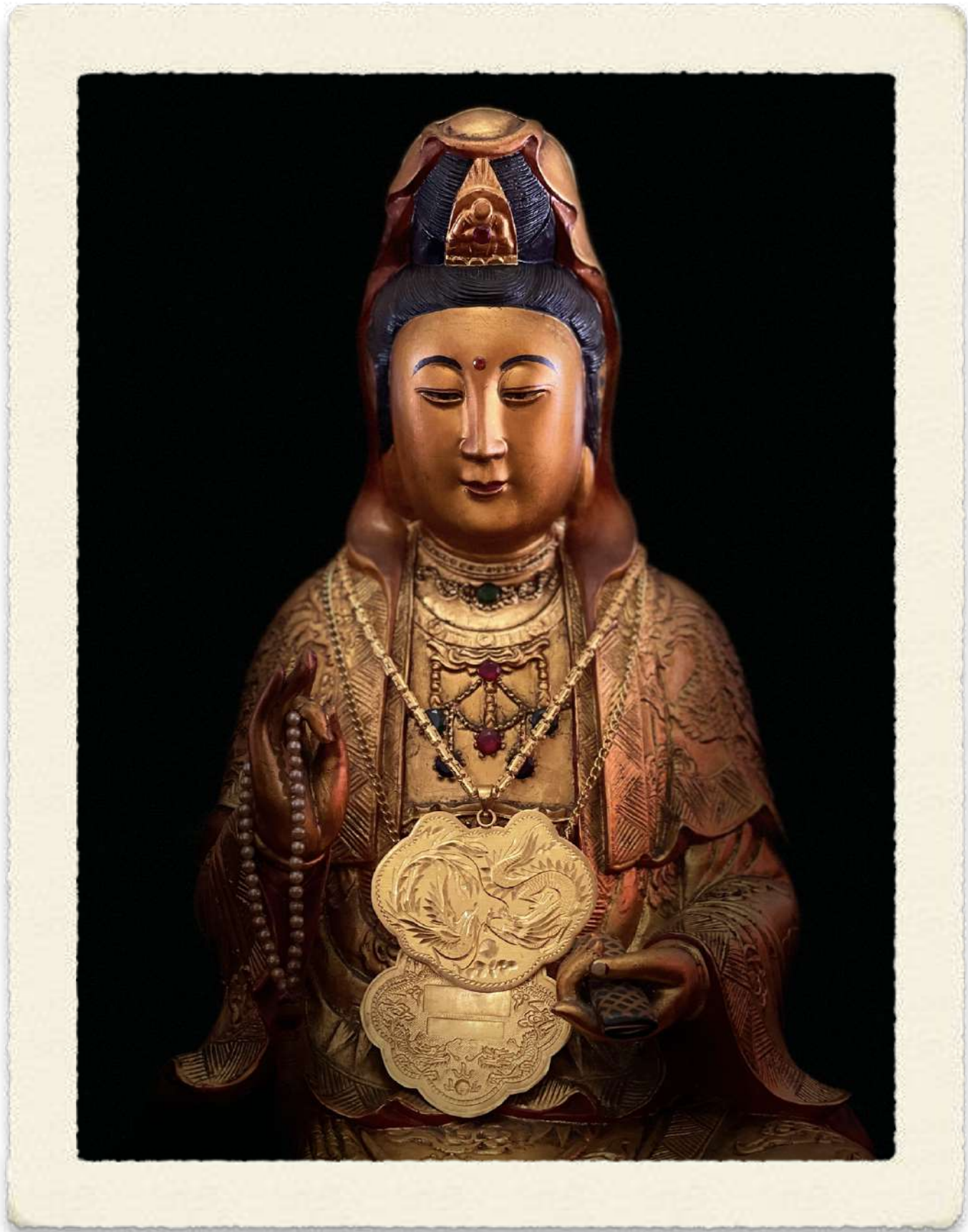
Thus, this compendium represents my humble contribution to the Dharma, and the fields of art, philosophy and spirituality. My way of repaying the kindness of the Buddha, my parents and benefactors.

**Brian Bye Sheng Chung**

鍾佰晟

Oct 24 2021

# The Treasury of Dharma Gems



Translations of Key Excerpts and Essays From the Works of The Great Upasakas and  
Dharma Masters of the 20th Century

Brian Bye Sheng Chung

2021 Edition

## Table of Contents

Preface.....	3
Upasaka Li Bing Nan.....	5
Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu.....	24
The 13th Pure Land Patriarch, Master Yin Guang.....	33
Master Zhangjia.....	66
Upasaka Xia Lian Ju.....	68
The Universal Way of Avalokitesvara (Chapter 25 of Lotus Sutra).....	71

## Dedication of Merit

May the merits and virtues accrued from this work adorn the Buddha's Pure Land, repay the Four Kindnesses above, and relieve the sufferings of those in the Three Paths below. May those who see or hear of this, bring forth the heart of understanding and compassion and, at the end of this life, be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

## Reprinting and Sharing Allowed

This work may be shared or reprinted, either wholly or partially, for the purpose of non profit and educational usage.



## Preface

In March 2021, I started reading the Priceless Treasure That is The Buddha-Dharma by Upasaka Li Bing Nan (1890-1986), and found it to be a most excellent Dharma-booklet that made the profound principles of Pure Land Buddhism both accessible and easy to implement in our daily lives. I believe that if a man who has never read the Buddha-sutras were to read this booklet, then this alone would be sufficient to allow him to realize the full benefits of the Buddha-dharma.

My father suggested that such a great booklet should not remain unknown to the wider English speaking community, and so from then on, I started selecting the most important excerpts from his works to translate. Soon, I realized that the wealth of wisdom and knowledge left by the Great Dharma Masters and Eminent Upasakas of the 20th Century, such as the works of Master Yin Guang, Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu, and Upasaka Xia Lian Ju, could scarcely be found in English.

Thus, over the course of the year, I translated scores of excerpts, essays and articles by or regarding these great figures that I found to be the most important and relevant. The Treasury of Dharma Gems is the collection of these translations, and my way of repaying the kindness of my teachers and parents.

I hope that everyone who reads this will find my modest contribution to be valuable in their spiritual journey, and in bettering their lives.

Brian Bye Sheng Chung

September 24th 2021

## Upasaka Li Bing Nan



Elder Upasaka Li Bing-Nan (1890-1986) holds an important place in Pure Land Buddhism. Having studied under great masters such as Patriarch Yin Guang and Master Tai Xu, he also served as an official in the Office of the Sacrificial Minister to Confucius (previously the Duke of Yansheng). His contributions to preserving traditional Buddhism after the chaos of WWII are of towering importance, and among his students is the famous Ven. Master Chin Kung.

“....Moreover, any act or deed that benefits society, or even just one person, or one small critter, must be done. And done with sincerity, without concern whether it is large or small, without limit, without constraint by time, place or occasion, and without designs for personal ascendance. Done without fearing hardship, toil, opposition, and sacrifice....”

—Upasaka Li Bing Nan, Purification of Karma Excerpt From The Taste of Two Worlds

## **EXCERPTS FROM THE TASTE OF TWO WORLDS**

### **The Suffering of Being Unable to Obtain What We Want or Need (Saha World)**

What defines human life? The answer is that it is a continuous cycle of stressful consumption. If we become short of money, we will lack food, clothes, shelter and transportation, thereby losing our ability to maintain ourselves. However, it matters not whether we toil with our minds or labor with our bodies, we are still subject to job losses and lack of opportunity. As unemployment is omnipresent even during times of plenty, what security can we find in our current era of strife and instability? Money, assets and careers have the staying power of bubbles in these perilous times. At any moment, they could become worthless, be taken or lost.

If we look carefully, not only is great wealth unobtainable, even our current standard of living can barely be maintained. Moreover, peace and security in body and mind always eludes us. Let us have a look at this person: He desires to reside in a large detached house, to ride in a luxury automobile, attend banquets, marry a trophy wife and enjoy the power of possessing a fortune. He seeks left and right to realize this dream, but his efforts are always in vain. Moreover, should he by some rare chance attain all he wishes for, he is unlikely to enjoy it for long. For estates that last a millennium will see their owners replaced hundreds of times, and what blooms today wilts tomorrow. There is nothing that can be planned or guaranteed long term in this world, and the fruit of a lifetime of toil and effort is often to remain empty handed.

Disappointing isn't it? Well disappointment defines not getting what we want. It is many times more bitter than the bitterest taste.

### **The Abodes of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss (Amitabha's Pure Land)**

It's a pity that our world is so crude. Even the palaces of the Emperors—lauded as halls and towers of gold and precious jade—are but yellow glazed tiles, sparse bronze ornaments and white stones. However, the Land of Ultimate Bliss is completely different. For the abodes there truly have gold ceilings, jade beams, bejeweled balustrades, silver stairs, cameo glass walls, lapis lazuli floors, and gates and windows of pearl and carnelian. Vividly resplendent, dazzling with gold and jade, and adorned with inlaid rubies, their radiant splendor is as glorious as the light of a thousand stars. These vast abodes possess a dense array of towers and pavilions, of varied height, each with myriad doors and windows.

Moreover, all within these abodes are likewise composed of the seven treasures. Banners and canopies adorned with pearls and brocades, fluttering in the sky, flying like the clouds. Anything that is required manifests and disappears in response to only a thought, and needs no labor to obtain or dispose. Surrounded by row after row of perfectly lined trees, with ponds and streams all flowing with waters replete with the eight virtues near the entrance. Beyond the windows are cheerful scenes of peace and serenity, overhanging flora of myriad forms, rustling with pleasing sounds in harmony with the mellifluous songbirds. The lotuses in the pools all exude wondrous and subtle fragrances. Such splendid views are granted for our enjoyment at all hours, for it is always radiant day and never dark night. Neither cold nor humid, but as pleasant as spring all year around ; spotless without dust or blemish, and all things without decay.

## **The Suffering of Strife (Saha World)**

Humanity, being unaware of their true innate nature, remains enthralled by wrathful, avaricious and ignorant thoughts. And so, society is gripped by constant strife and conflict. The same is true among states and nations. One encroaches, the other invades, for true world peace has eluded us since time immemorial. However, with the advancements in modern technology, conflicts have become ever more fearsome!

Let us remind ourselves of the horrors of war: Refugees frantically fleeing as news of war spreads ; whole populations are trapped in the chaos as transportation breaks down. Moments later, waves of warplanes as ferocious as storm and thunder rain fire from the skies, shattering the land. Then comes the roar of artillery, the unending sound of flying bullets, and the battle cries of swarming infantry. As corpses litter the ruins, as the wounded and maimed lie in pools of blood and moan in pain, they sound eerily like howling ghosts. Suddenly, armored vehicles and tanks rumble forward and steamroll over the dead and wounded alike. Amidst such brutal suffering, what comfort can property and family give you? Even if one manages to avoid the massacres, in such times of strife and instability, there is no guarantee that one could remain immune from the omnipresent rape, captivity and looting occurring all around. How fiery the suffering of this world!

## **The Tranquility of The Land of Ultimate Bliss (Amitabha's Pure Land)**

The ground of the Land of Ultimate Bliss is a boundless expanse of lapis lazuli. Upon it are roads and paths paved with gold. If one looks down from the gleaming and translucent surface, one will see golden pillars supporting the land. Colorful blossoms rain down like confetti from the sky in regular intervals, lushly carpeting the land. Moreover, there are groves composed of row after row of perfectly uniform jeweled trees, all made from treasures such as gold, silver, lapis lazuli, cameo glass, pearl, rubies and carnelian. Vividly resplendent, with crowns adorned by bejeweled nets and pearls as glorious as a myriad galaxies. When the blissful and gentle breezes blow across the groves, they rustle with wondrous musical sounds and exude myriad fragrances beyond the most prized incense of our world. Flying amongst the flora are the five colored songbirds that hum tranquil sounds of purity. If one listens, one will be filled with indescribable serenity and ease. The paths are lined with bejeweled balustrades, and gleaming ponds and flowing streams are everywhere, each filled with such august wonder that it matches the beauty of the land.

## **The Heavy Suffering of Unceasing Death and Rebirth Within the Samsara (Saha World)**

“One missed breath, and the Three Evil Realms might snatch you.” This famous phrase is so cruel, for there are many who hope to rest in peace after a life of sorrow. But now there is the risk of rebirth in the Three Evil Realms, places where the pains of bloodshed, sword and fire are ever present. Such a fate is many times worse than the misfortunes of today ; human rebirth is an oasis in the desert of suffering that is the Three Evil Realms.

The Samsara is divided between top and bottom. The Three Evil Realms are the three lower realms. All that belong to the animal kingdom—be they birds, fish, beasts or insects—suffer the pains of bloodshed. The pains of being forced to labor, or slaughtered and hunted on a daily basis by humans or predators.

As for the Realm of Ghosts, though there are spirits of great and moderate wealth, the vast majority are emaciated hungry ghosts. Even spirits belonging to the greater wealth category must suffer from want, for example, the spirits who subsist on castoffs can only eat religious offerings that have been disposed off. Tumor ghosts, of the moderate wealth category, have a huge pus filled tumor under their necks, and whenever they are hungry, they must squeeze it and swallow the pus for sustenance. Needle throat ghosts, being wholly destitute and emaciated, have throats as wide as the tip of a needle, thus prohibiting them from imbibing even a drop of water. There are also hungry ghosts who spew plumes of fire from their throats, reducing any food to ash just as it reaches their mouths. Moreover, ghosts suffer from the omnipresent oppression of halberd wielding guards [subordinates of powerful Ghost Kings]. Thus, the suffering of this realm is symbolized by the sword.

The Hells, the realms of fire, are too numerous to mention in full. But a few examples are the hells of crushing stone pestles, cauldrons filled with boiling oil, and the saw. Furthermore, other infernal tortures include flaying, tongue tearing, and gouging. Though some hells are freezing or filled with excrement, most are fiery. For example, there exist fire hounds, fire beasts, fire wolves, red hot houses, flaming beds and pillars, fiery bolts and magma spewing volcanoes. The suffering of the hells last tens of millions of eons, and all persons of all races, even the gods and spirits, are not immune from them.

While it is true that the Celestial Heavens/Three Pleasant Realms exist and can be attained through the accumulation of good deeds, the safety afforded by these realms are temporary and incomplete. The Samsara is a great ocean of cyclical suffering, and rebirth in the heavens is akin to a drowning man briefly popping his head above the water. After the karmic rewards are exhausted, the Three Evil Realms once more reappear. Within the painful Samsara, the time spent in the heavens are always short, and the time spent in suffering always long. This is the bane of cyclical rebirth.



## **The Freedom and Ease of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss (Amitabha's Pure Land)**

All who arise in the Pure Land become replete with spiritual powers. They may soar across the skies if it pleases them. It is so wondrous that even the pavilions and towers can manifest anywhere at will. Suppose you are meditating within one of the halls, and you wish to visit another world system, in response to that thought, the entire building will teleport across the universe to that world system.

The skies of the Land of Ultimate Bliss are unique beyond compare. Vivid five colored clouds roll endlessly across the skies in wondrous display. The landscapes, palaces, pavilions and the myriad glories are likewise indescribable. Even the beauty of the most brilliant cinematography cannot hope to equal one ten thousandths of the splendor of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Blossoms raining down like confetti, exuding fragrances, and pleasant sounds never ceasing, rhyme and melody wherever you go, journeying about without the suffering of being confined in a plane or car. The view outside is a boundless expanse of lush gardens, like a master oil painting, tens of millions of miles of eye pleasing wonder. If you tire of your abodes, it will disappear ; if you wish to sit, a settee of seven jeweled lotuses will appear. Such boundless spaciousness exists for your pleasure. All world systems can be reached within a finger-snap, afterwards, returning to the Pure Land with equal ease. Such convenience, such freedom and ease!

## **The Suffering of Feuds and Vendettas (Saha World)**

This world is aptly named as the Wicked Realm of Five Turbidities. The Five Turbidities require some time to explain, thus, we will only explore what is meant by Wicked Realm. It refers to the fact that this world is defined by killing, stealing, lust, lying, divisive slander, depraved speech, insults, avarice, wrath and ignorance. All persons in this world are sunk in these vices, and so we are forever swamped by strife and grievances. Two persons seeking revenge finally collide, mutually glaring with rage filled eyes, unable to avoid the inevitable, they either viciously fight in the open or covertly conspire against each other. They say the way paved by one's nemesis is narrow with nowhere to hide. Yet, such hatred is ubiquitous in our society, and even within the family unit, there are many abusive parents, rebellious children, feuding siblings and unhappy marriages. The old sayings that "every family has resentments and trigger points" and "even a honest Magistrate cannot untangle family feuds" are indeed true. While you may escape from your external enemies, you cannot avoid wrathful family members. The Ancients say: "If a group of people were not enemies, they would not be drawn towards each other." Such pains test the limits of our endurance indeed.

## **The Suffering of Old Age and Bodily Decline (Saha World)**

During the flower of one's youth, who isn't strong and beautiful, filled with vigor, ability and strength? Unfortunately, by middle age, in addition to being worn out by myriad anxieties and all sorts of toil, one is also confronted with the marks of decline: Wrinkles, gray hair, collapsing posture, always coughing and hobbling. How frustrating! Moreover, the vision blurs, the ears deafen, the teeth fall out, and eating becomes hard. Every pace taxes the joints and hip, the breath smells foul, and the mind becomes dull. Assistance becomes required just to live. At this point, wealth and filial children can cushion the suffering, however, those without sufficient wealth or relatives must suffer unimaginably. Even a full lifespan is tainted by this bitterness.



## **The Suffering of Death (Saha World)**

The Ancients say that “few live past seventy” and “both young and old are seen crossing the river Styx.” To put it bluntly, the Demon of Death shadows all living beings, and once it catches up, resistance is futile. The taste of death is bitter indeed, akin to a tortoise losing its shell or the pain of dismemberment. At this juncture, neither heroic status, vast businesses or literary brilliance can save one’s life. Your properties, estates, wives and children, whether you are able to let go or not, are lost forever. Sobs or howls of grief, as painful as a thousand arrows through the heart, can do nothing against death. After one is buried with all this mental anguish, in a cold tomb soon overwhelmed by weeds and burrowing animals, all that remains are bones that rot. One must wake up in the face of such bitterness!

## **The Suffering of Fires and Infernos (Saha World)**

Fire safety is a practice as old as civilization itself— its importance carved in stone. Cities and towns all have their own fire brigades, and there is no one who does not fear a raging inferno. However, despite these precautions, there are no guarantees of success. And once fires appear in those moments of carelessness, even grand towers, gilded pavilions, frescoed ceilings, sculpted beams, exquisite brocades, silk, gold, jade, and jewelry are not spared from being charred and burnt to ash. Likewise, the meager possessions of a poor household will not elicit any pity or compassion from the fiery flames. Both precious and base are consumed by the flames without discrimination. Even when the ignorant brashly rush in to save their possessions from a raging inferno, the fires will not defer to them and will reduce both persons and property to smoldering ruins. Fires and floods are truly without pity! Living in this world filled with so many risks, who dares to say that they are immune from the suffering of fire?

## **The Refreshing Waters of the Land of Ultimate Bliss (Amitabha's Pure Land)**

The Land of Ultimate Bliss has ponds and pools everywhere. They are all made from the seven types of treasure (gold, silver, pearl, carnelian, cameo glass etc.). The waters within are special, for they are replete with the Eight Virtues:

1. It is as pure and clear as Lapis Lazuli, and not turbid like the waters of this world.
2. It is always refreshingly cool, neither hot nor cold, and will not steam or freeze like the waters of this world.
3. Its taste is always fresh and sweet, and not salty or astringent like the waters of this world often are.
4. It is as light and soft as a plume of incense smoke, and not full of pressure like the waters of this world.
5. It is always gleaming and resplendent, and not dark when without light like the waters of this world.
6. It is always harmonious and safe, never like the dam bursting torrents of this world.
7. It both quenches thirst and alleviates hunger, unlike the waters of this world which has no nutrition.
8. Not only does it nourish the body, it also grows the good roots of the mind as well.

It is because of these eight meritorious advantages that these waters are called the Waters of Eight Virtues in the Sutras. But its wonder does not stop here. If you wish to bathe in these waters, the depth and temperature will adjust to your liking by itself. One pond of water can transform myriad times, and whenever it flows or ripples, it exudes unmatched fragrances and emanates soothingly mellifluous sounds that come and go on demand. The bottom of the ponds have no mud, and are lined instead with layers of fine golden sand as soft as cotton. Filled with giant lotuses exuding myriad aromas ; vivid, gleaming and colorful like rainbows. Resplendence surpassing that of the sun, moon and stars. The whole Buddha-land is radiant without limit, and always blissfully cool. Such pools of water are aptly named as Waters of Eight Virtues. Until now, it is likely we have not only never seen such wonder, but couldn't even have imagined it as well.

## The Purification of Karma

Having read this far, and now understanding the pains of the Samsara, one naturally will vow for Pure Land rebirth and recite the name of Amitabha. However, that is only the principal practice, and needs to be supported by auxiliary practice. Auxiliary practice refers to the Three Blessed Methods for Purifying Karma:

### The Three Purifications of Karma

- ┐ (1) Filial Piety, Respecting Teachers/Elders, Merciful Kindness, Holding the Ten Virtues.
- + (2) Taking the Three Refuges, Observing all Precepts, Becoming a Paradigm of Virtue.
- └ (3) Vowing for Bodhi, Faith in Karma, Reciting the Mahayana Sutras, Sharing the Dharma.

The principal practice is like the first forward step, and the auxiliary practice is the second foot stride. Only with both legs moving can one walk towards the goal. While the auxiliary practice may appear complicated to implement at first, being both numerous and broad stroke, it is actually quite easy to approach and understand. For all things have a core element, and by identifying the core element, half the success is already attained, and progress is made even if one cannot perfect the rest.

Of these precepts, “Vowing for Bodhi” is the most important as it embodies the fact that all sentient beings are equal and interdependent. Thus, any thoughts of benefiting oneself at another’s expense ought to be eliminated. To hurt another is to hurt oneself ; to benefit another is to benefit oneself. Understanding this key principle, one ought to refrain from even the smallest act of selfishness or evil. **Moreover, any act or deed that benefits society, or even just one person, or one small critter, must be done. And done with sincerity, without concern whether it is large or small, without limit, without constraint by time, place or occasion, and without designs for personal ascendance. Done without fearing hardship, toil, opposition, and sacrifice.** Vow to adorn and transform the world into the Land of Ultimate Bliss, to elevate sentient beings to become replete with myriad virtues, abilities, blessings and wisdom, just like Amitabha.

As lofty as this sounds, it is perfectly attainable by all. As long as one harbors this great resolve and vow, one’s mind and body will not be slothful. By starting from one corner, beginning with just one or two persons, advancing and never retreating, continuing ever onwards, one fulfills the requirements. This is the spirit of Buddhism, this is the heart that must be kept.

As the matter is now clear, and both principal and auxiliary practice have been explained, it is time to implement them in life. For time flies, life is short, and the days decrease constantly. Shelter must be built before the storm ; wells must be dug before the drought. If the opportunity is allowed to slip, then even if one then wants to cultivate and do good, it’ll be too late. Those who are wise will waver no more, and perfect enlightenment is within their grasp. May all readers have a bright and cherishable future!

## **EXCERPTS FROM THE PRICELESS TREASURE THAT IS THE BUDDHA-DHARMA**

### **Human Life is Full of Misfortune**

Who in the world is immune from illness, aging, the loss of family members, impoverishment and feuds? Moreover, even though the poor yearn for wealth, the childless seek to have children and the jobless pine for employment, how many actually have their wishes fulfilled? In the face of such misfortunes, what could we do?

### **This World Mired in Calamities**

Whenever storms sweep through and earthquakes strike, myriad ruined homes and corpses are the result. Too little rain and there is drought ; too much rain and the harvest is likewise ruined. Without grain, famine arises. Floods drown whole villages, infernos scorch whole neighborhoods, leading to countless casualties. Such disasters occur on a yearly basis and take lives regularly without mercy. But that is not all, for there is also the ever looming threat of war. Nations who do not cherish humaneness and peace not only engage in conflict, but create ever more fearsome weapons of mass destruction. It is almost as if their only fear is that humanity does not become extinct. Perpetrators of genocide claim they are “purifying the world” but are simply turning the world into a savage slaughterhouse. Thus, faced with all these omnipresent disasters, what could we do to escape?

### **The Pains of Death and Rebirth**

To add insult to injury, there is no rest even in death as the consciousness lives on, locked in the Six Realms of the Samsara (the Heavens, Humanity, Asuras, Animals, Hungry Ghosts and the Hells). While the Heavenly and Human realms are marginally better than the other paths, it is still excruciatingly painful to cycle among them all. Just imagine being a heavenly being in one life, an animal in another, and a hell being in the life after? Having suffered birth and death under such conditions since time immemorial, our accumulated bones pile higher than mountains and the tears we have shed enough to fill oceans. Such unbearable suffering urgently begs the question: How do we escape the Samsara and gain lasting peace?

### **How to Reverse Adverse Situations and Eradicate Calamities**

Pain and pleasure are but the workings of karma, which spans more than just this life and encompasses both past and future. Today, as we meet adverse conditions and or calamities, we must recognize them as karmic manifestations. The fastest way to neutralize adversity or calamity is through recitation of the name of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The Sutras state: “Single-minded recitation of the Buddha’s name can eradicate eight thousand million eons of heavy karmic offenses.” Therefore, if the evil karma has been dissolved, how could we suffer from any adversity or disaster?

The Sutras also affirm that those who recite the name of Amitabha are blessed and protected by the myriad Buddhas of the six directions. Buddhas are spiritually omnipotent and have limitless virtues, thus, with the Buddhas’ blessings, what is there to fear?

## The Ultimate Way Out of the Painful Samsara to Reach Lasting Peace

So what exists beyond the Samsara? It is a most curious question. The answer is that the Samsara is the dimension of common beings, and beyond it are the Sagely realms of the Buddhas. West from this world is the Land of Ultimate Bliss, the Buddha-land of Amitabha. Entirely composed of the seven treasures, pure, august, and surpassing the wonder of the heavenly palaces by a myriad-fold. Its foremost advantage is that all who dwell there have infinite life, unlike the heavenly devas of the Samsara who have limited lifespans and undergo ceaseless rebirths. The Sutras also say that all who rise to the Pure Land are bestowed golden bodies, august resplendence, divine powers, infinite life and food and clothes that manifest on demand. They will all attain Buddha-hood. So how do we attain the Pure Land? The Sutras clearly state that we must recite the name of **Amitabha**, recite it until we reach the serene state of *one heart unconfused*, and we will be welcomed into the Land of Ultimate Bliss by Amitabha when our lives end.

### Managing Life And Death is the Greatest Matter

As humans, we are afflicted by the pains of birth, aging, sickness and death. Moreover, we are also subject to the perils of unending transmigration within the Samsara. What a frightening reality! When we die, it is akin to moving house as our souls and consciousnesses never die. Based on the virtues and vices we have accrued over the course of our lives, our balance of good and evil karma compels us to suffer the pains of death and rebirth. Those who have done good are reborn in the three pleasant realms of existence ; those who have done wickedness are reborn in the three evil realms and will suffer limitless woes. In our countless deaths and rebirths since time immemorial, we have all lived in the Heavens, been reborn as humans or Asuras, and suffered as animals, ghosts and hell beings.

The Samsara is like six different houses. Our flesh bodies are like a transient and unreliable home. Even a fortune in wealth and property cannot grant us immortality or forever guarantee our health and strength from decay.

Thus, we must enlighten ourselves to these facts without delay. As humans, we toil daily for wealth to satisfy our material needs. We labor to support our sons and daughters and to further our businesses or careers. Thus, we exhaust both mind and body as we anxiously strive in a world filled with much disappointment and little joy. Currently, most consider the acquisition of wealth and luxury to be the most glorious pursuit. They do not realize that the soul and consciousness does not die with the body but will continue to suffer the wearisome cycle of birth and death.

Pitiful beings we are! If we only observe carefully, we would realize that human life is tainted by birth, old age, sickness and death. It is also afflicted with the sufferings caused by failure, deprivation, enmity, and the loss of or separation from what we love. Moreover, it is defined by the misery of the five skandhas, the three pains and eight sufferings. It is filled with calamities, accidents, and myriad misfortunes and anxieties which constantly assail and unsettle us. All persons are afflicted by these manifold miseries.

Thus, we must not dither in realizing this. We must recite the name of Amitabha. If we persist on the path of striving for temporal success, then even if we do eventually achieve wealth and position, we would most likely be old by then — trapped in a decaying body propped up by medication. And then death dawns upon us. Thus, isn't this so very frightening? With death comes the loss of everything, and neither our wealth nor our dearest family members may accompany us. Only our accumulated good and evil determines our fate within the wearisome Samsara, and not our personal will.

Most people acquire next month's grain beforehand, or lay up next year's grain this year. Yet, so many ignore the fact that no one is immortal. It is just like if our house has decayed beyond repair, what type of dwelling will we be able to acquire and move into next? Those who do much evil will have no choice but to move into the homes of animals, ghosts and hell beings, suffering woes for a long period of time. Only when their evil karma is finally exhausted may they return to the realm of humans. Such is the indescribable suffering they must endure!

If we are to be intelligent and wise, then we must prepare the merits and good deeds needed to guarantee a pleasant future rebirth now. To give our souls and consciousnesses an assured and stable future.

### **A Simple Standard of Good and Evil**

...The boundaries between good and evil are misunderstood by most people. Too often, they fail to recognize the good and cannot tell when a deed is evil. Thus, by using the **Sutra on the Ten Good Deeds**, we can identify a standard of good and evil. To transgress this standard is to commit evil, to abstain is to be good and virtuous.

#### Actions to Refrain From

##### ***The Three Karmas of the Body***

*Lust*

*Theft*

*Killing*

##### **The Four Karmas of the Mouth**

*Lying*

*Frivolous Speech*

*Abrasive Speech*

*Divisive Speech*

##### **The Three Karmas of the Mind**

*Avarice*

*Wrath*

*Ignorance*



As long as a critter or sentient being has life, no matter how big or small it is, one commits the offense of killing if one harms it. As for the property or reputation that justly belongs to others, no matter how much or how valuable, one commits theft if one appropriates it without permission, be it through power, intrigue, force or deceit. Moreover, promiscuous conduct, and any carnal knowledge outside of a true marriage, violates the precept of chastity.

To utter false words with the intent to maliciously deceive is considered lying. And all speeches, written works, spoken and written communications that promote moral laxity and undermine public decency are considered frivolous speech. Abusive and insulting words constitute abrasive speech, and any attempt to create disharmony, distrust and mutual enmity between two parties represents divisive speech.

Furthermore, to hold unrelenting attachment to the manifold material desires, to seek excessively despite already having much, is avarice. To meet misfortune and respond with hatred or anger is to be wrathful. Lastly, to be without reason, to be willfully befuddled, and doubtful of the words of the Buddha, Sages and the Laws of Karma, characterizes the mental offense of ignorance.

## **The Ultimate Way to Transcend the Samsara and Attain Buddha-hood**

Twenty five hundred years ago, a great Sage came to our world and attained Bodhi, he was the Honorable Original Patriarch, Shakyamuni Buddha. He revealed to us the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, the Buddha-land of Amitabha. A land composed exclusively of the seven treasures, and whose purity and augustness surpasses that of the heavens by a myriad-fold.

The Sutras state that all who rise to the Land of Ultimate Bliss are endowed with infinite life, infinite radiance, boundless divine powers, omniscience and immortality. In this land, food and clothes appear in response to only a wish ; residences, raiments and nourishments all arise naturally. Whenever meals are to be taken, golden alms-bowls, silver chalices, jade ramekins and jadeite platters manifest in perfect display. Each filled with rare delicacies and myriad dishes — divine foods replete with a hundred gourmet flavors — that arise in response to only a thought. The food never decreases and is spontaneously replenished in tandem with consumption. Once the meal is finished, the bowls, platters and chalices disappear by themselves, leaving nothing to be washed or cleaned.

Moreover, myriad raiments of rich and radiant colors manifest, in perfect size as if tailored, on the body in response to mere wish. As for the abodes of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, they all have gold beams, jade ceilings, bejeweled balustrades, walls of silver or cameo glass, lapis lazuli floors, pearl gates and carnelian windows. Vividly resplendent and crafted solely from the seven treasures, they are of indescribable wonder.

It is a land tailored to one's wishes. Now that we know how wondrous the Land of Ultimate Bliss is, how could we not yearn for it? As we are all saddled with heavy karmic obstacles, of scant fortune and little wisdom, pitifully cycling within the painful Samsara, Shakyamuni Buddha proceeded after his enlightenment to impart his Bodhi wisdom to help beings like us cultivate virtue and attain Buddha-hood. The Buddha's Dharma clearly reveals the true nature of the universe and the purpose of human life, as well as the rules of propriety. The Buddha exhorts all to eschew vice and embrace virtue, to leave suffering and obtain bliss, to forfeit falsity and seek truth, and selflessly benefit everyone. The Buddha-dharma is without doubt the most perfect truth in the whole world.

The Buddha also tells us that to study the Dharma is to understand how to behave. That good deeds yield blessings and wicked deeds bear woeful fruit. Buddhism is a proper and wise faith, and does not reward the slothful. It is a faith that rests on the truth that one's gain is proportional to one's own willingness to labor in cultivation. There are some of little wisdom who refuse to cultivate merits diligently, and instead claim that they can reap a harvest they did not sow. How deluded! They are just like a person who desires a fortune without managing an enterprise, or a debtor who expects leisure and relief despite refusing to earn money to pay down their debts. Thus, the Buddha tells us to approach spirituality with wisdom in order to avoid cultivating incorrectly and remaining trapped within the Samsara.

The Buddha teaches us that all evils must be avoided and all good deeds must be done. To hold the Five Precepts and realize the Ten Virtues.

The Five Precepts are:

- **No Killing**
- **No Stealing**
- **No Lust**
- **No Lying**
- **No Intoxicants**

The Ten Virtues consist of the three karmas of the body, four karmas of speech and three karmas of the mind. They are as follows:

1) **No Killing** — To harm any animal is to kill. The Buddha has said that all sentient beings are our past life parents and future Buddhas, so if we harm them, we incur karmic retributions. It is only because of their past evil karma that they are animals today, and if we harm them, they may take revenge once they receive a better rebirth.

2) **No Stealing** — To take the valuables or possessions of others without permission is to steal.

3) **No Lust** — All relations outside of a proper marriage is considered a violation of the virtue of chastity.

4) **No Lying** — To utter false and unsubstantiated words is to lie.

5) **No Idle Speech** — This refers to words that harm public decency and advocate moral laxity.

6) **No Divisive Speech** — To provoke conflict between two parties and undermine other's mutual relationships constitute divisive speech.

7) **No Abrasive Speech** — Profane, violent and insulting words constitute abrasive speech.

8) **No Avarice** — To be obsessively materialistic, to seek more despite already having much, is to be avaricious.

9) **No Wrath** — To meet misfortune with hatred and outbursts of anger is to be wrathful.

10) **No Ignorance** — To be without good sense, reject the Dharma of the Buddha, neglectful of the teachings of the Sages, and doubtful of the laws of karma is to be ignorant.

The Buddha stresses that all who observe the Five Precepts and Ten Virtues will be reborn as humans or celestial devas in their next life. However, those who have failed to do so are guilty of the Ten Vices, and are therefore slated for the hells, ghost and animal realms. How frightening! Thus, we must hold fast to the Buddha's teachings in order to be saved.

In studying the Dharma, we must first take refuge in the Triple Jewel (the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha). We must have faith, resolve and action. To believe that there is a Western Land of Ultimate Bliss where we may exchange suffering for bliss is to have faith. To vow to leave this evil world of the five turbidities and rise to the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is to have resolve. Lastly, action refers to actual implementation of the Buddha's teachings, to cultivate with full understanding of the Buddha's words and faithfully recite the name of Amitabha.

There are many who are familiar with the Buddha's teachings but neglect to actually cultivate. They are just like sick people who refuse to take the proper medicine but wish for recovery by merely reading the prescription. Reciting the Buddha's name is akin to taking the proper medication to cure the disease of the three poisons (avarice, wrath and ignorance) which fuels the wearisome cycle of the Samsara. As recitation of the name of Amitabha can cure the disease that is the three poisons, it can break the cycle of transmigration within the six realms, result in rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, and the attaining of Buddha-hood and release.

We must faithfully recite the name of Amitabha at all times, whether we are moving, resting, sitting, lying down, or working. We ought to recite with confidence and unwavering determination, for the Sutras state that even one sincere recitation of the name of Amitabha can eradicate eight thousand million eons of heavy karmic obstacles. We must recite without thought of reward, from start to finish, and through thick and thin. Each utterance of the Buddha's name has boundless merit and can dispel all disasters while we are still living, and ensure Amitabha's appearance during our moment of death to welcome us into the Western Buddha Land of Ultimate Bliss, where we may become Buddhas forever released from the Samsara.

Unfortunately, Some people refuse to have faith in anything they have not personally seen, and so they are unable to have faith in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. Moreover, they also do not believe in the existence of the hells. However, if I had told you during the 1940s that all households would soon have television sets, you wouldn't have believed it. It is just like if we explained to a pig all the luxuries of the human realm — the wide beds, fine dining, towering residences and sedans— the pig would refuse to believe it to be true as it had never seen such a life, and instead remain content within the slothful squalor of the pigsty.

The Buddha considers such doubtful people to be weighed down by heavy karmic obstacles, ignorant and without wisdom. Such persons are to be pitied. The Buddha has also taught that all sentient beings have the Buddha-nature and can attain Bodhi, and it is only because they have committed boundless evil karma since time immemorial that they suffer the painful cycle of birth and death within the Samsara today.

As for why we must recite constantly and diligently everyday? The answer is that it is just like if we owe a sum of money, we must work hard to repay the debt in order to avoid repercussions. The Buddha has said that by reciting the names of Amitabha and Avalokitesvara, we will eradicate all the evil karma we have committed since time immemorial. Once the karmic obstacles have been dissolved, we naturally enjoy leisure and bliss in both body and mind. Thus, recitation of the Buddha's name is like earning to pay back what we owe, and only by diligently and faithfully reciting the name of Amitabha until our final moment can we be welcomed by Amitabha into the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss to become Buddhas.

## **A Reminder on Reciting the Buddha's Name**

When we are reciting the Buddha's name, we must empty our hearts and minds of all thoughts and cares. We must not allow our minds to wander. Simply allow the name of Amitabha to rise from our hearts, exit through our mouths, resound in our ears and impress into our memory. The name of the Buddha must be clear in our minds, clear in our voices and resound clearly in our ears. Only by doing so can we obtain a response from the Buddha.

### **A Simple Routine for Morning and Evening Practice**

1) **Namo Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Benevolent, Original Patriarch, Shakyamuni Buddha** (*Recite once and bow once*).

2) **Namo Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Benevolent, Amita Buddha** (*Recite once and bow once*).

3) **Namo Amitabha** (*No need to bow and may recite while kneeling, sitting or standing. Recite at least a hundred times, but if one has the time, one may recite a thousand times or tens of thousands. However, one may only increase and not decrease the number of regular recitations*).

4) **Homage to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva** (*Recite once and bow once*).

5) **Homage to Mahasthamaprabhata Bodhisattva** (*Recite once and bow once. Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprabhata are the two Bodhisattvas supporting Amitabha, and together they are known as the Three Sages of the West*).

6) **Homage to the Multitude of Bodhisattvas as Pure and Vast as the Great Sea** (*Recite once and bow once. These Bodhisattvas are our peers in Pure Land, hence we must pay them respect here*).

7) **I vow that the merit accrued adorn the Buddha's Pure Land, repay the four kinds of benevolence above, and relieve the suffering of the three woeful realms below. May all who hear this give rise to the Bodhi heart, and at the end of this life, be reborn together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.** (*This merit dedication represents one's resolve to attain Pure Land rebirth. Resolute vows are necessary components of practice*).

8) Bow and respectfully retire.

*Note: If we have an altar with an image of Amitabha, we should recite there. If not, we may practice anywhere, though it is preferable if we face the Western direction when bowing or reciting. We may also recite out loud or silently depending on the situation.*

## How to Reverse Adverse Situations and Eradicate Calamities

Pain and pleasure are but the workings of karma, which spans more than just this life and encompasses both past and future. Today, as we meet adverse conditions and or calamities, we must recognize them as karmic manifestations. The fastest way to neutralize adversity or calamity is through recitation of the name of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The Sutras state: “Single-minded recitation of the Buddha’s name can eradicate eight thousand million eons of heavy karmic offenses.” Therefore, if the evil karma has been dissolved, how could we suffer from any adversity or disaster?

The Sutras also affirm that those who recite the name of Amitabha are blessed and protected by the myriad Buddhas of the six directions. Buddhas are spiritually omnipotent and have limitless virtues, thus, with the Buddhas’ blessings, what is there to fear?

## Shattering Doubts

Even though all faiths teach the importance of eschewing vice and embracing virtue, the ultimate question of which path to take when our final moment arrives still remains. This is where Buddhism differs from all other faiths. If we look carefully, most faiths cultivate in order to obtain heavenly rebirth. The blessings of the heavenly devas are indeed enormous, and their lives are both long and luxurious. However, once their stock of merit has been exhausted, they fall into the various lower planes of existence, and continue to suffer within the Samsara. Therefore, these faiths are ultimately incomplete in their reward.

Only Buddhism can transcend the Samsara. And by reaching the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss to become Buddhas, we forever transcend the Samsara.

To be a human on this earth is similar to being on a treasure seeking expedition in a mountain full of riches. For example, say two of the treasure seekers encounter piles of silver ingots, and being naturally thrilled, they take all they could carry. After a long trek, they encounter piles of gold ingots. One of the treasure seekers proposes that they abandon the silver and load up on the gold, however, the other treasure seeker refuses and reasons that since he had already expended so much energy carrying the silver, he ought to keep it and forgo the gold.

This example perfectly illustrates the choice between Buddhism and other faiths. The two treasure seekers are like cultivators of another faith, and heavenly rebirth their reward. However, the treasure seeker who wanted to exchange his silver for gold is like a person who, despite being of another faith, wisely decides to practice Pure Land Buddhism after encountering the profound and perfect principles of the Buddha-dharma. Amita Buddha, the Patriarch of The Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, is the Father of Great Compassion, and his 48 Great Vows were made to guide innumerable suffering sentient beings to attain bliss in His land. As long as we faithfully and without doubt recite the name of Amitabha until our hearts are without confusion, Amitabha will appear during our last moment of life and welcome us into the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, where we may attain Bodhi and freedom from the Samsara.



Some people who have just begun to cultivate in earnest may meet obstacles. For instance, they might face adverse situations or encounter family problems. Oftentimes, such people later blame the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for not compassionately blessing them enough. However, such blameful thoughts are wrong. If we should meet misfortune or adversity, it is because of the multitude of evil karmic seeds we have accrued since time immemorial ripening. While reciting Amitabha's name can eradicate calamities and dispel disasters, it takes resolute practice to fully eradicate such a large amount of evil karma. It is just like if we owe tens of millions in debt, but we have only ever made a payment of a few thousand, then we cannot hope for our creditors to leave us alone. The Buddha teaches us to be wise and not to waver, to faithfully and diligently recite the name of Amitabha, prostrate and repent before Him. After practicing with unwavering resolve, there will be a day when we profoundly experience the myriad benefits of reciting the Buddha's name.

Moreover, there are also some people of little wisdom who doubt the workings of karma. They always feel that the wicked and deceitful often dwell in good fortune while the virtuous suffer poverty and unhappiness. The truth is that they're wrong. Such situations are merely a matter of timing and not that the laws of karma are untrue. It is just like how the law often operates with a lag. The Buddha's Sutras state: Our current circumstances reflect our past life deeds, and our future will reflect our current deeds. As we are common people and not Sages, we lack the power to see the good and evil of our past lives, and so we must not be like a foolish person who, after noticing that his granaries were empty, rushes to sow seeds hoping for a simultaneous harvest. Our faith in the laws of karma must remain resolute, for all reap what they have sown in the past. Therefore, the wicked who enjoy prosperity are merely burning through their blessings accrued during a previous life. They are like a person who constantly withdraws from their account without making any new deposits. Eventually, their stock of merit will be depleted, and poverty and adversity will then rear its ugly head. To indulge in luxury and prosperity is to fritter away one's stock of blessings, and is behavior characteristic of those who do not understand the laws of karma. Thus, we must hold fast to the Buddha's teachings of cause and effect in order to avoid the fruits of evil karma.

Furthermore, nowadays, once a person's breathing stops, family members weep and mourn, the body is immediately moved, dressed in new clothes, and even sent to the refrigerator. Such actions are actually cruel and very disturbing for the deceased. When a person dies, the soul and consciousness still lingers within the body. If the body is moved before 10–12 hours have passed after breathing stops, the consciousness of the deceased can still feel and be disturbed by such acts, but must suffer while voiceless. If those who are on the verge of death or have just died give rise to evil thoughts, they will fall into the frightful paths of suffering, and be reborn in the hells, ghost and animal realms. Thus, we must wait 10–12 hours before moving the body in order to prevent their consciousness from falling into the evil realms. More importantly, the family and friends of those on the verge of death must sincerely recite the name of Amitabha to elevate the consciousness of the dying. No one may consume meat during this time, and no meat should be present during the memorial service in order to avoid tainting the merits of the deceased.

In general, the 10–12 hours after breathing stops are the most critical. During that time, the body cannot be moved, must not be changed into new clothes, and no one may cry or wail in sorrow. Family and Dharma friends must gather to render supportive chanting, to sincerely recite the name of Amitabha. Or, monks may be invited to hold Dharma repentance ceremonies for the benefit of the deceased, and guide them to seek Amitabha's invitation into the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

## **The Ten Wondrous Benefits of Reciting the Buddha's Name**

- The Celestial Generals, along with their retinues, secretly protect you through day and night.
- The Blessings of Avalokitesvara and the multitude of Mahabodhisattvas constantly shadow you.
- You will receive mindful protection from all the Buddhas, and be blessed by Amitabha's radiant light.
- All evil ghosts, yakshas, rakshasas, venomous snakes and poisons cannot harm you.
- You will not suffer from fires, floods, feuds, wars and prosecutions. Nor will you die of unnatural or unjust causes.
- All past evil karma will dissolve, and all your karmic creditors will obtain release.
- You will have auspicious dreams, and you may see Amitabha's august and golden form.
- Your heart will be joyful, and your appearance will be bright and full of vigor. Moreover, all your endeavors will be successful.
- You will often receive reverence and respect from the masses.
- When your final moment arrives, you will not be ravaged by sickness and your heart will not be afraid. Right mindfulness will arise. Amitabha and a host of Sages will welcome you into the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss to enjoy supremely wondrous bliss.

## Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu



Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu (1913-1992) was one of Ven. Master Chin Kung's benefactors and teachers, and a major figure in Pure Land Buddhism. He studied under both the Great Zen Master Hsu Yun and the Eminent Upasaka Xia Lian Ju. His famous commentaries on the Infinite Life Sutra by Upasaka Xia Lian Ju, and the Path to Pure Land Prayer book (also by Upasaka Xia) are essential for all who wish to study them.

**“Thus, if we do not seek rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha, there is nothing we could do for our dearest family members. For if we are not reborn in the Pure Land, we would have no idea where our relatives are or what forms they now assume. Thus, only by attaining Pure Land rebirth can a reunion become reality. To be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss is to turn a tragedy into Great Joy. This is not death but life ; not eternal separation but the beginning of a great and joyous reunion.”**

**—Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu, Page 26**

## Excerpts From Commentary on Chapter 33 of The Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartially, and Enlightenment Sutra

### 【世人共爭不急之務】

**People of this world all vie over matters of little importance.**

The first passage begins by saying: 「**People of this world all vie over matters of little importance**」, in essence, summarizing this whole chapter. So what do the people of this world vie for ? They vie over 「**matters of little importance**」 ! Issues that are not pressing at all ! And over such petty and unimportant matters, everyone fights, and as they compete so ardently, few could avoid being entangled in this mutual struggle.

Conversely, no one pays any attention to the truly urgent, and this is why the people of this world are so pitiable. They strive for shortsighted things, but neglect what they ought to be doing. They are totally ignorant, not raising the issue at all. Unaware that all they vie over are no more real than a dream, an illusion, a bubble and a shadow. It is for such illusions that they grit their teeth, exhaust both body and mind, and risk their lives.

«The Compiled Commentaries» explain that....”*All things have roots and branches, and matters are ranked by urgency.*” Thus, we must be able to discern whether each of the myriad issues we are confronted with are truly important or actually trivial, urgent or inconsequential, and prioritize the matters of true consequence. If we focus on the trivial and ignore the urgent, only failure will result in the end. Thus, discernment is very important.

The same text also provides a parable: Suppose you have just entered into a mighty metropolis , what is the first thing you ought to do ? The answer is naturally to secure a staffed and furnished dwelling. After you have an official place to stay in, you can go about your business, and attend to audiences. Officials and merchants who often hit the circuit all know this. Obviously, you cannot drag your belongings to the various halls and offices where your appointments are. To not have a good dwelling would encumber you with great anxiety, and so you must find one as your first priority. A dwelling place was historically referred to as the ”place of retirement.” And so when night falls, as you already have a place to retire to, you are not worried.

Therefore, what is the meaning of this *parable of the place of retirement* ? It means you must cultivate Pure Land Buddhism. The most urgent matter of human life is fully illustrated by this parable, with nightfall being the time of death, the inevitable end of all persons. To have a place to retire to after the sun of life sets is of utmost importance, and for cultivators of Pure Land Buddhism, they will be seated within their own Lotus in the Lotus Pond of The Land of Ultimate Bliss, forever free from the clutches of the Three Evil Realms of the Samsara.

Thus, isn't this the most urgent matter ? However, most people do not care about this at all, and instead expend all their efforts on trivial pursuits. Thus, when death suddenly dawns upon them, they panic as they have always treated it with neglect. In sum, they lived for the trivial and ignored the urgent.

《The Compiled Commentaries》 further describes impending death as a “*predicament as pressing as fire*,” and unfortunately, people ignore the fire burning on their heads and instead “*pursue unimportant projects, business and commerce*.” They are like the one who leisurely selects new outfits and polishes their shoes even while threatened by a raging inferno—the fact that all persons will die eventually.... Some persons do not even manage to live beyond graduation.....Yet the people of this world ignore their own mortality and focus only on the accumulation of wealth or influence, unwisely believing that what they have acquired can be kept in the face of impermanence.

【人在愛欲之中・獨生獨死。獨去獨來。苦樂自當・無有代者。善惡變化・追逐所生。道路不同・會見無期。】

**Amidst love and passion, one is born alone and dies alone, comes alone and goes alone. Pain and pleasure are borne solely by each, with no one else taking their place. The ever fluctuating rewards and retributions of each person follows them everywhere. As their karma guides them onto divergent paths, when could loved ones ever hope to reunite?**

When the Sutra says 「**Amidst love and passion**」, it is referring to the suffering of being separated from loved ones, from the affectionate company of dear relatives, parents, spouses, sons and daughters. Though life is a sea of passions, love and attachment, all are 「**born alone and dies alone, comes alone and goes alone**」. We were all born alone, unaccompanied, and when we die, no one else will follow us either.

Moreover, as 「**pain and pleasure are borne solely by each, with no one else taking their place**」, the bliss or suffering we encounter are the result of our own individual karma, and no one else may take our place. Neither loving spouse nor dear sons and daughters can lessen our suffering and anxieties, even if they worry just as much as we do. All reap what they personally sow.

「**The ever fluctuating rewards and retributions of each person follows them everywhere**」 The first portion, 「**ever fluctuating rewards and retributions**」, has two explanations. The first understanding is simply that good deeds yield good fruit and evil deeds yield painful fruit. This explanation is found in the Buddhist teachings of the Goryeo Kingdom and the Tang Dynasty era commentaries on the Infinite Life Sutra.

《The Compiled Commentaries》, on the other hand, defines the term 「**ever fluctuating**」 as wicked but currently prosperous people receiving retribution in their next life. Thus, even though they enjoy blessings in this life, the evil they do now will force them to undergo negative change and be reborn into a subsequent life of punishment. Conversely, those who are living a life of suffering and misery can ascend to a blessed future by doing good deeds now. Thus the changes of good and evil are myriad, and different seeds grow into different fruits.

Good and evil deeds (and their rewards and retributions) 「**follows them everywhere**」. No matter where we go, our personal karma will follow. On the other hand, members of the same family are reborn in different places, as everyone's karma is different. Even people who die at the same time in the same calamity will be reborn in different realms. However, there are also cases where a group of people are reunited due to their karma, personalities and work being extremely similar. Nevertheless, this is a rarity compared to the chance of being scattered across the Samsara.

「*As their karma guides them onto divergent paths, when could loved ones ever hope to reunite?*」 There is no telling when loved ones could be reunited. Even when they do reunite, no one can recognize each other, and this is the most painful aspect. Thus, the horrifying saying that due to animal rebirth (relatives being reborn as pigs, cows or sheep), a person may inadvertently consume the flesh of a former grandparent or use their uncle's skin as leather is indeed true. Therefore, this is a warning to us, no matter how deep our love, affection and attachments are in this life, once impermanence strikes, all are parted and go their separate ways.

Thus, if we do not seek rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha, there is nothing we could do for our dearest family members. For if we are not reborn in the Pure Land, we would have no idea where our relatives are or what forms they now assume. Thus, only by attaining Pure Land rebirth can a reunion become reality. To be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss is to turn a tragedy into Great Joy. **This is not death but life ; not eternal separation but the beginning of a great and joyous reunion.**

To bring about a great reunion, we must first attain Pure Land rebirth. Only then can we manifest to liberate the others, convert all our loved ones with the Dharma and cause them to also attain Pure Land rebirth, thereby reuniting with them there. This is a true and lasting reunion, unlike in the Samsara where separation occurs within a finger-snap and no one recognizes each other. Only in the Land of Ultimate Bliss can a true and great reunion be realized. Unfortunately, many ignorant people of this world do not understand this fact.

【何不於強健時・努力修善・欲何待乎。】

**Therefore, why not pursue cultivation while still young and strong, why dither at all?**

Thus, the Buddha exhorts us to cultivate while we are still young and strong..... do not wait until old age or retirement.



## Excerpts From Commentary on Chapter 35 of Sutra

其二者・世間人民不順法度。奢婬驕縱・任心自恣。居上不明。在位不正。陷人冤枉。損害忠良。心口各異・機偽多端。尊卑中外・更相欺誑。

**The Second Kind (the offense of stealing):** People of this world defy the principles of justice. They are promiscuous and arrogant without measure. Impulsive and dissolute, they do as they please. Negligently abusing whatever position or authority they have, they persecute the loyal and virtuous, and preside over miscarriages of justice. What they say differs from their heart, and they are both dishonest and deceitful. No matter where they are from or what class they belong to, they are all united by the desire to defraud.

「*People of this world defy the principles of justice*」 It is like this all over the world, for instance, as we have all eaten meat before, we all have a share in the karma of killing. Thus, we must not feel that this has nothing to do with us. The karmic offense of stealing is the same, it is evident everywhere in the world. 「*Defy the principles of justice*」 They break the laws and do not respect the rules.

「**They are promiscuous and arrogant without measure**」 They are excessively lustful, and their arrogance and conceit runs unchecked.

「**Impulsive and dissolute**」 This refers to their impulsive habit of indulging in revelry and luxury.

「**Negligently abusing whatever position or authority they have, they persecute the loyal and virtuous, and preside over miscarriages of justice.**」 Such behaviors also fall under the offense of stealing. For instance, powerful persons, such as the chancellors of past dynasties, were negligent and did not appoint the wise and able, instead, they engaged in nepotism, which is also a form of stealing. Appointing friends and relatives at the expense of the able and deserving while possessing the public trust is certainly theft. In the past, I thought this passage was overly complicated, but I now consider it to be very clear and relevant. If they have authority, but are unjust and betray that trust, then this passage can encompass many abuses and offenses, for instance, it could refer to bribes, promiscuity, organized crime, and so forth. All such unjust behaviors are considered theft. Moreover, 「**preside over miscarriages of justice**」 refers to malicious prosecutions and false accusations. Because they are not honest and have ulterior motives, they often take action against those who know the truth or are outspoken.

「**They persecute the loyal and virtuous**」 Naturally, they are unable to coexist with the loyal and virtuous, thus, they persecute them. This adds the karma of killing to their karma of avarice and theft.

「**What they say differs from their heart**」 Such persons are hypocrites whose actions differ from their words. Moreover, they are dishonest and deceitful, insincere like demagogues.

「**No matter where they are from or what class they belong to**」 It doesn't really matter if they are superior or subordinate, from here or there, familiar or stranger, they are all 「**united by the desire to defraud**」. Why are they like this? Why do they add the karma of lying upon the karma of stealing? It is because they wish for unjust gain or to protect their position, their motive is their greed.

瞋恚愚痴・欲自厚己。欲貪多有・利害勝負。結忿成讐。破家亡身。不顧前後。

**Foolish, wrathful and rapacious, they selfishly retain for themselves all the gain and benefits. Locked in belligerent struggles for profit, they make enemies and create feuds. In their pursuit of wealth, they sacrifice their lives, ruin their families and disregard the laws of karma.**

What is their temperament like? The answer is that they are 「**Foolish, wrathful**」. They are quick to anger and very muddle headed. They think of themselves as highly capable, and they throw their weight around. They are unable to realize that they are incompetent and ignorant.

「**They selfishly retain for themselves all the gain and benefits**」 They wish only to benefit themselves, to line their pockets everywhere they go, and this is their greatest and most foolish mistake.

「**Rapacious**」 Always seeking to obtain more, doing so by encroachment. As they are competitive and belligerent, they fight in the realms of commerce no less aggressively than in a real war. They wish to bankrupt others and take over their competition. As they fight for gain, there are victors and losers, thereby creating feuds, cycles of revenge leading to both death and ruin. Thus, 「**they sacrifice their lives, ruin their families and disregard the laws of karma**」, in their viciousness, they destroy themselves and disregard future karmic retribution.

富有慳惜・不肯施與。愛保貪重・心勞身苦。如是至竟・無一隨者。

**When they are wealthy, they are stingy and refuse to give alms. Sunk in avarice, they hoard all for themselves. Toiling in mind and body to retain what they have, non of their wealth follows them after they die.**

And when such persons are wealthy, they are stingy and uncharitable. This is not referring to the act of unjustly obtaining wealth, but to their lack of charity, their refusal to give or share with others.

「**Sunk in avarice, they hoard all for themselves**」 This refers to their selfish emotional attachment to their wealth, their extreme greed. Thus, as they 「**toil in mind and body to retain what they have**」, they are physically exhausted and mentally afflicted. The result is that 「**non of their wealth follows them after they die**」, and so even though they fought and schemed, they cannot keep any of it. It is just like the saying: “None of the myriad things can be kept, only karma follows.” Only their deeds follow them after death.

Good deeds lead to blessings ; evil deeds cause calamities.... no matter where one is reborn, they will follow. However, neither prized possessions nor dear relatives will follow you after death.

又或見善憎謗・不思慕及。

**Some of this type, whenever they see others perform virtuous deeds, become irritated and inflict calumny upon them. Never giving the virtuous deserved admiration.**

Some such persons, by this we mean people who like to steal, may 「 **see others perform virtuous deeds, become irritated and inflict calumny upon them**」 . Whenever they see others do meritorious deeds, they become prejudiced or angry, and subsequently slander the doer. 「**Never giving the virtuous deserved admiration**」 They do not know that they ought to admire good conduct and emulate it.

常懷盜心・悵望他利。用自供給。消散復取。

**Always larcenous at heart, they covet the benefits of others. Appropriating at will, they squander as quickly as they plunder.**

「**Always larcenous at heart**」 Can be described as a mentality that views anything that could be stolen, but not stolen, as a wasted opportunity. They do not refuse gifts, bribes or unjust gain, and nor do they turn down any chance to encroach on the rights or property of others. All this falls under the offense of stealing.

「**They covet the benefits of others**」 They always eye what they do not deserve. They coerce others and appropriate at will, and as such wealth comes easily, they squander it just as quickly. As their spending cannot be controlled, they repeatedly commit the same offense to satisfy themselves.

神明尅識・終入惡道。自有三途無量苦惱・輾轉其中・累劫難出・痛不可言。

**The demigods and spirits have recorded all their wicked deeds. Upon death, they descend into the Evil Realms. Thrown into the unlimited pains of the Three States of Woe. Cycling within, their suffering is unbearable, and they cannot hope for escape for eon after eon.**

... 「**Upon death, they descend into the Evil Realms**」 There is no escape from the retributions for evil acts. 「**The unlimited pains of the Three States of Woe**」 They must cycle among the myriad pains and anxieties of the Evil Realms, which are unlimited and boundless.

「**Their suffering is unbearable, and they cannot hope to escape for eon after eon.**」 Amidst such unspeakable suffering, they are further confronted by the fact that they must suffer such intolerable pains for eon after eon, without hope of escape.

The Fourth Evil regards 「**The Precept of Abstaining From False Speech**」, and this is a large category. Previously, we covered the Three Precepts of the Body, 「**Killing, Stealing, and Lust**」. The Four Precepts of Speech, although often referred to only as False Speech, are actually four separate offenses, and they are: 「**Divisive Speech, Harsh Speech, False Speech, and Frivolous Speech**」.

「**Divisive Speech**」 Refers to speech that sows discord. Words that create division, undermine mutual trust, and incite prejudice or conflict are all considered 「**Divisive Speech**」.

「**Harsh Speech**」 Refers to abusive and insulting words that afflict other people. Words that provoke anger and undermine dignity are 「**Harsh Speech**」.

「**Frivolous Speech**」 Are words that accord with people's passions and desires, as opposed to the joy that comes from the Dharma. It is speech that satisfies the defilements of the heart. Thus, if we were to expand this offense to its broadest meaning, even examples of classic eloquence, such as song and poetry, can be considered 「**Frivolous Speech**」. In a narrower sense, it refers to words, articles, and media that are suggestive, lustful, obscene and or indecent.

「**False Speech**」 Encompasses anything that lacks truth. This offense fundamentally comes from an impure heart that is prepared to deceive, to cover up the truth, and lie. Such evil karma falls under 「**False Speech**」.

..... 「**They cannot escape as they are leashed by their evil karma**」 Their evil karma drags them down so they cannot break free, they have no choice but to receive retribution. 「**They must go forward into the infernal realms**」 Be cast into the hellish realm of red hot bronze walls, iron pillars and cauldrons of boiling oil, the unavoidable results of their evil karma (of speech).

## **Excerpts From Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu's Commentary on the Path to Pure Land Prayer Book**

*Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu's Commentary on the Path to Pure Land was spoken and recorded just before his own Pure Land rebirth. It is his last and greatest contribution to Buddhism, and his way of fulfilling his filial duty to his teacher (Upasaka Xia).*

Excerpt 1 (from page 149–150 of 2015 printed transcript by the Hwazan Pure Land Association):

In the past, there was a monk who was well versed in the Sutras, strong in cultivation, and a gifted orator. He wanted to expound the Dharma, yet could find no listeners. Thus, he was quite troubled by his inability to fulfill his vow of spreading the Dharma. Fortunately, someone eventually provided him with a solution. He was advised to sell all his belongings, buy grain with the proceeds, bless the grain with chants of Buddha-names and mantras, scatter it all among the grass for the birds and insects to eat, and vow for all the critters that eat the grain support the Dharma in the future. 20 years later, the causes and conditions for expounding the Dharma indeed aligned, and his Dharma lectures enjoyed a vast audience of young twenty somethings (the birds and insects reborn as humans). All this is the karmic result of his vows, of the positive affinities he had created by that simple act of Dharma infused generosity. Thus, the creation of positive affinities is very important.

Excerpt 2 (from page 44 of 2015 printed transcript by the Hwazan Pure Land Association):

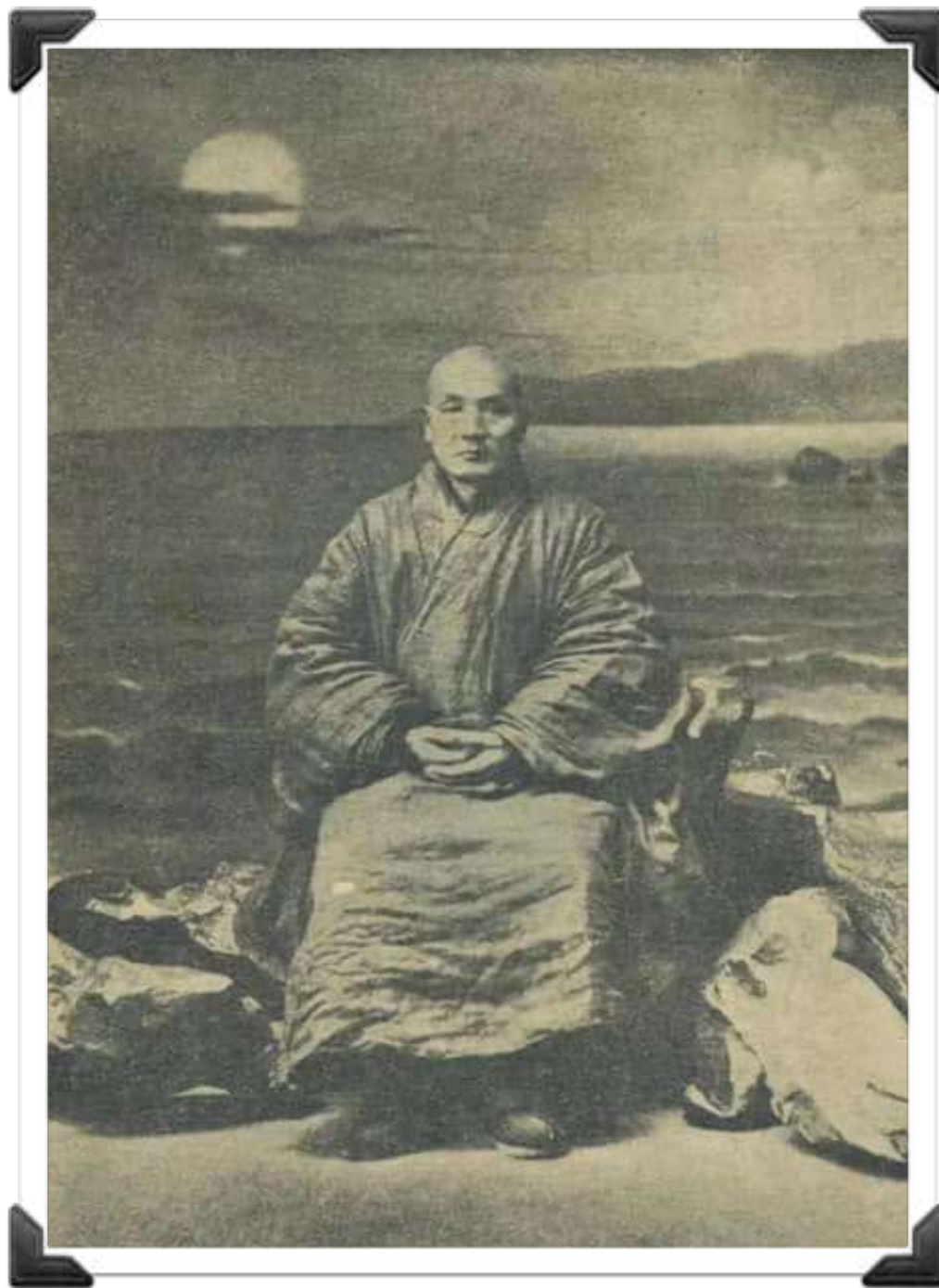
“So what is the purpose of this short daily practice? The answer is that it is to obtain for ourselves a response from the Buddha through the rectification of the three types of karma. To be able to obtain a response from them, a mutual connection, is the best outcome and the reason we cultivate. So how do we obtain a response? We do so by sincerely purifying our actions, speech and mind (the three types of karma). Our entire existence is based on these three karmas of body, speech and mind, and it is through these three karmas that a response from the Buddha can be obtained. When we prostrate, we are rectifying the karma of the body. When we recite, we are rectifying our karma of speech. And when we firmly concentrate on the profound sutra passages of the practice, we are rectifying the karma of the mind. By cultivating thus, we can obtain a response from the Buddha, and gain the Buddha's compassionate blessings.”

**Link to Translation of the Path to Pure Land:**

**<https://archive.org/details/pathtopureland>**



## The 13th Patriarch of the Pure Land School, The Great Master Yin Guang

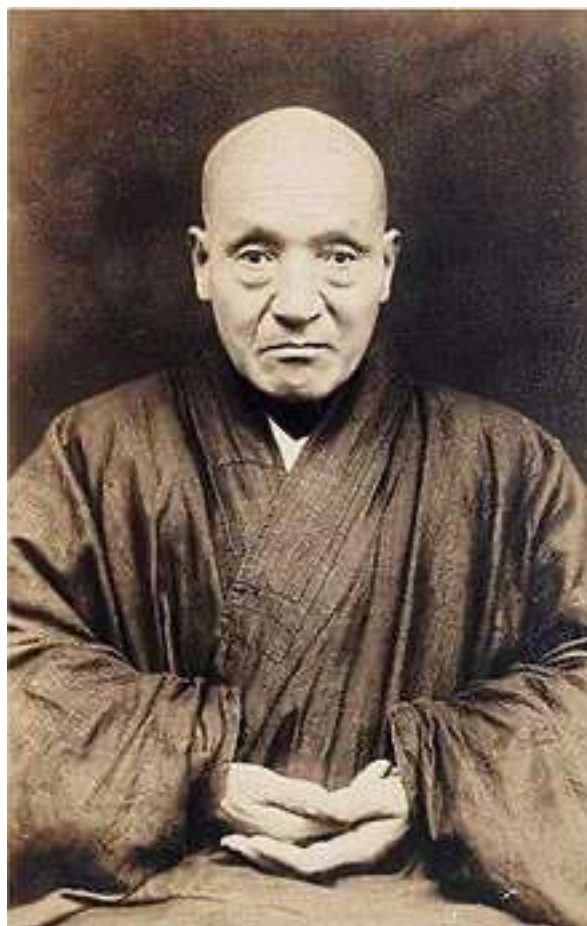


Master Yin Guang, the 13th Patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism, was an important Dharma Master who single handily saved Pure Land Buddhism during the chaotic years following the fall of the Qing Dynasty and subsequent Warlord era. His teachings form the bedrock of Pure Land Buddhism, and solve many of the common mundane problems afflicting people in their daily lives. After his Pure Land rebirth, he was proven to be the manifestation of Great Strength Bodhisattva (Mahasthamaprapta).

**“...Furthermore, whenever the Bodhisattva manifests, he is not limited to forms of the living. He may manifest as the mountains and forests, as bridges and boats, as pavilions, houses, walls, villages or as anything the situation demands. He will manifest whatever it takes to shelter those in danger. The various ways he saves beings are so many it is hard to recount them all...”**

—Master Yin Guang, Foreword on an Edition of Collotype Prints of Classic Master Paintings of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva from the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties

## Master Yin Guang's Letter Revealing the Profound and Esoteric Meaning Behind Life Release



Master Yin Guang (1861-1940)

*Translation of **Letter Encouraging Support for the Rebuilding of the Life Release Pond of Nanxun Ultimate Bliss Temple** (from the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang).*

While it is not difficult to cherish life and release captive animals, the principles behind are profound and esoteric. If we do not understand the principles, then even though we may superficially perform the actions, we will never embody the required sincerity, dedication, and compassion. Such shallow mindedness weakens our merit and prevents us from deriving the full karmic benefits of life release. Moreover, whenever ignorant people criticize or slander the practice, we may become doubtful and retreat from our initial virtuous resolve. Such is unfortunately often the case.

Thus, this essay will explore in detail the principles behind life release, expound the Dharma that allows myriad beings to bathe in the benevolent compassion of the Buddha's wisdom and grace, and help all persons accrue merit and good fortune. Once profound and sincere compassion dissolves everyone's evil karma of killing, we shall all enjoy long and peaceful lives. Moreover, I pray for everyone to dedicate their merits towards Pure Land rebirth—transcendence beyond the triple realm of the Samsara—thereby becoming disciples of Amitabha immersed in the virtuous fellowship of the Lotus Sea Assembly.

The myriad beings of land and sea fundamentally share the same heart-nature of the Buddhas of past, present and future. There is no difference. However, as evil karma accrued in past lifetimes now shroud their innate brightness and wisdom, preventing it from shining forth, they inhabit the forms of animals today. They are thus forced into a life of ignorance, concerned only with survival and feeding themselves, unable to do anything else. They are like a bejeweled bronze mirror encased in centuries of grime and dust. Even under the bright sun, it neither appears to be valuable nor does it gleam. Only when a wise person, seeing its true value, polishes and restores it, will it once again gleam brightly. At the beginning, only the form may reveal itself, but once he polishes it to the utmost, it shines forth boundlessly once more. At this point, regular people will recognize it as treasure. We must understand that the mirror's inherent ability to gleam was not granted by the act of polishing, but without it, it would never have shined again. The inherent natures of sentient beings of the Samsara, from the human to the heavenly, are thus similar. As their innate brightness remains shrouded by past evil karma, ignorance of their own true natures perpetuates their existence within the Samsara.

Shakyamuni Buddha understood that the innate natures of all sentient beings did not differ from that of the Buddhas, and so spoke the Dharma in accordance with the differing inclinations of various sentient beings. He helped all to cultivate the Dharma of Sila, Samadhi and Prajna, allowing them to eventually cease delusion and rediscover their innate blessings and perfect wisdom, and attain the true Dharma-body. He also caused the people of the world to take up the vows of mercy and compassion, to cease killing, and liberate life. This is because we and all other sentient beings have cycled within the Samsara since time immemorial, alternatively begetting and killing each other. Thus, we have all at one point been their fathers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. And they too have been our fathers, siblings, and children. Due to their evil karma, they have been killed by us in the past, whether as humans or animals. And due to our own evil karma, we have been, whether we were human or animal, killed by them in the past as well. For eons, we have slaughtered each other without end. Common people are ignorant of this fact, but the Buddhas see it clearly. Once we understand, we would be ashamed!

Fortunately, our past life good karmas have granted us human rebirth today. With this advantage, we ought to dissolve grievances, abstain from killing, and release life. To let all beings thrive in their respective habitats. Furthermore, we ought to recite the name of Amitabha for their benefit, to help them transcend the suffering of the Samsara. Even though their heavy evil karma prevents them from quickly attaining Pure Land rebirth, we ourselves ought to resolve to attain Pure Land rebirth during our final moments, and rely on our merits and works of mercy to realize this goal. Once we are reborn there, we transcend the Samsara and ascend into the ranks of Sages—becoming Buddhas.

Moreover, the ancient Sages have all cherished life and liberated animals. For instance, according to the Instructions of Yi in the Book of Documents, “The birds, beasts, fish and shellfish have their own natures, let them thrive in their own environments.” King Wen of Zhou even pitied the decaying bones left unburied, not to mention living beings that can feel. Besides, the Sagely and Wise are all of one merciful heart, as seen in the examples of Jian Zi releasing captive doves, Zi Chan releasing fish into a pond, Sui Hou saving snakes, and Yang Bao saving sparrows. They all knew that sentient beings have the same Buddha-nature as humans.

Even though today they are temporarily cycling within the Samsara as our friends or foes, tomorrow they shall become Buddhas. When the Buddha-dharma arrived in the East, the principles of karma, and the fact that all beings are equal and share the Buddha-nature, were finally understood by the wider public. Therefore, the Great Sages and Wise Men are united behind the virtue of cherishing life and liberating animals, for the sake of preventing wars and massacres, creating merits and blessings, and to put an end to violence so that all may enjoy their natural lifespans.

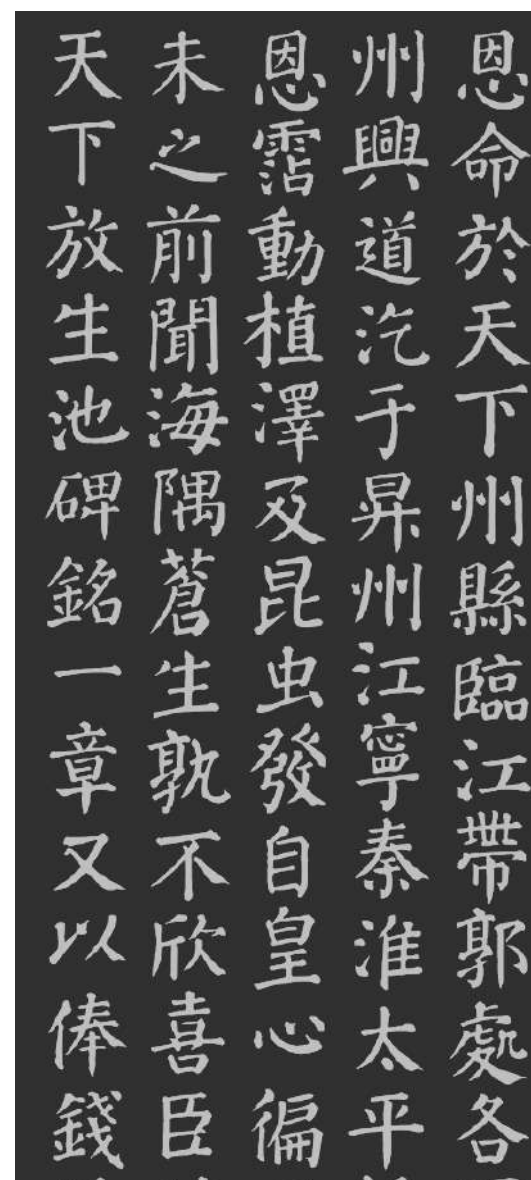
The Ancients say that, “If you wish to know the cause of wars and conflict, simply listen to the midnight cries of animals in the slaughterhouse.” They also say that, “World peace can only be achieved if all persons abstain from eating meat.” Thus, we must understand that liberating life and not killing is the ultimate solution to save the world, for it eliminates the root causes of war.

Therefore, the Great Dharma Master Zhi Zhe of the Chen dynasty purchased sixty locations along the Liang River, spanning across four hundred li, to be used as life release ponds. He then convinced the Emperor to issue an edict prohibiting poaching at these locations, and karmic retribution often fell upon those who dared to violate. Up until the Zhenguan years of the Tang dynasty, it remained so. During the second year of the Qian Yuan era of the reign of Emperor Suzong of Tang, he issued an edict ordering all the provinces to build life release ponds, and appointed famed calligrapher Yan Zhenqing to write the steles.

Moreover, Yan Zhenqing also said, “My Emperor has turned all under heaven into a pond of mercy, to let myriad animals benefit from the blessings of the Dharma, and through the power of the sacred mantras, transcend this sea of Samsaric suffering.”

If we examine dynastic history, we could see another dynasty that matches the above virtue. In the first year of the Tianxi era of the reign of Emperor Zhenzong of Song, he ordered the entire realm to construct life release ponds. The famous West Lake of Hangzhou was also converted into one of the life release ponds. Additionally, the Great Dharma Master Lian Chi of the Ming dynasty constructed two life release ponds in Tuzhu and Changshou. His essay on cherishing life and liberating animals has circulated across the world. Over the last three hundred years, his virtues remain greatly admired, and countless people have been brought upon the path of mercy by his teachings.

There are some who say that the poor, widowed and suffering of this world must be helped first, and not animals. However, I say they are ignorant of the reason the Buddha exhorts all to cherish life and save animals.



One of the steles based on calligraphy of Yan Zhenqing

Even though animals and humans differ in form, the Buddha-nature is the same. They are animals because of negative karma, and we are humans because of positive karma. If we do not now show pity and compassion, and instead indulge our appetite, then once our good fortune is exhausted, and their retributions have ended, the places will switch and we would be forced to repay them with our own flesh. All strife and conflict are the result of past killing karma. If we are without killing karma, then even if we meet bandits, they would be kindly disposed towards us, and not harm us. The same goes for plagues, floods, fires, disasters and accidents. Those who cherish life and free animals rarely meet such misfortunes. To protect life is to protect ourselves, and by abstaining from killing, we will never be killed by heaven, ghosts, bandits or blood feuds.

Of course, we must save the poor, widowed, orphaned and needy whenever we can, and those who release and cherish life often give alms generously. However, as pitiable as the poor and suffering are, they are not on the verge of slaughter. On the other hand, if animals are not saved, they would be immediately killed and eaten.

Furthermore, others may question how we could save all the countless animals that exist. I say that as the purpose of life release is chiefly to encourage all to give rise to the great and merciful resolve to save animals, so that all may have hearts of great compassion and refrain from eating meat, then once the demand for meat is gone, activities such as fishing would stop as well. When this is the case, all that which flies, trots and swims will be able to live freely in their respective habitats, and the whole world is transformed into a life release sanctuary.

While not everyone will do so, even if just one person cherishes life enough to abstain from meat, then countless animals of both land and sea will be freed from slaughter, not to mention there are many who do abstain. Thus, in order to help people of the present and future neutralize the karmic causes of being widowed, orphaned, impoverished, and afflicted, to help them attain health, long life, nobility, prosperity, peace and happiness, to ensure love between father and son, and allow couples to grow old together, we must cherish life and release animals. All who do so will enjoy for the rest of their lives, and in all the lives to come, freedom from the aforementioned misfortunes, and also enjoy the blessings of long life and prosperity. This is to cover the nation with blessings. Thus, by saving animals we save humanity as well.

Outside of Nanxun Ultimate Bliss Temple, there is a life release pond. As parts of the sides have not been properly built, it has partially collapsed, and over the years, the pond itself has silted up. Thus, whenever good people release life, they do so in a small nearby river. Even though they seek to do good, the animals hardly benefit, and more than half of the animals released in the morning are recaptured by evening. If we are near a great river, then we should release there, but small rivers are unsuitable. Dharma Master Yuan Lin cannot bear to watch this happen any longer, and so he has resolved to dredge the pond and build up a secure and solid perimeter. To create a safe sanctuary for all to release life into. This is a most wonderful initiative. They have not yet begun construction. Luckily, Senior Dharma Master Jiao San of Putuo Mountain recently dropped by for a visit, and they both shared the same vision. Dharma Master Yuan Lin has since entrusted Master Jiao San with the running of the temple so he himself may let go and focus on attaining Pure Land rebirth. Master Jiao San, having taken on this duty, wishes to quickly accomplish the restoration. However, as the project is hard and costly, his own resources are insufficient. Thus, he intends to raise money and support from the faithful of the town. He has also asked me to write the introduction.



As I am saddened by the wars and violence of our current era, I always yearned to help, but had not the opportunity to do so until now. His request has moved my heart, and so I have discussed herein the shared innate nature between humans and animals, the principles of karma, and the consequences of killing. I hope all the donors will unite behind the vow of kindness, and donate generously to ensure that this virtuous project can be completed as soon as possible. So that countless animals may finally receive sanctuary. The merits and karmic benefits will be boundless and unlimited, able to melt away myriad disasters as towering as a mountain of ice, and gather together the clouds of auspiciousness. Lastly, the beings who will repay the kindness in the future will number in the thousands of billions.



## Master Yin Guang: Attaining Pure Land Rebirth is Easier Than Regaining Human Form in the Next Life

Even if we live to be a hundred, the years disappear as fast as a finger-snap. Thus, we must use every moment of our life to seek a way out, to avoid being seized with regret when our moment of death arrives. As we have taken refuge in Buddhism and studied its teachings, we ought to live in accordance with them. The Buddha teaches us to seek the Western Pure Land, yet many people are unwilling, and instead desire only for a better next life. Have they forgotten all the suffering—the wars, floods, droughts, plagues, famines and disasters—that they have experienced in the few decades they have been alive? If we have not encountered Buddhism, and are thus ignorant of the way to escape, then there is nothing that could be done but to accept karma and Samsaric rebirth. However, as we have encountered the Buddha-dharma, and taken refuge, we must not be stubbornly doubtful of the Buddha's words, and unwisely seek human rebirth once more. We must understand that to be human again is harder than achieving the Western Pure Land.

The amount of evil karma we have accumulated in this life are countless. Even if we ignore everything else, just the killing karma created by our lifelong consumption of meat can do us in [one must hold all five precepts to secure the right to human rebirth]. Students of Buddhism must vow to have the heart of Great Benevolence and Great Mercy, to seek the Western Pure Land, to become Buddhas and save all the sentient beings we have harmed in the past. With the greatly merciful powers of the Buddha, this karmic debt can be dissolved. However, a cultivator who seeks only a pleasurable future rebirth lacks the resolve of the Great Way, and even if their cultivation is stellar, their merit will nevertheless be as limited as their narrow heart. Anything done with a common person's heart of duality will not yield much merit. Moreover, all sentient beings have accrued countless evil karmas since time immemorial. When this evil karma suddenly ripens, the corresponding three evil realms arise, and human rebirth slips out of reach.

As we are not Sages, we remain shrouded in ignorance and evil karma. Remaining trapped within the Samsara, bad rebirths are unavoidable. Thus, the Tathagata strongly exhorts sentient beings to give rise to true faith, hold onto the name of Amitabha, and seek the Pure Land. To seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land is easier than regaining human rebirth, for the powers of the Buddha can eradicate all past evil karmas. Today, as we practice the Dharma-door of Amitabha, we must seek the Western Pure Land with faith and resolve. We must not seek a pleasurable afterlife of blessings. As the Dharma-door of Amitabha exists to guide people into the Western Pure Land, those who practice it only to obtain worldly blessings or a pleasurable afterlife have not followed the Buddha's teachings—they have broken the precepts and contradicted the Dharma.

Moreover, some people overestimate themselves and think they can achieve the state of no- thought. Thus, they attempt to avoid giving rise to any thought, avoiding even single mindedness of the name of Amitabha. Such grandiose claims can only be realized by Great Bodhisattvas, and such Sages, for the sake of benefiting common people, do not make such claims. Yet unenlightened sentient beings, yet to achieve Pure Land rebirth, make claims they have no right to, gravely misleading themselves and others. They mislead themselves just like Su Dong Po [famed Song Dynasty Philosopher and Official]. Common people who seek the Western Pure Land must rely on sincerely holding the name of Amitabha, thus, to rely on no- thought is to forsake the Buddha's response. The Buddha's response springs solely from our own faith, mindfulness, sincerity and diligence.

The merits accrued by those who recite Amitabha's name must not be used to obtain human and heavenly blessings, or else the opportunity to attain the Western Pure Land is lost. Before one has transcended the Samsara, large blessings serve only to fuel one's ability to do great evil, thereby assuring eventual infernal rebirth. In such cases, to hope for human rebirth and another chance to meet the Pure Land Dharma-door becomes as unreachable as the stars.

Not only must we refuse a pleasurable afterlife, we must also not seek blessings such as health and long life in our current life. We must seek only Pure Land rebirth during our moment of death. This way, the resolve of cultivators of Amitabha's name will connect with the vows of Amitabha, and there will be a response. It is like if castaways in a great ocean are willing to board the rescue vessel, they will be saved. However, to seek human and heavenly blessings at the expense of the Western Pure Land is akin to being cast adrift in a mighty sea, but refusing to board the rescue vessel. Sooner or later, drowning becomes inevitable. The Buddha wishes us to transcend the mundane and enter the path of Sages. However, if we choose instead to seek blessings with outflows, once the blessings are exhausted, the realms of suffering will seize us. To do so is akin to expending a priceless gem as a projectile to hunt sparrows—the gain minute, the loss massive.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔續編卷上-復傳德師書、一函遍復》 《文鈔三編-復周智茂居士書三、復智正居士之母書》 《印光法師嘉言錄：二、誠信願真切-丙-誠具足信願》

## Master Yin Guang's Foreword on an Edition of Collotype Prints of Classic Master Paintings of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva from the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties

*Date: 27th year of the Republic*

Countless aeons ago, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva achieved Bodhi, and was thereafter honored as the Buddha of Bright and Upright Dharma ; dwelling perpetually in the Pure State of Sole and Lasting Light, forever enjoying true and everlasting Dharma bliss. However, because of his boundless compassion, and his vows of unlimited benevolence, he returned to the nine realms to rescue the suffering and help the needy. He manifests across the myriad Buddha-lands of the ten directions, heeding the voices of all who cry out in pain. He has particular affinity with the beings of the Saha world. To those who are without virtuous roots, he encourages them to accrue virtues. To those whose virtues are not yet ripe, he helps ripen them. And to those who are not yet liberated, he speedily liberates them. Moreover, he manifests in myriad forms to speak the Dharma, and whatever form he appears as or whatever Dharma he preaches are all tailored to the unique inclinations of the audience. Wherever he appears, suffering is alleviated and joy forthcoming.

In recent years public morality has declined considerably. Many slaughter each other as they contend over territory and cities, and upon such man-made calamities are added natural disasters—droughts, floods and pestilences. Such disasters are the result of the various evil deeds accrued by everyone over many lifetimes. However, if the heart can create karma, it can recreate karma as well. Therefore, if we sincerely recite Homage to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva whenever calamities and disasters dawn upon us, vowing henceforth to walk the honest path of forgiveness, compassion and true virtue, then we will certainly receive the merciful protection of the Bodhisattva, have those disasters dissolved and avoid all danger. Let the individual karma of reciting Avalokitesvara's holy name recreate the collective destiny of current and past lifetimes, thus creating great auspiciousness. All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas view the inhabitants of the Samsara as their own dear sons and daughters. Thus, they often wish to see all leave suffering and attain bliss. Unfortunately, sentient beings are deluded and lacking in faith. Therefore, they remain ignorant of the Buddhas' ceaseless compassion. It is just like those who do not hold their heads up high can never admire the clear skies despite being right under it.

As war and conflict currently smother the world, making death and displacement omnipresent, all are mired in deep suffering! Fortunately, Upasaka Fei Hui-Mao of Nantung City has long desired to do something to help people avoid such pains. Thus, he has arduously accumulated master paintings of Avalokitesvara dating from the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties—142 in total. He intends to produce a thousand collotype reproductions of his collection for distribution, using only the finest paper. He hopes that all who see them will be brought towards proper faith and recite the name of Avalokitesvara, thereby wiping away all manifesting bad karma and planting virtuous roots of Bodhi. Moreover, we must understand that the Bodhisattva has not his own heart, but is within the hearts of all sentient beings. He has not his own environment, but exists in the surroundings of all sentient beings. To feel is to connect, and a response occurs without seeking. There must be a connection between the hearts of sentient beings and the Bodhisattva's. Because sentient beings turn their backs on truth and accord with the six kinds of dust, it is hard for there to be a connection.

If they could instead give rise to a thought of faith, sincerely hold the Bodhisattva's name, turn their backs on the six kinds of dust to accord with truth, reject ignorance and accept wisdom, then there will be a connection. Thus, whenever common people meet great disasters, they obtain a response as they truly cry for the Bodhisattva.

Furthermore, whenever the Bodhisattva manifests, he is not limited to forms of the living. He may manifest as the mountains and forests, as bridges and boats, as pavilions, houses, walls, villages or as anything the situation demands. He will manifest whatever it takes to shelter those in danger. The various ways he saves beings are so many it is hard to recount them all. A general idea can be had by reading the *Odes to Guanyin* (觀音本跡頌), *Records of the Spiritual Responses of Guanyin* (觀音靈感錄) and the *Guanyin Cilin Collection* (觀音慈林集).

Thus, whenever man-made calamities and natural disasters occur in droves, the only solution is to commit to virtue and recite the holy name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. Even in times of peace, we must recite it often as well. By doing so, we reap the five fortunes (health, prestige/ riches, virtue, long life and peaceful death) at the minimum, and utmost Bodhi if we are wise—thereby attaining complete liberation from all suffering in accordance with the Bodhisattva's merciful vows. According to the Lotus Sutra, sentient beings afflicted with lust, hatred and ignorance can see their vices recede if they often cherish and recite the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. Thus, I hope all who read this will recite the name of Avalokitesvara.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang



Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva



## Master Yin Guang: The Myriad Manifestations of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

Putuo Peak is the sacred place where Avalokitesvara has displayed miracles— thereby giving sentient beings a place of pilgrimage. This is not to say that Avalokitesvara is based exclusively on Putuo. The Bodhisattva is like the luminous moon high up in the sky, granting its reflection to myriad rivers and lakes across the world. Even a small drop of water could reflect its resplendent form. However, turbid or dirty water cannot. The hearts of sentient beings are like water. If the heart holds the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva with focus and concentration, the Bodhisattva will certainly protect and bless the cultivator, either during their recitation, or in a way that is manifest or covert.

However, if the heart is not sincere, not focused, a response would be difficult to get. Why is Avalokitesvara known as the One who Heeds and Hears the Sounds of the World? It is because he achieved enlightenment by inwardly contemplating his own nature of hearing. Thus, he heeds and hears the voices of sentient beings uttering his name, and dispenses relief by following those sounds and voices.

In the well known Universal Way of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, the term “Universal Way” means that Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is boundless and unimpeded. He manifests before myriad sentient beings in accordance with their inclinations and natures. To teach them and give them a start. Thus, Avalokitesvara is universal and not limited to a single Dharma path. It is just like how countless diseases have countless different cures. As the Bodhisattva is not limited to any single method, he approaches sentient beings in the way they can most accept. Of the six strands, six dusts, six consciousnesses and seven greats (the senses and elements), he can approach through any one of them, and allow perfect enlightenment to be reaped. All dharmas and factors can be used to transcend the Samsara, and thus become a way to Bodhi. This is why it is known as the Universal Way.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔增廣卷一-復  
郇隱叟書》

## Master Yin Guang: Dissolving Fear and Anxiety

News of ongoing wars and instability has paralyzed one of Master Yin Guang's lay believers with fear and dread. All day long, he is jittery and erratic. One moment rushing to seek professional help, unable to wait for even a minute, the next moment, disregarding the prescription and seeking another doctor, and another after that. Master Yin Guang chuckled at his childish behavior, and told him that his actions would only worsen his anxiety and health. However, he fearfully replied that he simply couldn't control his afflicted heart and chaotic mind.

The Great Master then said: "Your erratic medicating will only increase your afflictions. You claim to wish to leave the home life to cultivate, to transcend birth and death, yet your egoistic habits, caused by your privileged life, if not changed, will only cause you to die of anxiety if you become a monk." Upon hearing this, the Upasaka felt ashamed. The Master continued: "Cultivators of the way must approach all matters with the wisdom of the Buddha-dharma, and remain unfazed in the face of misfortune. If they should meet danger, they shouldn't tremble in fear, and once the danger has passed, forget it like a bygone dream. They should not keep it in mind lest stress induced illnesses arise. They must understand that all situations are the result of past karma, and thus can be turned around by sincere recitation of the Buddha's name."

However, the Upasaka still felt that the current national situation was simply too frightening to ignore.

The Master replied: "As you have not done anything wicked and unreasonable, what is there to fear? All who recite Amitabha's name are blessed and protected by Auspicious Deities, and evil ghosts cannot go near them. Thus, what is there to fear? To be anxious all the time will attract the Demons of Fear. Karmic Creditors from since time immemorial will notice your state of anxiety, and come to exploit this weakness by unsettling you further until the distress collapses your health, thus accomplishing their revenge."

The Upasaka muttered that as he was a cultivator of Buddha-name recitation, they wouldn't do such things.

The Master responded: "As you focus your entire attention on fear and anxiety, your state of mind is walled off from the Buddha's, but connected with that of Demons. It is not that the Buddha is not efficacious, it is that you have lost your uprightness of mind, which inhibits the efficaciousness of your cultivation."

The Upasaka was startled by this revelation.

The Master further beseeched: "I hope you will sincerely self reflect. Fear is of no use against manifesting evil karma. Only by keeping your cool, maintaining uprightness of mind, and acting properly will the evil ghosts be kept at bay. Otherwise, your lack of levelheadedness will invite evil Demons, and Karmic Creditors from lifetimes past will come to exact revenge by paralyzing you with panic and fear, how pitiful. You must relax as all matters can be easily thought over, there really are no grounds for anxiety. Cultivating at home, you and your family members ought to mutually support each other and practice pure karmas together.



Otherwise, you can go to the Shanghai Society for the Purification of Karma to practice recitation of Amitabha's name with them, as well as listen to Dharma lectures. After a few months, you can return home for a few days to catch up, and then return to the Society to continue cultivating. Wouldn't that be wonderful?"

Lastly, the Master stressed: "In this dangerous era, you must relax and cultivate pure karmas, not worry about fortune and misfortune, and casually deal with all matters. Even if great adversity is encountered, you must realize that you are not alone as there are always many others dealing with the same type of adversity. Moreover, no matter the situation, you still have Amitabha and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva to rely upon. Thus, there is nothing to fear. Concern yourself only with reciting the name of Amitabha and Avalokitesvara, and use them as your rock of fearlessness. Let your heart relax, and do not fear things that have not happened. Do so and your condition will improve gradually, and you will be at peace in both body and mind. If you do not, then you will mire yourself in danger even though danger has not actually arrived. In such a state, not even the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas could save you."

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔三編-復同影居士書》

### **Master Yin Guang: Man Saved From Robbers by Avalokitesvara**

In the 19th year of the Republic, a young man from Suzhou by the name of Guo Zhen Sheng was the proprietor of a small paper shop on Jingde rd. One day, he accompanied one of his elder relatives to Baoguo Temple to take refuge in the Buddha-dharma. Master Yin Guang told him: "We now live in times of chaos and danger, you ought to recite the name of Amitabha and Avalokitesvara often." Unfortunately, being young and impulsive, he did not heed the advice and dismissed it.

During the winter of the next year, Guo Zhen Sheng went to Shanghai on business, but was stuck when conflict broke out, and he was unable to return home. In fear, he sheltered in place until the new year, but the fighting continued. Unwilling to wait further and wanting to go home, he decided to take a longer route to bypass the fighting, which had severed the main railway line. He thus boarded a small ferry to Jiaxing. As the chaos was everywhere, bandits and pirates infested the sea route and often robbed the ferryboats.

At this point, he remembered Master Yin Guang's words, and he silently recited the holy name of Avalokitesvara. At nightfall, they were indeed boarded by robbers. They robbed the first class cabins first (he was in second class) before turning on the poorer passengers of second class. Everyone was robbed, yet Guo Zhen Sheng, a large man wearing a leather coat, was completely overlooked by the robbers. He was the only one to be unscathed. This was because the Buddha's protecting light prevented the robbers from seeing him. Recitation of the name of Amitabha and or Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is a wondrously efficacious way to dissolve disasters and turn misfortune into fortune. The unwise who refuse to recite are helpless before karmic creditors and ripening evil karma.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔三編卷三-復淨善居士書四》

## Master Yin Guang: The Avalokitesvara Statue of Stone Bridge Pavilion

Yongchun County (“Ever Spring”) of Fujian Province is famous for its majestic peaks and gorges, and its simple folk customs. Praised for generations as the Peach Blossom Spring (metaphor for utopia) of real life. Ten miles east of the county is a place called Dongguan, which neighbors Nan’an County of Quanzhou City. There, the river—a thousand feet wide—cuts across the mountain road. During the Song Dynasty, a stone bridge was built for the benefit of all who wished to cross. However, as the river flowed rapidly, the stone bridge often collapsed during storms. Thus, the bridge had to be restored every few decades to a hundred years. As the locals were faithful Buddhists, they built a pavilion in the middle of the bridge where they made offerings to a holy image of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva—thereby allowing all pedestrians to plant good roots of Dharma.

During the 34th year of Qing Emperor Gaungxu, Yongchun county was beset by flooding, and the stone bridge did not survive. Near the entrance of the bridge was the home of a shopkeeper named Chen Mou, a faithful Buddhist, then in his fifties. During one of the fearsome storms, when he was asleep, he heard loud knocking at his door and someone shouting for him to quickly save the bridge’s Avalokitesvara statue. Awakened by the commotion, and with the pleas sounding ever more desperate, he quickly rushed to his door only to discover that there was no one there. As his gaze turned to the bridge, which was then on the verge of being washed away, Chen braved the wind and rain, and rushed onto the bridge pavilion to save the Avalokitesvara statue. Just as he carried the Bodhisattva to safety, the bridge’s center collapsed behind him. Chen Mou was forever astonished by this event, and often said, “I have no idea where I got the courage to do what I did, it was surely due to the powers of the gods and spirits.”

As the father of Upasaka Li Yuan Xian had made a fortune in South East Asia, he was able to support his passion for philanthropy. Together, he and a few fellow expats donated to restore the bridge. However, just three years later, the bridge was damaged again by another storm. The local people thus moved the Avalokitesvara statue to a nearby temple. As the following years were beset by chaos and conflict, no one had time to restore the bridge. Later, when the mother of Li Yuan Xian, Madam Huang, was burning incense at the temple, she felt a great sadness at the dilapidated state of the bridge, and resolved to restore it once more. That night, she saw in her dreams Avalokitesvara in resplendent golden form, who said to her,

**“Now it is up to you to restore this bridge for me as an offering. You must quickly realize this vow, and your descendants shall have their blessings augmented.”**

As the heart of the Bodhisattva seeks only to benefit others, all who see the holy images and statues will have the virtuous seeds of Bodhi planted within their hearts. Thus, the Bodhisattva displayed spiritual powers to encourage her to restore the bridge as an offering. Madam Huang then diligently fundraised everywhere, and the restoration was finally completed several years later. The local people recorded this deed by engraving it onto a plaque, and the Bodhisattva was once again enshrined in the center pavilion of the stone bridge. Afterwards, the number of pedestrians burning incense at the pavilion increased greatly.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔增廣卷四-永春重修東關橋觀音靈感記》

## Master Yin Guang on Good and Evil / Cause and Effect.

Whenever a person accrues merit or creates karma, the outlets are inevitably the six strands and three karmas. The six strands are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. The first five are of the body, and the last one belongs to the heart—karma committed mentally. Of the three karmas, the first refers to bodily actions of killing, stealing and lust. These three offenses are of grave consequence. Buddhists should not kill, and therefore should be vegetarian, and love all creatures. All animals feel pain ; they adore life and abhor death. Thus, they must never be harmed. If they are harmed, the karma of killing is committed, and in a future life, they will take revenge.

Moreover, we should not take anything that is not freely given. Petty theft corrodes our virtue, and the effects of grand theft can be life threatening. If we steal from others, we may appear to have profited, but the actual result is that our stock of merit and lifespans have already been doubly reduced—costing us the original good fortune we would have naturally enjoyed. Whether the methods are through underhanded tactics, coercion, or embezzlement, all are considered to be stealing. Lastly, the offense of lust encompasses all extramarital relations, and this applies even to courtesans. To commit lust is to degrade proper human relationships, and to imitate the behavior of beasts with the human body. If one acts like an animal in this life, one will surely be reborn as one in the future. Those who indulge in lust will have children who do likewise. Though all parents fear that their own children may become promiscuous, if they themselves cannot control their own behavior, it is inevitable that they will set a bad example. Thus, not only is adultery prohibited, even the passion between husband and wife must be kept to a minimum. The people of this world believe that passion and lust are sources of enjoyment, yet they do not understand that the bliss is momentary and the suffering lifelong, affecting even later generations. If we refrain from the above three offenses, we have achieved bodily virtue. If we do not, then we have accrued bodily evil karma.

The second karma refers to the four types of evil speech: Lying, gossip, harsh and divisive speech. To lie is to utter false statements, to have a heart that contradicts the tongue. Gossip refers to seductive and perverse communications that elicit people's passions, and lead youth astray, tempting them to indulge in promiscuity or self pleasure. Such offenders, even if they themselves are chaste, will nevertheless suffer infernal punishment, and then rebirth as sows or female canines. When they are reborn as humans, they become courtesans, and though they may prosper during the flower of their youth, they soon suffer immensely from venereal disease. Moreover, insults are so unnecessary, why accrue hatred with our tongues when we could be accruing merit instead? Harsh speech is to be mean in demeanor, and to have a tongue that cuts. Finally, divisive speech refers to talk that stirs up conflict and division. If slight, it confounds persons, and if serious, entire nations are mislead. If we can abstain from these four forms of speech, we are virtuous in tongue, if not, then we are evil in speech.

The third karma refers to mental states of avarice, wrath and ignorance. We are avaricious if we want all the wealth and profit for ourselves, with an attitude of the more the better. Wrath is to be angry and hateful without first carefully examining our own right and wrong, without giving any consideration to honest counsel. Lastly, ignorance does not refer to a lack of intellect, and even eloquent scholars who do not believe in the principles of karma and the Samsara, who think that all live only once, are guilty of ignorance. To abstain from these three mental states is to be virtuous in mind, and vice versa. The virtuous in body, tongue and mind who recite the Sutras or the Buddha's name reap merit hundreds of thousands of times greater than evil people who do the same.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔續編上-誠吾鄉初發心學佛者書》

### **Master Yin Guang Saves Those in Desperate Need**

Near Suzhou's Baoguo Temple was a shanty town. One day, the whole settlement was consumed by an inferno, leaving behind wailing survivors in desperate need. It was truly an awful sight. Master Yin Guang pitied them, and after tallying the victims (there were approximately ninety in total), he donated three Silver Dollars [roughly one month's living expenses per person] to each of them. However, Master Yin Guang's Honghua Society (non profit educational association) had little in reserves, and to meet the need of the victims, every last copper penny was squeezed out. The chief staffer was worried that the society would go broke the next day. Fortunately, and quite unexpectedly, they received the next day a donation via postal remittance of several hundred Silver Dollars, and this allowed the victims of the fire to receive full relief. The Master said: "The donations given to us must be used to create merit on the donor's behalf, and not held in reserve, so that after we are gone, people will not accuse us of being greedy ghosts."

In the ninth lunar month of 1936, the director of the Zhongguo Buddhist Association, the Dharma Master Yuan Ying, invited Master Yin Guang to preach the Dharma at the Shanghai Dharma Ceremony for National Salvation. The eight day ceremony enjoyed a vast audience. During that time, as the bloody Suiyuan campaign raged on, Master Yin Guang donated the entirety of the 2,900 Silver Dollars he received from over a thousand people as an offering (for taking the three refuges) to help the victims. And when he returned to Suzhou, he immediately remitted another donation. The Master was frugal his whole life, and whenever he had money, he used all of it to print sutras and save disaster victims. He did not harbor disciples, did not assume the role of abbot, built no memorials, and other than the clothes on his back, donated everything else to charity. He once said: "When I die, I will possess only my robes."

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《無錫佛教淨業社年刊》、《文鈔三編卷四-上海護國息災法會法語》



## Master Yin Guang's Open Letter to Encourage Support For the Building of a Charity Home for the Impoverished Blind and Disabled

All sentient beings are of one heart and one nature. However, the reason we differ in body and mind, suffering or bliss, is because of our conduct over past lifetimes. A difference in conduct in the past yields a difference in result today. The Sutras state: Our past deeds can be seen in our current circumstances, and our future circumstances can be seen in our current deeds. The Treatise of Response and Retribution states: Woe and weal have no fixed ways of manifesting and instead appear naturally in response to men's deeds ; the fruits of virtue and vice follows each like a shadow. Thus, a wise gentleman embraces the will of Heaven and is never resentful nor aggrieved. Instead, he creates his own fortune by diligently cultivating virtue—wiping away all past karmic obstacles and creating a blessed future.

The impoverished blind and disabled of this world suffer the most and deserve the utmost pity. Though they are men and women just like us, we have eyes that can clearly survey the world, but they, though living under clear skies and the bright sun, feel no different than if they were in a dark room or gloomy cavern. We have arms and legs that move freely, but they are disabled, missing limbs, without freedom to do even the smallest task. Moreover, their suffering is doubled by their poverty, their lack of shelter or caring family members, their lack of food and clothes.

All persons are the offspring of Heaven and Earth. Thus, all are one family. As we currently enjoy the kindness of Heaven and Earth, living in more prosperous circumstances, we would be remiss in our duties to give back and honor the impartiality of Heaven and Earth if we do not sincerely help alleviate the suffering of our impoverished, blind and disabled brothers and sisters, liberating them from their karmic obstacles and helping them find better rebirths.

The ancient Sages have always exhorted us to be charitable, to care for the old and young, to tend to the suffering of others as speedily as we tend to our own wounds. We must all admire the kindness of Heaven and Earth, the Sagely and Wise, and eagerly walk with them on this great path of compassion.

Recently, Upasaka Wang, a man of significant wealth, has made a great vow to build a home for the impoverished blind and disabled in Shanghai, near South Station. To provide food, care and shelter for the homeless poor and disabled for life. Those who are blind or missing limbs will receive personal care, and those who can still see and work will have the opportunity to do light work they enjoy. Moreover, Buddhist practitioners well versed in the Sutras will be invited to live among them, to minister to them the Dharma of embracing virtue and eschewing vice, to encourage them to recite Amitabha's name with sincerity, and seek the Western Pure Land with true faith. They will help them understand cause and effect, cultivate virtues, single-mindedly recite the Buddha's name, and attain Pure Land rebirth—thereby forever transcending the suffering of the Samsara to enjoy the perpetual purity of the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

As the people who are in dire need of help are many and the expenditures high, the strength of a few big donors alone will prove insufficient. Thus, all of us must vow to unite in compassion and donate without reservation our wealth and treasures to help advance this worthy cause. And in doing so, we nourish our Dharma spirit and walk the path of lasting auspiciousness.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang

## **Selected Excerpts From Master Yin Guang's Article on The Rewards of Creating and Circulating Sutras and Buddha Images**

Sentient beings, floundering amidst this sea of suffering, can only be saved by the Compassionate Dharma-vessel. The Buddha-dharma exists in this world in the form of Images and Sutras, passed down from generation to generation. Thus, if one vows to preserve the Dharma by carving statues, gilding them or drawing images, or by copying and printing sutras, or through other methods of creation and reproduction, then one's merit will be boundlessly great. The same is true for those who encourage others to do so if they lack the resources to do it themselves, and also true for those who distribute and make offerings to the Sutras and Images created by others. Likewise, those who praise, rejoice in and or aid such works will also receive vast and incalculable merit.

The powers of the Buddha are without limit—capable of uprooting all forms of suffering.

Furthermore, as the Dharma is rare and sentient beings innumerable, those who print sutras and create images are building the great bridge of Dharma, converting the masses, and generously gifting the Dharma-treasure to all who have affinities. As their generosity and magnanimity are incalculably vast, so are their merits. Below are the ten karmic benefits, recorded in various Sutras, that those who do such works accrue:

1) The myriad evil karma they had previously accrued will be instantly dissolved if moderate, and greatly reduced if heavy. Greed, hatred and ignorance are the seeds of wickedness ; the body, tongue and mind are the outlets for evil. Thus, all who carefully reflect will realize that the wicked karma accrued in this current life is already incalculable, and the cumulative evil accrued since lifetimes past are as towering and imposing as the great icy peaks of snowy lands. How frightening! However, as wickedness is fundamentally false, just one sincere thought of repentance—vowing to circulate Sutras and adorn Buddha Images—will melt the icy peaks of wicked karma through the radiance of the wisdom sun.

2) They will always be protected by auspicious deities and spirits. The various disasters— plagues, floods, fires, bandits, wars, and imprisonment—cannot touch them. The manifold misfortunes of human life are invariably caused by evil karma. Thus, a single kind thought returns one to the path of Heaven. The accumulation of good deeds—especially through the easy and utmost meritorious way of printing sutras and creating images—deeply moves all auspicious deities and spirits, who zealously bestow their protection in response. Moreover, this is an arrangement of mutual benefit, for the Heavens are still bound to their karma and suffer from the cycle of death and rebirth. Thus, when the Buddha spoke the Dharma, the multitude of spirits and deities reverently offered their protection. And when Ananda compiled the Sutras, the Four Great Heavenly Kings likewise offered their protection. Thus, printing sutras and creating images are activities greatly favored by the gods, deities and spirits. Such merit attracts the blessings of auspicious deities and secures their constant protection from all dangers and disasters.

3) They will be freed from all feuds and enmities. No foe will exact revenge upon them. Behaviors such as fighting, envy, fraud, false accusations, looting, massacres and hostilities are the result of selfishness. Thus, the Buddha-dharma strives to end suffering by transcending the ego. As printing sutras and creating images benefit the multitude, such selfless generosity of Dharma yields vast and inconceivable merit. One drop of Dharma rain can not only extinguish the fires of hatred built up over many lifetimes, but also turn foe to friend and woe to weal.



5) Their hearts will be without worry or fear, their days will be peaceful without any threats, and their nights will not be haunted by nightmares. They will have radiant complexions and be full of vigor. All that they do will be blessed. In this tainted world, eight out of ten persons are at any one time mired in anxiety, fear, hatred and suspicion. And at least seven tenths of human life is likewise spent in worry, fear, doubt and hatred. Afflicted by mutual opposition, struggling alone against the multitude. Even in peace, they create worry, and even without cause, they ripple in fear. Such is suffering. However, the Buddha-dharma can eliminate all suffering. By printing sutras and creating images, thereby tasting wisdom from the flavor of Dharma, the snows of affliction will melt and disappear. The heart enjoys peace, and the body is at ease.

7) Their every word and action will be met with joy and support. They will be respected and loved by all. It is a fact that those who are jealous, slander others, prate scandals and reveal the shortcomings of others will suffer in the evil realms for many eons. Once they are reborn as human beings, they are hated by all and nothing they do will bear fruit. On the other hand, those who propagate the Buddha-dharma accrue positive karmic seeds, are grateful and desire to benefit the masses. Thus, those who purify the three karmas , copy sutras and draw images, or donate to print sutras and create statues, reap immeasurable merit. All who are currently respected by the masses had propagated the Dharma in their past lives. And those who in the future will be respected and revered are those who presently accrue the merit of spreading the Dharma.

8) The ignorant will become wise, the sick will become healthy, and the unsuccessful will find success and good fortune.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang

## **Accounts of Karmic Responses From a Life Release Tractate Edited by Master Yin Guang**

### **※Health Restored After Donating Entire Savings—The Case of Ye Hong Wu**

When Ye Hong Wu, of Qian Tang county, was nine years old, he dreamt of being led to a majestic city by an emerald faced deity, who then threw him inside its crimson walls. Inside, he saw a seated golden faced god, of fearsome countenance, staring angrily at him. Afterwards, the golden faced god nodded to the emerald faced god, and Ye was thrown outside, struck in the back, and woke up in pain—vomiting blood all over his bed and clothes. The family tried every treatment to no avail, and the illness dragged on for a year.

Though Ye Hong Wu was young, he was very intelligent, and was thus adored by his older relatives, who often gifted him money. In total, he had accumulated thousands of strings of copper coins (equivalent to thousands of taels of silver, as 1 string = 1 tael). One day, his grandmother pointed out that money was useless if his illness could not be cured. Ye agreed, and decided to buy and release captive animals with his savings. Once the money had been completely spent, he suddenly made a full recovery without medicine.

### **※Accumulation of Virtue Extends Lifespan—The Case of Yu Yi Lang**

Yu Yi Lang of Jingnan loved to release life and sculpt Buddha images. Later, when he died of illness, he saw himself welcomed by a multitude of animals. Escorted to the Hall of King Yama by thousands of monks, he saw the King order the Vice Judge to examine his records of good and evil. The Vice Judge said: “This man, because of the merits from his life release, shall have his lifespan extended by two dozen years.” Afterwards, Yu was immediately resurrected.

### **※Extending Compassion to all Animals—The Case of Zhang Cong Shan**

When Zhang Cong Shan was 15 years old, he pricked his fingers on the fins of a live fish he caught. This caused him to reflect on the pains a fish suffers when it is gutted and chopped up. Thus, he released the fish and never hurt a single animal again. The merits of his compassion allowed him to live to the ripe old age of 98.

### **※Releasing Fish Increases Lifespan—The Case of Qu Shi**

When Qu Shi was at Yuan Village, he saw a red carp, and subsequently bought and released it. Later, he dreamt of a Dragon King (i.e. Naga Spirit) in his palace, who said to him: “Your lifespan was originally exhausted, but because you have saved my kin, your lifespan is extended by a dozen years.”

### **※Saving Ants Extends Lifespan of Novice Monk**

Once, when a senior monk entered samadhi, he saw that a novice monk was to reach the end of his lifespan in seven days. Thus, he granted him leave to return to his parents. Unexpectedly, the novice monk survived. The senior monk once again entered samadhi, and saw that the novice monk had, on his way home, saw an ant nest about to be flooded, and acted quickly to shape a dirt dam to prevent the flooding. The merit created extended his lifespan by a dozen years.

### **※Virtuous Vows Reaches Heaven—The Case of Jiang Duan Mu**

Jiang Duan Mu of Ren He was a filial son. When his father fell ill, and all medicine was of no avail, Jiang prayed day and night—vowing to release hundreds of millions of animals, publish articles promoting life release, and to exchange his own lifespan to extend his father's. One night, his father dreamt of his father (Jiang's grandfather), who said: "My grandson's virtuous vows have reached Heaven, and you no longer need to worry." Jiang's father soon recovered.

### **※Family Saved From Pestilence—The Case of Shen Wen Bao**

The residents of Taihu were mostly fishermen by trade. Only Shen Wen Bao and his family practiced virtue and often released life. All the other residents derided and mocked him, yet he did not take it to heart and was always joyous. One year, when pestilence broke out, one person had a dream of a ghost holding a bundle of flags and ordering that all houses except the house of the life releasing Shen family were to be flagged. A few days later, of the three hundred households of the village, over half died of the disease. Only the Shen family was completely unscathed.

## **Master Yin Guang: If the Lustful Heart Cannot be Uprooted, One Cannot Escape the Dust**

Love, lust and desire afflicts all persons across the world. Not only are regular people enthralled by beautiful forms and voices, even able cultivators of the Dharma can be tempted in their moment of carelessness. Since ancient times, countless heroic and outstanding persons, on the verge of Sagehood, were brought down by temptation and cast into the evil realms. According to the Shurangama Sutra:

**“If the sentient beings of the myriad worlds within the Samsara had hearts free from lust and desire, they would not have to undergo death and rebirth. Moreover, he who practices Samadhi to escape the wearisome dust, but fails to eradicate his lustful desires, cannot escape the dust.”**

Cultivators of the way all seek to transcend the Samsara, but if they cannot resolve to overcome their own lust, they are bound to fail in their quest to end birth and death. Even if they practice the Dharma-door of Amitabha, where their past evil karma can be shouldered by the Buddha, the lustful passions that remain ingrained in their hearts will continue to alienate the Buddha, and thus they cannot receive a connection or response.

If we wish to solve this problem, we must view all men and women as our dearest kin, most committed foe, and as vessels of impurity. The first view is to see all who are senior to us as our own parents or older siblings. Likewise, those who are junior to us should be seen as our younger siblings or own sons and daughters. This way, even strong habits of lust and passion can be inhibited. The second view is to understand that the temptations that arise from handsome men or beautiful women can cause one to fall into the perpetually excruciating suffering of the evil realms. The harm caused by such temptations are more dangerous than bandits, beasts, pythons and poisons by a thousand fold. To remain seduced by such a foe is surely the height of delusion. The last view is to see through the thin tempting exterior to witness the bones, blood, urine, hairs, sweat and fluids that lie behind. It is not pleasant at all. This is akin to a vase filled with excrement, who would wish to carry it? What lies within the skin is even more foul than mere excrement, yet we remain enchanted by that thin layer of skin. If we do not resolve to break this habit of lust, and remain fixed on superficial attraction, entertaining relentless passion, then we risk being reborn as womb born beings, perhaps even as animals.

If we wish to not be enthralled by temptations, we ought to train ourselves with these three views before we encounter such situations. If we do so, we may resist temptation whenever it appears. If, however, we do not, then even if temptations do not arise, our own hearts are already sunk in lust and fantasy. Only by diligently and steadfastly eliminating lust can we win true freedom. Other than fulfilling our responsibilities, we ought to focus on reciting the name of Amitabha, practice each morning and evening in front of the Buddha, and repent of all the evil karma we have accrued since time immemorial. Eventually, we will receive, without thinking, an inconceivable response.

According to Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, the Universal Way of Avalokitesvara,

**“If sentient beings with much passion and lust can often cherish and be mindful of the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, they will be freed from lust.”**

The same goes for hatred and ignorance. All who sincerely recite the name of Amitabha and Avalokitesvara will naturally eradicate the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion. As we live in chaotic and dangerous times, we must recite the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva in addition to the name of Amitabha, and though it may not be visible, there will be inconceivable changes, and we will not be trapped by manifesting past karma. Moreover, we ought to often read karmic texts that help people overcome lust, and stay away from crude or promiscuous friends. Only then will our hearts become upright and untroubled by temptation, thereby accomplishing our purification of karma.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔增廣卷二-復甬江某居士書》

## Master Yin Guang's Dharma Exhortation to Upasika Zhou Yu Zhi-lian

Date: 20th Year of the Republic (1931)

Thou are well over seventy, without many years left. Thus, you must thoroughly settle all the matters of your life. Let your heart be free from all cares, dedicated solely to Amitabha's name. Do so and you will be without worry or anxiety during your last moment. If, however, you cannot let go, cannot release yourself from attachment, then at your moment of death, all attachments—the clothes, jewelry, properties and grandchildren—will manifest and deprive you of Pure Land rebirth. If you cannot attain Pure Land rebirth, then the virtues, Buddha-name chanting and good works you have accrued over your life become mere blessings. Thou are currently without wisdom, as despite your diligent recitation of the Buddha's name, you still waver in your resolve for Pure Land rebirth.

If you do not attain Pure Land, then in the next life where you will enjoy those blessings, you are certain to be tempted, led astray and commit various offenses. Having committed various karmic offenses, your subsequent life will be within the suffering of the hells, ghost and animal realms. Such immense suffering is the direct result of your current wavering resolve for Pure Land rebirth. As I am concerned about you, and do not wish to see you fall into such situations, I have advice for you. If you follow my counsel, you may avoid reaping misfortune from fortune. As you are still healthy, you must be mindful of death. Thus, you should equally distribute your most prized silk and leather outfits to your daughters in law and grandchildren, keeping only your daily outfits. Gather up your jewelry, armlets, ear rings, gold, silver, jade and the like and donate them to help disaster victims. Dedicate the merits towards Pure Land rebirth.

If you are reluctant to do so, then you must still distribute them among your daughters, daughters in law and granddaughters. You must not allow such tempting valuables to remain by your side. As for your savings, apart from the portion you need to sustain yourself in your old age, you should likewise disperse among your grandchildren. Lastly, you must also clearly assign your land and property in advance as well.

There must be nothing on your mind but mindfulness of the Buddha's name. Even your body you must let go, along with plans for future burial arrangements. Moreover, you must see your grandchildren and great grandchildren as strangers, paying no heed as they bob about. Concern yourself only with recitation of Amitabha's name, single-mindedly looking forward to the Buddha's appearance to welcome you into his Western Pure Land. If you follow my advice, and let go of all things, the Buddha will naturally appear at your final moment and bring you into the Western Pure Land. On the other hand, if you remain attached to your prized possessions and dear relatives—the silver, land, properties, jewelry, clothes, sons, daughters, grandchildren, great grandchildren and the like—then you will never be able to ascend into the Pure Land.

If you do not attain Pure Land rebirth, then in your next life, you will enjoy the rewards of your good deeds within the ignorance of the Samsara. Led astray by the temptations of good fortune, you will subsequently fall into the evil realms. Shrouded by karmic obstacles, with the mind sunk in dullness, even a living Buddha cannot save you then. Would that not be a great and pitiful regret? Thus, I entreat you to follow my counsel, and embrace the great and auspicious way forward.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang



## Record of Upasaka Zhou Zi Shan's Pure Land Rebirth

Upasaka Zhou Zi Shan, of Jiangxi's Ji-an county, was from a family of substantial means. Orphaned at a young age, he was raised by his grandmother. Zi Shan was very intelligent, magnanimous by nature, and very frugal and humble despite his wealthy upbringing. During his career as a statesman and magistrate, he was loyal and honest, and treated his friends, relatives, colleagues and servants with kindness and respect—always tolerating the mistakes of others. After retiring, he encountered by chance the Buddha's Sutras, and discovered that the Buddha-dharma was indeed the root of everything. Thus, he took refuge with Dharma Master Di Jian, and received the Dharma-name Zhi Cang (Wisdom Treasure). Thereafter, he adhered to a vegetarian diet, recited the name of Amitabha, abstained from taking life, liberated animals, and achieved purity of heart. He was always generous with his relatives, ever eager to give alms, and supportive of the good deeds of others. As Zi Shan had vowed the Great Bodhi Vow, he thus dedicated all his merits and virtues towards rebirth in the Western Pure Land.

During the morning of April 8th 1932, the birth anniversary of Shakyamuni Buddha of that year, Zi Shan suddenly felt pain in his back, and asked someone to help alleviate it by gently pounding his back. Afterwards, he sat in the lotus position and faced the western direction—reciting the name of Amitabha with focus and concentration. His voice was clear and resonant. A while later, the recitation gradually became weaker, and as his hands loosened, he ascended into the Pure Land. A wondrous and supernatural fragrance soon filled the entire room, and only dissipated after five days had past. With a mind clear and righteous, peacefully letting go, like entering Samadhi, Zi Shan was unmistakably welcomed by the Buddha to enter into the Western Pure Land.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔續編下-周紫珊居士生西記》

## Record of Upasika Le Hui Jing's Moment of Pure Land Rebirth

Le Bin Zhang, a merchant from Dinghai, was a faithful lifelong cultivator of Buddhism. One spring, he visited Shanghai and met Master Yin Guang (1861–1940), who was at Taiping Temple at the time. He brought his wife along and asked to receive the three refuges and five precepts. The Master gave the couple the Dharma-name of Hui Bin and Hui Jing, gifted them copies of his Dharma letters and sayings, and instructed them to cultivate in accordance with them.

Upasaka Hui Jing thereafter focused on the recitation of Amitabha's name. In the middle of May, she fell ill, but was able to prostrate and recite until early July. Afterwards, she was bedridden, but still recited the Buddha's name in her heart. On the night of the seventh day of August, she coughed for a whole hour before falling asleep. She saw in her dreams many monks, page boys and jeweled parasols—and her illness completely abated when she awoke. On the night of the ninth day, she saw in her dreams Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, followed by multitudes of monks and page boys. On the night of the tenth day, her family members (who were by her side) saw her recite Amitabha's name and praying repeatedly with joined palms before falling asleep. When she awoke, she said: "Amitabha has appeared, and I am about to ascend into the Pure Land." At daybreak, she instructed that all her coats and jewelry were to be sold and the proceeds used to do good deeds. She also exhorted her family to be firm believers in the laws of karma, and to be charitable and virtuous.

At noon, her eyes suddenly became brightly resplendent, exuding a warm golden glow, she smiled and said: "The Buddha has arrived." She then asked for her maid to wash her feet while she washed her own face. With eyes brightly exuding majestic light, she turned to her husband Hui Bin and informed him that: "Amitabha, Mahasthamaprapta, Avalokitesvara, and a host of page boys have arrived to welcome me into the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss." When Hui Bin wanted to inquire further, Hui Jing asked him not to disrupt her concentration. After that, supportive chanting and Buddha mindfulness resumed, and she attained Pure Land rebirth a few minutes later. Thus, if Hui Jing, a frail person afflicted by illness, having practiced the Pure Land Dharma door for less than a year, can have such an august final moment, then this is enough to prove that all sentient beings have The Buddha-nature, and that Amitabha's Vows are indeed efficacious.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔三編卷三-樂慧靜優婆夷生西記》

### Three Key Sayings by Master Yin Guang

- The people of this world all know to secure for themselves adequate food, clothes and necessities, yet they pay no heed to the importance of preparing for death and rebirth. Not only do they not care, they also mock those who do cultivate merits in preparation. Moreover, they indulge themselves, and commit acts of lust and violence, foolishly believing that they are cleverly securing their own interests. They should know that the blind, deaf, mute, disabled and helpless of this world, the horses, cattle, pigs and sheep, the slaves and unfree labor, as well as the myriad animals butchered for meat were once people who acted and believed just as they did. So much for their cleverness and self interest.
- Those who recite the Buddha's name must practice filial piety, and respect their teachers and elders (i.e. persons who have mentored them or persons of high morality and wisdom). They must be compassionate, abstain from killing, and adhere to a meatless diet either all the time or at least some of the time. And if they are not yet fully vegetarian, they must never kill animals personally. They must cultivate the Ten Virtues and abstain from killing, theft, lust, lies, divisive speech, gossip, harsh speech, avarice, malice and ignorance. They must be kind fathers, filial sons, friendly siblings, respectful friends, good husbands, gentle wives, benevolent employers, loyal employees, and fulfill their roles in life. Furthermore, they must not complain if others have not fulfilled their duties to them, but seek only to do their part for family and society. Such persons are qualified to be called virtuous. The virtuous who cultivate to reach the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss will certainly attain it during their final moments. As their hearts are in accordance with the Buddha's, the Buddha responds by welcoming them into the Pure Land. However, those who recite the Buddha's name but ignore morality, or disregard their duties to their parents, siblings, wives, children, friends and colleagues, have turned their backs on the Buddha. Therefore, it is difficult for them to attain Pure Land rebirth. They have raised a wall between themselves and the Buddha, and therefore do not receive a response.
- The attached are always tempted and enthralled by pleasurable circumstances, and beings of the desire realm arise because of passion, which is created by love. Thus, if one could contemplate the human body from inside to outside, and see the sweat, filth, tears, saliva, nails, teeth, hairs, bones, flesh, blood, feces, urine and foul odors akin to a corpse or outhouse, one would know that no pleasure could be obtained through such impurity. As passions and desires are extinguished, the heart becomes pure. By reciting the name of Amitabha with a pure heart, one achieves success as easily as white absorbs color and the sweet taste compliments myriad foods. One is rewarded doubly for half the work, and the benefits are inconceivable.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang

## Master Yin Guang: How to Recite Sutras to Gain Wisdom and Samadhi

When reciting the name of Amitabha, we must recite each word clearly and with an empty mind. The same is true when we recite Sutras. We must not ponder the meaning when reciting or reading Sutras as doing so will merely increase our biases and wandering thoughts, bringing little benefit. In the past, when an esteemed practitioner was copying the Lotus Sutra, he did so with singular focus, concentrating only on the act of transcribing, and ignoring everything else—not even noticing that night had fallen. When an attendant passed by and asked how he could possibly continue copying in the darkness, he suddenly saw that the entire room had become pitch black. Thus, the difference between light and dark is created by the emotional attachments and false thoughts of sentient beings. When the cultivator single-mindedly copied the Sutra, his wandering and discriminatory thoughts ceased, and so did his attachments, thus, he was unimpeded by the darkness. Only when reminded of the darkness did his thoughts of duality arise once more, and the phenomena of darkness was again able to impede his sight.

The key factor in cultivation is our focus and concentration, our ability to set aside our feelings, pondering and thinking. Moreover, after we have ceased our wandering thoughts, there remains false views, and once that is removed, Proper Wisdom finally arises. To read the Sutras in such a manner (single— minded focus) is the same as practicing Zen Koans or mindfully reciting Buddha-names and mantras.

Once we persistently practice with single-minded concentration, there will be a day when we experience true wisdom and joy. The Ming era Zen Master Xue Jiao Yuan Xin was illiterate and unlearned. Leaving the home life during his middle years, he not only toiled in great difficulty, but also bore what others could not and cultivated what others found too hard. Eventually, he achieved Bodhi, and his every word embodied wondrous esoteric wisdom. Originally, he could neither read nor write, but after cultivating for a long time, literacy suddenly arose in him. Such benefits are unlocked by the ceasing of false and discriminatory thinking. When we recite the Sutras, we ought to do so in such a manner, which is the rule, as recorded in the Qing Dynasty's Official Buddhist Canon (the Dragon Tripitaka).

When reciting the Sutras, we ought to read it from start to finish, refrain from analyzing the meaning of the words and phrases, and maintain complete neutrality of heart. If we could recite in such a manner, the more able among us can realize the emptiness of both the self and all dharmas, gaining the truth that penetrates illusions. The less able among us can have their past evil karmas eradicated, and have their blessings and wisdom increased. When the Sixth Patriarch said: "Through the Diamond Sutra, one may rediscover the self nature," he was referring to reading Sutras in such a manner. Thus, if we could read in such a way, all of the Mahayana Sutras can spark enlightenment within us. If, however, we read and ponder at the same time, thinking over the meaning of each phrase, then that is to use mundane emotions and wandering thoughts to randomly speculate. By doing so, we fail to concur with the wondrous nature of the Way and realize the true purpose of the Buddha-sutras. Neither could we eradicate karmic obstacles and increase our merit and wisdom.

If we wish to study the principles of the Sutras, and or to compose translations and annotations, then we should set aside study time to do so. Before we have opened our innate wisdom, we should focus on mindfully reading the Sutras, and do only a little research. If we focus only on research, then that is akin to gazing at the moon or admiring the mountains, mere superficial understanding that is useless in helping us transcend birth and death. If we do not recite Sutras in accordance with the aforementioned instructions, we risk allowing our past life karmas to lead us astray, causing us to sink into ignorance and the fiery habits of lust, killing, lying and stealing. Foolishly believing that we are cultivators of the Great Way, unimpeded, and perhaps daring to misuse the Six Patriarch's saying, "A calm heart need not toil in keeping the precepts," to justify that breaking the precepts is akin to keeping them. Such cultivation is useless. We ought to recite the name of Amitabha as our principal practice, and read the Sutras as supporting practice. The Mahayana Sutras—such as the Lotus Sutra, Shurangama Sutra, Nirvana Sutra, Diamond Sutra, and Complete Enlightenment Sutra—can be recited regularly, either by picking only one or rotating among them.

In response to these teachings, Upasaka Zhou Meng You inquired if reciting each word with respect, correctness and clarity is enough to fulfill the instructions of not pondering. He further stated he often worried that the non pondering and non discriminating way of reciting might not yield actual understanding and Dharma-joy. Moreover, he recounted that whenever he recited the Amitabha Sutra or The Vows of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra Sutra, he often thought about the beauty of the Land of Ultimate Bliss and the compassion of Samantabhadra, leading to great happiness in himself. However, he also worried that what he was doing constituted attachments and wandering thoughts.

The Master replied that for the Sutra passages that are obvious in meaning, as long as we recite clearly, and refrain from intentionally analyzing or pondering, then that is fine. It is not necessary for us to suppress any obvious understandings.

Upasaka Zhou then brought up another example: "I once saw a Dharma Master who recited the Lotus Sutra but did not understand the meaning. The joyful face he displayed when reciting could not be described by words. From this, I can understand that Dharma-joy is unrelated to knowing the meaning or understanding. Only by reciting without duality, and with persistence, compassion and respect will tangible benefits arise naturally and Dharma-joy be experienced."

Upasaka Zhou further expressed that he would strive to always recite Sutras in such a manner from now on, and dedicate the merits to Bodhi.

**The Master then told him that the Ancients also prioritized hearing the Sutras being recited without pondering or thinking.** For instance, when one person recites, another could carefully listen to each single word with unbroken focus. As the listener is concentrated, his senses will exclude everything else lest his concentration is disrupted. As the reciter has a copy of the Sutra, even if he is not attentive, he could still recite clearly. However, the listener relies solely on each input of sound, thus, any break in focus will be disruptive. To listen to recitations attentively yields as much merit as respectfully reciting the Sutras. Moreover, if the reciter lacks sincerity, his merit becomes inferior to that of the listener.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集《印光法師文鈔增廣卷一-復永嘉某居士書五》、《印光法師文鈔三編卷四-答念佛居士問(即周孟由)、淨土法門說要》



## Master Yin Guang: The Best Way to Deal With Bugs and Pests

Upasaka Zhang Yi Quan once proposed that beasts, snakes, locusts and the like, being threats to life and property, ought to be culled for the benefit of humans. The Great Master Yin Guang responded by issuing a severe and critical rebuttal to his proposal:

“If they harm humans, it is because of humanity’s own evil and wicked hearts. If people could practice mindfulness of Amitabha, and teach everyone else to do the same, then these beasts and pests would leave and not trouble them. Culling does not work at all, and your proposal only encourages the accumulation of killing karma—incurring life after life of blood stained karmic retribution. For a Buddhist like you, one who has vowed to cherish life, to propose something as evil as this is to beg for divine punishment—you must quickly repent to save yourself.”

The Great Master then raised an example: “In the past when Long Zi Xiu was a District Magistrate in Jiang-bei, he received reports that the population was suffering from severe locust swarms. They asked him to assess the disaster zone and solve the problem. Upon arriving, Magistrate Long did not see any locusts, but felt that the ground was unusually soft. When he asked where the locusts were, the people simply told him to lower his gaze, and he saw a thick layer of locust eggs blanketing an area several li wide and tens of li in length—enough to create a swarm so colossal that the sun would be blocked and the sky darkened. Magistrate Long was horrified by the scale of the disaster and he immediately abandoned any hope of solving the problem himself. He then prostrated to Heaven and Earth, praying for Heaven to grant the population a way out. A mere 2–3 hours later, a sudden massive thunderstorm swept all the locust eggs away in the downpour. This is to receive a response after praying to Heaven. Even if he had ordered the problem to be brutally dealt with by fire, he would not have achieved a result as efficacious.”

The Great Master then recounted another example: “A little girl once bought a fly swatter and proceeded to kill flies at every opportunity. Soon, the entire house was crawling with flies. Her grandmother quickly opened the windows and recited the name of Amitabha—begging for the flies to leave. The flies all flew away as she wished. Fortunately, the girl’s grandmother put an end to her killing karma, or else the daily habit of killing would have severely shortened her lifespan.

Surely you know that In the Universal Way of Avalokitesvara it is mentioned:

**“Or if You are circled by ferocious beasts, teeth and claws  
Long and sharp, abide in Avalokitesvara and see them scatter  
Away in every direction. Cobras and scorpions, toxic vapors  
And thick smoke, all dissipate when the name  
Of Avalokitesvara resounds in the air.”**

Thus, it is indeed true that animals can be touched by kind thoughts. You are ignorant of reason and understanding, and have thus proposed something that is gravely harmful and misleading. If I had not corrected you, you would soon be mired in karmic feuds. You ought to be very careful of what you say.”

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔三編卷一-復章以銓居士書三》



## **Master Yin Guang's Clarification: We May Recite Both Amitabha and Avalokitesvara**

**Question:** While I aspire for the Western Pure Land, I feel a strong affinity with Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, and particularly enjoy reciting the name of Avalokitesvara. I would like to know if I can still attain Pure Land rebirth by reciting the name of Avalokitesvara? Since the Master often recommends people to recite the name of Avalokitesvara, what is the difference between reciting the name of Amitabha and the name of Avalokitesvara?

**Master Yin Guang's reply:** In general, we recite the name of Amitabha to attain Pure Land rebirth, and recite the name of Avalokitesvara to neutralize suffering and gain happiness. In truth, Amitabha and Avalokitesvara constitute one united family, and need not be distinguished from one another. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is actually an ancient Buddha—the Tathagata of Bright and Upright Dharma—who has particular affinity with sentient beings of our quarter. Due to his boundless benevolence and mercy, he captains the vessel of compassion to save all suffering sentient beings in pain and peril. He also serves as the Dharma-prince of Amitabha, supporting his efforts to convert sentient beings.

Thus, if we recite the name of Avalokitesvara to attain the Western Pure Land, we are certain to find success. When we receive a response hinges only on our sincerity. As sentient beings of the Dharma-ending Age are mired in deep suffering, afflicted by many troubles, and Avalokitesvara's Vows of Mercy very profound, I therefore often suggest people to recite the name of Avalokitesvara so that they may quickly be saved by his benevolence and compassion. This is not to say the name of Amitabha cannot uproot suffering, nor does it mean that we must choose only one name and exclude the other. In truth, we may recite either one name or recite both. Reciting the name of Amitabha yields both rebirth in the Western Pure Land and freedom from imminent fear and danger. Likewise, one can also attain Pure Land rebirth by reciting the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.

However, I must clarify that we cannot recite Amitabha and seek the Western Pure Land while also reciting Medicine Master Buddha to seek his Eastern Pure Land [of Lapis Lazuli]. As for the differences in the attributed merit of reciting the names of Avalokitesvara, Ksitigarbha or Amitabha, they are merely to encourage cultivators to have strong and unwavering faith in their preferred practice. Thus, do not look left and right or lose your focus. True cultivators of Buddha-name recitation must cultivate with focus, and such practice is more than enough for attaining Bodhi. Cultivation is best done with focus.

Cultivators who recite the name of Avalokitesvara in addition to that of Amitabha will benefit from this supporting practice. As even Amitabha relies on the help of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva to convert sentient beings, let alone us in our practice. Thus, it is perfectly fine to also recite the name of Avalokitesvara.

Both the names of Amitabha and Avalokitesvara can dispel all dangers and disasters. If we are terminally ill, we must let go of all things and single-mindedly recite Amitabha and seek the Western Pure Land. If it turns out that our lifespans are not yet exhausted, our recitations of Amitabha's name will also extend our allotted years. However, some who seek the Western Pure Land, when confronted by severe illnesses, panic and only seek recovery through the name of Avalokitesvara, thereby revealing their lack of resolute resolve for the Western Pure Land. In such cases, if their lifespans are up, then their wavering resolve will result in a missed opportunity, thereby delaying their original aspiration for Pure Land rebirth.

It is not that we must give up our lifespans if we recite the name of Amitabha when ill, nor does reciting the name of Avalokitesvara somehow prevent Pure Land rebirth. It is just that ignorant people who have never truly sought the Western Pure Land end up impeding their own transcendence of birth and death. Amitabha's Infinite Light represents the eradication of misfortune, and his Infinite Life heralds the extension of our lifespans. Thus, if the name of Amitabha can result in Bodhi when skillfully recited, how could it not extend our lifespans? It is simply preposterous to think that it could somehow hasten death.

During regular times, we should recite Amitabha more and Avalokitesvara less. If we meet suffering or misfortune, we ought to focus only on reciting Avalokitesvara's name. However, we must not mistakenly think that Amitabha's benevolence and mercy are somehow inferior to Avalokitesvara's. Avalokitesvara is the Buddhas' representative in bestowing mercy and saving the suffering. Even Shakyamuni Buddha taught suffering sentient beings to recite the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva when he was here in this world, let alone common beings like us. In this current era of crisis and instability, it is easy to convince persons with mature roots of virtue to recite the name of Amitabha. On the other hand, those whose roots of virtue are not yet ripe cannot easily give rise to faith and vows. As there is no one in the world who does not know that Avalokitesvara saves the suffering and distressed, it is much more useful to teach all to recite the name of Avalokitesvara. Besides, Avalokitesvara is the Dharma-prince of Amitabha, so it is just like if people wish to petition the Emperor, they first ask the Crown Prince. We can attain Western Pure Land rebirth through recitation of the name of Avalokitesvara. Thus, as Amitabha and Avalokitesvara are one family, they convert sentient beings together.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔三編-復卓智立居士書三、答卓智立居士問、復寧德晉居士書十五、十八》 《印光法師文鈔續編-復殷德增居士書、復念佛居士書》

## Master Yin Guang's Warning Regarding Incense

In response to an Upasaka's intention to enter the incense business, the Master had the following to say: Selling incense is an easy way to increase one's blessings, but if done improperly, can cause offenses to snowball. Incense today come in creative and fancy packaging—often with the images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas printed on the box or wrapping paper. Others even impress images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas onto the incense itself. These products are popular among the ignorant who do not realize that they are committing sacrilege. As people use up the incense, they throw away and discard the boxes and packaging [thereby gravely disrespecting images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas].

People who sell such products will not only have their families go extinct, but will also fall into Avici hell upon death. This is because they have not only committed sacrilege against images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, but have also entrapped the buyers who use the incense, be they Buddhists or non-Buddhists, thereby saddling them with guilt.

Moreover, some incense makers care only about the aroma, and thus use impure ingredients. For instance, incense from India should not be burnt as they contain musk, which not only has an nauseatingly strong aroma, but also induces miscarriages among expectant mothers [musk is an abortifacient].

Such unscrupulous merchants accrue indescribable evil karma, yet they gloat over their profits. Thus, as you are entering into the incense trade, I wanted make sure you understood the dangers. So that you do not end up accruing immense evil karma over a little profit.

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang 印光大師講故事全集 《印光法師文鈔三編卷二-復蔡契誠居士書一》

## Master Zhangjia (Zhangjia Hutuktu)



Zhangjia Hutuktu (1890-1957) was an eminent Living Buddha of Vajrayana Buddhism, and considered by many as a manifestation of Manjusri Bodhisattva. Zhangjia Hutuktu (Tibetan) and Javzandamba Hutagt (Mongolian) are the two major living Buddhas in Mongolian Lamaism. According to his biography, Zhangjia Hutuktu had been reincarnated nineteen times. Moreover, he was honored as the National Dharma Minister by both the Qing Dynasty and the subsequent Republic.

**“Buddhism is to let go and see through, and one approaches this state by practicing charity.”**

**—Master Zhangjia’s most famous saying**



## Master Chin Kung Recounts Zhangjia Hutuktu's Three Teachings That Allowed Him to Recreate Destiny

When I [Master Chin Kung] first started to study Buddhism, Master Zhangjia was one of my teachers. At that time, I was twenty six, and he was sixty five. Since he was filled with many decades of life experience, having known a great many people, he knew from just a look that I had the destiny of a pauper, fated to be without wealth or position in this life. Luckily, he also saw in me some intelligence, some roots of virtue, that I respected by teachers, cherished morality, and was filial to my parents. He also knew that I was fated to die young at age forty five. His assessment of me I agreed with completely.

Thus, he helped me by teaching me to do three types of giving: To give wealth, give Dharma and give fearlessness. He taught me this so I could change my destiny. At that time, I had no money to give, and the little I earned each month was barely enough for sustenance. He asked me, "Can you spare a dime?" I said yes. He then asked me, "How about a dollar?" I said yes too. Thus, he told me to begin by donating a dime to a dollar. More importantly, I must often harbor the resolve to give, to have these thoughts of generosity. Afterwards, I often visited temple libraries (which contained sutras not available elsewhere), and whenever I saw that they were accepting donations to print sutras, I participated by donating half a dollar or a dollar. The other cause was life release. These two causes (printing sutras and life release) were what I supported when I first studied Buddhism. **And true enough, the more I gave the more I received.** Afterwards, I studied the sutras under Mr. Li Bing Nan, and later I started lecturing the sutras, which is to give the gift of Dharma.

After eleven to twelve years, I once again met Gan Zhu Living Buddha, a disciple of Master Zhang Jia, and an esteemed figure in Vajrayana Buddhism. He is no longer with us. At that time, he pulled me aside and said, "Master Chin Kung, come over here, I have something to say to you." I knew him well, and politely asked what it was. He replied, "We used to say that you were quite unfortunate, and that even though you were intelligent and kind, your destiny was that of a hard and short life." I replied that I knew all this beforehand, and didn't take it to heart. He continued, "However, as you have spent these years preaching the Dharma, your destiny has changed considerably due to the vast merit thus accrued." I asked, "Truly?" And he replied, "True indeed—your lifespan is now very long, and your blessings immense." I had not prayed for good fortune or a longer life, but received both. Just two years after he revealed this to me, he achieved parinirvana.

—From the Dharma Talks of Ven. Master Chin Kung (淨土大經解演義第一集 2010/4/5)

## Upasaka Xia Lian Ju



**Compiler of The Mahayana Infinite Life Adornment Purity Impartiality and Enlightenment Sutra, the Grand Consolidated Version of the Infinite Life Sutra, and the current principle text of Pure Land Buddhism.**



## Biography and Introduction to Magnum Opus

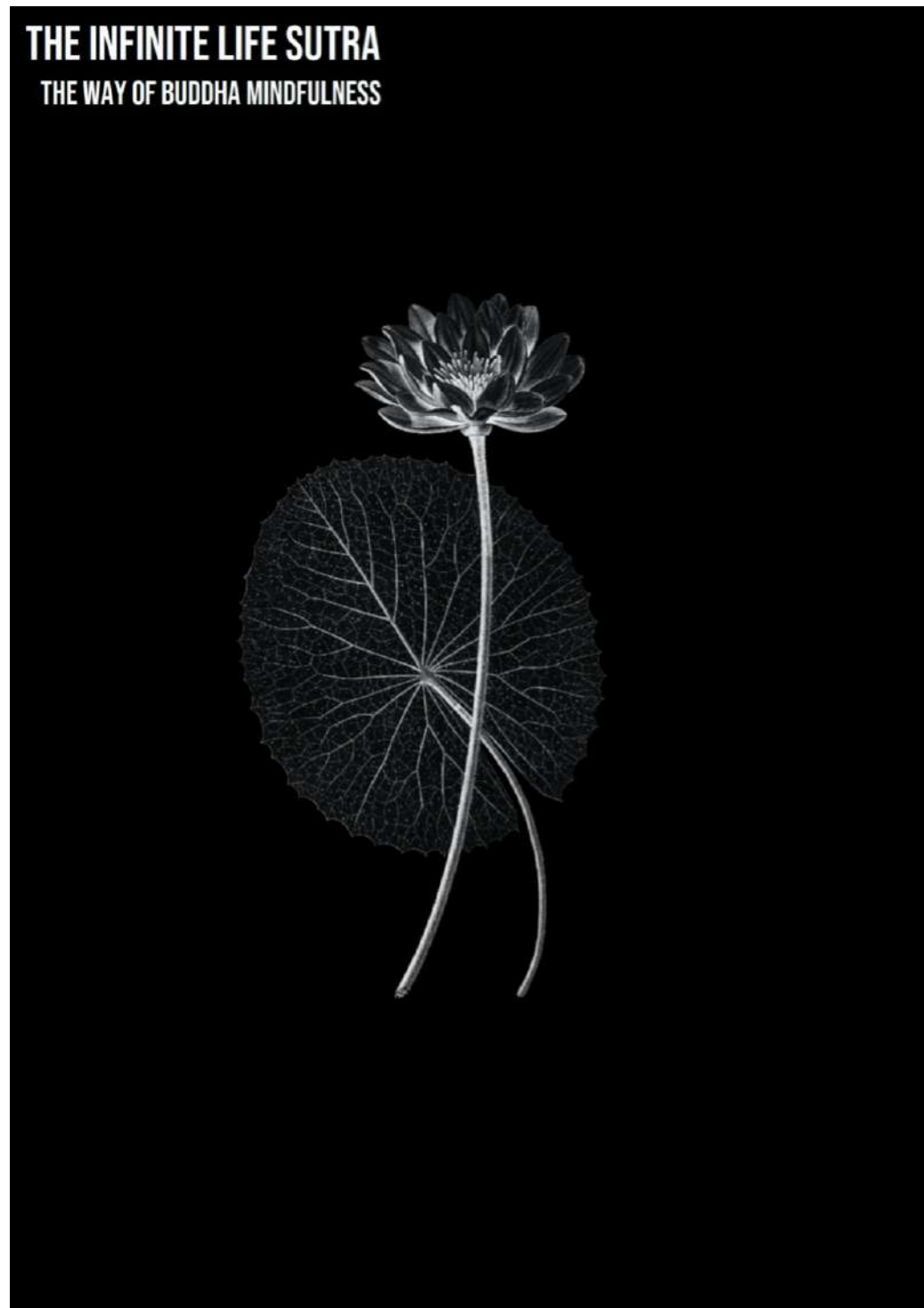
Upasaka Xia Lian Ju (夏蓮居老居士) was born as Xia Ji Chuan (夏繼泉), courtesy name Pu Zhai (溥齋), art name Qu Yuan (渠園), on March 20 1884 into a prominent gentry family. His ancestral home was in Yuncheng County of Shandong Province. An influential Buddhist Upasaka, scholar and statesmen of the late Qing and early Republican era, he was the eldest son of Qing era Yunnan Provincial Commandant Xia Xin You. After passing the imperial examinations, he held various appointments such as Magistrate of Jinghai District, Prefect in Jiangsu, Commandant of Zhili, and Vice Secretary of the Shandong Militia. After the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, he continued to hold various civic and provincial offices in Shandong. In 1916, he was appointed into the Secretariat of the Presidential Office, and in 1918 he won a legislative seat. He also implemented major reforms in his capacity as the Commissioner of the Shandong Salt Administration, his last major post.

In 1921, he retired from public life to focus on his various cultural and educational roles, as well as the propagation and revival of Buddhism. In 1925, he was persecuted by notorious warlord Zhang Zongchang, and fled to Japan. While in exile, he diligently and single-mindedly recited the name of Amitabha — thereby perfecting his Samadhi of Buddha-name recitation. He peacefully achieved Pure Land rebirth in 1965.

In 1932, he resolved to consolidate the five main extant versions of the Infinite Life Sutra, the most important Sutra of Pure Land Buddhism, into one perfect edition. As the Infinite Life Sutra was spoken by the Buddha multiple times during his 49 years of preaching, there existed many versions of the Sutra. After the Song Dynasty, only five out of the original twelve versions remained: 1) The Later Han version 2) The Sun Wu version 3) The Cao Wei version 4) The Tang Dynasty version 5) The Song Dynasty version. While there were previously attempts to consolidate the five extant versions into one, the resulting editions were suboptimal and not sufficiently faithful to the original works. Worried that the messy situation would confound later generations, Upasaka Xia Lian Ju vowed to create a perfect Grand Consolidated Edition to pass down to future generations, an edition that would remain completely faithful to the five original versions, without a single character being changed. The project would take him over a decade of painstaking research and effort to complete, and his finished magnum opus' full title, a combination of the titles of the five original, was **The Mahayana Infinite Life Adornment Purity Impartiality and Enlightenment Sutra** (佛說大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經 會集本). His magnum opus quickly won widespread acclaim, and several contemporary civic and religious leaders, such as the eminent Dharma Master Ci Shou (慈舟法師), supported and propagated it.

This Grand Consolidated Edition of the Infinite Life Sutra has been praised by the Ven. Master Chin Kung as the most important sutra of our era — uniquely relevant to the karmic inclinations of people today. He also recommends that all recite Chapter 6 in the morning, and Chapters 32–37 in the evening as daily practice.

Even though the final version of the Grand Consolidated Edition came out in 1946, a full English translation did not exist until this year. John Scot Walker's 2021 translation of this all important Sutra marks a groundbreaking development for the Pure Land School, and he has generously made the electronic version available for the public to read and share:



**Link to Interactive Version:**

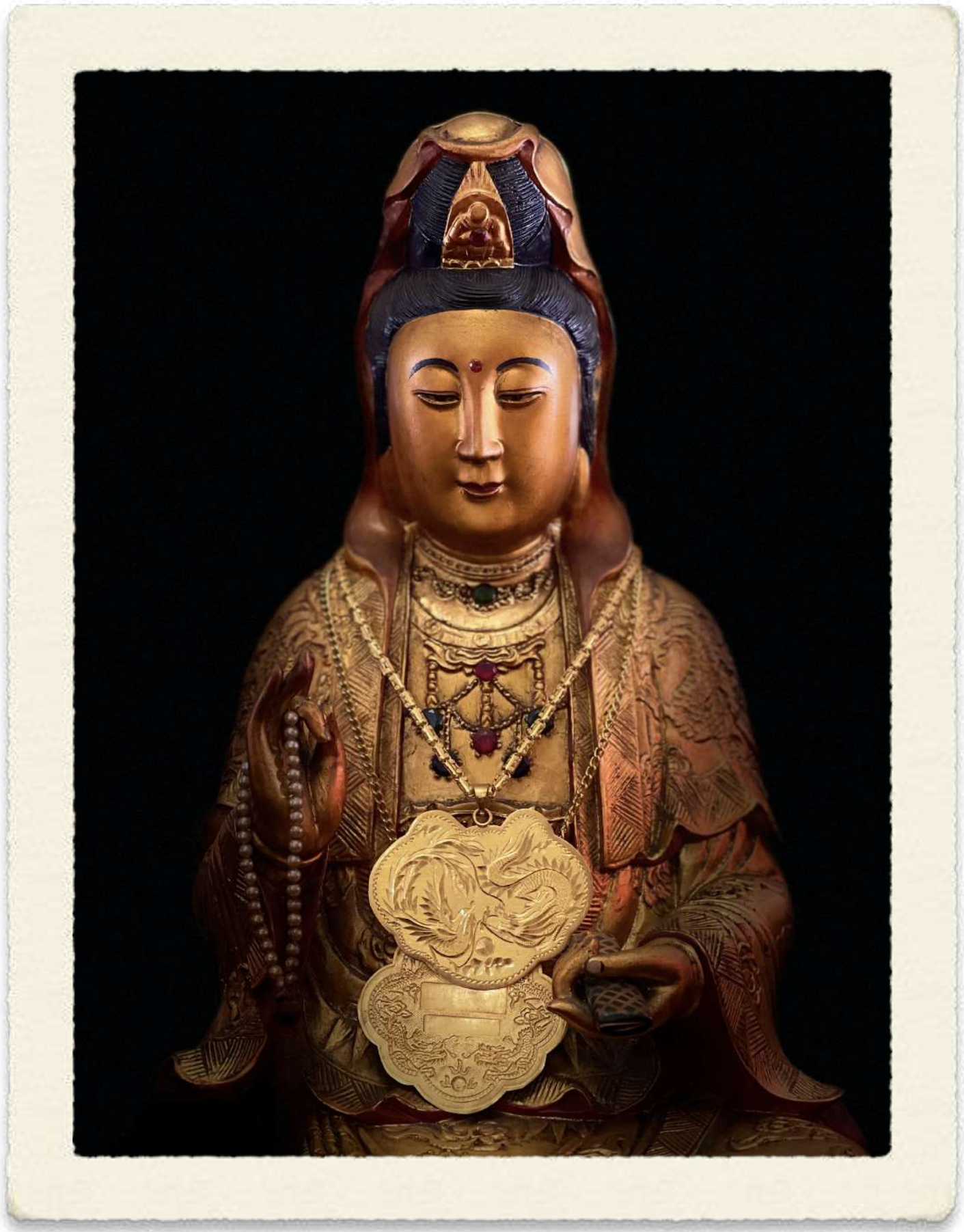
[archive.org/details/the-infinite-life-sutra-the-way-of-buddha-mindfulness](https://archive.org/details/the-infinite-life-sutra-the-way-of-buddha-mindfulness)

**This translation has also been accepted and uploaded into The Matheson Trust Library for preservation:**

[www.themathesontrust.org/library/infinite-life-sutra](http://www.themathesontrust.org/library/infinite-life-sutra)

# The Universal Way of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

(Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra)



## Preface

The Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Chapter of the Lotus Sutra is perhaps one of the most efficacious Dharma Doors ever spoken by the Buddha. Regular recitation of this Sutra can dispel all disasters and help the cultivator build a strong foundational affinity with Avalokitesvara, a Bodhisattva able to uproot all types of suffering, no matter how severe or how strange, be it physical, spiritual and or psychological. Anyone who is able to build a foundation with Avalokitesvara (by reciting his Name or this Sutra) shall be forever remembered by the Bodhisattva, who will respond by granting all wishes (be they spoken or secret) and eliminating all of the cultivator's misfortunes, flaws, problems and obstacles— either covertly or openly.

Thus, the purpose of this translation is to serve as an easily recited and understood edition of the Avalokitesvara Chapter for all to use in their daily practice. A public domain text to be freely printed and shared without any restriction.

*Brian Chung (translator)*  
March 2020

## The Universal Way of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

The Bodhisattva of Boundless Will arose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, turned towards the Buddha with joined palms and asked: “World Honored One, we yearn to know why the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, He Who Hears and Heeds the Sounds of the World, is titled thus?”

The Buddha replied to Boundless Will: “Virtuous Son! If a multitude of distressed sentient beings, ensnared in myriad sorrows, cry out with one heart the name of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva will heed their cries and release them from suffering. If those who uphold Avalokitesvara's name were thrown into a raging inferno, they would, by the astonishing power of the Bodhisattva, be immune from the flames. And if swept away by turbulent tides, they would reach the shallows. Likewise, whenever the many who cross the oceans in search of a fortune in gold, silver, red coral, pearls and precious stones find baneful winds forcing them into perilous or haunted waters, then the whole vessel may be steered to safety if just one among them chants the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. For these reasons, he is honored as He Who Hears and Heeds the Sounds of the World.”

“Furthermore, if soon to be victims of violence cry for Avalokitesvara, the attacking blades shall break and leave them uninjured. Should a mighty host of Yakshas and Rakshasas —vast enough to cover the universe— march forth to torment others, then these fearsome ghosts, upon encountering someone who holds the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, would be unable to even gaze at them with evil eyes, let alone do any harm. And all who are chained and fettered, whether guilty or not, will be freed and their restraints shattered upon invoking the name of Avalokitesvara. Moreover, say a merchant caravan laden with wealth and goods is about to pass through a perilous path surrounded by hoards of marauders—men with hearts hardened by hatred and grievances. If at that time one of the merchants addressed his peers: ‘My good fellows, be not afraid, for let us all chant with one heart the name of Avalokitesvara, the one who bestows fearlessness, and be thus freed from these marauders,’ then the merchants, upon chanting ‘Homage to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva,’ will be released from all danger and be able to see their goods to safety.”



“Boundless Will, the divine powers of Avalokitesvara Mahabodhisattva are ever so glorious. If beings stricken with lust or malice or ignorance often recall the Bodhisattva and cherish his name, they will see their vices recede. Boundless Will, Avalokitesvara possesses such bountiful and penetrating spiritual powers, thus, all beings must keep his name close to their hearts. If a woman wishing for a son prays and makes offerings to Avalokitesvara, she will have a son replete with fortune and wisdom. If she prays for a daughter, she will be blessed with a virtuous daughter of graceful countenance, honored by all. Boundless Will! Avalokitesvara has such awe inspiring powers, sentient beings who reverently pray to him will have not done so in vain, and shall receive endless good fortune. This is why all must receive and keep the name of Avalokitesvara.”

“Boundless Will, say someone faithfully upholds the names of Bodhisattvas as numerous as sand grains in sixty two hundred million Ganges Rivers, and offered bed linens, robes, alms food and medicines to each and every one of them for a lifetime, would not the merit of such a virtuous man or woman be great?”

“Certainly, World Honored One,” was the reply from Boundless Will.

The Buddha continued: “On the other hand, if someone else who holds only the name of Avalokitesvara bows and makes offerings but once to him, the merit and blessings attained will be equal to that of the previous person, and shall last for all time. Boundless Will! The blessings reaped from keeping the name of Avalokitesvara are unlimited and unending.”

The Bodhisattva of Boundless Will then asked the Buddha: “World Honored One, how does Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva tour the Saha world and minister to the masses? What is his way of preaching?”

The Buddha replied: “Virtuous Son, if the inhabitants of a land must meet a Buddha to be liberated, Avalokitesvara will appear in the form of a Buddha and minister to them. He will manifest as a Paccekabuddha to those who have such affinities, and as an Arhat to those who seek one. If people are to be liberated by the Great Brahma King, he will appear as one and preach the Dharma, and if an audience requires the form of the Heavenly Father, he will appear as the Heavenly Father. If beings need to be ministered to by a deva from the Heaven of the Unburdened, he will appear as one, and likewise manifest as a deva from the Greater Heaven of the Unburdened when required. If the need to appear as a Celestial Marshal arises, he will do so and preach in that form. If the form of the Celestial King Kubera is sought for, he will oblige. The same is true for the forms of princes, elders, householders, magistrates, brahmins, monks, nuns, lay devotees, consorts, matrons, youthful sons or pure maidens. He will furthermore appear as any god, dragon, yaksha, gandharva, asura, garuda, kinnara, mahoraga, human or nonhuman. And for those destined to be liberated by a Vajra God, he will manifest accordingly and preach the Dharma to them as a Vajra God.”

“Boundless Will! These are the meritorious deeds of Avalokitesvara, he graces all the lands in myriad different bodies and liberates all. So fail not to single-mindedly make offerings to Avalokitesvara, for it is this Mahabodhisattva who bestows fearlessness in moments of peril. He is known across the Saha world as the one who dispels all dangers and disasters.”



The Bodhisattva of Boundless Will declared: “World Honored One, I shall now make an offering to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.” As he removed his bejeweled Livery Collar—a treasure equal to a thousand gold staters—and presented it before Avalokitesvara, he said, “O Humane One, please receive this pious offering of pearls and jewels.” Being ever humble, the Bodhisattva declined the gift. In response, the Bodhisattva of Boundless Will beseeched again, “Humane One, please accept this offering out of pity for me!”

At that moment, the Buddha said to Avalokitesvara: “You must accept this pious offering out of compassion for Boundless Will, the four assemblies, and for the gods, dragons, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans and nonhumans.” Thus, out of compassion for them all, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva accepted the gift, halved it, and offered a portion each to the Buddha and the Myriad Jeweled Stupa. “Boundless Will! Such is the supreme spiritual power of Avalokitesvara, he who is ever present across the entire Saha World.”

**The Bodhisattva of Boundless Will then asked in verse:**

“O World Honored One of wondrous countenance,  
I now seek once more the origins of this Heir of Buddha,  
The One Who Hears And Heeds the Sounds of the World!”

**And so, The Eminent One of Excellent Features replied  
To Boundless Will in mellifluous verse:** “Hear the Ways of

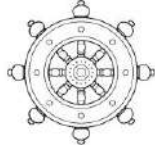
Avalokitesvara, he who manifests in myriad places,  
Has resolve deeper than oceans, he who has waited upon  
Countless Buddhas over endless eons, and kept the  
Great Vows of Purity. I shall now tell of the miracles  
Granted to those who hear his name, see his person,  
Those who hold his name close to their hearts,  
For their many sorrows shall all wither into dust!  
Say the murderous plot to push you into a fiery pit,  
Abide in Avalokitesvara and the fiery pit will turn into  
A delightful pond. Or if you are cast adrift in a mighty  
Sea, surrounded by hydras, sea-nymphs and devil whales,  
Abide in Avalokitesvara and the shallows shall appear.  
If you are pushed off Mount Meru, abide in Avalokitesvara  
And you will float in the void like the Sun. Suppose you are  
Pursued by hounds to the edge of the Vajra Cliff, abide in  
Avalokitesvara and see not one hair harmed. Or if you  
Are trapped by extortionists, armed and ready to do harm,  
Abide in Avalokitesvara and see forgiveness and mercy  
Swell in their hearts. Or if you are ensnared in the laws of  
Magistrates and sent to the guillotine, abide in Avalokitesvara  
And the blade shall break into pieces; if chained and fettered,  
Then the restraints shall be shattered and liberty regained.  
If you are victim of the dark arts, of curses and vexes,  
Abide in Avalokitesvara and the malice shall backfire onto the culprit.

Should you meet fearsome Rakshasas, venomous basilisks  
And other ghosts, abide in Avalokitesvara and none would dare  
Haunt you. Or if you are circled by ferocious beasts, teeth and claws  
Long and sharp, abide in Avalokitesvara and see them scatter  
Away in every direction. Cobras and scorpions, toxic vapors  
And thick smoke, all dissipate when the name  
Of Avalokitesvara resounds in the air. And so too  
Ominous clouds, striking lightning, hail and rainstorms—  
Fading before the powers of Avalokitesvara. The multitude  
Of sentient beings, ensnared in myriad sorrows, shall find  
Release in the wondrous wisdom of Avalokitesvara, which  
Alleviates all worldly pains and anxieties. Replete with  
Divine powers, and forever perfecting his wisdom and ease,  
He manifests in all the lands across the ten quarters.  
The manifold states of woe, the hells, ghost realms and  
Beastly domains, the suffering of birth, old age, illness, and  
Death shall all recede. Heeding purity and truth, heeding the  
Vast body of wisdom, heeding benevolence and compassion,  
May all forever admire him with resolve and praise.  
Radiance pure and unblemished, like sagacious solar rays  
Dispelling the darkness, able to tame all disasters from wind to  
Fire, and illumine without bounds the whole universe. He is  
The body of benevolence, with thundering virtue, pouring forth  
The ambrosia of truth to extinguish the embers of anguish.  
If you are mired in prosecutions or caught in the throes of  
Battle, abide in Avalokitesvara and all enmity shall vanish.  
The wondrous sounds of Avalokitesvara, so pure like  
Serene waves, peerless in this world, who could afford  
Not to keep his name? Cherishing each chant with true faith,  
The pure and sagely Avalokitesvara is your rock in times of  
Pain and peril. Replete with merit and eyes of benevolence,  
Blessings boundless like the ocean, worthy of reverence!”

In the end, the Bodhisattva Who Shouldered the Earth rose and proclaimed before the Buddha: “O World Honored One, anyone able to hear this sermon on the boundless deeds of Avalokitesvara and his universal works of mercy surely has an abundance of merit.” And as the Buddha spoke this Sutra, the myriad beings in the congregation before Him vowed for Unsurpassed Bodhi.

Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!

**Homage to the Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Benevolent, Avalokitesvara  
Mahabodhisattva!**



THE BUDDHA SPEAKS THE MAHAYANA,  
INFINITE LIFE, ADORNMENT, PURITY,  
IMPARTIALITY, AND ENLIGHTENMENT  
SUTRA

A TRANSLATION OF KEY CHAPTERS WITH CASE STUDY

EDITION II

佛說大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經精簡英文版

BRIAN CHUNG

作者：鍾佰晟

FEBRUARY 2015



---

THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT

---

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

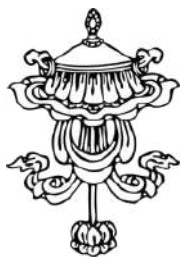
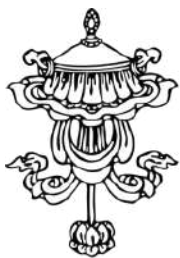
Foreword.....	5
Introduction to the Sutra.....	6
Sutra Chapter 4: The Origins of Dharmakara.....	7
Sutra Chapter 6: The 48 Vows.....	9
Sutra Chapter 14, 15, 16 & 17: The Jeweled Trees, Bodhi Trees, Way Places and Meritorious Rivers, Ponds and Lagoons.....	16
Sutra Chapter 19: A Dream Come True.....	20
Sutra Chapter 24: The Three Grade of Aspirants.....	21
Sutra Chapter 25: The Ideal Aspirant Elaborated.....	23
Sutra Chapter 32: The Unlimited Bliss of Pureland.....	25
Sutra Chapter 33: The Buddha's Exhortation to Sentient Beings.....	27
Sutra Chapter 34: A Heart of Wisdom.....	29
Sutra Chapter 35: The Five Evils.....	30
Sutra Chapter 36: The Pains Caused by the Kleshas.....	34
Sutra Chapter 37: A Golden Opportunity.....	35
Sutra Chapter 38: Pureland Shown to Congregation.....	37
Sutra Chapter 41: Obstacles to Meeting the Buddha (Partial).....	39
Sutra Chapter 42: Bodhisattvas Arriving in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.....	40
Sutra Chapter 43: The Epitome of the Great Vehicle.....	41
Sutra Chapter 44: Experiencing Bodhi.....	42
Sutra Chapter 45: The Last Redoubt of the Dharma.....	43
Sutra Chapter 46: Exhortation to Cultivate Perseveringly.....	44
Sutra Chapter 47: The Stanzas of Merit and Wisdom.....	45
Sutra Chapter 48: A Final Word From the Buddha.....	47
The Burning Pains of the Five Evils illustrated (Jade Record).....	48
The Supreme Benefits of Veganism .....	63
The Importance of Family & Filial Piety.....	71
Venerable Hai Xian's Pureland Rebirth (Case Study).....	81
Treatise on Perfect Enlightenment Through Mindfulness of Amitayus.....	93
Patriarch Yin Guang's Exhortation.....	98

### NO RIGHTS RESERVED

As the author of this text, it is my express intent that the entirety of this text be released into the Public Domain. I reserve no rights to this work. If the laws of a particular jurisdiction should make it impossible to reserve no rights, then I hereby grant permission to anyone who seeks to use and reproduce this work for any purpose.

---





NAMO AMITA BUDDHA

南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



---

### **DEDICATION OF MERIT**

**May the merits and virtues accrued from this work  
repay the kindness of my Mother, Father and Elders  
and relieve them from their sufferings.**



**May my Mother, Father and Elders  
bring forth the heart  
of understanding and compassion and,  
at the end of this life,**



**be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.**

---

---

## FOREWORD

This is the second edition of the Translation of Key Chapters with Case Study of Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's compilation version of the Infinite Life Sutra. Since the first edition was published in 2014, additional chapters were translated in order to create an edition that captured the full essence of the Sutra

Furthermore, in addition to the newly re-edited version of the case study of Venerable Hai Xian's Pureland rebirth, several important commentaries, articles and illustrations have been added to give readers a more complete understanding of the context and principles of this Sutra.

For instance, important excerpts and illustrations from works such as the Jade Record , Shurangama Sutra and the Ershisi Xiao have been included. These additions are in accordance with Ven. Master Chin Kung's philosophy, which combines Mahayana Pureland teachings with Confucian and Taoist values, thus creating a comprehensive curriculum that reflected the methods of the Ancient Sages.

Moreover, this edition also features translations of two historical accounts that document the supreme benefits of protecting life and practicing vegetarianism. The importance of protecting life cannot be overstated. Currently, hundreds of billions of animals die painfully each year just to gratify the desires of a few billion people. According to the 安士全書 (a collection of Sagely texts by Upasaka An Shi), as soon as the karmic seeds caused by the killing of animals mount up to the maximum—wars, violence and vandalism will occur across society. Hence, the merits resulting from protecting life are boundless and very potent. If these merits are then sincerely dedicated towards rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, rebirth there is assured.

This edition also includes a translation of Mahasthamaprapta's Treatise on Perfect Enlightenment Through Mindfulness of Amitayus. This treatise is a must read for anyone wishing to understand the mechanics behind single-minded recitation of Amita Buddha's name. Lastly, a new translation of Patriarch Yin Guang's Exhortation (one of the most important tracts in Buddhism) is included at the end.

---

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SUTRA

The Buddha Speaks the Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra (佛說大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經) is the central text of the Pureland school. This Sutra represents the Buddha's highest wisdom and succinctly outlines the way to achieve Bodhi within one life.

The Buddha spoke the Infinite Life Sutra five separate times over the course of his life. Thus, there were originally five versions of this Sutra. However, the eminent Upasaka Xia Lian Ju (夏蓮居居士) compiled all five versions into one version without changing or discarding a single character during the early to mid 20th century. This compilation version is now the universally accepted version of the Infinite Life Sutra. Furthermore, The Venerable Master Chin Kung (淨空法師) has stated that this Sutra is the most important one of our time and the only one that he would recommend.



**Upasaka Xia Lian Ju**



**Venerable Master Chin Kung**

The Venerable Master Chin Kung has also stated that it requires unmatched stocks of merit to be able to study Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra and witness Venerable Hai Xian's Pureland rebirth. As this Sutra was not widely circulated until a few decades ago, our generation is certainly the most fortunate generation since the Buddha's appearance. Therefore, we should know that it is our destiny to make use of our gifts and single-mindedly seek rebirth in Pureland.

**Namo Amita Buddha!**

## CHAPTER 4: THE ORIGINS OF DHARMAKARA

### Sutra:

**The Buddha said to Ananda: "Innumerable kalpas ago a Buddha named Lokeshvararaja appeared in the world. Having attained Unsurpassed Bodhi, he was worthy of offerings. Furthermore, countless sentient beings were brought to the shores of liberation through his perfect wisdom. For forty-two kalpas, he spoke the true Dharma to both devas and men."**

**"At that time there was a valiant sovereign named King Universal Bountiful. Having heard the Dharma, he rejoiced and ignited his resolve for Bodhi. Seeking the Way, he renounced his crown and became a mendicant named Dharmakara (Treasury of the Dharma). Owing to his peerless wisdom and matchless strength of will, Dharmakara mastered the Bodhisattva Way with effortless ease. Upon meeting the World Honored-One, he reverently prostrated before Lokeshvararaja Buddha. The Bhikshu then uttered verses praising the Buddha's glorious countenance and expressed his aspiration to create the Land of Ultimate Bliss. A land that will serve as a pure and permanent paradise for the benefit of all sentient beings throughout the ten quarters."**

### Commentary

Beginning from this chapter, the Buddha starts to explain Amita Buddha's path to Bodhi and the origins of Pureland. Innumerable kalpas (eons) ago Lokeshvararaja Buddha appeared in this world to teach the Dharma. He guided sentient beings for a total of forty-two kalpas. According to the Venerable Master Chin Kung, the total length of time a Buddha speaks the Dharma is about half the average contemporary human life expectancy. This means that the average lifespan of an individual during the time of Lokeshvararaja Buddha was no less than eighty kalpas! As lifespans are determined by past merits and current virtues, the people who lived during Dharmakara's time undoubtedly possessed exceptionally good karma. Thus, we should realize that the fruits of doing good are boundless and everything we seek can be obtained by diligently amassing merits.

Although the Chinese text of Dharmakara's praises and aspirations are much longer, the details basically reflect the last realization of the Eight Discernments of Eminent Men Sutra:



**The Eighth Discernment is this: The Samsara is a raging inferno plagued by endless afflictions. Hence, resolve upon the Mahayana aspiration to liberate all beings. Vow to bear the unbearable for the sake of helping sentient beings achieve ultimate bliss.**

The Eight Discernments of Eminent Men Sutra is a text that outlines the motivations of those who seek Sagehood. The first few realizations represent the wisdom of those seeking only personal liberation (i.e. Arhats) while the latter are the insights of Bodhisattvas. The eighth and last is the highest realization where the Bodhisattva not only fully understands the pains of the Samsara, but also wishes to selflessly save all the innumerable beings still trapped within the cycle.

Dharmakara's aspiration to create the Land of Ultimate Bliss mirrors this highest realization. Hence, Dharmakara's Great Compassion for sentient beings cannot be exceeded. This is why Shakyamuni Buddha stated in the Amitabha Sutra that all Buddhas praise Amita Buddha as the foremost among them. In Chapter 5 (not translated), Lokeshvararaja Buddha recognizes Dharmakara's noble aspirations and thus showed him the way to Unsurpassed Bodhi. He also explained to him the various positive and negative aspects of all the innumerable world-systems in existence. With this knowledge, Dharmakara was able to proclaim his 48 Vows in the presence of the Buddha's august assembly.

Dharmakara's Pureland is basically an amalgamation of all the positive aspects of every world-system and Buddha-land in the universe, but without even an ounce of the negative qualities. Simply put, it is a land of unsurpassed security, bliss and perfection. Rebirth there is easily attainable for any sentient being who wishes to do so. No one is refused entry. Once reborn in Pureland, Bodhisattvahood is immediately attained and Buddhahood is guaranteed to be achieved within a short span of time. Thus, rebirth in Pureland means instant enlightenment. In fact, it took Dharmakara many maha-kalpas of deep meditation in order to create such a wonderful land.

Lastly, reciting this Sutra is very meritorious. It is standard practice for those practicing Pureland Buddhism to recite the 48 Vows (Chapter 6) during the morning recitation session and chapters 32-37 during the evening recitation session.

## CHAPTER 6: THE FORTY EIGHT VOWS OF AMITABHA

### **Introduction:**

The following vows represent the cornerstone of Pureland Buddhism. They signify Amita Buddha's promise to all sentient beings—be they devas, humans, insects, microbes, ghosts or hell beings. As the Buddha has confirmed that Dharmakara attained Buddhahood ten kalpas ago (he is now Amita Buddha), all of the following vows are now valid in perpetuity. Lastly, any reference hereinafter to "the Way" or "Dharma" etc. generally refers to the Dharma-door of Pureland Buddhism.

### **Sutra Vows 1-2 : The Vows of No Evil and Suffering**

**"If I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my Buddha-land will be adorned with infinite and inconceivable merits. There shall be no hell beings, emaciated ghouls, wild beasts, pests and pestilences in my land. Sentient beings arriving to dwell in my land, even from the hells or evil paths, will all share my merits and become Bodhisattvas at once. They shall never again fall back into the states of suffering. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

### **Sutra Vows 3-5 : The Vows of Equal and Majestic Appearances**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings from the ten quarters who are reborn in my land shall assume majestic appearances as august as Tyrian purple and as fair as the finest gold. They will be regal in countenance and possess all of the Buddha's 32 fine features. Furthermore, their bodies will be upright, pure and without outflows. The splendor of their appearances shall all be equal. If some are handsome while others hideous, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

### **Sutra Vows 6-8: The Vows of Clairvoyance and Clairaudience**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land will have the Divine-Ear and Buddha-Eye. They shall, without limit, be able to recall all of the good and evil habits of their innumerable past lives. Also, their acuity and powers of postcognition and precognition will be unlimited. Every event occurring across the ten directions will be known to them. Neither the slightest sound nor the faintest sight will escape them. Until these vows are**

fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

**Sutra Vow 9: The Vow of the All Knowing Heart**

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be able to see through the hearts and minds of each and every being living across the incalculable and inconceivable world-systems. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

**Sutra Vows 10-11: The Vows of Transcendental Powers and Limitless offerings**

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be complete with perfect ease and the six transcendental powers. Furthermore, they will be able to instantly manifest anywhere they desire and make offerings simultaneously to innumerable Buddhas across the ten directions. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

**Sutra Vow 12: The Vow of Samadhi and Perfect Wisdom**

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be bestowed with Samadhi that will free them from outflows and attachments. They will all become irreversibly established on the path towards perfect wisdom (Bodhi). Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

**Sutra Vow 13-14: The Vows of Infinite and Serene Light**

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my light shall shine brightly across the ten directions. When I appear before sentient beings— as soon as my light touches them—they shall feel bliss as their afflictions dissolve. They will immediately be reborn in my land. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

**Sutra Vow 15-16: The Vows of Infinite Life and Incalculable Populace**

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall have infinite life. Even if an entire congregation of as many Paccekabuddhas as there are living beings in a great trichiliocosm should spend

**hundreds of thousands of kalpas trying to calculate the lifespan of any one of the countless Sages in my land—a figure would still be unreachable. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

**Commentary:**

A finite lifespan is one of the greatest threat to those seeking Bodhi. This is because death and rebirth dampens the momentum of their cultivation. For instance, if a diligent cultivator suddenly died and was reborn as a deva, he would likely become so distracted by his impermanent newfound luxuries that he could no longer concentrate on seeking liberation. If he was reborn as a human (womb born), it would take him some time to grow up and refresh his roots of wisdom. However, rebirth in Pureland guarantees infinite life. As all beings who are reborn in Pureland become Bodhisattvas due to Amita Buddha's blessings, they have naturally far transcended the Samsara and the pains of birth and death. With infinite life and the exalted environment of Pureland, Unsurpassed Bodhi can be easefully attained.

**Sutra Vow 17: The Vow of Universal Recognition**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all the Buddhas across the ten quarters will join in unison to praise the infinite merits of my name and the peerless virtues of my Buddha-land. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

**Commentary:**

According to Venerable Master Chin Kung, the name of Amita Buddha represents the names, teachings and combined merits of all the Buddhas across the ten quarters. Hence, this is why all the Buddhas across the ten quarters commend Amita Buddha and his Land of Ultimate Bliss.

**Sutra Vow 18: The Pureland Rebirth Upon Ten Recitations Vow**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who joyously and single-mindedly seek rebirth in my land after hearing my name—wholeheartedly dedicating all their merits towards this aspiration with each new thought—will be reborn in my land upon reciting my name for ten times. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

**Note:** The Chinese text includes an exception for those who slandered the Dharma or committed the five grave offenses. However, Vow 21 contradicts this prohibition. Hence, this contradiction means that this exception was meant only as a warning to prevent people from committing such heavy evil offenses. As long as they repent, Pureland will certainly accept them with open arms.

### **Sutra Vows 19-20: The Resolve For Bodhi Vow and the Vow of the Sagely Welcoming Party**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who resolve to attain Bodhi in my land after hearing my name, who subsequently dedicate all the merits and virtues from their lifelong practice of the Six Paramitas towards this aspiration, and who single-mindedly recites my name through day and night without cease, will meet me during their last moments. I shall welcome them into my land while surrounded by an august retinue of Sages. They will instantly become Mahabodhisattvas. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

### **Sutra Vows 21: The Vow of Forgiveness**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, there would not be one virtuous and willing sentient being who could not easily attain rebirth in my land. However, if sentient beings who have long committed evil repent after hearing my name, and thereafter adheres to the Buddhadharma while yearning for rebirth in my land, then such beings will be saved from the evil paths and rise to my land upon their deaths. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

### **Sutra Vows 22-24: The Vows of No Womanhood and the Vow of the Lotus Bud Transformation**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, the retribution of womanhood will not exist in my land. If women who loathe the burdens of their gender become sincerely resolved upon attaining Bodhi in my land after hearing my name, then they shall be transformed into Bodhisattvas upon such a rebirth. Sentient beings of the ten quarters who are reborn in my land will be transformed while dwelling in palatial lotus buds floating upon the glistening waters of the Seven Jeweled Lagoon. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**



**Commentary:**

Sentient beings who are reborn in Pureland will become Bodhisattvas by transformation. This means that if you achieve such a rebirth, you will instantly manifest as an enlightened Bodhisattva. There is no pain of birth or inconvenience of growing up in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

**Sutra Vows 25-27: The Vows of Good Karma and Virtue**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are inspired by my name to sincerely cultivate the Bodhisattva Way shall be respected by both men and devas. Moreover, sentient beings who merely hear my name will be reborn as virtuous aristocrats possessing wealth, knowledge and auctoritas. Their bodies will be healthy and complete. Lastly, they will enjoy cultivating the highest Dharma. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

**Commentary:**

These vows represent the most basic benefits of reciting Amita Buddha's name. Simply hearing or perceiving this name will guarantee a good rebirth and future opportunities to learn Buddhism. Furthermore, in the Contemplation Sutra, it is stated that just one recitation of Amita Buddha's name can eradicate eight billion eons worth of heavy karmic offenses. Hence, those who fail to achieve Pureland rebirth despite having recited the name will still amass enormous stocks of merit.

**Sutra Vows 28-31: The Vows of Virtue, Purity, Detachment and No Outflows**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my land will be free from even a hint of evil. All sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be united in proper virtue and purity. They will be forever free from afflictions and attachments. Moreover, they will enjoy the same bliss as a bhikshu without outflows. If residents of my land should retain false thoughts and attachments to the body, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

### **Sutra Vows 32-34: The Vows of Incorruptibility, Eloquence and Expoundance**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, those who are reborn in my land will all possess infinite good roots. Hence, their bodies shall be as incorruptible as the Buddha's. They will also have radiant halos above their heads. A affirmation of their infinite wisdom and eloquence. Thus, they will naturally expound the Dharma like clockwork. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

### **Sutra Vows 35-36: The Vows of Swift Perfection**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are reborn in my land shall swiftly attain Buddhahood. Excepted are Bodhisattvas who have made Mahayana vows to liberate beings across the ten quarters. Using various expedient devices, they will unfailingly inspire sentient beings to bring forth faith in the teachings of Samantabhadra. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

### **Sutra Vows 37-38: The Vows of Abundance and the Receipt of Offerings**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be instantly furnished with whatever food, drink, attires and requisites that they wish for—no one will be left unsatisfied. If those dwelling in my land shall seek to make offerings to Buddhas across the ten quarters, rich offerings will instantly appear before all the Buddhas of the ten quarters as a response to that thought. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

### **Sutra Vow 39: The Vow of Infinite Augustness**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all aspects of my land shall be infinitely well adorned and be of indescribable beauty. Even though the residents of my land are clairvoyant, they will still be unable to describe the infinite beauty of my land. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

### **Sutra Vows 40-41: The Vows of Jeweled and Mirrored Trees**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, the jeweled trees of my land shall be hundreds of thousands of yojanas in height. However, the Bodhi trees next to the**

Way places will be even taller. No Bodhisattva of my land would fail to perceive this. Those who wish to view the august lands of other Buddhas may do so by simply gazing at the jeweled trees, and what they seek will appear as clear as one's reflection in a mirror. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

#### **Sutra Vow 42: The Vow of Resplendence**

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my land shall be boundlessly expansive and as bright and unblemished as a gleaming mirror. Its light shall pervade warmly across the ten quarters. Any sentient being who can see this light will become irreversible upon the path towards Bodhi. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

#### **Sutra Vow 43- The Vow of Widespread Treasures and Fragrances**

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, everything in my land, from the ground to the skies above, such as the lagoons, arbors, rivulets, villas, halls and pavilions, shall all be composed of untold treasures and scented woods. The fragrances of my land will saturate the entirety of the ten quarters. Any sentient being who can sense it will become resolute in cultivating the Dharma. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

#### **Sutra Vow 44-45: The Vows of Samadhi and Buddha Offerings**

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, Bodhisattvas of the ten quarters who hear my name will immediately gain the Samadhi of purity, release and equality. They shall dwell in the highest Samadhi until they become Buddhas. They will also make offerings to countless Buddhas while meditating. Unless these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

#### **Sutra Vow 46-48: The Vows of Dharani, Patience and Non-Retrogression**

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, Bodhisattvas from other worlds who hear my name will immediately become Mahabodhisattvas. They shall abide in equality and dwell in purity, impartiality and perfect wisdom. Lastly, they will instantly reach the state of Avivartika and attain the three stages of endurance. Unless these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

## **CHAPTER 14, 15, 16 & 17 : THE JEWELLED TREES, BODHI TREES, WAY PLACES AND THE MERITORIOUS RIVERS, PONDS AND LAGOONS**

### **Sutra (Chapter 14):**

**"Arising from the golden soil of the Land of Ultimate Bliss are countless magnificent jeweled trees. Some are composed of gold or silver while others are made from crystal, elegant cast glass, amber, imperial jade or agate. Each of these trees are purely composed of one type of treasure. However, other jeweled trees are made from two, three or even seven types of precious jewels and treasures. For instance, some trees may have cameo glass bodies, agate berries and crystal blossoms. Others such as the seven jeweled trees may have golden roots, silver trunks, cast glass branches, crystal twigs, amber leaves, imperial jade petals and agate berries. There are innumerable seven jeweled trees of various combinations in the Land of Ultimate Bliss."**

**"Furthermore, the jeweled trees of Pureland are not only composed of exquisite treasures—but are also completely balanced and perfectly symmetrical. Even the twigs, flowers, berries and leaves are uniformly well formed and proportioned. The glorious aura and warm radiance of these trees are of indescribable beauty. Moreover, whenever pleasant breezes gently ruffle the leaves, it is as if an celestial concerto grosso is being masterfully performed. Divine music naturally emanates from these wonderful jeweled trees."**

### **Sutra (Chapter 15):**

**"In addition, there are grand Bodhi trees next to the Sermon Pavilion. These Bodhi trees are four million Han miles in height and five thousand yojanas in circumference. The crown of each tree covers a radius of two hundred thousand Han miles. Composed purely of countless gems and adorned with multitudes of jeweled blossoms and berries, their warm radiance naturally pervades boundlessly."**

**"Furthermore, wish-fulfilling jewels of various colors such as emerald, ruby and ivory—the foremost of all precious stones—are used prominently as decorative wreaths. The jeweled trunks are wrapped with ribbons made from celestial stars while bells composed of gold and pearls adorn the branches. Moreover, rare and supremely wonderful jeweled meshes adorn the canopies. The hundreds of**

thousands of divine colors compliment each other to create a glorious aura of majestic and infinite brightness. What a marvelous sight! Such augustness reflects the purity of those who dwell in Pureland."

"When delightful breezes ruffle the leaves and twigs, countless divine sounds of Dharma immediately fill the air. Exquisite, elegant, enlightening and refreshing, these sounds are the foremost of all the sounds across the ten quarters. Anyone who merely sees a Bodhi tree, hears its sounds, tastes its fruits, breathes in its fragrant scents, comes into contact with its august brightness or contemplates its merit will attain Avivartika Bodhisattvahood. Immediately, they will be freed from outflows and afflictions. Moreover, they will become irreversibly established on the path to Unsurpassed Bodhi and attain the three stages of endurance.

"The Buddha said to Ananda: "The rare flora of Pureland turns the Dharma Wheel and creates Buddhas. They exist because of the infinite merits and powers of Amita Buddha and his great vows."

#### **Sutra Chapter 16:**

"In the Land of Ultimate Bliss, the Sermon Pavilion and the other structures are also composed of the same exquisite jewels that make up the trees. Furthermore, numerous ornately carved webbed panels and screens—all decorated with white pearls and wish-fulfilling jewels— adorn the splendorous Pavilion and surrounding architecture. The gilded halls, grand villas and celestial palaces of the Bodhisattvas are similarly well adorned and of unmatched beauty.

Moreover, the Bodhisattvas of Pureland are constantly cultivating with great diligence. Some are speaking the Dharma while others are accepting and listening to it. Some may cultivate Zen or Vajrayana while effortlessly suspended in the air. Protected by Amita Buddha's merits and vows, all of them easefully progress through the various stages of Sagehood and soon attain Unsurpassed Bodhi. They joyfully cultivate in accordance with their wishes."

#### **Sutra Chapter 17:**

"Moreover, the Sermon Pavilion, halls and palaces are all surrounded by divine streams, ponds and lagoons. These bodies of water are perfectly proportioned in



accordance with their surroundings. Some are ten yojanas, twenty yojanas or even hundreds of thousands of yojanas in size, depth and length. The waters are pristine, fragrant and endowed with the eight meritorious virtues. These glistening waters are always sweet, soft, serene, light and clear. They can wash away every affliction and defilement. On the banks and beaches are numerous sandalwood trees and arbors bearing auspicious fruits. They are divinely radiant and diffuse perfumed fragrances. Moreover, their long elegant branches and lush bejeweled leaves form lovely shades above the azure lagoons. The marvelous aromas produced by such flora are simply undreamed of. When gentle breezes ruffle the branches, auspicious blossoms and berries fall gracefully into the waters. They drift along the gentle ripples and exude untold fragrances."

"These rivers and lagoons are all adorned with the seven types of gems. The river beds are carpeted with golden sand. Furthermore, multitudes of exquisite lotus flowers and water lilies— utpalas, padmas, kumudas and pundarikas—of various rich and celestial colors, adorn the surface of these divine bodies of water. Their vivid complexions and stunning brightness pervades across the entire surface."

"If a Bodhisattva of Pureland chooses to bathe one of these jeweled rivulets, ponds and lagoons, the water will obey their every fancy. If they wish for the water to rise to their ankles, it rises to their ankles. If they wish for it to rise to their waists, it rises to their waists. If they wish for it to rise to their necks, it rises to their necks. If they wish to be completely immersed, it will spontaneously pour over their bodies. If they wish for it to recede, it will immediately recede and leave them as dry as before. Additionally, if they wish for cool water, it will turn cool. If they wish for warm water, it will turn warm. If they wish for the rapidity of the water to change, it will change in accordance with their wishes. These meritorious waters exist only to serve. It comforts the body, eases the mind and washes away the six kinds of dust. It is so pure that it appears formless and so clear that the brightness of the aurulent river bed shines forth from all depths. These delightful and enticing waters swirl gently in graceful overlapping circles."

"Furthermore, the mild waves produce countless wonderful and soothing sounds. Depending on one's wishes, one can hear the sounds of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha or of the paramitas. One may hear the sounds of stillness and purity or the sounds of what neither arises nor ceases to be. One may also hear the sounds

**of the Ten Strengths of Valor or the sounds of Non-abidance. The sounds of Great Compassion, loving kindness, empathy and equanimity or the anointing of the crown of wisdom with divine nectar may also be heard. Once these sounds are heard, the roots of virtue quickly mature and the heart becomes pure, unattached, upright and impartial. Everything that one hears is in accordance with the Dharma. One alone hears what one wishes to hear and does not hear what one does not seek to hear. One can neither retrogress from Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi nor retreat from the heart of Bodhi."**

**"Sentient Beings of the ten quarters who are reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss will be spontaneously transformed while dwelling in palatial lotus buds floating upon the glistening waters of the Grand Seven Jeweled Lagoon. They instantly obtain radiant bodies that are pure, ethereal, formless and without outflows. They will never again hear even a whisper of terms such as anxieties, burdens, evil realms and the kleshas. Thus, if there exists not even the notion of suffering, how could there be any actual suffering?"**

**"On the other hand, the sounds of bliss are ever present in Pureland. This is why it is called the Land of Ultimate Bliss."**

## **CHAPTER 19: A DREAM COME TRUE**

### **Sutra:**

**"Furthermore, sentient beings who have been, will be or are about to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss will all possess wonderful golden bodies and majestic appearances. Their wisdom and merit will be unlimited. Additionally, they will have perfect ease and transcendental powers. No one is left wanting and everything is plentiful. Elegant palaces, rich ornaments, exquisite flowers, perfumed incense, lush streamers, plush canopies and various other beautifully adorned requisites all arise spontaneously on demand."**

**"When nourishment is sought for, alms bowls made from seven different kinds of gems will immediately manifest as a response. Divine food, nectar and refreshments of a hundred flavors will appear in sumptuous quantities and disappear when not needed. However, no one actually consumes these aliments. Instead, upon perceiving the profound insight of Dharma's gourmet flavors, they dine only on the pure thoughts resulting from their observation. Therefore, they are naturally immortal, refreshed and delighted. They have no attachments to food and drink. What's more, those who dwell in Pureland wear divine tunics and togas woven from soft jeweled threads. Their coronets, laurel wreaths and ornate accessories are likewise composed of numerous precious stones. With such august adornments, their bodies naturally exude infinite light and a myriad of splendorous colors."**

**"Moreover, the various aspects of their palatial abodes—such as the size, shape or location—are all customized in accordance with their wishes. For instance, some palaces are terrestrial and surrounded by tranquil pools of divine water while others glide among the stars. Furthermore, all residences are adorned with ornate and bejeweled domes. Countless bells composed of precious stones also lend their splendor to these heavenly palaces and villas. The colors and brightness of such elegant celestial dwellings are naturally glorious. Such purity, bliss and peace arise in response to nothing more than a thought. Thus, no one could be unsatisfied."**

## CHAPTER 24: THE THREE GRADES OF ASPIRANTS

### Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda: "Devas and humans of the ten quarters who sincerely seek to be born in Pureland can be classified into three grades. The highest grade of aspirants are those who willingly leave their homes and abandon temporal desires to join the Sangha as monks. Having ignited their resolve for Unsurpassed Bodhi, they single-mindedly recite Amita Buddha's name. They dedicate their vast stocks of merit—the fruits of practicing the Vinaya—towards rebirth in Pureland. When their lives draw to a close, Amita Buddha will appear before them while accompanied by an august retinue of Sages. At once, they will be born in Pureland by transforming spontaneously from within lotus buds composed of the seven types of jewels. They will attain the state of Avivartika, attain steadfast wisdom, and be capable of freely exercising the six transcendental powers. For this reason, Ananda, sentient beings who wish to see Amita Buddha during their lifetime should awaken aspiration for Unsurpassed Bodhi, single-mindedly recite his name, and dedicate the resulting merits towards Pureland rebirth."

"The middle grade of aspirants consists of those who have resolved to attain Unsurpassed Bodhi but could not leave the home life to become monks. Nevertheless, they diligently recite the name of Amita Buddha with deep concentration. They also amass merits by doing many good deeds. For instance, they create Buddha images, give alms to monks and build Stupas. They also observe the eight precepts and make offerings of light, incense, flowers and the like. They dedicate their stocks of merit towards the fulfillment of their vows—to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. At the time of their death, Amita Buddha will appear before them in his transformation body, which is fully possessed of the same radiance, physical characteristics and features as those of the real Buddha. He will also be accompanied by a host of Sages. Once reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, they will enter the state of Avivartika. Their virtue and wisdom will be next to those of the higher grade of aspirants."

"The lower grade of aspirants consists of those who cannot do many meritorious deeds. Nevertheless, they seek Unsurpassed Bodhi and recite the name of Amita Buddha with great concentration. When they hear the profound Dharma, they joyfully accept it and do not harbor any reservations. They sincerely aim to be

**reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. When they are about to die, they will see Amita Buddha in a dream and be welcomed into Pureland. Their merit and wisdom will be second to those of the middle grade of aspirants."**

**"If those who have slandered the Dharma and committed the five grave offenses can repent at the moment of death and recite the name of Amita Buddha for one to ten times, then they too can be reborn in Pureland and attain irreversible Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

## CHAPTER 25: THE IDEAL ASPIRANT ELABORATED

### Sutra:

**"Furthermore, Ananda, virtuous men and women who reverently cultivate this Sutra through day and night by reciting, studying, copying, worshipping and disseminating it can aspire for rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Besides, they also diligently and unfailingly observe the Vinaya or the five and eight precepts. They dedicate their merits to the peace and prosperity of all sentient beings. Additionally, they never cease their mindfulness of Amita Buddha and his Pureland. Such persons will meet Amita Buddha and his retinue of Sages during their final moment of life. Once in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, their appearances will be the same as Amita Buddha's and they will summarily abide in Non-abidance."**

**"Also, Ananda, as for those sentient beings who wish to ascend to Pureland but can neither cultivate with great diligence nor flawlessly practice high wisdom and Dhyana Samadhi— their hopes lie with the ten virtues. They must not kill, steal or indulge in lustful excess and depravity. They must guard their tongue and refrain from lies, profanity, ridicule, gossip, divisive speech and cajolery. Furthermore, their hearts must not be infested with avarice, wrath and faithlessness. Through day and night without cease, they shall be mindful of Amita Buddha and contemplate the merits and augustness of his Pureland. With single-mindedness, they shall take refuge in Amita Buddha ; prostrate and make offerings to him. When the lives of such persons draw to a close, they will not be afraid or anxious. Their hearts will be clear and unconfused. Swiftly, they will attain rebirth in Pureland."**

**"Aspirants who are weighed down by worldly matters to the point that they are unable to become monks, unceasingly hold the eight precepts and attain single-minded purity should cultivate in accordance with what I am about to say."**

**"During their spare time, they should straighten their hearts and minds, curb their desires and remove anxieties. They must always strive to hold compassionate thoughts in the place of greed, miserliness, wrath, envy and jealousy. Furthermore, they should be charitable and refrain from gluttony. They must never doubt or allow their commitment to waver. Moreover, they**



**must be respectful, sincere, trustworthy, loyal and filial towards their parents. They must believe that the Buddha's words are profound and that good deeds result in blessings and rewards. These instructions must be sincerely observed without fail. "**

**"Moreover, they ought to ponder deeply on how to leave the Samsara. They must always contemplate on Amita Buddha and vow for rebirth in his Pureland. Also, they should eke out spare time amounting to ten consecutive days and nights per year or one day and night per month. For the full duration of this period, they are to cultivate unceasing mindfulness of Amita Buddha."**

**"When the lives of those who follow these instructions end, they will be reborn in Pureland and attain Bodhisattvahood."**

**"Everyone who attains rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss will instantly reach the stage of Avivartika and possess the aurulent 32 features of the Buddha. They will soon attain Unsurpassed Bodhi. While there might be a slight difference in regards to the timing of the achievement of Buddhahood by these Bodhisattvas, no one will fail to achieve it swiftly. Afterwards, whenever and wherever a Buddha is needed, they will respond by manifesting in accordance with the wishes of those desiring to be liberated."**

**"Ananda, all the Buddhas of the ten directions agree with what I have just said. They praise in unison the merits of Amita Buddha, the Tathagata of Infinite Life."**

## CHAPTER 32: THE UNLIMITED BLISS OF PURELAND

### Sutra:

**The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: "The Bodhisattvas in the Land of Infinite Life have immeasurable merit and wisdom. The wonders and bliss of Pureland are simply unimaginable. All there are virtuous and cultivation of the Way occurs naturally. Whether making offerings to Buddhas or listening to Dharma talks, the Bodhisattvas of this land do so with matchless aptitude, unwavering diligence and great joy. Thus, their wisdom and resolve can only increase with each passing moment. Even if they appear to be leisurely, eager diligence unmistakably influences them from within. They are all of the same compassionate mind and spirit.**

**As they dwell in Non-abidance, the appearances of these Bodhisattvas are naturally august. Always self-reflective, their hearts are forever clean and pure. Because they are free from greed and defilement, these Bodhisattvas unwaveringly cultivate mindfulness of Amita Buddha. Their vows cause them to be steady in their faith. Like calm waters, there are no ripples in their poise and confidence. Never influenced by wrong views, they strictly adhere to the sutras and never stray. Because they are constant in their admiration for the ultimate aim of Unsurpassed Bodhi, they have no other thoughts. Being free from afflictions and defilements, they are unburdened and naturally act in accordance with the Buddha-nature. Their minds are as devoid of false thoughts as a vacuum is of matter. Contented and without attachments, they diligently fulfill their Mahayana vows. With Great Compassion, they empathize with the sufferings of the unenlightened. Hence, they teach this Dharma-door of Amitabha in accordance with the customs and inclinations of the various audiences, thereby facilitating easy acceptance and understanding."**

**"These Bodhisattvas swiftly obtain Unsurpassed Bodhi and then help others do the same. Once Bodhi has been achieved, they realize everything and fully comprehend the original purity of the self nature. They also realize that all dharmas are rooted in the self nature. Thus, they recover a natural and unsurpassed brightness which shines across the entire Dharma realm. They are now Buddhas."**

**"Everything in the Land of Ultimate Bliss is naturally composed of treasures and**

**jewels that far surpass the seven types of gems found in the pleasant continent of Uttarakuru. As there are no limits to the merit of Amita Buddha, the august brightness of the Land of Ultimate Bliss and the grandeur of its manifestations are simply incomparable. The Bodhisattvas of Pureland fully understand the Tathagata's perfect wisdom."**

**"Thus, all of you should diligently seek rebirth in Amita Buddha's Land of Infinite Life and Ultimate Bliss. Blessed by the vows of Amita Buddha, you can effortlessly leave the Samsara. The evil realms will collapse behind you as you immediately attain Bodhisattvahood. Pureland rejects no one and is very easy to reach, but few actually go there. By letting go of worldly affairs and attachments, you can reach Pureland and enjoy limitless bliss and infinite life. Thus, is there any reason to remain greedily attached to this miserable and impermanent world?"**

## CHAPTER 33 : THE BUDDHA'S EXHORTATION TO SENTIENT BEINGS

### Sutra:

**"People of this world all hanker after matters of little importance. Thus, they must toil and slog under an oppressive atmosphere of evil and suffering. Whether rich or poor, patrician or plebeian, young or old, male or female, they are all worried about the future and tormented by the past. Shackled by desire, they cannot rest. For instance, those without dwellings yearn for them while those without land wish for it. All seek to gain or retain wealth, family and servants. If they have one they feel they lack the other. These people of feeble merit are forever afflicted. If they should by some chance amass all that they wish for, impermanence will visit them in the form of wars, disasters, bandits, creditors, extortionary governments and karmic enemies. Overwhelmed by sorrow over their losses, they become consumed by obstinate loathing. Unable to let go, all that they care for are torn from them upon their deaths anyway. This causes them to suffer ceaseless pain and anxiety. Such misery does not discriminate between aristocrats and paupers."**

**"People of this world, fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, husband and wives, kinsmen and relatives, must all love and respect each other. They should refrain from hatred, envy and jealousy. Moreover, they must mutually assist each other without thoughts of stinginess. They ought to treat each other with tact and politeness."**

**"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of enmity in the lives to come. Thus, we should be cautious. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims and suffer their vengeance."**

**"Moreover, amidst temporal desires and attachments one is born alone and dies alone. The departed transmigrate to either a painful or to a pleasant state of existence. Each receives individual karmic retributions that no one else can bear in their place. Once a person has been reborn in a different realm due to his own karma, he can no longer meet or remember anyone he once knew. Since everyone's path of rebirth is uniquely tailored to their own habits and deeds, it is impossible to tell the time of their reunion."**

**"Knowing this, is there any reason not to diligently cultivate virtue while you are still youthful and strong? Why wait?"**

**"People of this world are confused about good and evil. Their faith in the laws of karma are weak. Hence, they tenaciously cling to their own delusions. Being foolish, they reject the Dharma and embrace wrong and deviant views. Their upside-down ways trap them within the Samsara. As they seek only instant gratification, they are addicted to hatred and gripped by lust and avarice. Isn't that pitiable?!"**

**"Because their forefathers were evil and rejected the Dharma, there is no one to teach it to them now. Thus, their lack of understanding of the Buddha's perfect wisdom is forgivable. However, as they even reject the basic laws of karma and rebirth, they are completely consumed by absurd and incorrect views."**

**"The workings of karma are like gravity, invisible but all pervasive. Look around you, fathers inevitably shed tears for their deceased offspring while children weep over their late parents. Siblings and couples all become grief stricken when the one they love is lost. They do not know that their attachments are false and impermanent. Consumed by love and emotion, they are shackled to the Samsara. Consequently, they squander their years and neglect to diligently and properly cultivate the Dharma. Few become Sages while many drown in their own delusions."**

**"Because they harbor malicious intent, they tumble from darkness to deeper darkness. They indulge their caprice and defy the will of Heaven and Earth. Injustice and vice inevitably follow and will run unchecked until evil karma accumulates to the maximum. As their original lifespans have been shortened by their evil deeds, they will soon meet death and fall into the hells for eons without end."**

**"Contemplate what I have just said and refrain from all evil. The virtuous understand that love and glory cannot be kept and bring only suffering. Thus, they strive diligently to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Once there, their happiness is unlimited and everlasting. Those who choose their passions over the precepts will inevitably fall behind everyone else."**

## CHAPTER 34 : A HEART OF WISDOM

### Sutra:

**The Bodhisattva Maitreya exclaimed: "World Honored-One, your words teach the precepts and illuminates the path towards virtue. You kindly help everyone rise to Unsurpassed Bodhi. You are the King of Dharma and the foremost of all Sages. Your light shines warmly and your perception is unlimited. You are the teacher of both devas and men. Today, we rejoice in the wonderful teachings of Infinite Life. Our hearts have been opened by your wisdom. "**

**The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: "Those who respect the Buddha gather vast stocks of merit. They repay the Buddha's kindness by single-mindedly reciting Namó Amita Buddha. By doing so, they remove all doubts and deracinate the six kinds of dust. Thus, attachments and afflictions leave them forever. Having become Sages, they are no longer bound by death and rebirth. These Bodhisattvas respond to the pain and suffering of the unenlightened. Hence, they freely manifest wherever they are needed to teach the Dharma to those who have not yet been liberated."**

**"All of you should know that the people of the ten quarters have been turning in the wheel of suffering since time immemorial. Their afflictions are never-ending. Being born and growing old are both painful ; sickness and death are equally agonizing. No one can obtain true happiness while trapped in bodies tainted by all kinds of foul odors and impurities. Only by cleansing the heart of the three poisons will such suffering dissipate. Thus, be not slothful. Make sure that you are sincere in thought and action. Refrain from putting up hypocritical facades. Strive to be quickly reborn in Pureland so you can liberate others. Sincerely make such vows and accumulate the virtues needed to fulfill them. However hard a life of diligent cultivation may be, it can only be for a short while. Afterwards, you will be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss and enjoy perpetual joy there. Birth and death can never trouble you again as you are permanently free from the afflictions of the three poisons. With infinite life, you can effortlessly attain Unsurpassed Bodhi. So I bid you all to single-mindedly seek such emancipation. Do not entertain any doubts while practicing lest you be reborn in the bejeweled borderlands of Pureland where you will be made to wait in the lap of luxury for five hundred years."**

**The Bodhisattva Maitreya said: "World-Honored One, all of us accept your**



teachings and we will all diligently and single-mindedly cultivate in accordance with it. Do not worry as we will not doubt!"

## CHAPTER 35 : THE FIVE EVILS

### Sutra:

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: "A person who remains virtuous at heart and upright in thought while residing in this world is the foremost of all people. Why? Because virtue is actually widespread across the ten quarters. Thus, sentient beings of the ten quarters are very easy to convert. This, however, is not the case for this world. Amidst countless afflictions, all of you live among the five evils. Having become a Buddha in this world, I endeavor to teach everyone to forfeit the five types of evil conduct. If you do so, you will be free from the burning pains that are the result of such evil. By forsaking evil, the five precepts can be held and merits will accumulate."

"I will now explain the five types of evil conduct in detail."

### First Evil: The Root Offense of Killing

"People of this world are driven to kill by their desires. The strong abuse the weak and the victorious massacre the defeated. They hunt, slaughter and devour. Thus, karmic retributions naturally follow. That is why some are orphaned, poor, lonely, wicked, blind, disfigured, deaf, mute, deranged, weak, deformed or crude. They had rejected virtue in their past lives and refused to be charitable. The fundamental truth is that nobility, wealth, courage, grace, wisdom and eloquence are the result of kindness and filial piety. Only merits and good deeds can yield such wholesome results."

"Moreover, the retributions of karma continue after death. The souls of the malicious inevitably fall into the evil realms of suffering. Perhaps some will be reborn as hell beings, wild beasts, pests, maggots or emaciated ghouls. Those who commit evil will suffer misfortune in this life and the hells in the next. Once you fall into the evil realms, you will cycle there for endless kalpas. You cannot hope to leave until your evil karmas are rectified. Such pain and misery are indescribable. Between Heaven and Earth, there is naturally justice. Even though consequences may not be immediate, rewards inescapably shadow the virtuous while retributions naturally pursue the wicked."

### **The Second Evil: The Root Offense of Thievery**

**"People of this world defy the rules of propriety. They are proud, shameless and rapacious. Furthermore, they revel in decadence and cause outrage. They abuse their authority and engage in corruption. Likewise, they punish the innocent and scheme against the virtuous. Hypocritical and manipulative, they seek to defraud others. Regardless of their station in life, they are all united by a deceitful heart."**

**"Being contemptuous and foolish, they are naturally self centered and full of avarice. Thus, they viciously vie for personal benefit and act dishonorably. Widely hated, their greed and disregard for the laws of karma eventually drives them and their families to ruin. Even if they are wealthy, a miserly and uncharitable heart still grips them. Greedily attached to their wealth, they toil in mind and body to retain it. However, they must part with all that they have accumulated upon their deaths. Only our merits or offenses are truly ours."**

**"Because they are selfish, they slander virtue instead of praising it. Being full of envy and always desiring to steal, they seek for themselves the benefits that justly belong to others. Demigods record each of their offenses as they repeatedly plunder and exploit. Thus, it is expected that they should fall into the evil realms where unspeakable pain and suffering will torment them for eons without end."**

### **The Third Evil: The Root Offense of Lust**

**"People of this world have short lifespans and must rely on reciprocity to live. However, wicked people pay no heed to this impermanence and are always full of immoral intentions. They are dissolute and full of lust ; their appearances reflect their perversions, which also consumes them. Furthermore, they squander their patrimonies on vice and transgress the bounds of decency with their depravity. They willfully neglect to fulfill their duties and to do good."**

**"Moreover, their lust often drives them to engage in wanton violence or to form mobs, bandit gangs and armies. They plunder and loot to satisfy the needs of their wives or concubines. Lastly, their debauchery causes their victims to hate them and the public to despise them."**

**"Demigods and Spirits keep records of their evils. Once their lives end, they are**

cast into the three evil paths where unlimited afflictions and unspeakable suffering awaits them. With such heavy evil karma, can they ever hope to gain release?"

#### **Fourth Evil: The Root Offense of Capricious Speech**

"People of this world rarely think of doing good. Instead, they utter abusive and sarcastic words. They lie, mock, cajole and spread rumors. Using evil or untrue words, they turn people against each other and cause strife. They hate good people and ruin Sages. Being conceited, they treat their teachers with arrogance and fail to be filial towards their parents. Their friends cannot trust them due to their lack of sincerity."

"Arrogant and self absorbed, they consider themselves to be virtuous heroes. Using force to prop up their authority, they abuse others and demand obedience. Such persons are hard to convert as they never self reflect. Luckily for them, they may have done some act of goodness in lives past and can now count on that small amount of merit to protect them. However, their unceasing caprice soon eradicates whatever merit they still have. When their lives end, all their evil suddenly manifest and recoils upon them. Demigods have kept detailed records of their many crimes and the workings of karma naturally forces them into the evil realms. They have no chance of escape as their bodies are cast into boiling tar and crushed into pieces. Suffering extreme torment, they finally regret their sins. However, it is already too late."

#### **The Fifth Evil: The Root Offense of Intoxication**

"People of this world are often slothful. They cannot be bothered to do good or cultivate virtue. Their parents try to change them but they respond with scathing words and rebellion. Weeping in sorrow, their parents regret begetting them. Such persons feel no gratitude for their parent's kindness and are never filial. They are wastrels who squander their days on idle pursuits. Being lazy, they drink themselves to drunkenness and feast on sumptuous food. As they are quarrelsome and loutish, they conduct themselves boorishly and without decorum."

"Their callousness causes them to show no concern for the welfare of their family and relatives. Furthermore, they are indifferent to the sacrifices their parents

have made for them and show no sincerity towards their friends and teachers. Throughout their lives, they are evil in action and evil in speech. They even fail to entertain one single upright thought. Rejecting the Dharma and refusing to believe in the laws of karma and rebirth, they seek to harm Sages and cause schisms and chaos within the Sangha. They consider themselves to be wise despite being extremely deluded. Never do they wonder about where they are going to after death. Even though they are neither humane nor respectful, they expect long and happy lives. When kind people try to teach them the laws of karma, they respond with mockery and abuse. Their hearts and minds are as obstinate as rocks. On the eve of death they find that they have no merits to count on. Filled with fear as hellish flames surround them, they painfully regret having not done a single good deed."

"Between Heaven and Earth, the good and evil paths of rebirth are clearly distinguishable. The rewards for virtue and punishments for vice are as unavoidable as one's shadow in the sun. However, woe and weal are interlinked. For example, those flush with fortune often become complacent while those who are afflicted often become faithful towards the Dharma. Hence, we must be vigilant."

"Those who perform good deeds enjoy pleasure after pleasure and become wiser with each passing day. On the other hand, those who commit evil suffer endless misfortunes and fall further and further into the darkness."

"If you can realize this truth, you have truly heard my teachings. The delusions that cause the Samsara are only fully known by the Buddhas. Even though I tirelessly teach people these truths, few take heed of my words. Thus, the existence of the evil realms and the Samsara continues without cease. As the people of this world refuse to stop committing evil, the workings of karma naturally forces them into the evil realms where immeasurable anguish awaits them. They must bear indescribable pains for life after life and kalpa after kalpa, with no end in sight. Only with great difficulty can they gain release. These are the burning pains that engulf those who commit the five evils."

"If in the midst of all this, you are virtuous, upright in deed and thought, honest in speech and sincere in doing good and shunning evil, then with the merits and virtues acquired you will naturally attain bliss. You can also cultivate the Way to Unsurpassed Bodhi— just reward for holding the five precepts."

## CHAPTER 36 : THE PAINS CAUSED BY THE KLESHAS

### Sutra:

**"The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: I again urge you all to avoid the five evils and the burning pains that accompany them. The sufferings of the evil realms lie ahead of those who refuse to do so. In this world, some who have committed evil may become bedridden with incurable illnesses. Ensnared in a limbo between life and death, their efforts to gain relief are all in vain. Thus, they are a living example of the immediate consequences of evil deeds. After dying in pain, they fall into the three evil realms."**

**"Karmic feuds are perpetuated by acts of violence. The seeds for future carnage are often planted over minor things. As people are greedy for love and wealth, they are possessive and uncharitable. Gripped by passion, they feel no concern for moral principles. Motivated by delusions and avarice, they become selfish and hanker after personal gain. When they are rich and powerful, they become complacent and enjoy themselves at will. As they are impatient and apathetic towards the task of accumulating merits, their pomp and power are short lived. Good and evil both have distinct consequences that always unfold. Once they do, those who have for so long done as they please will be filled with unspeakable fear as their souls descend into the evil realms. Do not doubt what I have said."**

**"Now that I have elaborated in detail the true nature of the Samsara, you should all ponder deeply. There is nothing to enjoy in this world and certainly nothing you can truly keep. Hence, each of you must strive hard to practice virtue for the rest of your lives. Honor the Sages and respect the virtuous. Let mercy, humaneness and tolerance be your guide. You must seek Bodhi— thus uprooting the three poisons that fuel the Samsara for good. By doing so, you will be eternally freed from the pains of the three evil realms."**

**"Of all good deeds, which is the foremost? The answer is that rectifying one's heart and mind is the greatest good. Your body can commit no evil if your heart is pure. Do this and you will be in accordance with all that which is good and virtuous. Those who silence their desires cannot transgress the rules of morality. What they see and speak of are always harmonious. Furthermore, they are careful and proper in demeanor. Those who conduct themselves in accordance with their own passions will meet only failure and regret. A steady hand on the**

tiller can only come from patience."

## CHAPTER 37 : A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

### Sutra:

"You should all widely amass supreme causes pertaining to Sagehood. Do not break the precepts and always be patient and diligent. Be compassionate and single-minded in cultivation. If you can hold the eight precepts for a day and night, the resulting merits will surpass those derived from cultivating in the Land of Ultimate Bliss for an entire century. Why? Because the residents of Amita's Buddha-land are naturally virtuous. There is not even a hair's-breadth worth of evil there."

"In fact, if you practice virtue in this world for ten full days, the merits derived will surpass that of cultivating elsewhere in the Samsara for a whole millennium. The reason is that the other worlds are naturally pleasurable due to the superior virtue and merit of their inhabitants. Thus, there are no grounds for committing evil. Conversely, the world we reside in has little good but plenty of evil. People here are harassed by scarcity and must toil for a living. In addition, the food and drink here are toxic and bitter. The evil habits of this world increases with each passing day."

"Ever since my attainment of Bodhi, I have indefatigably expounded the Dharma to all who would listen. I exhort all of you to accept, study and cultivate in accordance with my instructions. I also urge you all to follow and accept the entirety of my teachings. Furthermore, each of you should spread what I have said to the public. Teach it to the young and old, to men and women, and to your friends and family. Let the Wheel of Dharma turn."

"In your own practice, you must always be strict with yourself. Always self-reflect and act in accordance with reason. Be optimistic, filial, humane, just and dutiful. Speedily correct your faults and always strive to eliminate evil habits while increasing virtuous ones. You should never tolerate your own offenses. By cultivating the precepts and the Dharma, you are like a pauper who has finally obtained limitless wealth. Moreover, neither regret nor lament because the future is all that matters. Sweep away the six kinds of dust and the wisdom of Bodhi will naturally show."



**"Anywhere a Buddha goes, whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet, people will be converted and brought towards the Way. All the lands beneath the stars will be serene and harmonious. The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be clear. Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm. Plagues and calamities will not occur. Society will be prosperous and peaceful. Soldiers and arms will be of no use. Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished. All will feel compelled to cultivate etiquette and deference. Society will be free from thieves and bandits. There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice. The powerful will not exploit the weak. Everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."**

**"The compassion I feel towards sentient beings far exceed a mother's love for her children. Having become a Buddha in this world, I use virtue to overcome vice. I also uproot the pains of birth and death. As I have become one with the five virtues, I now ascend towards my parinirvana. However, after I am gone, my teachings will be slowly twisted and misunderstood. Eventually, the ever increasing karmic obstacles of this world will cause my teachings to become lost. With nothing to guide them, future generations will drown in their own evil habits. Society will be plagued by chaos and the evil realms will overflow with evildoers. As you have now heard the Dharma, you must do your best to spread these teachings. You must strictly observe the precepts and uphold the sutras."**

**Bodhisattva Maitreya joined his palms and said: "The evil habits of the people of this world match your descriptions perfectly. World-Honored One, we will never forget your kindness. We fully accept your words of wisdom and will wholeheartedly strive for rebirth in Pureland. We shall never stop until Bodhi has been obtained!"**

## CHAPTER 38: PURELAND SHOWN TO CONGREGATION

### Sutra:

**The Buddha said to Ananda: "If you wish to witness the Buddha of Infinite Purity, Equality and Wisdom as well as the attendant lands of Bodhisattvas and Sages, then sincerely prostrate towards the west and single-mindedly recite Namo Amita Buddha."**

**Ananda quickly arose from his seat, joined his palms and faced the west. He prostrated and declared: "Today, I wish to see the Land of Ultimate Bliss and Amita Buddha—to revere, make offerings and cultivate roots of virtue!"**

**At that time, Amita Buddha appeared in full view. His body was vast and august ; his countenance regal and upright. Like a golden colossus rising from the sea, his enormous and majestic form rapidly eclipsed the entire universe of countless world-systems. In addition, the Buddhas of the ten directions all became visible as well. The multitudes of Buddhas were seen ceaselessly praising and admiring Amita Buddha's numerous virtues and merits.**

**The Venerable Ananda said: "The Land of Ultimate of Bliss is a place like none other! I have already sought and attained rebirth there—I am now a Bodhisattva of Pureland."**

**The Buddha replied: "Those who attain rebirth there have met countless Buddhas in their past lives. They have also accrued abundant stocks of merit. If you wish to reach the Land of Ultimate Bliss, you must single-mindedly take refuge in Amita Buddha."**

**As the Buddha spoke, Amita Buddha let out a supreme and infinite light from his palms. This light enveloped all the innumerable world-systems belonging to the multitudes of Buddhas, making them plainly visible to the assembly. Every single detail of those worlds— such as the Adamantine Mountains, snowy peaks, whitewater rivers, dense forests and celestial vimanas—became clearly visible to everyone due to Amita Buddha's pure and glorious light. Akin to sunlight illuminating the Earth. Even the dismal realms of the ghouls, hell beings and animals were also visible under Amita's golden light. His aurulent colored brightness filled up the entire universe like a great flood consuming the world.**

**Needless to say, the radiance of a Buddha naturally outshines the halos of Bodhisattvas and Shravakas.**

**The monks, nuns, upasakas, upasikas, devas, celestial dragons, yakshas, asuras, kinnaras, mahoragas, gandharvas, garudas, humans and non humans that formed the Buddha's congregation all witnessed the magnificent and august splendors of the Land of Ultimate Bliss with their own eyes. They also saw Amita Buddha in his jeweled pavilion. He was seated upon an ornate settee composed of fragrant lotuses. His upright appearance naturally exuded virtues and radiated merits. Sages and Bodhisattvas could be seen reverently attending to him. He was like the King of Mount Sumeru, a pure and shining beacon surrounded by the calm and meritorious waters of the vast ocean. Untainted by anything strange, evil or impure but adorned with countless treasures and surrounded by Sages.**

**Ananda and those present were so jubilant that they proceeded to prostrate before Amita Buddha with their heads touching the ground. Sincerely, everyone recited Namo Amita Samyaksambuddha. The multitudes of men, devas and even the little insects all benefited greatly as Amita Buddha's light enveloped them. All of their sufferings, anxieties and afflictions ceased completely at that moment—swiftly replaced by bliss and compassion.**

**Devas promptly made wonderful offerings of celestial bliss. With elegance and poise, they masterfully played their heavenly mandolins, clarinets, harps and clavichords. The atmosphere soon resounded with exquisite and ethereal music. Moreover, multitudes of gods and goddesses were seen scattering fragrant incense and flowers across the skies out of awe and veneration.**

**Due to the limitless powers of the Buddha, a land hundreds of thousands of kotis of nayutas away was seen in plain sight on the Saha world. Those who have the Buddha-Eye can still witness this sermon and scene in a future time.**

## **CHAPTER 41: OBSTACLES TO MEETING THE BUDDHA (PARTIAL)**

### **Sutra:**

**..... The Bodhisattva Maitreya asked: "Why is it that some people of this world who cultivate good cannot seek rebirth in Pureland?"**

**The Buddha said to Maitreya: "Such people are of little wisdom. They foolishly prefer the bland pleasures of the impermanent heavens over the supreme bliss found in Pureland. Thus, they do not vow for rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss."**

**Bodhisattva Maitreya asked further: "How can persons with such delusions and aversions expect to be saved from the Samsara?"**

**The Buddha replied: " These people are unable to collect merits without becoming attached. As they cultivate virtue only to obtain worldly happiness, they have no interest in the Buddha's profound wisdom. On account of their good deeds, they will be reborn as aristocrats or devas. However, they cannot leave the Samsara. Even though their parents, spouses, children and relatives strive to bring them towards the Way, their wrong views and attachments make such efforts futile."**

**"Furthermore, there exists another class of people who are even more deluded. These people may do some good and are interested in my teachings. However, they are deceived by their own worldly intellect and eloquence. Thus, they entertain wrong views and slander the Dharma. They edit, reinterpret and twist it in accordance with their own false views. Hence, they are unable to achieve liberation from the Samsara."**

**"Lastly, there are people with excellent roots of virtue who diligently amass vast stocks of merit. However, they are attached to the skandhas and very sentimental. Thus, even though they seek liberation, they still fail to do so. Such persons can only liberate themselves by cultivating with the wisdom of Non-abidance. By leaving behind attachments and aversions, their hearts and minds become calm. This allows them to successfully seek rebirth in Pureland."**

## CHAPTER 42: BODHISATTVAS ARRIVING IN THE LAND OF ULTIMATE BLISS

### Sutra

The Bodhisattva Maitreya asked the Buddha: "How many Bodhisattvas of this Saha world and the various Buddha-lands are currently on the verge of rising to Pureland?"

The Buddha replied: "In this Saha world, there are seventy two thousand million Bodhisattvas who have already made offerings to countless Buddhas and amassed ample stocks of merit and virtue. Thus, they are destined for the Land of Ultimate Bliss. However, this figure does not account for the countless junior Bodhisattvas who have cultivated accordingly and are likewise destined to go there."

"In fact, what I have just said is also true for the worlds beyond the Saha world. For instance, eighteen kotis of nayutas of Bodhisattvas from the world of the Far-shining Tathagata have just manifested in Pureland. In the Northeastern direction, nine thousand million Bodhisattvas from the world of the Jeweled Treasure Tathagata have also reached Pureland."

"Furthermore, anywhere from hundreds of millions to tens of thousands of millions of Bodhisattvas from the collective worlds of the Infinite Sound Tathagata, Brightness Tathagata, Celestial Dragon Tathagata, Tathagata of Triumph, Simha Tathagata, Defilement Free Tathagata, Foremost Virtue Tathagata, Sovereign of Mercy Tathagata and Glorious Banner Tathagata will all follow suit. The twelfth Tathagata is named Unsurpassed Glory. In his world, there are innumerable multitudes of wise and valorous Bodhisattvas who have already waited upon countless Buddhas. Exercising great diligence and vowing for the Dharma, they will rise to Pureland within seven days. Thus, they effortlessly acquire the assured Dharma that eminent Sages have cultivated for hundreds of thousands of millions of kalpas."

"As for the name of the thirteenth Tathagata, he is called the Tathagata of Fearlessness. In his world, there are seventy nine thousand million Mahabodhisattvas and countless junior Bodhisattvas, bhiksus and the like who are about to enter into the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Incalculable multitudes of Bodhisattvas from countless worlds across the ten quarters are streaming into the Land of Ultimate Bliss as we speak."

## CHAPTER 43: THE EPITOME OF THE GREAT VEHICLE

### Sutra:

The Buddha said to Maitreya: "the aforementioned Bodhisattvas now reap the boundless fruits of their profound cultivation. Likewise, If virtuous men and women can briefly rejoice, take refuge and show respect after hearing the name of Amita Buddha, their merits and rewards will be equally great. Their hearts are free from arrogance and baseness. Thus, they promptly perfect their roots of wisdom with unceasing diligence and single-minded cultivation. Such persons represent the epitome of the Mahayana ideal and are the most exalted of all my disciples."

"All devas, men, asuras and so forth must cherish this Dharma-door and diligently cultivate it. Give rise to the rare and profound resolve to attain Bodhi in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Let this Sutra guide you and be your teacher. In turn, you will help countless sentient beings speedily advance to abide in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. They will yearn to witness the boundlessly adorned Buddha-lands. Those of perfect and complete merit are diligent in studying and cultivating this Dharma-door. You must never waver or entertain doubts while seeking such profound Dharma. Even if you must soldier through a raging inferno, you must neither dither nor regret. Why? Because countless crores of Bodhisattvas all seek to cultivate this magnificent Dharma-door. They reverently hear it and never turn their backs on it. In fact, there are many Bodhisattvas who are unable to hear it despite their constant efforts. Thus, cherish this Dharma-door and do not allow the rare chance you now hold to slip away."

## CHAPTER 44: EXPERIENCING BODHI

### Sutra:

**"Even in a future time when the proper Dharma no longer flourishes, there will still be some sentient beings who diligently reinforce their stocks of merit and wisdom. We should know that such people have already made offerings to countless Buddhas in their past lives. Hence, they are blessed by all of those Buddhas. These blessings allow them to obtain, completely accept and cultivate this supreme and most profound Dharma-door. In due course, they will attain perfect wisdom and thereby understand the boundless sapience contained within this Sutra—obtaining true bliss in the process of doing so. Moreover, they will spread the teachings of this Sutra far and wide and delight in unceasing cultivation. Good men and women who are acquainted with this Sutra or will be can reap supremely positive benefits."**

**"You must all entrust yourselves to this Sutra and entertain no doubts. Reinforce your stocks of merit and diligently cultivate virtue. Do not allow your own slothfulness, attachments and reservations to bog you down. Always remember that the temptations of the Samsara and the six kinds of dust are odious hindrances—they are nothing but shackles impeding your freedom!"**

**"Maitreya, only masterful cultivators of great merit can produce this uniquely exalted Sutra. It is the foremost of all Dharma-doors — sourced directly from the Buddha-nature. Because this Sutra is rare and often ignored, the Bodhi resolve of hundreds of millions of cultivators now dither and waver as temptations and provocations overwhelm them."**

**"If persons can hand copy, accept, recite, make offerings to and or teach and propagate this Sutra —and if their faith never dithers and their mindfulness of Amita Buddha is unceasing— then they are irreversibly established upon the Way to Unsurpassed Bodhi. During their last moments — even if the entire great trichiliocosm were to be doused in flames — they can still transcend it and reach the Land of Ultimate Bliss! Such people have reverently made offerings to countless Buddhas in their past lives and are thus well acquainted with Bodhi. All the Tathagatas praise such persons in unison. Thus, you should all faithfully and diligently accept, cultivate and propagate this Sutra."**



## **CHAPTER 45: THE LAST REDOUBT OF THE DHARMA**

### **Sutra:**

**The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: "Today, I speak this Sutra for the benefit of all sentient beings. Besides, everyone can now meet the Buddha of Infinite Life and witness every detail of his glorious land with their own eyes. All who sincerely seek this Dharma shall have it. However, do not squander this opportunity and end up floundering amid doubts after my parinirvana."**

**"In the Dharma extinction age—when the last of my teachings perish and evil flourishes—I will use my powers to protect this Sutra and allow it to last for another hundred years. People who feel joy upon encountering this Sutra and who do their best to cultivate in accordance with it will be able to realize their dreams—no matter what those aspirations may be."**

**"The appearance of a Buddha is rare and meeting a Thus Come One is even harder. The various sutras spoken by the Buddhas are hard to obtain and difficult to hear. Those who can cultivate in accordance with the proper teachings are even rarer. However, If a person can joyfully hear and accept this Sutra and cultivate in accordance with it, then such a person has accomplished a task of unsurpassed difficulty."**

**"People who hear the name of Amita Buddha or this Sutra and as a result become pure and compassionate or so moved that they may even shed tears of bliss are not common people. They have cultivated Buddhist teachings in the past. On the other hand, persons who feel deep doubt upon hearing the Buddha's name and who have no faith in the sutras are people who have just been reborn from the evil paths. The wicked habits that have tainted them for so long have not yet dissipated. Thus, their hearts remain consumed by doubt and they are unable to transcend the Samsara in this life."**

## CHAPTER 46: EXHORTATION TO CULTIVATE PERSEVERINGLY

### Sutra:

**The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: "This Sutra is the highest Dharma taught by the Buddhas and Sages. It is the profound Dharma of the fearless, unhindered and unattached. It is also the foremost of the Mahayana Prajnaparamita teachings. This Sutra is hard to meet and difficult to understand or explain. Furthermore, it is even more difficult to faithfully cultivate in accordance with it."**

**"Today, I speak this profound and wonderful Dharma-door in the most suitable manner possible. I do not speak more than you can comprehend or less than you deserve. The multitudes of Buddhas all praise this sermon. I now entrust this Sutra into the care and protection of the Bodhisattvas, Arhats and Paccekabuddhas present in this assembly. I do so for the benefit of the countless beings who are still afflicted by passions. To prevent them from continuing to turn in the Samsara and suffer such excruciating pains."**

**"You shall all cultivate in accordance with what I have taught you. Be pious, filial and always feel grateful for the kindness shown by your teachers. You must help ensure that the Dharma does not disappear by prolonging it with your own sincere cultivation. You must never violate or discard the precepts and the principles of the Dharma. Furthermore, you must all understand that you are not at liberty to replace or discard the words and characters of the sutras. You must cultivate single-mindedly in order to attain Bodhi swiftly. What I say now I have already done myself. The conduct of the Buddhas and Sages are to be emulated. Thus, collect merits and cultivate goodness by rectifying your heart. Finally, seek rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss."**

### Commentary:

The Chinese translations of the Mahayana sutras were translated by monks who were actually Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Hence, the Traditional Chinese versions of the sutras are superior to the original Pali or Sanskrit versions. Chinese is the profound language of Non-abidance and no other language can describe Buddhist wisdom like it does. Each character has insightful meanings that far exceed the face value. Thus, this is why the Chinese characters of the sutras cannot be changed. It is also why Upasaka Xia Lian Ju did not alter or discard a single character of this Sutra.

## CHAPTER 47: THE STANZAS OF MERIT AND WISDOM

### Sutra:

The World Honored-One then spoke the following stanzas:

Those who seldom accrue merit and wisdom,  
 Cannot appreciate the proper Dharma.  
 Only by having made offerings to countless Tathagatas,  
 Can one faithfully rejoice in this Dharma.

The wicked, arrogant, deluded and slothful,  
 Have no faith in the Thus Come One's profound Dharma.  
 They are like blind men,  
 And blind men cannot lead the way.

Those who have planted roots of virtue,  
 With Innumerable Buddhas past,  
 Will save the world,  
 By preserving and protecting the true Dharma.

Upon hearing this Dharma,  
 Accept, recite, copy, praise and teach it,  
 Act it out and make offerings to it,  
 Advance towards Pureland with one heart.

Resolve for rebirth in the Land of Amitayus,  
 Even if the universe were to be doused in flames,  
 You shall still retain faith,  
 For the Buddha will guide you to safety.

The boundless and profound wisdom,  
 That the Thus Come One holds,  
 Is only known by other Buddhas,  
 Even after contemplating for eons without end,  
 Shravakas still cannot know it,  
 And those with divine powers find it out of their reach.

**The merits of such profound Dharma,  
Can only be spoken by the Buddhas,  
Human rebirth is hard and difficult to get,  
And he who faithfully hears the wisdom of this Dharma,  
Is the rarest of the rare.**

**Those who are sincere upon the Bodhi path,  
Can surpass Samantabhadra and reach the other shore,  
And those who are fond of speech, debate and knowledge,  
Should learn humility and develop true faith in my teachings.**

**As you have now heard this magnificent Sutra,  
Never cease to joyously recite Amitabha's name,  
Accept it and use it to convert others,  
Do so and all the Buddhas will say you are virtuous.**

## **CHAPTER 48: A FINAL WORD FROM THE BUDDHA**

**As soon as the Buddha finished speaking this Sutra, innumerable devas, humans and sentient beings became free of the six kinds of dust and opened their Dharma-Eye. Moreover, two thousand million sentient beings realized the third fruit of Arhatship on the spot. Sixty eight hundred Bhiksus also became free from all outflows and achieved liberation. In addition, four thousand million Bodhisattvas now dwell in the state of Non-abiding cessation. The august merits of the Dharma were fully visible. What's more, twenty five hundred million sentient beings achieved the state of Irreversible Fortitude. Countless beings attained Unsurpassed Bodhi.**

**Furthermore, The multitudes of beings who had never before desired liberation all awakened the aspiration for Unsurpassed Bodhi. They all vowed to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Once they do so, they will all be referred to as the Tathagatas of Wonderful Sound. Anyone who wishes to cultivate this Dharma-door, whether now or during future generations, will be able to see Amitabha and be reborn in Pureland. His vows are always valid and will stand for all time.**

**At that time, the great trichiliocosm gently shook in the six auspicious ways. Various divine transformations manifested. A immense light soon enveloped the ten quarters. Devas could be seen gracefully performing wonderful celestial music while gliding among the stars. The Brahma devas of the Rupaloka also celebrated after hearing the Buddha's sermon. Bouquets of divine flowers soon rained down from the skies like confetti. The Venerable Ananda, Bodhisattva Maitreya, attending Bodhisattvas, celestial dragons and everyone else all rejoiced in what they just heard and proceeded to cultivate in accordance with it.**

**THE BURNING PAINS OF THE FIVE EVILS ILLUSTRATED**  
**(EXCERPTS FROM THE JADE RECORD)**

The following series of illustrations are a selection of excerpts from the most recent edition of the Jade Record. They were drawn by Jiang Yi Zi (江逸子) through psychography. The deity that guided his hand when he drew these pictures is actually the demigod Magistrate Cheng Huang. He holds the rank of Praetor in the administration of the Four Heavenly Kings and his duty is to promote the laws of karma. Thus, these pictures provide us with an accurate idea of the burning pains in the evil paths that awaits those who commit karmic offenses.



**Amita Buddha with his retinue of Sages welcoming a successful aspirant into Pureland. This is the august sight that welcomes virtuous cultivators such as Ven. Hai Xian when their last moment arrives.**

**According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, people who neglect to contemplate the pains of death and rebirth will squander their last moment, and fail to be mindful of the Buddha at that critical juncture.**



## KING YAMA'S JUDGMENT



**Those who neglected to seek rebirth in Pureland and instead committed evils are brought before King Yama. There are numerous lesser courts and countless punishments due to the wide variety of specific offenses.**

**However, there is a 49-day grace period before rebirth in the evil paths is finalized and punishments are inflicted. If the relatives of the deceased can diligently amass good deeds on behalf of the departed within that time frame, the deceased can have their karmic situation rectified. They will be freed from their original fate and achieve rebirth as aristocrats or devas on account of the merits created on their behalf.**



## THE WORKINGS OF KARMA

Punishments in the evil paths are neither ordered by King Yama nor devised by the Jade Emperor. They are purely the result of a offender's own karma. King Yama and Praetor Cheng Huang are merely messengers who try to teach the laws of karma to the obstinate, arrogant and evil beings who fall into such states of woe. For instance, according to the Shurangama Sutra:

*"Ananda, it all comes from the karmic responses which living beings themselves invoke. They create ten habitual causes and undergo six interacting retributions. What are the ten causes? Ananda, the first consists the habit of lustful intercourse which gives rise to mutual rubbing. When this rubbing continues without cease, it activates a tremendous raging fire, just as warmth arises between a person's hands when he rubs them together. Because these two habits set each other ablaze, there come into being the Iron Bed, the Copper Pillar, and other such experiences. Therefore the Tathagatas of the ten directions look upon the act of lust and name it the 'fire of desire.' Bodhisattvas avoid desire as they would a fiery pit."*

Thus, those who indulge in lust and adultery create pertinent seeds of karma that are stored in their consciousness. When they die, these seeds manifest from their Alaya-consciousness and spontaneously arrange the five skandhas and four elements into a realm and state of suffering. The same goes for all the other types of offenses.

For example, there once was a person of high meditative ability and virtue who appealed to Praetor Cheng Huang to abolish the punishments found in the hells on the grounds that they were inhumane. However, the Praetor simply guided the cultivator to the place where punishments were inflicted and told him to see for himself. The virtuous cultivator looked around but saw nothing at all. Hence, he realized afterwards that the punishments of the evil paths were not created by anyone but instead caused by the evil habits and delusions of the offenders themselves.

## RETRIBUTIONS FOR LUSTFUL MISCONDUCT



Those who have indulged in lust, promiscuity, adultery and depravity will be forced to hug a flaming copper pillar as one of their punishments after their lives draw to a close.

Lust is considered the foremost offense by Sages since it gives rise to countless ills and faults. For instance—lying, violence, crimes of passion, divorce, disintegration of marriages, broken families, social decay, jealousy, venereal diseases, abortions, disrepute, decadence, feuds, legal penalties, poverty and even wars often result from lust and love.

Furthermore, according to an edition of Master Yin Guang's Treatise on Response and Retribution, those who create and publish pornography and erotic literature will fall into the Relentless Hell and suffer there for eons without end.

## RETRIBUTIONS FOR KILLING ANIMALS



**Those who had bred, slaughtered, skinned and butchered animals for meat and leather will meet a similar fate after their passing.**



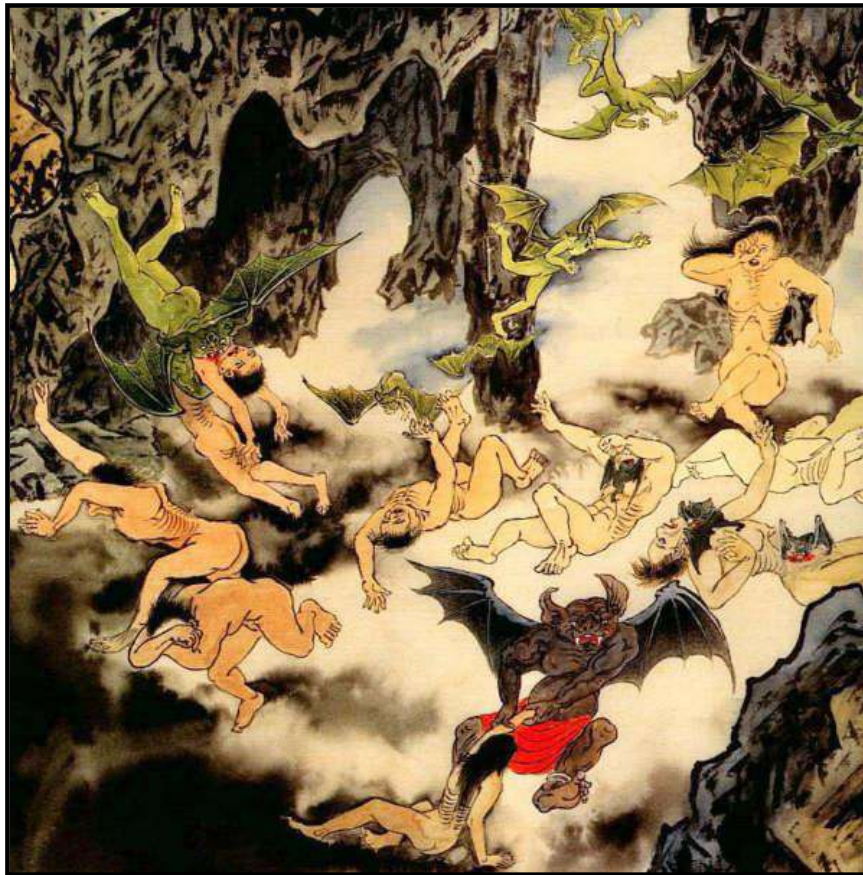
## RETRIBUTIONS FOR CAPRICIOUS SPEECH



**People who are fond of verbal abuse, lies, divisive speech, cajolery, slander, libel, incitement, ridicule, gossip and the like will have their tongues pulled out as one of their punishments.**

**Furthermore, orators, statesmen, professionals and intellectuals who use their status and skills to spread deviant ideas, ruin the innocent or engage in demagoguery will also be punished in this manner.**

## RETRIBUTIONS FOR AVARICE



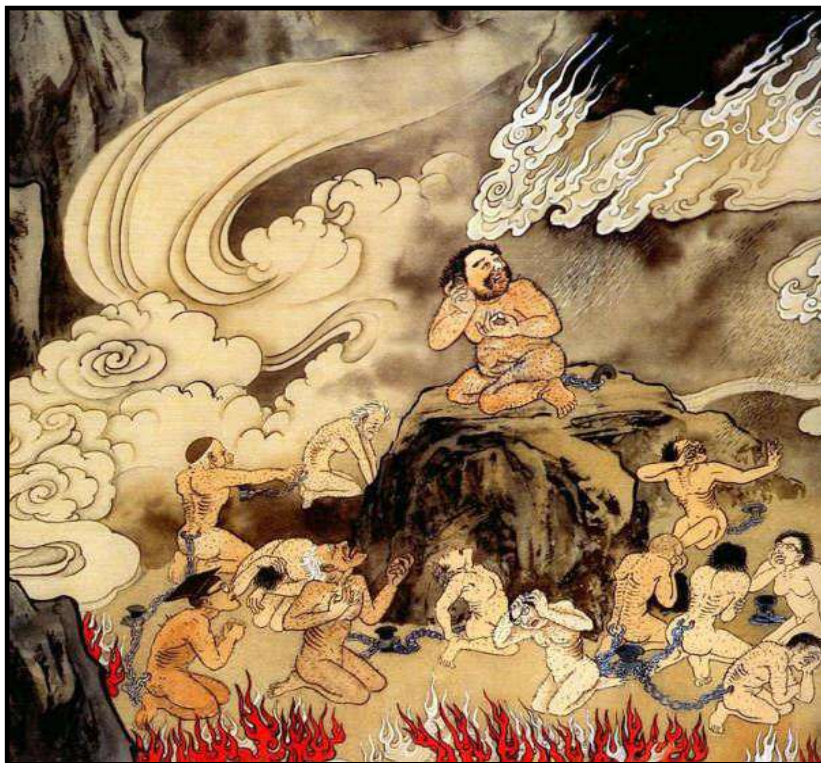
**Those who have engaged in usury, fraud, corruption, embezzlement and extortion will be punished by being repeatedly sucked dry by vampires and harpies.**

**Furthermore, officials, judges and rulers who confiscate, fine, expropriate, impose taxes and or employ policies such as penal labor, asset freezing, eminent domain, forfeiture and the like will also be punished in this manner after their passing.**

**Moreover, men of wealth who are greedy and inhumane will likewise be punished in such ways if they do not become kind and charitable before their deaths.**

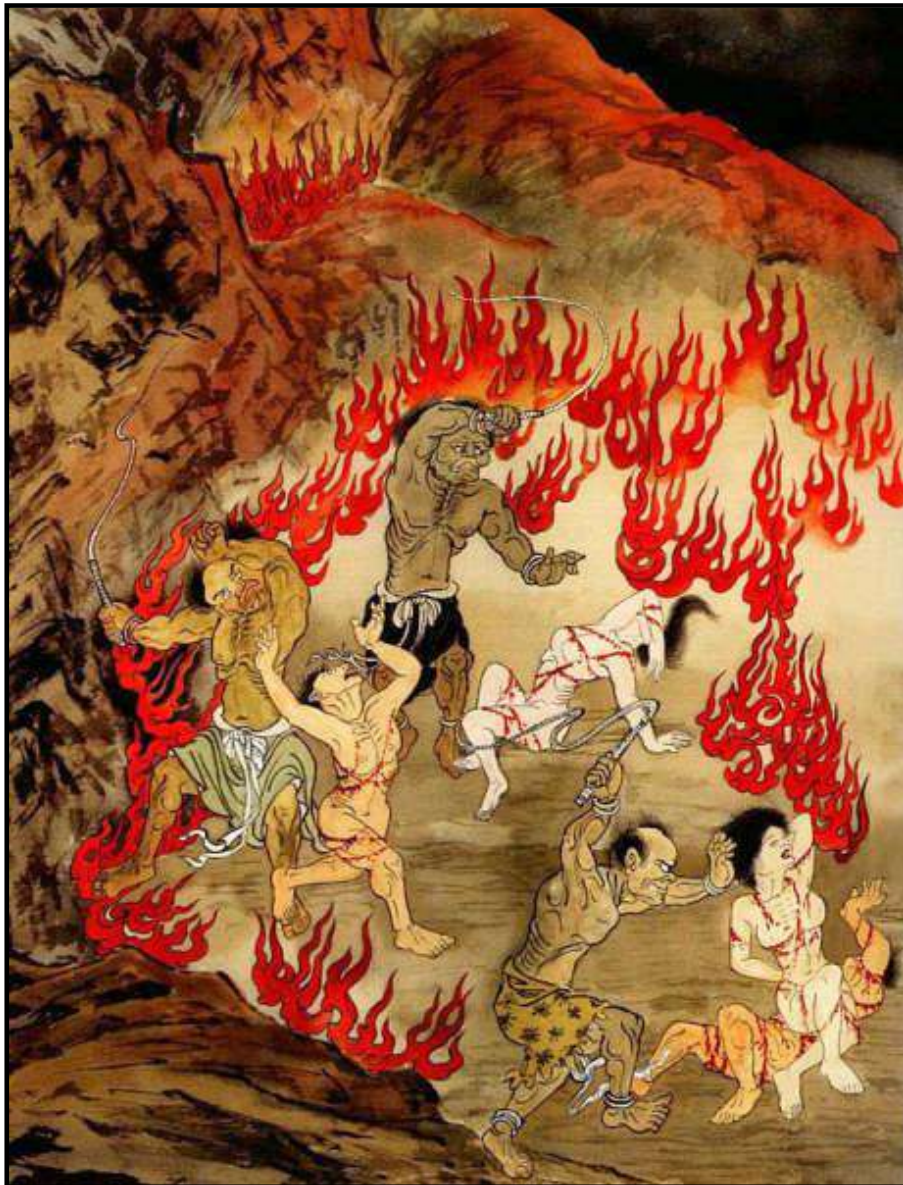


## RETRIBUTIONS FOR ABORTION



**People who abort unborn babies will be mauled and devoured by fierce tigers.  
Those who justify and incite abortions will be punished by raining needles.**

## RETRIBUTIONS FOR DISCRIMINATION AND TYRANNY



People who have abused their authority or strength will be lashed by barbed wire whips amid flames once their lives end. A Sage once said: " Even though ants are weak and small, their lives are cherished by Heaven." Hence, offenses such as racism, inequality, stigmatization, xenophobia, child abuse, animal abuse, bullying, tyranny, oppression, cruel and inhumane punishment, military action and the like will lead to the aforementioned punishment.



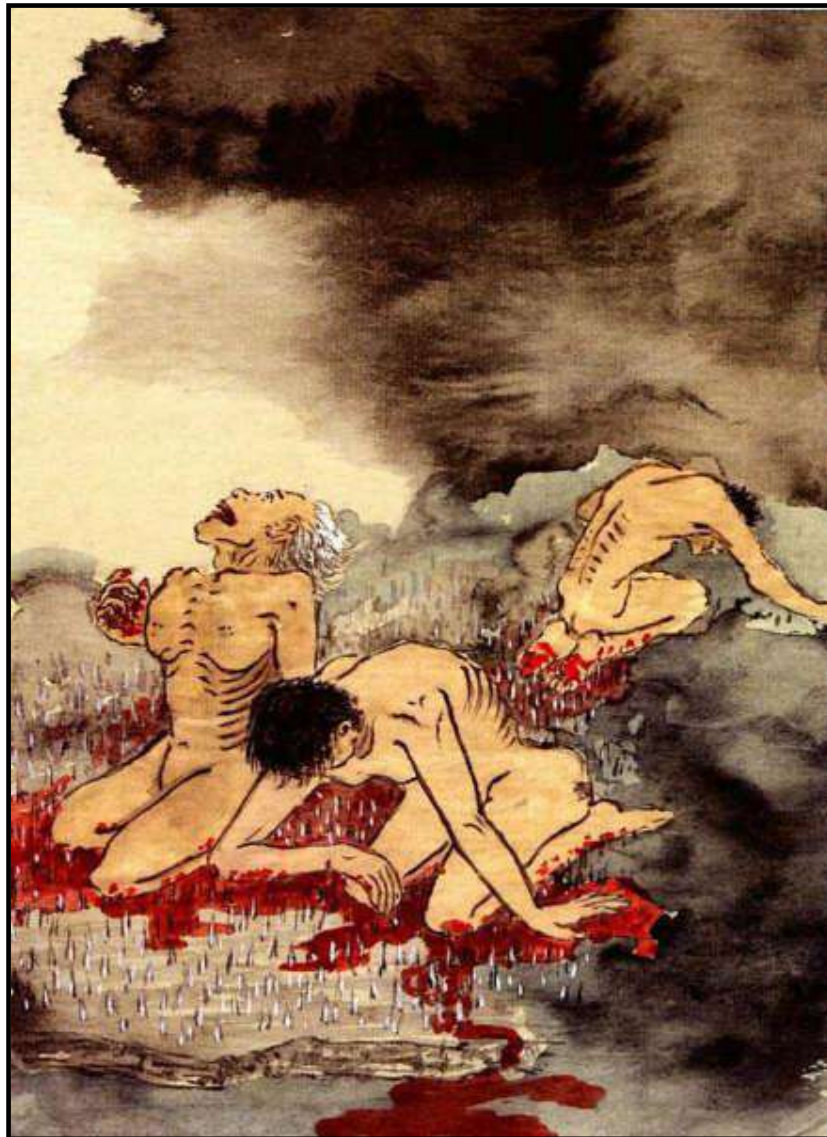
## RETRIBUTIONS FOR MISERLINESS



Those who refused to give alms or be charitable within their power will be reborn in scorching deserts as emaciated ghouls. Their hideous bloated stomachs have insatiable appetites but their barren abode offers nothing for them to eat. If they happen to chance upon something edible—as soon as they try to eat it— a plume of fire will shoot out from their throats and reduce the food to crisp. Thus, they can never ease their thirst and hunger.

The Bodhisattva seen giving food to the ghouls is Guanyin Mahabodhisattva. Because special mantras are chanted, the ghouls are able to eat the food given by the Mahabodhisattva. However, each of us can also help ease the suffering of these hell beings and emaciated ghouls by dedicating the merits from our good deeds to them.

## RETRIBUTIONS FOR IMMORAL MEDICAL PRACTICES



**Doctors and medical professionals who violate the Hippocratic Oath or are inhumane, deceitful and immoral will suffer the above punishment after their deaths. According to Buddhist teachings, doctors who are not interested in profit and tirelessly donate their skills will have limitless merits.**

**Furthermore, the teachings of the Sages require that doctors not charge fees for their work. They must never discriminate against those who are poor, weak or stigmatized. The compensation that they receive should be strictly limited to voluntary gifts from the patients and their families. Moreover, the same principle applies to teachers. For instance, Confucius and Mencius never asked for pomp, power or aristocratic titles—they simply taught those who sought their wisdom and lived off whatever was offered to them.**



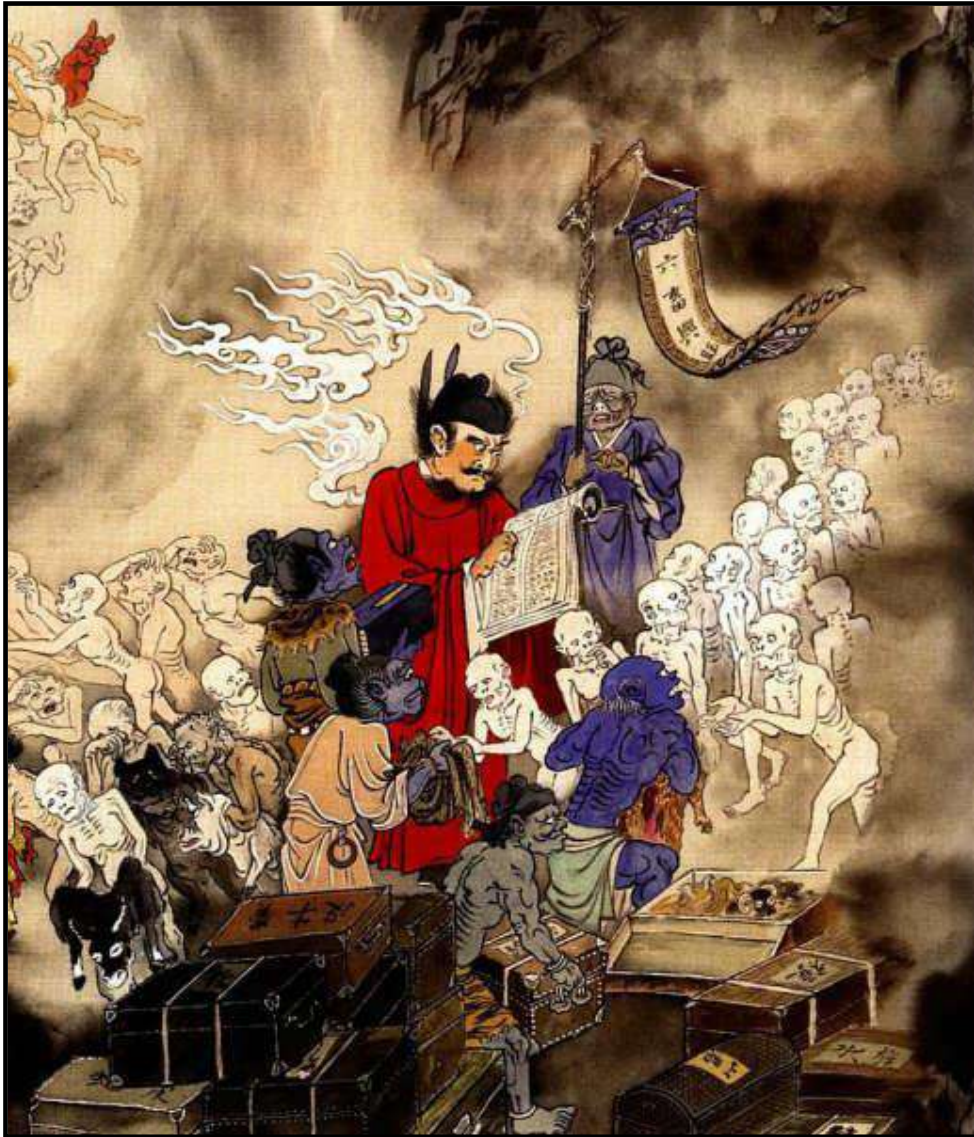
## RETRIBUTIONS FOR DESIGNING AND SELLING WEAPONRY



**This gruesome scene illustrates the suffering that befalls upon those who have designed, produced and sold arms and weaponry during their lives.**

**Wars are in direct opposition to the principles of benevolence that the Buddha and other Sages such as Lao Tzu, Confucius and Mencius have taught. Hence, those who create the tools that make armed conflict possible will bear heavy punishments once their lives end. Nations and statesmen often rally around military action and praise those who help with the war effort. However, the laws of karma does not subscribe to such obstinate hypocrisy and will mete out retributions to all those who kill and help others to kill.**

## RESIDUAL RETRIBUTIONS



Once those who have been punished in the hells and evil paths have exhausted their stocks of evil karma, they become eligible for rebirth in a higher plane of existence. However, human rebirth is often unobtainable since evil habits still taint them. Hence, they are punished by their residual evil karma to be reborn successively as animals.

For instance, in a eye-witness account originating from the Qing Dynasty, a butcher once discovered that the liver of a pig he had just slaughtered had the words "Cao Cao" burnt onto it. Cao Cao was one of the main warlords of the Three Kingdoms era. Thus, all his former power and Machiavellian deviousness was of no avail to him after his sins forced him to assume the body of a pig.

## CONCLUSION- HOW TO REFORM

**A man who has long committed evil but repents and thereafter does all good and refrains from all evil will be bestowed with great fortune after a while.**

### **-Treatise on Response and Retribution**

Having seen the horrific nature and severity of the retributions for evil, we should diligently discard our vices and amass good deeds. As the above quote states that virtue and good deeds can neutralize past evils—we should never again kill, steal, lie, indulge in excess, or fail to be filial towards our parents and elders. Furthermore, we should regularly give what we can to charity and protect animal life by purchasing and liberating captive animals slated for slaughter. What's more, we should print Buddhist texts and produce images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas for free distribution. The merits from turning the great Dharma Wheel—printing Buddhist texts and making Buddha images— are particularly exalted. The following is Patriarch Yin Guang's summarization of the main rewards for turning the great Dharma Wheel:

- 1.) Any pending karmic retributions will be eradicated, the most heavy ones will be reduced greatly.
- 2.) You will gain the protection of auspicious devas, gods and deities. Furthermore, you will avoid wars, disasters, bandits, thefts, diseases, floods and fires. Also, you will never be imprisoned or arrested.
- 3.) You will be released from the cycle of hatred and revenge as your past karmic enemies will share your merits and become devas or Sages.
- 4.) Vicious beasts, evil ghosts and demons cannot harm you.
- 5.) Your anxieties will fade away. No misfortune will befall upon you during the day and your dreams at night will always be sweet. Your strength will be full and your complexion will be radiant and healthy. Anything you do will be successful.
- 6.) As you are sincere and devoted to the Dharma, you will naturally have good fortune, long life, a harmonious family and abundant stocks of all the necessities of life.



7.) Yours words and actions will please the gods. Moreover, you will be welcomed and respected in all the places you go to.

8.) You wisdom, happiness and health will increase everyday. If you are a woman, you will be reborn as an eminent man.

9.) You will be forever free from rebirth in the hells and evil paths. You will always be reborn as a deva or member of the aristocracy. Furthermore, you will be wise, handsome and fortunate.

10.) You will help convert sentient beings towards the Way. Moreover, you will be perpetually close to the Buddha and Dharma until you attain liberation.

Furthermore, if we look back to Amita Buddha's 48 Vows, we can see that taking refuge in Amita Buddha is the only way to truly and permanently free ourselves of the threat of the evil paths:

#### **Sutra Vows 21: The Vow of Forgiveness**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, there would not be one virtuous and willing sentient being who could not easily attain rebirth in my land. However, if sentient beings who have long committed evil repent after hearing my name, and thereafter adheres to the Buddhadharma while yearning for rebirth in my land, then such beings will be saved from the evil paths and rise to my land upon their deaths. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

Thus, we must have faith that Pureland rebirth is open to all who are willing. Even those who are in the hells can manifest in Pureland within a space of a thought by taking refuge in Amita Buddha. Once in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, they will never retrogress and will dwell in the bliss of Bodhisattvahood. The evil paths will have forever collapsed behind them.

For instance, Venerable Yin Ke was a Song dynasty monk who had flagrantly broken several important precepts. One day, he read the Earth Store Sutra (which contains detailed descriptions of all the hells) and realized that his heavy sins will force him into the Relentless Hell (the worst of all the hells). Fearing this, he searched for a way to escape this retribution and later came upon the Infinite Life Sutra. He then retreated back to his room and diligently recited Amita Buddha's name unceasingly for 3 full days. At the end of that period, Amita Buddha appeared before him and he was saved!



## THE SUPREME BENEFITS OF VEGANISM

Unbeknownst to many in this world, the killing of animals for food and leather causes severe karmic retributions not only in the evil paths (as we have seen), but also in this world as well. For instance, the Buddha has said that wars, violence, illnesses, injuries and early deaths are all caused by the evil karmic seeds created from hunting, fishing, butchering and meat packing.

Hence, the violence, wars and diseases that are ever present in our time are mostly caused by our desires to eat meat. As mentioned in the Foreword, there are only a few billion humans in this world but hundreds of billions of animals are slaughtered every year. No wonder the Buddha said that those who cultivate virtue in this world for ten days can reap the same amount of merits that would take those in other worlds a whole millennium to amass.

Furthermore, eating meat has another even more horrifying consequence which the following abridged excerpt from Ven. Master Hsuan Hua's commentary on the Shurangama Sutra clearly illustrates:

*"During the reign of the Emperor Wu of Liang, the Buddhadharma flourished. At that time there was a wealthy man who was celebrating the marriage of his son. He invited Ch'an Master Chih Kung to recite Sutras and give the blessing. When Ch'an Master Chih Kung arrived and looked around, he said:*

***How strange! How bizarre!.....***

***The daughter eats the mother's flesh.***

***The drum the son beats is stretched with the father's skin.***

***Pigs and sheep are on the seat.***

***The six close kin cook in the brazier.***

***People gather to celebrate.***

***I see all this as a form of suffering.***

*How did Ch'an Master Chih Kung know this? Because he had the ability to know others' thoughts and the ability to perceive past lives - he had the Buddha Eye. When he looked in front of the house he said, "The daughter eats the mother's flesh," because he saw a little girl chewing on a chunk of pork. Her mother had died and been reborn as a pig. The pig had been slaughtered and cooked, and she was actually eating the flesh of her own mother! When he inspected the musicians in the band by*

*the entrance way, he said, "The drum the son beats is stretched with the father's skin." The drummer was hitting a drum stretched with deer-hide. His father had died and been reborn as a deer. The deer had been slaughtered and its hide tanned and the drummer was actually beating his own father!*

*Then Ch'an Master Chih Kung noticed that "Pigs and sheep are on the seat." He saw pigs and sheep sitting like guests on the k'ang - the high brick beds in the house. They were people now, but in their former lives they had been pigs and sheep. In their former lives they themselves had been eaten, so now they were reborn as people who in turn ate pigs and sheep to even up the debt. When the Ch'an Master took a look at the cooking pots' he exclaimed, "Six close kin cook in the brazier." The six kinds of close kin refer to relatives on the father's side and the mother's side, kin of the brother and sisters, and so forth. They had been close relatives of these people but now had been reborn as pigs and sheep, had been slaughtered, and were being cooked in the brazier. Ch'an Master Chih Kung summarized, "People gather to celebrate." Everyone who came was saying, "Congratulations!" and "Best Wishes!" But the Master notes, "I see all this as a form of suffering." What I see is actually suffering."*

Master Hsuan Hua makes it clear that people are reborn together as family members due to interconnected karmic affinities, debts and credits that have accrued since time immemorial. Thus, it is very likely for deceased parents to be reborn as livestock that will be eaten by their still living children. So imagine that! How many people have unwittingly killed and eaten their loved ones while grieving over their losses?

Furthermore, the Buddha has said that those who refrain from taking animal life will be long lived, healthy, safe and fortunate due to the positive karma created. The two accounts below are clear verifications of the Buddha's words. These true historical accounts are from another edition of the Jade Record that was written by a Chinese cultivator who met a Buddhist deity during meditation.

### **The Merciful Scholar:**

**During the Song dynasty, there was a young scholar who had tried and failed several times to pass the imperial examinations. Four years after his first failed attempt, he again travelled to the imperial capital to take part in the latest round of examinations.**

**He lodged himself in an inn and proceeded to study through the night in**

preparation for the upcoming exam. However, he soon became fatigued and dozed off. As he was about to slip into deep sleep—a vision of a distressed and bloodied white rabbit suddenly appeared. The rabbit pleaded with him to free it along with several other small animals held in the inn cellar.

The scholar immediately awakened and was initially doubtful at what he had just seen. Nevertheless, curiosity prompted him to silently sneak into the cellar. Surprisingly—there was indeed several animals locked in a cage. What he saw reflected his vision perfectly.

He soon realized that these trapped pheasants and small game were to be later served as main courses. Feeling ashamed over the fact that he too ate game, he hastily helped the animals to flee by opening the cage and cellar window. However, the injured white rabbit that had appealed to him for help remained traumatized and huddled in the corner. Thus, the scholar silently packed his bags in the middle of the night and personally carried the rabbit with him on his way out.

Eventually, the scholar stopped to rest under an arbor. Suddenly—out of the blue—a celestial devi appeared before him. She was fair beyond imagination and possessed a radiant golden complexion. As soon as she stretched her elegant hands towards the scholar, the rabbit quickly jumped into her arms. The devi then revealed that the rabbit he saved belonged to her. It had been violently captured while patrolling the mortal world. As the rabbit reassumed its celestial form, the injuries it had sustained miraculously disappeared. She explained that even though he was not a man of high wisdom, his kind and merciful heart had generated enough merits to gain high office. She reminded him to be kind towards the citizenry and to diligently protect living beings for the rest of his life. Having said that, the devi instantly disappeared. The young scholar was left in awe at the magnificent sight he had just witnessed.

The scholar proceeded to lodge himself at another inn and took the imperial exams the next day. Even though he did not achieve the prestigious academic honors he had sought after, he was still awarded a magistracy. Furthermore, he was quickly and continuously promoted by his superiors. Reflecting on this, he finally understood the power of good deeds and henceforth liberated life everyday. In addition to buying captive animals slated for slaughter and setting them free, he also became vegan and promoted veganism.

Years soon passed and the young scholar was now 54 years old. Furthermore, he had also reached the exalted post of Chancellor of State. Despite his unceasing efforts to liberate life and the fact that he had convinced many to become stop eating meat, he still felt that his impact was limited. The courtiers, aristocrats and members of the imperial family all scoffed at his scruples and continued to feast sumptuously on various meats such as lamb, bear paws and beef. They did not feel even a hair's breadth worth of shame at their cruelty and excess.

The scholar felt sorrow over the never ending slaughter and thus tendered his retirement. After returning to his hometown, he spent his remaining years using his substantial pension to adopt stray dogs and suffering animals.

When he turned 76, he saw the white rabbit that he had saved perched gracefully on his window sill. The scholar (who was on his deathbed) understood that his lifespan was up. Regretting that he could not turn the tide against meat eating, he expressed his apologies. However, the white rabbit quickly led him to his front gate where to his amazement, all the souls of the countless animals he had saved over the years were crowded around his residence. The rabbit then said: "As your stock of merits is full to the point of overflowing, the Heavenly Lord Lao Tzu wishes to bestow upon you a place among the gods. Otherwise, you could have your lifespan extended by 30 years. Your choice." The scholar replied that 30 years was too short and expressed his wish to rise to the side of the Heavenly Lord and assist him in doing good. Hence, he closed his eyes and ascended towards his celestial villa in the company of the white rabbit he had saved so many years before.

#### **Guanyin Bodhisattva's Visit to a Butcher:**

In 1908, there lived in Shanxi province a butcher named Chang. His parents (who were also butchers) had already passed away and the only family he had left was his sickly younger sister. Everyday, he slaughtered a pig and sold the meat for a living.

When Chang was young, he had detested the cruelty involved in slaughtering pigs. However, as he was the only heir to the family butchery, his parents forced him to learn the trade. By the time he was 25, he was already known in his village as the guillotine that all pigs fear. In fact, the total number of pigs he had

slaughtered was so numerous that if all the skulls of the pigs he had killed were lined up in a straight line, it would span several miles.

One day, a old woman visited the village and approached Chang's butchery. She said to him, " I will show you the way to a future fortune if you could give me two porkers free of charge." Chang thought that the old woman was mentally ill and thus ignored her. However, the old woman responded to this snub by recounting in detail his life, history and family situation. She also warned him that this was his last chance to extricate himself from his evil karma.

Startled by the fact that this stranger knew everything about him, Chang immediately suspected that she was a deity and proceeded to comply with her request for two porkers. She left right after taking possession of the two porkers, leaving Chang somewhat bewildered. Nevertheless, he was happy to have not offended a potential deity. However, before she disappeared from sight, she turned back towards Chang and shouted —"I'll be back tomorrow!"

The next day, she came back to Chang's butchery and requested that he give her four pigs. Chang immediately became irate and accused her of being a greedy fraud. However, she paid no heed to his anger and simply repeated her request for four pigs. Chang then demanded to know what happened to the two porkers he gave her the day before. She replied that she had released them.

Incensed, Chang immediately launched into a angry tirade. However, the old woman remained completely calm and simply asked, "Do you understand why I asked for those two porkers?"

Chang ignored the question and continued his tirade. Suddenly, the old lady ascended into the air and transformed into Guanyin Bodhisattva—faced with such a majestic and august sight—Chang promptly fell to his knees in reverence despite not being a Buddhist.

The Bodhisattva did not wait for Chang to compose himself but immediately showed him a vision which explained that the two porkers were actually his parents. They had been reborn as pigs to atone for their sins. Hence, he was just a few moments away from committing patricide and matricide had the Bodhisattva not intervened. Feeling immense shock and guilt, Chang begged the Bodhisattva to show him the way forward.

**The Bodhisattva said, " Your lifespan has been reduced considerably because of your offenses. Thus, if you wish to save yourself , you must henceforth cease all acts of killing. Furthermore, you must protect the pigs currently in your pigsty until their natural deaths. Afterwards, you must liberate 10,000,000 pigs in order to fully rectify your karmic situation. The first pig to die in your pigsty will show you the way."**

**As soon as these words were spoken, the Bodhisattva vanished into thin air. It was not difficult for Chang to keep the pigs currently in his pigsty, but he was doubtful that he could ever liberate 10,000,000 pigs. Nevertheless, he thought of the Bodhisattva's assurances and diligently proceeded to do as instructed. From that moment on, he treated his pigs like family. Eventually, word spread that he had renounced his career as a butcher. However, he never told anyone about his encounter with Guanyin Bodhisattva. Instead, he simply exhorted people to liberate life and refrain from slaughtering animals.**

**After a few years had passed, one of the pigs fell ill and was on the verge of death. As he was comforting the dying pig, it suddenly started to repeatedly oink towards a spot on the ground. A curious Chang immediately started to dig and to his surprise—crude oil began to seep out! A short while later, surveyors concluded that his pigsty was located above a oil reserve. He promptly sold his property and mineral rights for tens of thousands of silver dragons. He used this capital to start a business that soon generated for him a fortune. Everyday, he sent men into the market to purchase live pigs, thereafter depositing these pigs into Buddhist animal sanctuaries. After doing so for 50 years, he finally managed to save 10,000,000 pigs.**

**Chang lived to the ripe old age of 78. When he died, he left behind a wealthy family. Also, due to the karma created by his good deeds, he was able to avoid the wars of that period—safely retreating to Taiwan after the Communist takeover.**

### **Commentary:**

By simply saving the lives of several small animals, the scholar was able to amass enough merit to gain a lifetime of high offices. Furthermore, his remuneration and pension likely amounted to a fortune of tens of thousands of silver taels. In comparison, a small family could live for a year on just a few taels of silver during that time. He did not originally have such good fortune pending, but that one act of



opening the cage yielded this reward.

Moreover, due to his further efforts to promote veganism and liberate life, he was able to ascend to a blissful heavenly rebirth at the time of death. However, he was also offered a lifespan extension of thirty years. This is because those who liberate life will naturally obtain a long lifespan.

The same goes for the butcher. By simply renouncing his butcher's knife and protecting his remaining sounder of pigs for a few years, he managed to create such a large stock of good fortune that oil manifested below his land. Furthermore, his further efforts to liberate life gave him unparalleled prosperity and health. In fact, his originally meager lifespan was extended by over half a century! All this does not include the additional benefit of having the entirety of his prior evil karma eradicated. Thus, Chang went from a man on the verge of rebirth in the hells to a long lived and wealthy merchant.

Furthermore, in a set of short ancient historical accounts verified by Master Yin Guang, two of them reveal the supreme merits that result from not eating beef. While the killing of any animal for its meat is an offense, the gravest is the killing of cows.

According to the first of the two accounts: A member of a travelling theater troupe once met the wandering ghost of his deceased neighbor (who had died abroad). The ghost asked for permission to share the ferry he had hired, so that he (the ghost) may return home to take up abode in his ancestral shrine. The actor agreed. Eventually, the actor asked the ghost, "What does King Yama consider to be the gravest karmic offense?" The ghost replied, "Eating beef is the most serious sin—those who eat beef are devoid of fortune and bereft of divine protection—on the other hand, those who abstain from it will be blessed by the gods and accrue excellent stocks of merit!" Hearing this, the actor immediately vowed that he would never eat beef again. However, the ghost immediately burst into tears and exclaimed: "I can no longer return home! The auspicious spirits of good karma who now protect you will not allow a sinful being like me to accompany you." Dejected, the ghost climbed overboard and wandered away. Overawed by this revelation, the actor quickly rushed back to his village and convinced everyone to refrain from eating beef.

Unfortunately in this account, the actor did not know that he could dedicate his merits to the ghost. If he had done so, the ghost would have been immediately transformed into a radiant deva possessing a celestial palace (see the *Petavatthu* for more info).

Likewise, according to the second account: A minor local official of Suzhou province once circulated letters that encouraged people to abstain from beef. He did so after the spirit of a deceased colleague appealed to him to make merits on his behalf. As a result of this deed, the deceased colleague became a deva and the local official's lifespan was extended by six twelve year periods! Furthermore, his stocks of merit were filled to the brim.

In the Treatise on Response and Retribution, it is stated that grave sins result in one's lifespan being shortened by a period of twelve years and vice versa. Thus, the local official increased his lifespan by a whopping seventy two years by simply encouraging the local community to refrain from eating beef. This increase in lifespan was also accompanied by wealth, happiness, offices and future heavenly rebirth.

Therefore, how much more would be our reward if we abstain from all types of meat and diligently promote veganism?

It should be very clear by now that hunting, fishing, meat eating or engaging in the meat packing business will lead to heavy karmic debts. Thus, If we wish to be long lived and happy—and if we want to avoid atrocities and hellish karmic retributions—then we should diligently liberate life and encourage others to do the same. Furthermore, we should eat a meat free diet and abstain from hunting, fishing or working in the meat packing industry. If we sell food and provide catering services for a living, we should not sell meat products or dishes containing meats. The good karma generated from such abstinence will ensure happiness in this life and heavenly bliss in the next. If we dedicate these merits towards Buddahood in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, we will surely realize our aspiration!

**Recommended Charity: Tainan Avalokitesvara Homeland Buddhist Association**

**Website:** <http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Donation.php>  
**Sanctuary gallery:** [http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Pet1\\_pic.php](http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Pet1_pic.php)  
**Email:** [a0981552011@gmail.com](mailto:a0981552011@gmail.com)  
**Facebook:** <https://zh-tw.facebook.com/avalokitesvara2013>

This charity is registered with the government of Taiwan. Their mission is to save cattle, pigs, rabbits, poultry, goats, fish and the like from slaughter by purchasing them and moving them to their sprawling animal sanctuary in Tainan county.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY & FILIAL PIETY

# 孝順

The Buddha often stresses the importance of being filial towards our parents and elders. For harmonious families are the building blocks of a stable society where Sages can arise. The reason that Mahayana Buddhism has flourished so well in China is due to the steep tradition of filial piety and the moral teachings Confucius, Lao Tzu and Mencius. According to the Venerable Master Chin Kung, one's parents are equal in precedence to the Buddha. Thus, it is no surprise that patricide and matricide are among the five grave offenses that warrant rebirth in the Relentless Hell. In fact, the teachings of these Sages are basically a detailed expansion of the Buddha's Sigalovada Sutta.

However, filial piety is not exclusive to the Asian cultures. It is actually a integral part of the basic goodness of the Buddha-nature (which everyone has). Hence, everyone can emulate the virtues and social values promoted by Mencius and Confucius.

During most of Chinese history, the average family unit usually numbered around two hundred members while smaller families still had around eighty members. It was not uncommon for five generations to reside under one roof. Everyone supported each other and worked towards the common good. The elders administered the family moral code and preserved the family annals while the most senior family member served as the head of the entire household. Each family lived together in a family complex that also included a school for the children. The residential quarters and lounge of the elderly members were always located next to the school house. This way, the elders received much needed joy and company from the children, and the children benefited from the elders' valuable life experiences.

Furthermore, pensions were not needed in the past since the care of the old or infirm was the responsibility of the household. The security of the traditional family unit gave everyone a purpose in life and the freedom to pursue spiritual, literary, artistic and enterprising endeavors without having to toil just to eat and live.

Nowadays, few have such security. Once a person reaches the age of majority, they are often on their own and must now sweat for a monthly paycheck. They need to take out loans to fund everything from their house to living expenses. Even governments are saddled with massive deficits. Once they grow old, they must spend the rest of their lives in care homes or alone. Furthermore, their life savings are then wasted on medical bills. The Venerable Master Chin Kung often says that: "Nowadays, people indulge in idle pleasures during their youth, fight for a living during their adulthood and suffer alone in their old age". Burdened by anxieties, few are happy in this world. All this is because the world has turned its back to the teachings of the ancient Sages.

However, this was not the case in the past —far from it. Back then, Confucian teachings wisely divided a person's life into four stages under the Four Seasons of Life system:

### **Spring: Natal, Early & Higher Education (Ages 0-20):**

Moral education starts as soon as conception. Unbeknownst to many today, an unborn baby begins to perceive as soon it is conceived. Thus, the conduct, personality and language of the parents are already creating an impression. According to Master Chin Kung, the first three years of a child's life will influence him up to the age of eighty—and by age seven, the cumulative influences he has come into contact with since conception will influence him for life. Thus, the importance of natal moral education cannot be overstated.

Thus, in the past, parents remained celibate after conception and flawlessly treated each other with respect. They regularly recited Buddhist texts and observed the precepts. As teaching by example is stressed by the Sages, they personally displayed in conduct each of the rules outlined in the Confucian moral text *Di Zi Gui* (Standards of Being a Good Pupil and Child). They saw no evil, heard no evil and said no evil.

If only positive influences surround the fetus or embryo, the baby will naturally grow up to become a Sage. Furthermore, there is no need to teach several moral texts as Master Chin Kung has said that single-minded cultivation is the key to success. Hence, if you can master the *Di Zi Gui*, you have effectively mastered all the other sutras as well. In the past, each family had a family moral code based on the *Di Zi Gui* that included commentaries, annotations or accounts added by previous generations.

A strong natal and early moral education will ensure that the child becomes a good

man or woman. In all the Mahayana sutras, it is expressively stated that only good men or women can easily achieve profound insight by practicing them. Thus, this is why liberation is easily attainable in a Confucian society.

### **Summer: Junior Responsibility (Ages 20 to 40):**

Once children reached twenty years of age, they begin to contribute to society and the family. If a person wanted to start a business, capital will be provided from the family funds. However, most remained home and helped with the family business. Others may take part in the imperial examinations and become magistrates or civil servants. No matter what they chose to do, no one applied for loans or struggled alone. The family always provided.

Furthermore, by this time, suitable marriage partners would have been selected and vetted by the parents. As everyone back then practiced virtue, divorce never crossed anyone's mind. The men were honorable and the women kind and pliant. Thus, the messy divorces and relationships we see today were unheard of back then.

The most important task during this life stage was the accumulation of merits. With money and power now at their disposal, good deeds such as printing sutras, making Buddha images, releasing life, building bridges, giving food or medicine to the poor and making offerings to monks were diligently done.

If they became magistrates or officials after passing the imperial examinations, they governed in accordance with compassion, etiquette, filial piety and reason. They also used their official capacity to promote sacred moral texts such as the Treatise on Response and Retribution or Mencius' Analects. This is because the foremost duty of government officials back then was to promote virtue and the teachings of the Buddha by personal example. In the eyes of the Sages, society is like a haystack. It will not burn if the farmer keeps it wet. However, if it becomes dry (i.e. devoid of moral guidance), it can be easily set alight by just a spark. Once that spark ignites people's passions, an inferno of chaos, war, impiety, crime, inequality and tyranny will engulf society. No amount of law enforcement will be able to reverse such a situation.

Hence, in order to build and maintain a civilization, a sturdy foundation of morality is required—only the Dharma can save the world.

Furthermore, no matter which station in life they occupied, all of them contributed

back to the family and reverently served their parents and elders.

Such conduct accords fully with the Buddha's teachings and precepts. Hence, their stocks of merit only increased with each passing day. Besides, as they always had their family to count on, they were not burdened with mundane concerns such as job security, mortgages and saving for retirement.

### **Fall: Senior Responsibility (Ages 40 to 60):**

Once they reach this life stage, they take on senior roles in the household and or government. According to the Sages, the greatest act of impiety is to leave no heirs to honor one's ancestors. However, this does not mean that the bloodline must continue at all costs. It simply means that one must turn the Dharma Wheel by passing on the teachings of the family code to a successor. For example, senior officials would take incoming junior magistrates under their wing. Everyone back then—from artisans to chancellors—eagerly mentored and promoted the talented and virtuous. Lastly, they continued to use their wealth and or official resources to do good deeds and support the public welfare.

### **Winter: Sagehood (Ages 60-80):**

The age of sixty is the age of retirement. Those who had worked away from home would close up shop and return home. Officials and magistrates would tender their resignations. During this last stage of life, the primary concern was Pureland rebirth. With a vibrant family community to return to, no one worried about retirement savings or having no one to depend on. Back then, people spent their golden years blissfully enjoying domestic life. Moreover, as they have spent the last sixty years amassing merits and cultivating the Dharma, good fortune, health and happiness naturally shadowed them. Even if they do not obtain Pureland rebirth, they are always reborn as high ranking gods and goddesses.

### **Commentary:**

Mencius once gave the following advice to the King of Liang:

*"Mencius replied, 'They are only men of education, who, without a certain livelihood, are able to maintain a fixed heart. As to the people, if they have not a certain livelihood, it follows that they will not have a fixed heart. And if they have not a fixed heart, there is nothing which they will not do, in the way of self-abandonment, of*



*moral deflection, of depravity, and of wild license. When they thus have been involved in crime, to follow them up and punish them;-- this is to entrap the people. How can such a thing as entrapping the people be done under the rule of a benevolent man?"*

*"Therefore an intelligent ruler will regulate the livelihood of the people, so as to make sure that, for those above them, they shall have sufficient wherewith to serve their parents, and, for those below them, sufficient wherewith to support their wives and children; that in good years they shall always be abundantly satisfied, and that in bad years they shall escape the danger of perishing. After this he may urge them, and they will proceed to what is good, for in this case the people will follow after it with ease."*

In these two paragraphs, Mencius provides a succinct diagnosis of all that which is wrong with the world today. People today have no purpose and no support. Thus, they squander their years and pursue only survival or their passions. When they die, they find that they have neither virtue nor stocks of merit to rely on. Therefore, it is inevitable that they will have to descend into the realms of suffering.

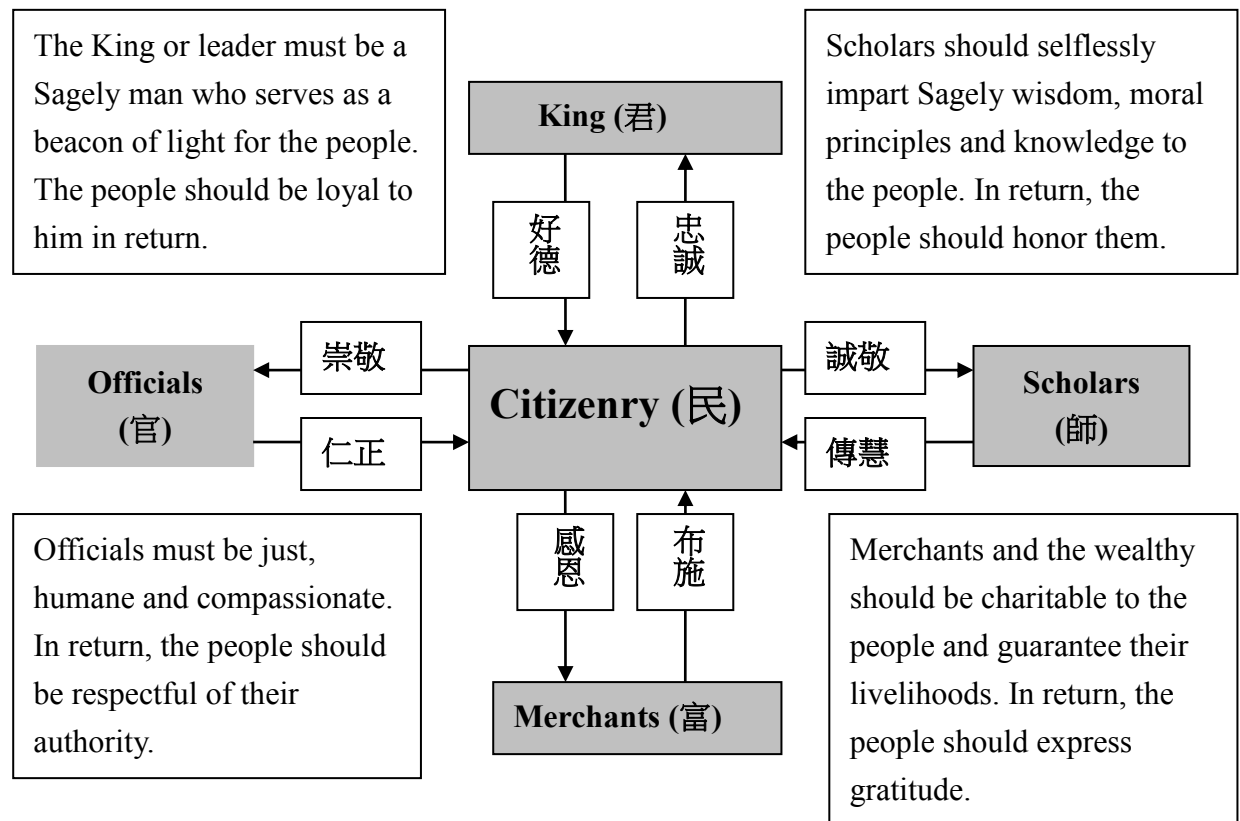
This is why the Buddha stresses that we must be filial and generous to our family members. Furthermore, we must educate our children properly (i.e. natal education) to ensure that they grow up to be good people. There will be neither rebellion nor adolescent misbehavior if everyone followed the parenting principles passed on by the Sages. Hence, the Confucian family model and the Four Seasons of Life system must be introduced into modern society or else the world will not prosper. While this would be very difficult to accomplish as the old traditional family units have since scattered into nuclear families, the truth is that the institution of the traditional Confucian family does not have to be based on blood relations.

For instance, Chinese businessman Hu Xiao Lin (胡小林居士) has managed to turn his business into a modern success story of Confucian ideals. What he did was that he decided to run his business in accordance with the teachings of the Di Zi Gui. He treated his employees like family and built for them a company school, hospital and residences. His employees have not only job security, but also the peace of mind of knowing that their children will be educated properly and be offered positions in the company once they are of age. Unsurprisingly, his business improved considerably after he started adhering to the words of the Sages. The merits created by doing good and spreading the teachings of the Sages are indeed boundless!

Furthermore, as you can see from the chart below, Hu Xiao Lin has also fulfilled his duty as a merchant in the Confucian social structure. If the entire world could be

governed in accordance with these principles of reciprocity and righteousness, we would be living in an utopia.

### Principles of Confucian Governance



Hence, the problem today is that no one follows the above principles. For example, scholars nowadays often impart only their biases, delusions and political views while officials are often unjust, inhumane or opinionated. People cannot follow these principles since they have not been properly educated. They have not been properly educated because Confucian parenting principles and family values are not observed.

Even if we have not the ability to replicate Hu Xiao Lin's success, we must still raise our children in accordance with the methods outlined in the first life stage. Even if our parents have already passed, we should still diligently do various good deeds and dedicate the merits to them ; no matter which realm they have been reborn into, they can still benefit from these merits. If they have not passed, then we should diligently introduce them to Buddhist teachings so they can seek rebirth in Amita Buddha's Pureland. There is no gift greater than Bodhi and helping one's parents to become Buddhas is the highest act of filial piety.

To conclude this section, a translation of an excellent story from the Ershisi Xiao (Twenty Four Exemplars of Filial Piety) is included below:

### **The Example of Wu Meng: Rags to Riches due to Forbearance & Piety**

*In the Jin Dynasty, a filial eight-year-old boy named Wu Meng served his parents with devoted compliance. His family was extremely poor and could not afford mosquito netting. On hot summer nights the mosquitoes would come swarming in as thick as smoke. The little boy would remove his shirt and let the insects land on his bare skin. He would watch them drink their fill of his blood, and fly away; he wouldn't raise a hand to shoo them off, no matter how painfully they stung him. Wu Meng wasn't a fool, so why didn't he brush the bugs away?*

*He knew that his parents had no netting at their bedside. If he drove the mosquitoes away from his body, they would surely fly over and wake up his mother and father with their stinging. So the devoted son simply let the mosquitoes drink his blood instead. So that his parents wouldn't know about his sacrifice and demand that he stop, the boy would wake up earlier than they, slip his shirt over his swollen torso, and return to his own bed. But one morning, being tired from loss of sleep, he forgot to wake up and pull on his shirt. His father arose and found his son asleep by his bed. He looked at the boy's pathetic, mosquito-bitten skin that was covered with red welts, and understood immediately what Wu Meng had done. Mr. Wu woke up his wife and told her the story. The two parents, deeply moved by their son's unselfish concern for them, began to cry. They were so touched, their sounds of sobbing could be heard by the neighbors. From all sides the neighbors gathered to investigate the matter, and learned about Wu Meng's sacrifice on behalf of his parents.*

*Everyone thought that the boy's attitude of filial respect was most remarkable, especially for one only eight years old. Someone reported the incident to the local magistrate, who wrote a memorandum to the Dragon Throne, to inform the imperial court. The matter thus came to the attention of the Emperor, who rewarded Wu Meng with a scholarship to the academy. Further, he gave the family a set of mosquito nets and a stipend, so that they never again lacked the necessities of life.*

*A verse in his honor says,*

*Summer nights and no mosquito netting!  
Insects by the thousands, yet he wouldn't raise a hand.  
"Let them drink my blood and fill their bellies,  
Just don't disturb my parents while they sleep!"*

### **Commentary:**

In this story, Wu Meng not only showed exemplary filial piety, but also displayed immense compassion for not feeling hatred towards the mosquitoes or finding ways to do violence against them. Even though mosquitoes are small, they can still feel pain just like us. For instance, the great Zen Master Hsu Yun once heard (while meditating) a flea scream out in pain after being flicked off by a fellow cultivator—its limbs had been broken. Thus, all life is equally important and all pains are equally painful. Therefore, whenever we are tempted to kill a mosquito, we must instead ask ourselves if we would kill a man or break his limbs simply because he was annoying.

Furthermore, Wu Meng's filial piety, compassion and patience quickly melted away the evil past karma that caused their poverty while also generating abundant stocks of merit. This is why he and his family quickly received karmic fruits such as the generous stipend, good reputation and scholarship. In those days, a person who completed his education at schools run by the central government were granted magistracies. Therefore, the entire family was elevated to noble status due to Wu Meng's actions. If Wu Meng had been selfish, he would have lived and died in poverty. Thus, if we wish for good fortune and Bodhi, we must start at home. We should teach the Dharma to our parents and family, do our best to improve their lives, encourage them to practice good deeds and teach our children to be filial and moral.

Lastly, Wu Meng would not have been so filial at such a young age if his parents had neglected to give him a proper natal education. It was only because his parents had recited sacred texts, remained celibate and acted with propriety during and after the pregnancy that Wu Meng was able to have such genuine goodness. Thus, the deeper message of this story is that a stable and prosperous society can only be achieved when natal and early moral education is practiced by all parents.

If children are aged seven or above before being truly educated, it would be too late. Already influenced by their parent's bad habits or wrong views, their minds harden like soil under a scorching sun. With no good habits to guide them, few will grow up to be Sages. Instead, those with some past merit will commit sins while pursuing luxury, wealth, status and power. Those without merits will be bereft and struggle through life not knowing how to do good and change their karmic situation. No one will take the laws of karma seriously and all will follow their passions. All this is because parents failed to unceasingly impart the wisdom of the Sages to their offspring at a time when they were still innocent and impressionable.

### **A Important Reminder:**

**"The workings of karma are like gravity, invisible but all pervasive. Look around you, fathers inevitably shed tears for their deceased offspring while children weep over their late parents. Siblings and couples all become grief stricken when the one they love is lost. They do not know that their attachments are false and impermanent. Consumed by love and emotion, they are shackled to the Samsara. Consequently, they squander their years and neglect to diligently and properly cultivate the Dharma. Few become Sages while many drown in their own delusions."**

### **- Chapter 33, Infinite Life Sutra**

Therefore, as important as family and filial piety is, we must always remember to remain unattached to our family members. Filial piety and Confucian family values are about precepts and not emotionalism. Sages never promote attachments but advocate only duty and true compassion.

The following abridged excerpt from the Shurangama Sutra elaborates what the Buddha says above:

*"Actually, Ananda, all beings are fundamentally true and pure, but because of their false views they give rise to the falseness of habits, which are divided into an internal aspect and an external aspect."*

*"Ananda, the internal aspect refers to what occurs inside living beings. **Because of love and defilement, they produce the falseness of emotions. When these emotions accumulate without cease, they can create the fluids of love. That is why living beings' mouths water when they think about delicious food. When they think about a deceased person, either with fondness or with anger, tears will flow from their eyes.....** When their minds dwell on lustful conduct, spontaneous secretions will come from the male or female organ. Ananda, although the kinds of love differ, their flow and formation is the same. With this moisture, one cannot ascend, but will naturally fall. This is called the Internal Aspect."*

Thus, while the Sages and Upasakas of the past have always been filial and loyal to their families, they are actually completely unattached and unemotional. Their bodies may be at home, but their hearts have already left the Samsara and the home life. Therefore, we must not mistake filial piety and family loyalty to mean emotional attachment. We must always be practical and calm. The truth is that love leads to hate

and hate leads to love. These defilements and emotions are the fuel that drives the repetitive cycle of birth and death. For instance, Master Hsuan Hua has stated that grandparents who cannot let go of their grandchildren will be reborn as their children or spouses. However, if the grandchild proves to be a disloyal spouse or abusive parent, then the love will turn to hate. Such false habits and emotions will only cause one to fall into the evil paths.

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, the reason people are reborn together as family is due to past karmic debts and credits. For example, if you owe someone a favor for kindness shown in past lives, you will likely be reborn as a loving spouse or parent to the person you owe kindness to. If someone owes you money in past lives, you will most likely be reborn as that person's offspring and heir. Once the debt or favor has been repaid, the relationship naturally ends and any remaining affection usually disappears as new karmic relationships manifest. Thus, there really is nothing to be attached to.

This is not to say that we should disregard our obligations towards our family, it simply means that we should not be emotional. Filial piety is a virtue that mindfulness is built on, and no virtue can be successfully observed with emotionalism.

Furthermore, as every one of us have been turning in the Samsara since time immemorial, all the innumerable sentient beings in existence have at some point been our family members. Hence, we should cultivate the true compassion harbored by Bodhisattvas while shedding the false emotional partialities rooted in the three poisons. For instance, if you achieve Bodhi, countless generations of your family (including those of prior rebirths) will share your merits and become devas or Sages!

Consequently, we must always remember that filial piety and Confucian family values are precepts that require forbearance to observe. Buddhism is based on Sila Samadhi and Prajna. Hence, we must always hold these principles close to heart and examine our own conduct in accordance with it.



## VEN. MASTER HAI XIAN: A MODERN CASE OF PURELAND REBIRTH



Venerable Master Hai Xian

*Every drop of detail in the Infinite Life Sutra can be found displayed in his daily conduct. He is the Infinite Life Sutra and the Sutra is him. His life of cultivation will serve as a beacon of light for thousands of years to come.*

-Ven. Master Chin Kung on Venerable Master Hai Xian

信                      願                      行

FAITH            WILLINGNESS    ACTION

If one wishes to summarize the Buddha's advice in the Infinite Life Sutra, the above three words would suffice. Anyone who wishes to take advantage of Amita Buddha's Forty Eight Vows must have faith in Pureland and be willing to recite Amita Buddha's name to the level of single-mindedness. Furthermore, in the chapter where the Buddha outlined the three grades of successful aspirants, all three demonstrated these three tenets. However, in Chapter 41, all three types of persons who failed to leave the Samsara had either insufficient faith or a lack of willingness to act. Hence, doubt, inconsistent effort or lack of action will handicap your potential and must be eliminated. Therefore, we are now going to study the life story of someone who has succeeded by practicing this Sutra.

Venerable Master Hai Xian (海賢老和尚) attained Pureland rebirth last year at the

venerable age of 112. In fact, he was still plowing the temple fields on the eve of his Pureland rebirth despite his advanced age. Amazingly, he managed to successfully practice mindfulness of Amita Buddha for his whole life, even in the face of the chaos of the Chinese Civil War, WWII, Cultural Revolution and various other hardships such as illiteracy, misfortune and poverty. More importantly, he achieved all this because he was single-minded in his practice. His unwavering faith and willingness to act ensured that he was able to attain the level of single-mindedness within three years of his ordination. Thus, his life story is a living example of this Sutra. His conduct mirrors every virtue and instruction described by the Buddha in this Sutra. He is a Bodhisattva of Pureland and belongs to the highest grade of aspirants.

Venerable Hai Xian attained Pureland rebirth during the wee hours of January 17th 2013, a time and date he foreknew. Those who have recited the name of Amita Buddha to the level of single-mindedness will be able to meet Amita Buddha, who will either welcome them into Pureland or give them an option to choose a later date. Since Venerable Hai Xian's mindfulness had by then far surpassed this level, he had already met Amita Buddha numerous times before. However, he was requested to remain in this world in each of those earlier encounters because his exemplary conduct meant that his presence was needed to inspire confidence—to serve as a beacon of light for cultivators to emulate.

Furthermore, he has also been nominated to succeed the Great Master Yin Guang as the 14th Patriarch of the Pureland School by Venerable Master Chin Kung.

Therefore, all cultivators of Pureland Buddhism should watch this documentary and strive to emulate the late Master's exemplary faith and diligence in reciting Amita Buddha's name.

**Link to Documentary:** <http://edu.hwadzan.com/play/65/34/0/87285>

**Version with English subtitles:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoritpHKxm4>

## BIOGRAPHY:

### Childhood and Early Life:

Venerable Master Hai Xian (1901-2013) was born in Henan province on August 19th 1901 to a devout Buddhist family. His birth name was Wen Chuan Xian (文川賢) and he had five siblings. The family was poor and young Chuan Xian's father often had to travel to neighboring villages to ask for alms. When Chuan Xian was ten years old, his father was beaten to death by bandits while trying to put out a raging fire set by his murderers (they had torched a entire village while plundering it). The returning villagers sent his body home to be buried with honors.

When Chuan Xian reached adolescence, he experienced and observed several events which strengthened his faith in Buddhism. For instance, in one case, a relative of his who delighted in verbally and physically abusing another family member eventually gave birth successively to four children who all died young. Furthermore, she became mentally unstable and bit her own tongue out. Finally, she died in agony shortly after giving birth to a daughter. She was only thirty two years old at the time of death.

It was eventually understood that her short life and misfortunes were due to the evil karma created by her malicious speech and violent behavior.

When Chuan Xian reached the age of 18, he developed carbuncles (large boils) on his leg. It was so severe that the leg became gangrenous and his life was threatened. His mother consulted numerous doctors and tried all kinds of treatments, but all to no avail. Finally, Chuan Xian realized that this illness was the result of past evil karma and refused further treatment. He then sincerely recited the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva. Miraculously, the leg healed completely by the end of the month.

These experiences and events prompted him to seriously consider the pain and suffering of the wheel of rebirth. Just like Dharmakara in Chapter 4, Chuan Xian now understood the following:

**The Eighth Discernment is this: The Samsara is a raging inferno plagued by endless afflictions. Hence, resolve upon the Mahayana aspiration to liberate all beings. Vow to bear the unbearable for the sake of helping sentient beings achieve ultimate bliss.**

Moreover, his faith in the Buddhadharma and the laws of karma were now strong and resolute.

### **Life as a Monk**

When Chuan Xian turned twenty years of age, he decided to leave the home life and become a monk. Thus, he bid his mother farewell and was ordained in 1920 by the eminent Dharma Master Chwan Jie (傳戒法師). Henceforth, he was known as Venerable Hai Xian. Master Chwan Jie did not teach him to practice Zen or to study and speak the Dharma. He simply taught Venerable Hai Xian to single-mindedly recite the name of Amitabha. Venerable Hai Xian, being as faithful as Patriarch Huineng (who was illiterate like him), diligently cultivated as instructed. What many people do not know is that the name of Amita Buddha represents one's Buddha-nature. When Patriarch Huineng said that the Buddha-nature is self sufficient, he is referring to that when a man's heart is the same as Amita Buddha, he has attained the mind seal of the Buddha. Hence, such a person no longer has outflows and is pure.

In fact, all the great sutras such as the Lotus Sutra and Shurangama Sutra are simply a expansion of the name of Amita Buddha. They were spoken to serve as an indirect way for people who still have doubt to gradually believe in the unsurpassed perfection of reciting Amita Buddha's name. This is why the Shurangama Sutra ends by mentioning that anyone who merely thinks about teaching the Shurangama Sutra to someone can have all their heavy offenses eradicated and be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. The name of Amita Buddha represents the infinite merit and wisdom of all the Buddhas.

Hence, Master Chwan Jie recognized Venerable Hai Xian's faith and determination and thus passed to him the highest Dharma. Since Hai Xian's heart was always mindful of Amita Buddha, his conduct naturally conformed with that of a Buddha.

For instance, he cultivated each the Six Paramitas perfectly without exception. As his heart reflected Amita Buddha, he was naturally not subject to the urges and defilements that cause regular people to turn their backs on the five precepts and ten virtues. His heart was pure and free from the six kinds of dust.

In Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu's commentary on this Sutra, it is mentioned that there are four different fields of merit:

- 1) The field of gratitude (i.e. one's parents and teachers).
- 2) The triple jewel field (i.e. Buddhadharma).
- 3) The field of the poor, sick and needy.
- 4) The field of animals.

Thus, in terms of generosity, he diligently planted in all four fields of merit. For instance, when the Red Guards came to vandalize the Stupa of his mentor, Master Hai Xian managed to retrieve beforehand the ashes of his mentor and hid them in a secret compartment. When the Communist government forbade him from reciting and forced him to serve as a superintendent for a local farming team, he continued to be mindful of Amita Buddha in his heart and prostrated to the Buddha at night. If there was meat in the communal pot, he would eat only the vegetables around it. As soon as the Cultural Revolution ended, he immediately returned to the temple and built a new Stupa for his mentor. He also invited his aged mother into the small temple where he resided and cared for her until she attained Pureland rebirth.

Furthermore, throughout his life, he never ceased to be assiduous with his duties. Being a farmer by former profession, he diligently cultivated many wildlands into tillable farmland. With the crops he grew by himself, he fed his aged fellow cultivators and the poor, old and needy. In fact, he once donated about half a ton of crops that he personally grew to relieve those affected by the 1989 floods.

Moreover, he regularly released life and helped repair bridges. He also led the building of new temples. Even when he spotted someone stealing some of the corn he grew, he did not become hostile but generously gifted the thief the cream of the crop. Such conduct reflects the compassionate behavior of Bodhisattvas as described in the Sutra of the Eight Discernments of Eminent Men:

**The Sixth Discernment is this: Poverty and deprivation leads to countless grievances and unrest. When Bodhisattvas practice almsgiving, they consider foes to be equal to their dearest kinsmen. They neither harbor grudges nor ostracize criminals.**

As the name of Amita Buddha is self sufficient, one whose heart is in accordance with it will naturally display virtue, wisdom and equanimity at all times. This is why Venerable Hai Xian did not react with anger even when an arrogant man slapped him in the face. Also, in Chapter 33, the Buddha mentions that:

**"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of hostility in the lives to come. Thus, we must be careful. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims and suffer their vengeance."**

Likewise, the Venerable Master Chin Kung often stresses that competition leads to quarrels which later develops into wars. This is why forbearance is so important in Buddhism. However, it is very hard to exercise patience while still afflicted by passions. Hence, the only solution is to recite the name of Amita Buddha single-mindedly. Only with this samadhi can we avoid piling up karmic enemies. Furthermore, the merits created would be so great that all existing karmic enemies will instantly become friends. As our creditors, they naturally benefit from the blessings we create.

In all of his 112 years of life, Venerable Hai Xian lived simply. He sewed his own clothes and grew his own food. If he received offerings, he would use it to print sutras and release life. On his birthday the year before his Pureland rebirth, a group of householders prepared a sumptuous meal as a birthday gift. For the first time in his life, Venerable Hai Xian did not smile and declined to eat any of it except for a few sprouts. The householders soon realized that he was teaching them by example. As the Buddha's last advice to the Sangha before his parinirvana was that one should regard the precepts as one's teacher and hardship as nourishment, such a display of austerity reflected this key advice.

In Chapter 34 of this Sutra, it is mentioned that birth, death, sickness and old age are all agonizing pains. Furthermore, the Buddha also stressed that only Pureland rebirth can free us from them. Venerable Hai Xian's life proves this to us. Ever since he was able to single-mindedly recite Amita Buddha's name, he became free of those agonizing pains forever. He will never have to undergo birth again as those who are reborn in Pureland manifest by transformation. Moreover, sickness and old age cannot bother him as his mindfulness of Amita Buddha allows him to dwell in the bliss of samadhi.



### **Rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss**



Prior to his Pureland rebirth, Amita Buddha appeared before him and informed him that he will be reborn in Pureland when he receives a Dharma book titled "If Buddhism is to Prosper ; Practitioners Must Praise Each other" (若要佛法興唯有僧贊僧).

On January 13th 2013, a visiting guest gifted the book to Venerable Hai Xian. He immediately donned his best robes and requested that a picture be taken of him with the book (see picture). This gesture—he had never before asked to be photographed—was to serve as an endorsement for the book, which has decisively neutralized recent libel against Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra. Hence, we too should take the book's main advice and refrain from criticizing others. We should praise all practitioners of all branches of Buddhism and promote interfaith harmony.

In the three following days, Venerable Hai Xian visited a number of his old friends and acquaintances. Even on the afternoon of the third day, he was still working in the temple fields. When one concerned junior monk asked him to retire, he cryptically responded, "I 'm almost finished, when I am, I'll be done for good." That night, Venerable Hai Xian loudly recited the name of Amita Buddha continuously. By morning, he was discovered to have already entered the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Just like the recorded signs of Pureland rebirth in the various sutras—rigor mortis did not set in and his body remained soft, flexible and fresh. Incidentally, like Bodhidharma, Venerable Hai Xian's mother's coffin was empty except for a shoe when it was exhumed for a more proper reburial.

Hence, knowing this, we should have absolute faith in our ability to attain Pureland rebirth. Everything that Venerable Master Hai Xian achieved, he did it for us. He has unequivocally shown us the Buddha's words are true. He could have left for Pureland when he was in his 20s, but he stayed to show us the way. Therefore, we must repay such kindness by heeding the important lessons he has taught us by example.

Lastly, during Venerable Hai Xian's funeral ceremony, one attending Dharma Master mentioned Venerable Hai Xian's encounter with a wolf in his eulogy. One day when Venerable Hai Xian was journeying, a wolf came up to him and proceeded to gently drag him by his robes. He initially thought that this was his moment of death and thus diligently recited the Buddha's name. However, it soon became apparent that the wolf simply wished to request his help. The wolf led Venerable Hai Xian back to its den where a female wolf was on the verge of death due to complications of labor. Venerable Hai Xian speedily recited the name of Amita Buddha to the female wolf. The merit from his mindfulness instantly saved the life of the female wolf, allowing it to safely give birth to a litter of cubs. The next day, the wolf appeared again and offered honeycombs in gratitude to Venerable Hai Xian.

Thus, if even a wolf can recognize virtue and repay kindness, how can we (as humans) neglect to repay the kindness of Venerable Master Hai Xian and heed his example?

Buddhism is about turning the great Dharma Wheel. Hence, we must strive to cultivate in accordance with Venerable Hai Xian's teachings. We should first recite to single-mindedness ourselves and then turn to helping others. We repay the kindness of Master Hai Xian by becoming Sages ourselves. We turn the great Dharma Wheel by becoming an example for other people to emulate.

## IMPORTANT LESSONS

The most important lesson that Venerable Hai Xian's life teaches us is the importance of faithfully and single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha's name. As mentioned before, the Buddha-nature is self sufficient and Amita Buddha is our Buddha-nature. This means that this Buddha name represents the Six Paramitas, Four Immeasurables and Threefold Training all in one. Thus, by reciting Amita Buddha's name to the level of single-mindedness, you are recovering the infinite stock of merit, utmost virtue and unsurpassed wisdom that our Buddha-nature contains. You can only meet Amita Buddha when your heart finally matches the Buddha's and yearns for Pureland rebirth. The Buddha is absolutely compassionate and will certainly respond if you truly seek him.

**"Of all good deeds, which is the foremost? The answer is that rectifying one's heart and mind is the greatest good. Your body can commit no evil if your heart is pure. Do this and you will be in accordance with all that which is good and virtuous."**

**- Chapter 36, Infinite Life Sutra**

In short, the meaning of this important passage is that the greatest good is to recite Namu Amita Buddha to the level of single-mindedness.

The biggest mistakes cultivators make nowadays is to seek the external instead of from within. We do this and do that—we feel that we need to read that sutra, donate to this cause or receive those precepts. We do this for a little while and that for a little while. Then we complain that the Buddha does not respond. The truth is that the fault lies with ourselves. We are not sincere and our senses still connect with the six kinds of dust. Hence, we think we are seeking the Buddha and Pureland, but our scattered efforts and thoughts are simply asking for the six kinds of dust.

However, if we achieve single-minded concentration in Amita Buddha, we become self sufficient and can no longer be bothered by attachments and aversions. With such Non-abidance, we will effortlessly display all of the Six Paramitas and Four Immeasurables without fail. This is because all virtues and good works naturally spring from one who has accessed the Buddha-nature.

This is the point that Venerable Hai Xian is trying to teach us. He did the humanly impossible and bore unbearable burdens during his 112 years of life. However, he did

not suffer even a hair's breadth worth of stress. This is because he found the inner bliss of the Buddha-nature while we seek false bliss and distractions from the outside. He never planned or examined any of his own actions since he had already transcended intent. He did so by reciting Amita Buddha's name to the levels of single-mindedness and profound concentration. By simply resisting all scattered thoughts, doubts and the temptations of the six kinds of dust during his first few years as a monk, he achieved Sagehood. Thus, everything he achieved afterwards simply flowed from his Buddha-nature.

Thus, the main lesson here is that we need to focus. As mentioned before, sincerely reciting the name of Amita Buddha represents cultivating Sila, Samadhi and Prajna all at once. Thus, we should strive to recite it always. We must not be distracted by mundane urges and doubts. Further, we should not feel the need to reinforce our Buddha recitation with other good deeds or practices. We should just diligently recite towards single-mindedness. Unwavering faith and concentration is the key to doing so. Fortitude is the shield that maintains our efforts.

*"the key to success is to cultivate one Dharma-door unceasingly"*

- Venerable Master Chin Kung

**Venerable Hai Xian Epitaph (Written by Venerable Master Chin Kung)**

賢公和尚，佛門榜樣。不事經懺，遠離利養。嚴持戒律，四眾欽仰。老實念佛，道在平常。淨土大經，諸佛祕藏。一句彌陀，甚深妙禪。百一十二，老當益壯。唯僧讚僧，法門興旺。弘普賢願，表法離障。續佛慧命，功德無量。自在往生，倒駕慈航。

**Venerable Sage and model of virtue, you are a beacon of light in the darkness. Despite hardships, you were never even once tempted by pomp and profit. Strictly adhering to the precepts, you are a model for both monks and laymen. With faith and sincerity, you recited the Buddha's name. Principles of the Way were reflected in your every move. The Dharma door of Pureland is the Buddha's highest wisdom. With the name of Amitabha, you found your Buddha-nature and dwelled in the highest Samadhi. Even as your age rose above one hundred, your strength only increased. With mutual praise, Buddhism will prosper. You have cultivated the vows of Samantabhadra and showed us the way pass karmic obstacles. You turned the great Dharma Wheel, reaped boundless merits and serenely achieved rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. You have fulfilled your Mahayana vows.**

## A FINAL WORD

It is said that human rebirth is rare and the proper Dharma is hard to meet. Hence, we must treasure our time here and diligently recite Namó Amita Buddha to the level of single-mindedness. At that level, the only thing on our minds should be one recitation after another. Such samadhi will allow us to meet Amita Buddha and be welcomed into Pureland, thereby ending all our pain and suffering.

Even if we cannot recite this Buddha name to single mindedness, we can still be reborn in Pureland if we let it all go and become mindful of Amita Buddha during our last moments—wishing for him to appear and take us to Pureland.

According to the Shurangama Sutra, we will suddenly see all the good and evil that we have done in this life during our moment of death. Moreover, the Earth Store Sutra also mentions that when people of this world are about to die, they are often in a haze and unable to concentrate. This is similar to how we involuntarily recollect our day in our dreams. Hence, this is why it is so important to regularly recite the name of Amita Buddha. Doing so will help us recollect his name during our moment of death, thereby allowing us to attain Pureland rebirth by being mindful of the Buddha at the last moment. Furthermore, the merits acquired will allow us to stay clear minded at the moment of death. This will ensure that our mindfulness will not be distracted by evil ghosts or manifestations of evil karma at that critical juncture.

Also, this is the reason why we need to recite the name of Amita Buddha to the dead and dying. Even if a person has died, it is likely that the consciousness has not yet left the body (it usually leaves 8-12 hours later). Hence, it is important to not disturb the body and to recite Amita Buddha's name to them during this time. This will allow their consciousness to remain calm and become mindful of the Buddha. Furthermore, the 26th Vow of Amita Buddha also states that those who merely perceive his name will have a splendid rebirth even if they do not leave the Samsara. As a person's hearing is the last faculty to fail, their consciousness can still hear for the full 8-12 hour period after their breathing stops.

In conclusion, we must recite the name of Amita Buddha continuously and through thick and thin. We may meet stress, anxieties and obstacles tomorrow, but we must never stop sincerely reciting his name. It is the solution to all of our problems. This Mantra will cut through all of our afflictions and troubles like a knife through warm butter.

Moreover, it is perfectly acceptable to recite the name of Amita Buddha in any language and variation. Lastly, it is our duty to turn the great Dharma Wheel. Thus, we should all strive to make the Buddha's words known to others whenever the opportunity presents itself. The merits derived from doing so will be without compare.

**Namo Amitufo!**

**Namo Amitufo!**

**Namo Amitufo!**

## MAHASTHAMAPRAPTA'S TREATISE ON PERFECT ENLIGHTENMENT THROUGH MINDFULNESS OF AMITAYUS

**As Mahasthamaprapta, a prince of Dharma, arose from his seat, the 52 Bodhisattvas who formed his august retinue immediately followed suit. He and his retinue proceeded to reverently prostrate before the Buddha. His Serene Highness then spoke the following to the assembly:**

**"In a time before time immemorial, a Buddha titled Infinite Light appeared in this world. He was the first of twelve Buddhas who emerged in the that kalpa. The last one was a Buddha whose glorious light outshined the majestic brightness of both the Sun and the Moon. Thus, he was known as the Brightness Upon the Sun and the Moon Buddha."**

**"That Buddha personally taught me the Mindfulness of Amitayus Samadhi. For example, if a father who adores his son should have a son who does not requite, then the son's back will always be turned on his father. However, if both father and son were to yearn for each other, and if they unceasingly cherish thoughts of each other, then not even death could separate them. They will be together for life after life like a shadow following the form. The Buddhas of the ten quarters are like the father. They constantly show tender concern towards sentient beings who rarely requite. If those sentient beings could instead single-mindedly hold the Buddha's name, they will surely meet the Buddha. The Buddha's hands are always extended, but it is up to you to grasp it."**

**"Furthermore, if a man were to habitually burn scented incense, his person will naturally exude fragrant aromas. Likewise, a man who is mindful of the Buddha's name will be adorned with the Buddha's infinite light and merit. Hence, it was through such mindfulness that I gained insight into the fact that all dharmas neither arise nor cease. Today in this world, I tirelessly exhort all to faithfully practice the Dharma-door of Pure Land. There is no better way to attain Perfect Enlightenment and the state of no outflows than by pure and unceasing mindfulness of Amitayus. Such Samadhi is the foremost."**



**Commentary:**

This treatise, which is the last paragraph of Chapter 5 of the Shurangama Sutra, is one of the five principle texts of Pureland Buddhism. It was added to the original four by Master Yin Guang during the early 20th century. In fact, it was later determined after Master Yin Guang's passing that he was actually Mahasthamaprapta manifesting in human form! Thus, this treatise represents the Buddha's timely gift of Dharma to us all. It is also the most important part of the Shurangama Sutra.

In this treatise, Mahasthamaprapta concisely explains the mechanics behind single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha's name. The example of the father and the son is a masterful choice of words as it explains the level of devotion required in a way that most people can relate to. If we (i.e. the son) can yearn for the Buddha (i.e. the father) as strongly as a father loves his child, we will certainly achieve single-mindedness.

Moreover, the deeper meaning of this treatise is that all roads lead to Amita Buddha. As we have discussed before, the Shurangama Sutra is only nominally about Zen and the Shurangama Mantra. In truth, it actually about Amita Buddha Pureland Buddhism. That is why there are so many hints of Pureland Buddhism in it.

In fact, each and every one of the 84,000 Dharma-doors were spoken by the Buddha to gradually convert sentient beings towards the Dharma-door of Amita Buddha's Pureland. For instance, in the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's commentary on the Shurangama Sutra, in the section that addresses the part of the Sutra where the Buddha states that he appears in different forms to teach different sentient beings, an excerpt goes:

**Sutra:**

***"If there are living beings who wish to be the Heavenly Lord, leader of heavenly beings, I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."***

**Commentary:**

*"If there are living beings who wish to be the Heavenly*

*Lord": this refers to the Christian God. They want to be the "leader of heavenly beings." They want to rule the heavens. "I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish. I will manifest as Shakra for that kind of living being." Shakra is the Heavenly Lord - God.*

*Did you know that the Holy Mother of Catholicism is Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva? Catholics believe in the Holy Mother, because they want to be born in the heavens. So Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests as a goddess to teach and transform them, enabling them to be born in the heavens. Of course, they will have to come back again from the heavens, but gradually they will make progress. Why does Gwan Yin manifest and speak a dharma to help people get born in the heavens? His ultimate aim is to get them to believe in the Buddha. But since at present their wish is to be born in the heavens, he teaches them how to get reborn there. When they return from there, they will eventually come to believe in the Buddha. Ordinary people feel that the time involved in this process is quite long, but actually in the Buddhas' eyes, it is a mere moment, a blink of an eye.*

*This method can be likened to that of parents who want their child to master an excellent profession, but whose child does not wish to study that profession. The parents comply and allow the child to study what he wishes, but after several false starts, he eventually winds up studying that excellent profession his parents suggested. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva's method for teaching and transforming living beings is to fulfill whatever wishes they might have. But the ultimate aim is always to bring living beings to the accomplishment of Buddhahood.*

Therefore, it should be clear by now that all the major religions were founded by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Since the respective audiences could not yet accept the Buddhadharma, the Buddhas and Sages spoke alternatives such as Christianity or Taoism instead. Eventually, they will progress up to Zen or the Flower Adornment Sutra. Finally, they will practice Pureland Buddhism. Hence, all religions are one and there are no grounds for discrimination or religious conflict. This is why the

Venerable Master Chin Kung donates generous portions of the offerings he receives to Catholic charities every month. While most people believe that merit making in Buddhism is based on meditation—generosity towards the poor is actually a major tenet of Buddhism. For instance, according to the Earth Store Sutra:

*"Moreover, Earth Store, in the future, leaders of nations, Brahmans, and others may have compassionate thoughts upon seeing the old, the sick, or women in childbirth, and may provide them with medicinal herbs, food, drink, and bedding so as to make them peaceful and comfortable. The blessings and benefits derived from doing that are quite inconceivable. For one thousand eons they will always be lords of the Pure Dwelling Heavens. For two hundred eons they will be lords in the Six Desire Heavens, and they will ultimately attain Buddhahood. They will never fall into the Evil Paths, and for hundreds of thousands of lives they will hear no sounds of suffering."*

Thus, if you look closely, the conduct of Catholic Saints clearly reflect the conduct of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Take Saint Jeanne Jugan as an example, she was the founder of the Little Sisters of the Poor—a Roman Catholic charity that cares for the impoverished elderly.

Jeanne Jugan (1792-1879) was a pious nun who spent her entire life dedicated to helping the poor and sick. During the winter of 1839, she came across an elderly, severely disabled and homeless woman named Anne Chauvin. Jeanne carried Anne back to her apartment and took her in—she even let her have the only bed while she slept in the attic. Jeanne continued and expanded her work with the help of her colleagues. Thus, the Little Sisters of the Poor congregation was born. Every day, they went door to door asking for donations of food, clothing and money for the elderly women under their care. In one incident—a young man slapped her across the face. Instead of reacting with anger, she calmly replied, "You gave that to me, now please give something to the elderly". Deeply moved by the sweetness of her response, the young man donated all the money he had towards her cause.

Although she had founded the congregation, she was not allowed to lead it. Instead, Abbe Auguste Le Pailleur—the appointed Superior General—deprived her of any significant roles and later forced her to retire. He then attempted to take credit for her work. Even when faced with such adversity, she simply replied, "You have taken my life's work from me, but I gladly give it to you".

In the Diamond Sutra, a passage of paramount importance goes:

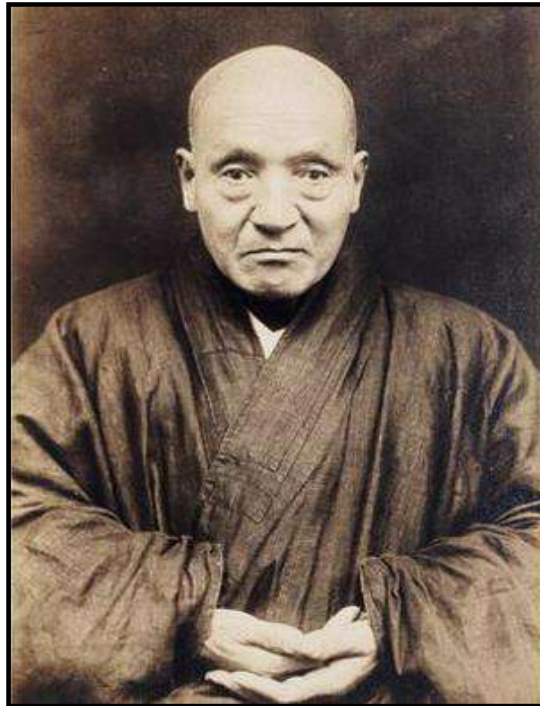
*"Subhuti, If a Bodhisattva practices generosity by donating precious metals and stones as numerous as there are sand grains in the Ganges, his merit would still be vastly inferior to the Bodhisattva who understands that the ego is false and all Dharmas are attained by forbearance."*

Hence, we can see that Saint Jeanne Jugan's conduct confirms fully with the part of the passage that is underlined (which defines the mentality of Mahabodhisattvas). She was selfless and showed forbearance always. She was not attached to prestige or even basic self interest. She simply did all she could to help the poor and needy. Such is the conduct of Guan Yin Bodhisattva.

Lastly, as all roads lead to Amita Buddha, we should all resolve to take the short cut and sincerely seek Pureland rebirth. By doing so, we will attain Bodhi within one life. Afterwards, we can simultaneously save innumerable sentient beings across the ten directions. If they seek the Dharma, we can explain it to them using the myriads of expedient devices at our disposal. If they need alms, we can furnish them with whatever they lack. For instance, when Shakyamuni Buddha was still a Bodhisattva, he once used his powers to retrieve a wish-fulfilling jewel for the purpose of allowing everyone on the entire continent of Jambudvīpa to benefit from endless treasures.

If we achieve rebirth in Pureland, we will instantly become Mahabodhisattvas with powers equal to that of Amita Buddha. Hence, there would be nothing we could not do to benefit each and every sentient being living across the ten quarters.

### PATRIARCH YIN GUANG'S EXHORTATION



**Patriarch Yin Guang (1861-1940)**

**"Whether we are layman or ordained, we must respect our superiors and show kindness to our subordinates. We must bear what others cannot bear and practice what others are too weak to cultivate. We must shoulder the burdens of other people and help others succeed in their cultivation."**

**"During solitary moments, we must self reflect and repent. However, we should never prattle about the mistakes or scandals of others."**

**"We must be mindful of Amita Buddha from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn. It makes no difference whether we are undertaking great feats or engaged in mundane daily chores, we must unceasingly recite the Buddha's name."**

**"When we are reciting—whether loudly, quietly or silently—we must refrain from entertaining false and wandering thoughts. There should not be a single thought which is not the Buddha's name in our minds. If false and wandering thoughts arise, dispel them immediately."**

**"Always feel remorse and be penitent. Even if we are skilled in cultivation, we must be humble and regard our own abilities as inferior. Never should we indulge in superbia."**

**"Instead of prying into the affairs or feuds of others, we should focus on ordering our own house. Furthermore, we should see only the merits of others, and not their faults or evils."**

**"For humility's sake, we must consider everyone else to be exalted Bodhisattvas—but ourselves as mere mortals."**

**"Those who observe these instructions will definitely achieve rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss."**

**BUDDHISM IS NONE OTHER THAN CULTIVATING VIRTUE,  
DISCARDING VICES AND PURIFYING THE MIND.**

**NAMO AMITABHA!**

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

This translation would not have been possible without Venerable Master Chin Kung's extensive Dharma lectures on Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra. Furthermore, this Sutra would have remained as unreachable as the stars if Master Chin Kung had not diligently promoted this Sutra during the last five decades. In fact, he is currently speaking a new series of lectures on this Sutra as we speak. Hence, no words could describe my immense gratitude towards his teachings and the opportunities he has given the world. I will also like to thank Hisao Inagaki for his excellent complete translation of the Ts'ao-Wei Dynasty version of the Infinite Life Sutra. The text served as an important inspiration and reference for this translation.

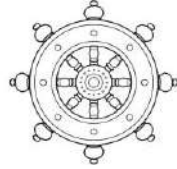
Furthermore, I wish to thank the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua for his commentaries on the Shurangama Sutra and all the past Sages and Buddhas who have made these Dharma teachings available for our benefit. Moreover, I also wish to thank an anonymous author who has created a full online translation of the Sutra text. It is available here: [zizhulintushu.com/e/action/ShowInfo.php?classid=10967&id=156213](http://zizhulintushu.com/e/action/ShowInfo.php?classid=10967&id=156213)

Everything written herein is known to us because of their noble efforts. If I have written anything good, it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants.

**Namo Amitufo!**







# THE BUDDHA'S AUGUR: THE GUANYIN SPIRITUAL RESPONSE ORACLE

觀世音菩薩感應靈課英文版

BRIAN CHUNG

作者：鍾佰晟

MAY 2015



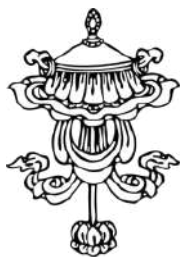
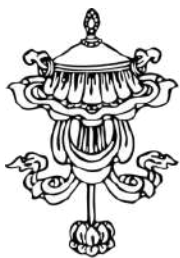
---

---

THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT

---

---

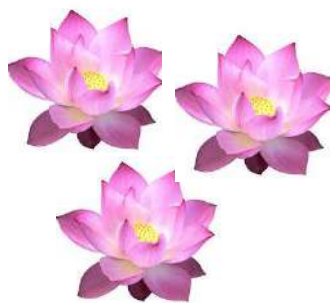


NAMO AMITA BUDDHA

南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



## CONTENTS

TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD.....	7
THE ORIGINS OF THE GUANYIN SPIRITUAL RESPONSE ORACLE.....	8
PATRIARCH YIN GUANG'S FOREWORD.....	9
PATRIARCH YIN GUANG'S INSTRUCTIONS.....	10
IMAGE OF GUANYIN BODHISATTVA.....	12
LIST OF LOTS.....	13
LOT DETAILS.....	15
THE WORKINGS OF KARMA AND FATE.....	47
THE POTENT MERITS OF NON VIOLENCE AND VEGANISM.....	54
AMITABHA MINDFULNESS, THE EPITOME OF THE DHARMA.....	69
HOW TO HELP THE DEAD AND DYING.....	96
HOW TO COUNTER OCCULT INFLUENCES, NEUTRALIZE GRAVE ILLNESSES, ELIMINATE EVIL KARMA & SAVE YOURSELF DURING EMERGENCIES.....	105
THE THREE GREAT BENEFITS OF FORBEARANCE.....	112
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRECEPTS.....	118
MASTER CHIN KUNG: ONE HUMANITY MANY FAITHS.....	138

---



---

## NO RIGHTS RESERVED

As the author of this text, it is my express intent that the entirety of this text be released into the Public Domain. I reserve no rights to this work. If the laws of a particular jurisdiction should make it impossible to reserve no rights, then I hereby grant permission to anyone who seeks to use and reproduce this work for any purpose.

*Brian Chung*

---



---

*"Anywhere a Buddha goes—whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet — people will be converted and brought towards the Way.*

*All the lands beneath the stars will be serene and harmonious.*

*The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be luminous.*

*Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm.*

*Plagues, intrigues and calamities will not occur.*

*Society will be prosperous and peaceful.*

*Soldiers and arms will be of no use.*

*Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished.*

*All will feel compelled to refine themselves with etiquette and deference.*

*Society will be free from thieves and bandits.*

*There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice.*

*The powerful will not exploit the weak.*

*Everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."*

**-Infinite Life Sutra**

### **DEDICATION OF MERIT**

**May the merits and virtues accrued from this work  
repay the kindness of my Mother, Father and Elders  
and relieve them from their sufferings.**



**May my Mother, Father and Elders  
bring forth the heart  
of understanding and compassion and,  
at the end of this life,**



**be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.**

*Only sincerity and deference can move Heaven and beget  
responses*

*-The Ancient Sages*

## TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

According to the Buddha, our current era is the Dharma-ending age. A time where liberation is hard and wrong views prevail. In the past, Arhats and enlightened Sages were a common sight and people could consult one in person at anytime. However, times have changed and the karmic obstacles of people today render it hard to find and meet Sages. In fact, just as the Buddha warns in various sutras, demons masquerading as good knowing advisors now abound across the world. These deviant people spread wrong views, slander the Dharma and promote greed, lust, religious intolerance, killing and capricious behavior under the guise of faith, reason or freedom. Thus, we live in uncertain, afflicted and confusing times ; pitfalls and opportunities for sloth and apathy are everywhere. Moreover, due to our scant stocks of merit, impermanence and karmic retributions often strike without warning, robbing us of even the chance to live a short life of peace and happiness.

Furthermore, imperfection and scarcity also torments us. If we have one thing, we often lack another. Some may have wealth but no health while others may have beauty but not wealth.

Thus, the purpose of The Buddha's Augur: The Guanyin Spiritual Response Oracle is to serve as a reliable and straightforward beacon of light for individuals and families to rely on in these turbid times. This book is intended to stop people from foundering among karmic retributions caused by ignorance and help them finally take control of their own lives and futures.

Thus, this book not only contains a full translation of Patriarch Yin Guang's Guanyin Spiritual Response Oracle, but also includes important sections on how to eradicate karmic retributions, illnesses and dangers, cultivate virtue, achieve liberation, acquire right views and how to spiritually help the dead and dying. All of the Buddha and Sages' highest and most practical words of wisdom have been synthesized into this book, ensuring that it will be able to serve as a comprehensive guide to help readers navigate through life and make beneficial correct choices.

Anyone who cultivates in accordance with the Dharma found herein will certainly be able to rectify their karmas, achieve their dreams and attain Bodhi!



## THE ORIGINS OF THE GUANYIN SPIRITUAL RESPONSE ORACLE

When the great Dharma Master Xuanzang embarked on his arduous pilgrimage to retrieve rare Buddhist texts and scriptures from India, he frequently consulted the Guanyin Spiritual Response Oracle. For he relied on it to gain insight into the fortunes and dangers he would meet during each new day.

In fact, it was Guanyin Bodhisattva who gave Xuanzang the dream that convinced him to begin the massive undertaking of retrieving and translating important Buddhist scriptures. To aid him, the Bodhisattva soon bestowed the Guanyin Spiritual Response Oracle onto him, along with instructions on how to use it.

At one point during his travels, he was almost killed and robbed by bandits, but he managed to escape unharmed because of this oracle. When he consulted it earlier that day, the Bodhisattva accurately warned him of the dangers he would face.

Therefore, we should not falsely consider this Dharma-door to be superstitious or against the Buddha's teachings. This method of divination is Guanyin Bodhisattva's gift to the world. As common people lack Dhyana Samadhi and transcendental powers, they are blind to the workings of their own karma. Driven by curiosity, many turn to fortune tellers or various methods of occult divination in order to know their future. This leads to various risks such as fraud, incorrect interpretations or possession by evil spirits and the like.

Therefore, out of compassion, Guanyin Bodhisattva bestowed the world with this oracle, so that everyone could benefit from his transcendental power of limitless foresight. Hence, whenever we are tormented by indecision, fears or dilemmas, we should consult this oracle. If we happen to receive an inauspicious lot, we must diligently recite Guanyin Bodhisattva's name. In Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, it is stated that such mindfulness can smash through lust, stupidity, dangers, karmic obstacles and all the causes and conditions of misfortune. Moreover, sincere recitation of his name will also allow merits to speedily accrue, thereby changing misfortune into fortune.

## PATRIARCH YIN GUANG'S FOREWORD

The benevolence that Guanyin Bodhisattva harbors for all sentient beings is indescribably great. Not even Heaven and Earth's parental love for all beings can match even a fraction of the Bodhisattva's limitless benevolence.

To those with scant or unripe roots of virtue, the Bodhisattva will help them accrue merits and amass causes for future enlightenment. To those who are able to achieve liberation in their present life, the Bodhisattva will manifest and speak Dharma to them. Like the radiant sun illuminating the skies and all under it, sentient beings of myriads of different inclinations, forms, fortunes and faiths all receive the bounty of the Bodhisattva's eternal spring. Whenever sentient beings yearn, the Bodhisattva responds. The Bodhisattva has no intentions of his own ; his heart is at one with that of all sentient beings. Even if the entire Dharma Realm were to yearn for help, the entire Dharma Realm will receive it.

The Bodhisattva, responding to the wishes of the people, gifted the Guanyin Spiritual Response Oracle to the world. This wonderful Dharma-door simultaneously acts as a popular method of divination and as a way to accrue merits ; just like if a child refuses good medicine, the parents will naturally mix it with sweets to make it more palatable.

Moreover, Guanyin Bodhisattva's name is like the legendary hangonko incense— anyone who simply perceives it in anyway will not only have their pending evil karma eradicated, but will also have their merits manifest instantly. Besides, those who promote this text are benefiting both themselves and the public. Thus, Upasaka Xu Ji Yu and his wife deserve special mention, for they have printed thousands of copies of this text in order to create causes for future enlightenment among the public. They have turned the Dharma Wheel and carried out the will of the Bodhisattva.

### **Translator's Notes:**

In the Buddha's Diamond Sutra, a famous gatha goes: "**The Buddhas' have no fixed Dharmas to speak ; all Dharma is Buddhadharma**" Hence, this is why the Buddha spoke 84,000 (innumerable) Dharma-doors for the benefit of all sentient beings. As, each sentient being has unique inclinations, goals, desires and habits, the Buddha speaks Dharma in accordance with these differing habits and wishes. Thus, the Guanyin Oracle is the Buddha's Dharma-door for those interested in divination.

## PATRIARCH YIN GUANG'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONSULTING THE ORACLE

Guanyin Bodhisattva hears the suffering and sorrow of all sentient beings and sends relief in response. Those who seek the blessings of the Bodhisattva in order to do good will receive it—all their endeavors will be successful. However, those who ask the Bodhisattva to help them accomplish evil designs will instead have their plans thwarted. This is to protect them from rebirth in the realms of suffering, where escape is difficult. Moreover, the Bodhisattva is supremely compassionate and harbors only true benevolence. Thus, he wishes to use this Dharma-door of the Guanyin Oracle to remove the doubts that prevent people from accepting the Dharma.

To consult the oracle, do the following:

- 1.) Prepare five pennies and wash them with clean water. Afterwards, dry them with a clean towel. Arrange all five coins to face either obverse side up or reverse side up. Prepare five small pieces of red paper and stick all of them onto either the obverse or reverse side of each coin. All pieces of red paper must be on the same side of each coin. Trim off any excess paper so that the coins remain completely round.
- 2.) Use black ink to write the following Chinese characters onto the red paper (one character per coin):

金   木   水   火   土

Metal   Wood   Water   Fire   Earth

- 3.) If you already have an image of Guanyin Bodhisattva, you should bow before it and reverently light good incense as an offering (if you do not have such an image or shrine, you can print out the image on page 12). Alternatively, you can bow before a printed copy of this book and reverently light good incense in front of it.
- 4.) Take the five coins and circle them over the burning incense for three times. Afterwards, sincerely contemplate your question or dilemma in your mind.
- 5.) **Once you have earnestly contemplated your question, you should sincerely recite Namo Guan Shi Yin Pusa for 1000 times or more.**

6.) Shake the coins in your hands to scramble them. Afterwards, toss them into the air and allow them to fall onto a hard surface.

7.) Select the matching lot based on the combination of the coins (see the List of Lots). For instance, if the coins show:

金   〇   〇   火   土

Then the answer to your question is Lot 22.

### **Important Notes:**

The reason that you need to recite the name of the Bodhisattva for at least a thousand times is because doing so proves your sincerity, and only sincerity can generate the purity of heart needed to beget an accurate response. Just like you cannot see your own reflection in volatile water, you cannot consult the Bodhisattva with a turbid mind. Furthermore, recitation also generates ample stocks of merit.

Furthermore, according to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, one thousand is a special number. For instance, if you sincerely read and recite any sutra for a thousand times, you will be able to acquire the foundational tranquility of heart necessary to attain sudden liberation. Afterwards, it is very likely that you will attain profound insight during your regular sutra recitations or when a seemingly random trigger event occurs.

**Lastly, many of the lots that make up the Guanyin Oracle indicate forthcoming rank and wealth. Rank and wealth naturally follow those who have done virtue. However, the Sages have said that: The petty and base are often wealthy ; the Sagely and kind live simple lives and are often devoid of wealth.**

**This is because the Sagely and kind voluntarily lead simple lives and give away any excess wealth to the needy. Moreover, they also decline to seek power. As the Buddha has said that wealth, lust, prestige, food and excessive sleep are the 5 roots of hellish rebirth, it is not hard to understand why the wise reject wealth and power while the greedy and petty exhaust their stocks of merit to seek it. Thus, if you manage to draw a good lot, the best course of action would be to let others enjoy your good fortune (i.e. charity) and continue to live simply yourself.**

# 南無大慈大悲觀世音菩薩



*Countenance as exalted as Tyrian purple and appearance as splendid as the finest gold ; adorned by hundreds of thousands of millions of divine lilies.*

*Robed in majestic white and complete with the thirty-two features of eminence.*

*Perfectly enlightened and dwelling easefully in Non-abidance.*

*Praised in unison by the wondrous universe as the Lord Paramount of Compassion.*

*Namo Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Benevolent, Spiritually Responsive, Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva Mahasattva.*

# LIST OF LOTS

金	木	水	火	土	LOT 1 .....	15
金	0	0	0	0	LOT 2 .....	16
0	木	0	0	0	LOT 3 .....	17
0	0	水	0	0	LOT 4 .....	18
0	0	0	火	0	LOT 5 .....	19
0	0	0	0	土	LOT 6 .....	20
金	木	0	0	0	LOT 7 .....	21
金	0	水	0	0	LOT 8 .....	22
金	0	0	火	0	LOT 9 .....	23
金	0	0	0	土	LOT 10 .....	24
0	木	水	0	0	LOT 11 .....	25
0	木	0	火	0	LOT 12 .....	26
0	木	0	0	土	LOT 13 .....	27
0	0	水	火	0	LOT 14 .....	28
0	0	水	0	土	LOT 15 .....	29
0	0	0	火	土	LOT 16 .....	30
金	木	水	0	0	LOT 17 .....	31
金	木	0	0	土	LOT 18 .....	32

金	0	水	火	0	LOT 19 .....	33
金	0	水	0	土	LOT 20 .....	34
0	木	水	火	0	LOT 21 .....	35
金	0	0	火	土	LOT 22 .....	36
0	木	水	0	土	LOT 23 .....	37
0	木	0	火	土	LOT 24 .....	38
0	0	水	火	土	LOT 25 .....	39
金	木	0	火	0	LOT 26 .....	40
0	木	水	火	土	LOT 27 .....	41
金	木	0	火	土	LOT 28 .....	42
金	木	水	火	0	LOT 29 .....	43
金	0	水	火	土	LOT 30 .....	44
金	木	水	0	土	LOT 31 .....	45
0	0	0	0	0	LOT 32 .....	46



## LOT DETAILS

### **Lot 1: The Lot of New Heights (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金 木 水 火 土

彩鳳臨丹闕。靈龜降吉祥。禍除福祿至。喜氣自洋洋。

**The prosperous phoenix mends every weakness ; the sacred tortoise bestows fortune and auspiciousness. Misfortunes are replaced by providence, and the air is filled with cause for celebration and revelry.**

#### **Meaning:**

The Lot of New Heights indicates honor, prosperity and cause for celebration. Moreover, it indicates that legal problems, lawsuits and conflicts will not happen ; any existing ones will be resolved favorably. The ill and bedridden will leave their sickbeds and be restored to health. Furthermore, you will become a honorable pillar of society. Those who are far away from home will return and reunite with their families. Misfortunes are eradicated and disasters dissipate ; bliss and inner peace will materialize imminently. In short, this lot represents celebration, wisdom, providence and honor.

#### **Translators Notes:**

Even though this lot gives you the right to enjoy yourself, you must still guard against hedonism and complacency. According to the Treatise of Response and Retribution, excess revelry, drunkenness, idleness and greed for meat dishes are all karmic transgressions. The treatise also states that sinners will have their lifespan shortened by periods of either 12 years (for serious offenses) or 100 days ; misfortunes, illnesses and so forth will also be meted out as punishments. Thus, it would be wise to handle good fortune with modesty and reasonable restraint.

## **Lot 2: The Lot of Positive Change (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金    〇    〇    〇    〇

舊跡宜更改。新事好進程。龍門魚化躍。凡骨作神靈。

**The stagnant will be reformed and new undertakings will progress unhindered.  
Fish will soar through the Dragon Gate and common men will become gods.**

### **Meaning:**

This Lot of Positive Change indicates increased income. As you will lack neither peace nor material security, now is a good time to amass merits and cultivate virtue. The sick and infirm will completely recover and leave their sickbeds. Everything will proceed in accordance with virtue and reason. Moreover, those who have travelled away from home will return to do profound and beneficial things. There will be no shortage of the necessities of life. Just like all flowers bloom during spring, even if a hundred virtuous undertakings are simultaneously carried out, no obstacles will be met and success is assured.

### **Translator's Notes:**

The phrase "common men will become gods" can also refer to spiritual attainments. For instance, the Buddha has said that those who make light offerings can achieve profound wisdom and the innate ability to discern between good and evil.

### **Lot 3: The Lot of Eventual Realization (Moderate Auspiciousness)**

○ 木 ○ ○ ○

動用因風便。求財可托人。喜逢戊己日。干事得完成。

**Observe the wind before setting sail ; finances will improve if carefully entrusted to someone else. Happiness and providence will arrive eventually.**

#### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Eventual Realization indicates that material security will become possible after careful planning and due diligence. The sick will take longer to recover and travelers will meet delays. Moreover, business and legal affairs may not proceed in accordance with reason. Aspirations will not be realized ; expectations may not be met.

However, when the time is right, much needed rain will fall and divine providence will manifest. In short, stagnation will occur before peace and comfort.

#### **Translator's Notes:**

If you draw this lot, it is recommended that you become vegan or vegetarian. The merits derived from respecting life are very powerful, thus, they can rapidly augment your stock of merits and speedily neutralize illnesses or other troubles.

### **Lot 4: The Lot of Smooth Sailing (Moderate-High Auspiciousness)**

○ ○ 水 ○ ○

船泛江湖內。難求獲寶多。更宜進大用。福至禍災除。

**A ship anchored in a river or lake cannot access the treasures of the deep blue sea. Use your wealth on charity and noble causes. Nevertheless, providence will be bestowed and misfortunes withdrawn.**

#### **Meaning:**

This lot indicates that anxieties will suddenly go away. While most lofty expectations will not be met, progress towards health and lasting comfort will occur. Happiness will be obtained by seeking the company of the wise and sagely. Just like receding rain clouds reveal clear skies and skeletal trees bloom upon the arrival of spring, modest and lasting comfort will be bestowed.

#### **Translator's Notes:**

While grand ambitions may not be reached, comfort and happiness will certainly be obtained. Thus, resources should not be squandered on vain attempts to gain love and glory, but should instead be used on amassing merits through good deeds.

## **Lot 5: The Lot of Flames (Moderate Auspiciousness)**

○ ○ ○ 火 ○

凶卦按南方。烈火不可擋。爭訟文書滯。時間有小殃。

**Fierce misfortune presses from the south ; infernos cannot be blocked. Legal proceedings will meet obstacles and time has small calamities in store.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Flames indicates fear and indecision. Initiating new projects, moving or expansion will result in defeat and retreat. The best course of action is to be conservative and maintain the status quo. **Wait and endure for now—providence will naturally manifest when the time is right.**

Furthermore, as demons and karmic creditors (the agents of misfortune) are attracted to meat and the impure aura that surrounds meat eaters, it would be wise to immediately adopt a vegan or vegetarian diet.

### **Translator's Notes:**

In the Earth Store Sutra, it is recommended that people keep an image of Earth Store Bodhisattva in a pure area in the southern part of their dwellings. If they do so and burn incense as offerings, they will reap great fortune, prolong the lifespan of their family members and eradicate evil karma. Thus, if you draw this lot, it is highly recommended that you heed this instruction. As the southern side is where the spirits of your karmic creditors linger, having a shrine to Earth Store Bodhisattva there will help ward off evil karma and settle karmic debts.

## **Lot 6: The Lot of Harvest (Moderate Auspiciousness)**

○ ○ ○ ○ 土

戊己本居中。先憂後喜逢。夫子值陳厄。目下不和通。

**Anxieties will come first but good fortune will follow. As misfortunes are either looming or present, you must act with modesty and caution.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Harvest means that obstacles presently impede your progress. Thus, do not wait until your coffers are broken, you must voluntarily spend amassed wealth on charity. Travelers and expatriates will remain away from home and the sick will find full recovery difficult to achieve. Whatever that is sought after will not be achieved. The time is simply not right. Thus, focus on being cautious of present danger or difficulty.

However, once this difficult period passes, an eternal harvest will dawn upon you, making misery a thing of the past.

Furthermore, in order to lessen or eliminate present difficulties, you should refrain from eating meat or slaughtering animals. Such abstinence will not only prevent evil stars and karmic creditors from approaching you, it will also speed up and multiply your pending good fortune.

## **Lot 7: The Lot of Extensive Progress (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金 木 〇 〇 〇

門戶興安泰。錢財漸漸昌。進身求望吉。疾病得安康。

**Prosperity and peace will dawn upon your household. Material security and virtuous aspirations will be realized. Even if diseases and illnesses are met, they will prove harmless.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Extensive Progress indicates lasting material security. Those travelling abroad will find treasures and success. Moreover, diseases and illnesses will do no harm. Legal proceedings or negotiations will play out in accordance with fairness and reason. This lot is also auspicious for marriages. Lastly, as such good fortune is due to your past good deeds, you must continue to replenish your stocks of merit by supporting Buddhist teachings and adopting a vegetarian or vegan diet.



## **Lot 8: The Lot of Great Assistance (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金   〇   水   〇   〇

所幹蒙天祐。門招百福臻。貴人相助力。獲福盡歡欣。

**Your virtuous endeavors will be blessed by Heaven ; myriads of auspicious events will find their way to your door. Moreover, assistance from friends and allies will arrive. You will harvest great fortune.**

### **Meaning:**

Just like burning good incense will attract blessings from auspicious gods, the Lot of Great Assistance indicates that friends and allies will offer important assistance in secret. As you will soon become a pillar of your community, you must work tirelessly to help the underprivileged, poor and needy. Those travelling will find material security and receive profound wisdom. Moreover, your family and descendants will all be united in joy and happiness.

As profound wisdom is the reward of having propagated the Dharma in lives past, you must diligently spread any profound and virtuous teachings you encounter to the public.

## **Lot 9: The Lot of Coming Peace (Moderate-High Auspiciousness)**

金   〇   〇   火   〇

目下如冬樹。枯衰未放花。看看春色動。一發盡生芽。

The view outside consists of trees made barren by winter. However, upon the arrival of spring, fresh leaves will begin to sprout.

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Coming Peace indicates hesitation. **Anxieties will come first but happiness and peace are guaranteed to follow.** Travelers and expatriates will return clad in brocade robes. However, illnesses are chronic and recovery will be sluggish. Nevertheless, marriages will be harmonious and glorious. Official business or legal proceedings will be mixed. On the other hand, relationships with most people will be agreeable.

As ill health, legal quarrels and anxieties are caused by the habit of eating meat and slaughtering animals, you should purify your karmic situation by becoming vegan and liberating life.

### **Lot 10: The Lot of Materializing Dreams (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金   〇   〇   〇   土

春日融和氣。衰殘物再興。更逢微細雨。德澤又還生。

Springtime will be graced with harmonious ambiance ; rebirth and revival will replace decline and injury. Moreover, a subtle and discerning rain will fall, completely replenishing the lake of merit.

#### **Meaning:**

This lot indicates great providence. Travelers and expatriates will return home clad in glory. Marriages and mergers will go smoothly. Furthermore, arguments and scandals will cease immediately. There will be an increase in social status and income. Moreover, If good deeds are done with diligence, inexhaustible bliss will materialize in the next life.

#### **Translator's Notes:**

If you receive this lot, you must follow the last line and diligently use your uniquely good fortune to do good deeds. This lot represents an exceptional opportunity to multiply one's stock of merits and gain unrivaled future rebirths.

### **Lot 11: The Lot of a Hundred Successes (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

○ 木 水 ○ ○

災散禍門閉。喜慶福門開。目前相逢處。須當得橫財。

**Disasters are dispelled and misfortunes are kept at bay ; joy, celebration and good fortune gush in through the front door. Windfalls will be encountered.**

#### **Meaning:**

The Lot of a Hundred Successes indicates that you are favored by superiors and admired by subordinates. Happiness occurs naturally and anxieties become non-existent. Respectability and material necessities will come on demand. Like a deprived seedling suddenly bestowed with ample rainwater, divine providence arrives as rapidly as a boat sailing downstream amid favorable winds. Moreover, life will be peaceful and devoid of harm.

#### **Translator's Notes:**

As this is a highly auspicious lot, you must not forget to diligently do good deeds if you draw this one. Only by continuously planting merits will your good fortune last across lifetimes.

## **Lot 12: The Lot of Peace and Prosperity (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

○ 木 ○ 火 ○

進用多隨意。寒儒衣錦歸。前程春風霽。散步賞芳菲。

**Advancement occurs naturally and in accordance with one's expectations. The prestigious symbols of office are finally bestowed. The future is as pleasant as a delightful spring breeze. Strolling easefully in the garden, one admires the fragrant blossoms.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Peace and Prosperity indicates blessed advancement. Positions of regional or national importance will be bestowed upon you. Moreover, friends and allies, all harboring high hopes for you, will support your many initiatives to benefit the public and promote mercy. You will soon become an exalted pillar of society. Moreover, there will soon be excess wealth to practice generosity with. You will shine like the gleaming august moon that illuminates the entire universe.

### **Translator's Notes:**

According to the Treatise on Response and Retribution, the virtuous become cautious when they receive favor. As this lot indicates that you will soon become the favorite son and see a large elevation in your status, you must never betray the public trust. With deference and virtue, you can rise to Buddhahood. However, if you abuse your position, then remember that the higher you rise the harder you fall.

### **Lot 13: The Lot of Strenuousness (Extreme Inauspiciousness)**

○ 木 ○ ○ 土

水中現明月。見影不見形。錢財多失散。謹慎得安寧。

**The water harbors a reflection of the gleaming moon, but only a vague silhouette could be seen. Wealth is lost and scattered. Peace and comfort can only be obtained through care and caution.**

#### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Strenuousness indicates that plans and initiatives will meet failure and sighs. Wealth will be scattered and assets lost. Moreover, you will experience social setbacks and relationships will be spoiled. You will have to contend against the sly and petty. Thus, the best course of action is to be conservative and cautiously guard your current position. Your time will eventually come. Nevertheless, in order to secure prosperity and happiness, you must diligently offer incense to images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

#### **Translator's Notes:**

While this lot is indeed very unfavorable, it also reveals a potent remedy. According to the Earth Store Sutra:

***“Moreover, Earth Store, in the future, good men or women, upon encountering images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, or Wheel-Turning Kings, may give gifts or make offerings to them. Such persons will obtain limitless blessings and will always enjoy supremely wonderful bliss among people and gods. If they can dedicate that merit to the Dharma Realm, their blessings and benefits will be beyond compare.”***

Thus, any one who receives this lot should diligently change his fate by making sincere offerings of light, flowers, incense, fruits, vegan foods, valuables, pure water and or canopies to images or statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

## **Lot 14: The Lot of Peace and Quiet (Moderate Auspiciousness)**

○ ○ 水 火 ○

動用不安寧。經營事不成。退身方可吉。守分禍潛形。

**Initiatives will lead to disturbances ; business affairs will not be successful.**

**However, by withdrawing, fortune can be obtained. Maintain the status quo and misfortunes will remain dormant.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Peace and Quiet indicates that you should maintain the status quo and act conservatively. Remain modest and avoid showing off. Caution and frugality will lead to peace and harmony. You must put aside ambitions and remain in your current station ; simply go with the flow. Furthermore, any effort to amass great wealth will be in vain. In order to neutralize disasters and misfortunes, it is imperative to regularly recite Namó Amita Buddha.

### **Translator's Notes:**

In the Contemplation Sutra, it is mentioned that eight billion eons worth of heavy evil karma is eradicated by each single utterance of Namó Amita Buddha. Hence, there is no better way to rectify our karmic situation than through sincere and habitual mindfulness of Amita Buddha's name.



### **Lot 15: The Lot of Obstacles (Extreme Inauspiciousness)**

○ ○ 水 ○ 土

衰木逢春少。孤舟遇大風。動身無所托。百事不亨通。

**The tree withers and spring disappoints. Like a lone boat blown around by fierce winds, no opportunities exist and nothing done meets success.**

#### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Obstacles indicates that the avenues to wealth and prestige are blocked. Aspirations will not be realized. The only course of action is to be content with current position. If you entertain anxieties, things will only get worse. Increases in rank or wealth will not happen ; prized steeds or luxurious fur become distant dreams. Therefore, you must live a life of simplicity and refrain from seeking forcefully. Furthermore, pray to Heaven and ask the Guanyin Bodhisattva for providence ; regularly recite his name and quietly do good deeds within your power.

#### **Translator's Notes:**

According to Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way, good deeds done anonymously or with a low profile brings multitudes of blessings and speedily eradicates past sins. Thus, if you draw this lot, you should keep a low profile and diligently cultivate mindfulness and virtue without boasting or demanding recognition.

### **Lot 16: The Lot of the Rising Sun (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

○ ○ ○ 火 土

日出照四海。光輝天下明。進身和合吉。百事自然成。

**The rising sun shines brightly across the Four Seas. Its glorious light illuminates everything under the skies. Advancing harmoniously under auspicious conditions, success occurs naturally for all things.**

#### **Meaning:**

The Lot of the Rising Sun indicates the absence of discord. Thus, peace and auspiciousness naturally pervades. Be bold and advance forward to deserved success. Travelers and expatriates will meet no hindrances. Legal proceedings will play out in accordance with fairness and reason. Moreover, this lot also indicates material security and blessings. You will also bask in esteem and bliss. By reading sutras and reciting Amita Buddha, lasting peace and prosperity will be ensured.

**Lot 17: The Lot of Pending Merriment (Moderate-High Auspiciousness)**

金 木 水 〇 〇

病散身安泰。官事只可和。前程宜守舊。災禍自消磨。

**Diseases and illnesses are dispersed ; tranquility and health are bestowed. Lawsuits will be resolved. For now, maintain current position. Calamities and misfortunes will wither away by themselves.**

**Meaning:**

The Lot of Merriment indicates bittersweet good fortune. Everything will turn out alright. However, lie low and do not contend or protest. By exercising forbearance and patience, calamities and misfortunes can be eradicated. Right now, the virtuous and upright are weak while the petty revel in their arrogance and shrewdness. Just like flora must endure winter before spring allows them to exude their fragrances, you must hide in your flower bud and wait for the wicked to fall on their own. Afterwards, you will bloom.

**Translator's Notes:**

The most important advice here is patience. Even if the abuses or behavior you see make your blood boil, you must still exercise forbearance. Nothing burns through karmic obstacles like the virtue of patience and forbearance. If you decide to fight and protest, you will only be swapping blessings for evil karma. Quietly build up your virtues and eventually, the wicked will have nothing but karmic retributions while you will be flush with merit.

### **Lot 18: The Lot of Indecision (Extreme Inauspiciousness)**

金 木 〇 〇 土

此卦恍惚多。財帛暗消磨。婚姻反成害。人事不諧和。

**There is much absent-mindedness. Wealth slips away and marriages become harmful. Social relations are not harmonious.**

#### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Indecision indicates the lack of success for all matters. Business and commerce will cause worry. Those you have shown great kindness to may repay your benevolence with cruelty. You must guard against hostilities initiated by petty people. Furthermore, speak with great caution in order to avoid arguments and contention. Do not be greedy for fame and profit as both are unattainable. However, just like how autumn ends the storms of summer and gives rise to the clear luminous moon, patience will eventually yield for you peace and comfort.

Until then, cultivate virtue, speak kindly and practice veganism. The resulting merits will keep you safe.

### **Lot 19: The Lot of Good Harvest (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金   〇   水   火   〇

豐富時時進。錢財格格高。松筠欺雪露。蘭檜出蓬蒿。

**Abundance and prosperity becomes the norm. Your good fortune is as majestic as a tall pine tree adorned with white snow and as unique as a radiant blue flower among bland vegetation.**

#### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Good Harvest indicates that the Three Gods of Auspiciousness will bestow blessings. Plentiful years, material abundance and a prosperous family is your lot. New heights will be reached and expectations exceeded. Travelers will reach their destinations unhindered. The sick will recover even without medical assistance. Scandals and arguments will sink away and disappear. If you can tirelessly recite Namo Amita Buddha, you will rise to a lofty state.

## **Lot 20: The Lot of Attaining Prosperity (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金   〇   水   〇   土

高明居祿位。籠禽得放生。動容招財寶。更宜向遠行。

**You are wise and deserving of wealth and rank. Like a soaring dragon, be proactive and you will find treasures. Travel far and seek progress.**

### **Meaning:**

This lot represents that the time for advancement has arrived. Do not procrastinate or hold onto the status quo. Your destiny demands that you do great things for the benefit of the public and the underprivileged. Moreover, by making long journeys to see wise men and true Sages, happiness will be obtained. Resources will come on demand and the amount will be in accordance with your expectations. Furthermore, do not let paranoia or a tendency towards being suspicious hold you back. Thank Heaven, thank Earth and thank the gods. Show your gratitude for blessings bestowed by burning fine incense and offering lights.

## **Lot 21: The Lot of Prosperity & Fortune (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

○ 木 水 火 ○

福祿得安強。聲名自進昌。遂心獲大吉。萬里好風光。

**Providence and blessings materialize unhindered. Your reputation advances and great bliss arises on demand. Even if you travel for tens of thousands of miles, your esteem and virtuous repute would still precede you.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Prosperity & Fortune indicates advancement and promotion. Misfortunes retreat and give way to boundless providence and blessings. Unbridled happiness will be attainable. You will soon hold the public trust and become a pillar of the community. Moreover, all of your virtuous desires will be within reach. Travelers and expatriates will return home clad in success. Of the thirty-two lots, this one is the best.

### **Translator's Notes:**

This lot is considered the best of the best. Hence, if you receive this lot, you must work hard to progress yourself spiritually. By amassing merits while enjoying the pinnacle of success, untold heights can be reached. As you are esteemed by the public, the most effective way for you to gather merits would be to spread rare and exalted Buddhist teachings such as the Dharma-door of Amitabha.



## **Lot 22: The Lot of Clarity (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金   〇   〇   火   土

明月正當天。清光午夜圓。纖毫雲翳息。萬里得凝然。

**The luminous moon shines prominently in the sky ; its clear light forms a gleaming circle in the darkness. As the skies are clear for thousands of miles, no clouds obstruct the moon's elegant and velvety form.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Clarity indicates that while the past may have been dark, the future is bright. There is good wealth luck and business activities will yield profit. In short, it will be smooth sailing from now on. Furthermore, lawsuits, legal proceedings and verbal conflicts will scatter and disappear. The sick will gradually return to health and all family members will be safe, prosperous and happy. Lastly, purple smoke will arise from your incense burners (i.e. heavenly blessings).

As all good fortune is the result of past merits, you must increase your charitable contributions now that you have the ability to do so.

### **Lot 23: The Lot of Delays and Barriers (Extreme Inauspiciousness)**

○ 木 水 ○ 土

羸馬登途遠。饑人去路長。進身皆不吉。凡事可消詳。

**Like a lean horse on a long journey, a hungry man cannot travel far.**

**Advancement is not auspicious and endeavors will face delays.**

#### **Meaning:**

This lot represents obstructions and hindrances. Everything you do will encounter delays. Neither journey afar nor leave your hometown. Your desires for wealth will not be fulfilled. Furthermore, arguments will escalate into legal proceedings and lawsuits. Take precautions against illnesses and threats to your health. You must sincerely make offerings of light, incense or flowers to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in order to obtain peace and dispel misfortunes.

## **Lot 24: The Lot of Glory (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

○ 木 ○ 火 土

三家俱養性。始元得共生。果隨心造化。萬事自然成。

**The three houses cultivate virtue in unison ; all peacefully coexist. Fruits ripen on demand and there will not be even one failure among ten thousand successes.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Glory indicates prestige. As you have the ability to be a virtuous official or executive, you should accept appointments when they are inevitably offered to you. However, keep a low profile before you are appointed. Aspirations will be realized and expectations met. Furthermore, everything you do will be successful. The sick will speedily and fully recover. If there are legal proceedings, they will cause neither anxieties nor doubts. Needless to say, you will never lack the necessities of life. As you are now flush with divine providence, do not forget to live frugally and donate regularly to charity. Good deeds will bring about lasting prosperity.

## **Lot 25: The Lot of Dense Blessings (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

○ ○ 水 火 土

離別重相見。不知事盡通。所求皆隨意。身樂得從容。

**You will be happily reunited with those dear to you. The unknown will become known. Whatever you wish for will be attained. Leisurely bliss is your lot.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Dense Blessings indicates extreme good fortune and the lack of anxieties. You will enjoy peace, bliss, harmony, delight and leisure. Trade, business and investments will go smoothly. Scandals and verbal conflicts will disappear. Moreover, those who have been separated for extensive periods of time will happily reunite. Lastly, you should use your newfound blessings to help the less fortunate and reunite the separated.

## **Lot 26: The Lot of Lasting Success (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金 木 〇 火 〇

年來少災害。先祖積陰騭。若言幹辦事。皇天相助力。

**Misfortunes are few and sparse. As your forefathers have accumulated yin virtue, the Jade Emperor will bless all your endeavors.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Lasting Success indicates complete success in all matters. Boundless happiness and bliss will be enjoyed by your household. Advance forward with virtuous intentions. Travelers will soon reach their destinations ; those who you wish to meet or reunite with will soon visit you. Furthermore, scandals and arguments will be eradicated. Misfortunes disappear ; lasting providence materializes.

### **Translator's Notes:**

"Yin virtue" refers to good deeds done selflessly and without desire for quid pro quo, loyalty or fame. In Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way, it is mentioned that if your ancestors had accumulated yin virtue, you will enjoy their surplus merits. Hence, if you receive this lot, you must work hard to repay the kindness of your ancestors by diligently doing good deeds and encouraging others to do good. Moreover, you must impart the wisdom of the Sages to your children so that they will grow up to be good men and women. Lastly, in order to end the repetitive cycle of killing and vengeance that results from eating meat, you must become vegetarian or vegan.

## **Lot 27: The Lot of Cornucopia (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

〇 木 水 火 土

霖雨禾苗潤。何愁不廣收。隨心得所以。無喜亦無憂。

**Timely rains nourish the crops ; a bountiful harvest is assured. Whatever that is wished for will naturally be attained. Thus, maintain a heart of equanimity**

### **Meaning:**

The effect of this lot is like how spring causes withered flora to bloom and how timely rains restore skeletal branches to lushness. The nine types of unnatural deaths and every kind of misfortune will never happen. All scandals and causes for misery will exit your life. Moreover, unbridled bliss and esteem will fall onto your lap. Accomplishment, blessings and providence will accompany your every virtuous endeavor.

### **Translators Notes:**

The nine types of unnatural deaths refers to:

- 1) Death by illnesses through either lack of care or lack of successful cure.
- 2) Death at the hands of the legal system.
- 3) Death after being robbed of life essence by evil spirits.
- 4.)Death by fire.
- 5.)Death by drowning.
- 6.)Death caused by being killed by wild beasts.
- 7.)Death caused by falling from heights.
- 8.)Death by poison or evil incantations.
- 9.)Death by starvation.

Furthermore, as long life and good health are the fruits of life liberation and vegetarianism, you should diligently amass more merit in these areas in order to multiply and prolong your blessings.

## **Lot 28: The Lot of Development (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金 木 〇 火 土

蚌中珠自現。石內玉爭妍。進身求望吉。凡庶作神仙。

**The mussels reveal their precious pearls and the majestic jade concealed within stone finally sees the light of day. It is an auspicious time for you to advance and pursue your dreams. Moreover, mere mortals can now become Immortal Sages.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Development indicates that you have enough merits to reach the lofty heights of great prominence. Coronets, purple robes and ivory batons—the symbols of ministerial office—will be bestowed upon you. As long as your policies represent mercy and humane kindness, you to be loved and esteemed by all. Furthermore, the sick will recover quickly and the necessities of life will be plentiful. If you can diligently rectify your heart and sincerely recite Namo Amita Buddha, you will be able to eradicate all doubts and make great spiritual progress.



## **Lot 29: The Lot of Heavenly Blessings (Extreme Auspiciousness)**

金 木 水 火 〇

征戰逢威力。旌旗引駕歸。功成名位就。門戶見光輝。

**Righteous struggle will be reinforced with power and strength. You will return in triumph as your banners flap victoriously in the air. Exaltation and renown will be achieved. Your household and family name will be adorned with glory.**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Heavenly Blessings indicates great providence. Because of your merits, heavenly blessings will be bestowed upon you. Moreover, you will receive assistance from friends and allies. You will enjoy unmatched esteem and public adoration. Furthermore, misfortunes and the like will be completely eradicated. You will live in leisurely peace and your heart will be filled with bliss. As your coffers will soon be overflowing with gold and jade, you must repay Heaven's kindness by diligently practicing generosity and charity.

### **Lot 30: The Lot of Later Bliss (Moderate-High Auspiciousness)**

金 ○ 水 火 土

離水得到岸。過橋獲度安。重重憂險阻。蕩蕩自心寬。

**Leaving the water, you come ashore. Like a man crossing the bridge to safety, the various anxieties that have plagued you will eventually be replaced by leisure and happiness.**

#### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Later Bliss indicates that your heart is currently gripped by anxieties. What you seek will not come easily and lofty aspirations for wealth and power will not materialize. Even though you now feel obstructed by various hindrances, you will gradually see an increase in your fortunes. Soon, the signs of divine providence will become clearly visible.

#### **Translator's Notes:**

As fortune can be changed by cultivating virtue, forbearance and charity, you should diligently do so. The resulting good karma will help reduce the wait time, speedily melt through karmic obstacles and augment your stocks of merit.

### **Lot 31: The Lot of Setbacks (Extreme Inauspiciousness)**

金 木 水 〇 土

迢迢途路遠。看看日墜山。憂心無可託。所作事艱難。

**The road is long and arduous ; the sun disappears behind the mountains.**

**Anxious and without hope, whatever you do will encounter difficulty.**

#### **Meaning:**

This lot indicates setbacks and delays, akin to a carriage mired in the mud. Like a long arduous journey to a far flung destination, the sun sets before you could arrive. There is no hope, no relief and no assistance. Furthermore, little help from acquaintances will be forthcoming and efforts to gain wealth will be in vain. The best course of action is to rectify your karmic situation by sincerely reciting Namó Amita Buddha. Heaven is merciful and will protect those who sincerely embark upon the path of virtue.

## **Lot 32: The Lot of Extinction (Extreme Inauspiciousness)**

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

塵暗秦時鏡。珉含卞氏瓊。如屈石窟內。何日見光明。

**Thick dust deprives the mirror of fortune of its shimmer. Priceless jade was once dull stone. You are like a gem in the rough, when will you decide to shine?**

### **Meaning:**

The Lot of Extinction indicates doubts and anxieties. Arguments, scandals, illnesses and misfortunes may appear. Your aspirations will not be attained ; your expectations will not be met. Thus, you must be conservative, live simply and maintain the status quo. Furthermore, you must hereafter do good deeds and study the sutras. By doing so, you are polishing your karmic slate and changing your fortune for the better.

### **Translator's Notes:**

According to Venerable Hsuan Hua, those who **regularly make offerings to and bow before an image of Earth Store Bodhisattva** will enjoy numerous benefits. One of them is that all their dreams will come true:

*"Fifth, they will easily obtain what they want...Those in the present may enjoy benefits and longer lives, but that is other people. I do not gain anything by it. Now here is something that is good for you. Your wishes come true. For example, one thing that most people think is most critical may be a man or a woman's hope for a good spouse. He or she will get their wish. This is an issue for laypeople. What about monastics? They will be good monks and nuns, getting their wish. If you say, "I'm not interested in any of these." Find something that interests you and the related wishes will come true."*

### **- Ven. Master Hsuan Hua's Commentary on the Earth Store Sutra (Chp.11)**

Thus, even though this lot is perhaps the worst, hope is still right around the corner. Diligently do as the sutras instruct and your fortune will change in a blink of an eye.

## THE WORKINGS OF KARMA AND FATE

The following is an important excerpt on the workings of karma from Venerable Master Chin Kung's commentary on Liao Fan's Four Lessons (a real life account of a man who changed his fate through good deeds):

Master Yun-Gu completely accepted the concept of predestination. However, we can change our own destiny and thus we create it. Buddhism is not about predestination. It is about recreating destiny. But, we can only depend on ourselves to do this, to become awakened. Nobody else can change our destiny for us.

"Destiny is created by ourselves," and "We seek our own good fortune". Since Mr. Liao-Fan was an intellectual, he knew much about the teachings of Confucius and so the master cited principles from the Book of Songs and the Book of History to enlighten him. Master Yun-Gu understood these teachings and confirmed them to be important and true.

**In the Buddhist teachings, it is written that if we wish for and seek wealth, position, a son, a daughter, long life, we can attain them. Since lying is one of the greatest offenses in the Buddha's teachings, we can be assured that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have no reason to deceive us.**

In Buddhism, it said that, "In seeking wealth, one will attain wealth. In seeking children, one will attain children". Even if we were not meant to have any children in this life, upon practicing good deeds we can have a child. "In seeking long life, one will attain long life". Mr. Liao-Fan was only meant to have a short life, was supposed to die at fifty-three. By cultivating according to the teachings whatever we seek, we will attain. Buddhism encourages us to create our own destinies rather than be constrained by them.

Living Buddha Master Zhang Jia said that, "In Buddhism, all our sincere pleas shall be answered". He elaborated further. Some people are unable to get what they want. Why? They did not accord with the teachings. If we understand the principles and methods, and have sought something in accordance with the teachings, then we are assured of receiving a response to our request. If we do not receive the desired response after having accorded with the teachings, it is due to our karmic obstacles. Once we have successfully eradicated these karmic obstacles, we will be

able to gain the desired results. As Master Zhang Jia said, there is nothing we cannot receive once we seek it properly.

Once we understand the fundamental principles, we will understand that "everything in this world and beyond arises from our minds and changes due to our perceptions". If we seek to become Buddhas, we will become Buddhas. If we seek to become heavenly beings, we will become heavenly beings. Everything accords with the mind." The Flower Adornment Sutra tells us that, "We should observe the nature of the Dharma Realm as everything is created by the mind". Therefore, the way of seeking is to accord with the principle that everything arises from our mind, is changed by our perception, our consciousness.

A most suitable and perfect method is the teachings of the Buddha. If we were to seek youth, health, eternal life in accordance with these teachings, can we attain them? Certainly! Master Yun-Gu only taught Mr. Liao-Fan some of the knowledge. Because Mr. Liao-Fan was not very ambitious and only sought worldly fame, wealth and prestige, the master only taught him this limited part.

The master told him that lying is one of the worst offenses in Buddhism. There are four fundamental precepts or rules: no killing, stealing, lying or sexual misconduct. Since, no lying is one of the fundamental precepts, how could the Buddha lie, how could he deceive us? Thus, it is the truth when the master told him that whether seeking children, wealth or long life, all could be obtained. As Mr. Liao-Fan had strictly practiced by following the master's guidance, he obtained what he sought.

**I then said I had heard that Mencius once said "Whatever is sought can be attained. The seeking is in ourselves". This refers to inner qualities such as virtue, responsibility and kindness. These are all qualities we can work toward. However, when it comes to outside factors such as wealth, fame and prestige, how can we seek to attain them? The Master replied that Mencius was correct, but that I had misinterpreted his meaning.**

Enhancing our inner qualities to become sages and virtuous people is within our control. But how do we seek fame, wealth and prestige? These are external commodities and are also attainable. Whatever we do not have, such as fame or wealth, we can attain by seeking. So it would seem to be destined. Because if we are not destined to have something how could we seek it? This follows most people's understanding of destiny, a constant in predestination. The constant is the cause

that we have created in our past lives and the result that we should receive in this life. We do not yet know that there are variables within the constants, that the results will change with the addition of variables. Indeed fame, wealth, and prestige are attainable by us.

**Master Yun-Gu said that Master Hui-Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of the Zen School taught "All the fields of merit are within one's own heart. If one seeks from the true mind within, one can be in touch with all one wishes for". By seeking inside ourselves, we will not only attain the inner qualities of virtue, responsibility and kindness, but we can also attain wealth, fame and prestige. To be able to attain both on the inside and on the outside is beneficial to our reward.**

Since ancient times in China, The Platform Sutra, the Diamond Sutra and the Surangama Sutra have been acknowledged as eminent literary works. The eloquent Platform Sutra was written by a Chinese Patriarch, thus to the Chinese it is particularly important. We cannot think of it as solely a sutra of the Zen School. It is an overview of Buddhism as a whole and also could be said to be Master Hui-Neng's report of what he had learned through his study and practice.

Whether attaining something outside of ourselves such as material objects or inside ourselves such as virtues, we still need to seek from inside, from the mind, not from the outside. It would be incorrect to seek from the outside. Why? The outside factor is a constant so it does not change. The mind is a variable so it is not constant, it changes.

For twenty years, Mr. Liao-Fan did not have wandering thoughts, thus, his mind could be considered as having been pure. Not knowing of the variables, his mind accorded completely with the constants. Thus, the twenty years of his life were exactly as Mr. Kong had predicted, everything occurred without the slightest deviation. This was because he did not understand the principle of variables.

Master Yun-Gu taught the principle that "the seeking is in ourselves". virtue, morality, kindness and responsibility are on the inside, they are the cultivation of virtuous conduct. Fame, wealth and prestige are on the outside, they are the enjoyments in life. To be able to receive both kinds of benefits is invaluable. As is said in the Flower Adornment Sutra, "Not to be hindered in the matter of existing things or reality principles", is the ultimate and perfect enjoyment, the great perfection

of both the inside and the outside. It is when everything is going as we wish. It is when we are satisfied with everything. It is to be liberated. It is to do all that is benevolent, all that is noble as we wish. If we cannot attain such wonderful results then no one would want to practice Buddhism.

Buddhism is neither negative nor passive, it is eminently practical. Nowadays, there is nothing more practical than the practice of Buddhism for it addresses reality, addresses something truly attainable. It is crucial that we understand the importance of Buddhism to derive the benefits from it. The truth is that people have misunderstood Buddhism and thus have missed these benefits. If we are able to personally experience them then we will know that of all teachings, Buddhism is a most remarkable and beneficial education. It is definitely not outdated and is as appropriate now as it was three thousand years ago. It is fitting for all people whether in the east or in the west.

**Master Yun-Gu then told me that if one cannot reflect inside one's own heart but instead blindly seeks fame, fortune and long life from outside sources, although one may pursue them by using intelligence, one can only attain at most what destiny had entitled one to. To do otherwise, one might lose both inner purity and what one was predestined to have. Then this seeking will have been in vain.**

This is pertinent for our world today. Can everyone attain what they are seeking? No. If we attain something it is because we were destined to have it. Only when we receive what we were not destined to have, can it be said that we have gained what we sought. It does not count when we receive what we were supposed to have for we would have attained it without having intentionally sought it.

For example, someone tells us that investing in the stock market is very profitable because they made millions of dollars a year in it. This person simply gained what he or she was supposed to gain. Others who are not destined to make money will simply lose it in the stock market. Not everyone profits from it. If every investor profits, then who loses? Likewise, money won from gambling is something the gambler was meant to have. Even the thief was meant to have what was stolen. If it had not been destined, then he would not have been successful in stealing it.

The ancients understood this, thus they said that, "A person of noble character and integrity is happy to be a noble person, but it is not worth the effort for a bad



person to be bad". Why? They will not be able to escape destiny, the constant. If we could just really understand the principles then all of us would be content with what we have. In this way, we will enjoy a fulfilling life, society will be stable, the world will be peaceful and there will be no more conflicts, no more wars.

Buddhism teaches us to seek for something not destined in our lives, not within the constant. What we are able to attain from seeking comes from the variable. How do we seek? From inside. This is crucial in our world today. Today, we are unable to seek awakening and to develop great virtue from the inside. Why? We do not yet understand. We seek from the outside. We plan and scheme everyday. But in seeking, we need to follow the right path. For even if we have the method, the plan, the means then what? In attaining, we merely attained what we were supposed to attain. Very simple. If we were not supposed to have it, we would not get it. All that we have attained was destined, was the constant. Mr. Liao-Fan understood there was a constant so he did not worry, he did not use various improper ways to seek. He knew his own destiny. He knew that to give rise to wandering thoughts, or to use whatever means possible was doomed to fail if it was not supposed to be.

"To be at a loss, inside and outside". What is the inside? The impure mind. How would we not give rise to afflictions, when our seeking on the outside is frustrated? For twenty years Mr. Liao-Fan conformed to Mr. Kong's predictions. Consequently, he did not lose the inside, he lost the outside. Because he did not think of anything, did not seek anything from the inside but maintained a state of contentment and purity of mind. Everything on the outside is controlled by fate. Everything on the inside is controlled by us.

Average people who fought tooth and nail to seek things from the outside would find that their knowledge and experience were incomparable to those of Mr. Liao-Fan. He had achieved perfect peace of mind. Ordinary people end up with afflicted and unsettled minds. Whatever they attained was something they were destined to have, thus they lost both inside and outside. For if one does not gain, one loses, thus ending up worse off than before. And then there is no benefit at all.

**The entire book is available for free here:**

<https://archive.org/details/ChangingDestiny>

## COMMENTARY

The wisdom contained within this excerpt is profound. Many people today may question the value of astrology, they may say that planets millions of miles away have no bearing on our fates or that it is superstitious. Such views are ignorant.

The reason that astrology and fortune telling works is because our birth date and time reflects our past karma. As unenlightened sentient beings constantly generate volition and wandering thoughts, they unceasingly create and change their karma, which in turn begets and shapes the entire universe. Thus, Heaven, Earth and the Stars are simply reflections of our heart and dictated by our karma. Therefore, subtle signs that reveal a person's future or past can certainly be found by observing mathematical relations, omens and astrology. After all, how could a mirror not reflect the form?

However, astrology and similar arts are by nature **superficial and fixed**. Just as a mirror cannot reveal what lies under the skin, a person's natal chart is likewise nothing more than a vague photograph of his karmic situation at the time of birth. His virtues or lack of virtue will change his natal chart everyday. Thus, just as Liao Fan's Four Lessons state, astrology and fortune telling does not account for variable change ; no one would think it wise to consult an outdated chart or a blueprint of a house that has already been rebuilt. Moreover, just one mistake or wrong interpretation (which does happen due to the obscure nature of astrology) can render the reading useless.

Therefore, this is why the Guanyin Spiritual Response Oracle is superior to all other forms of astrology and divination. As the powers of Guanyin Bodhisattva are the same as that of the Buddha, his samadhi is unsurpassed and unlimited. Hence, he needs no calculations to see the past or future ; his Buddha-eye allows him to see the karma of all sentient beings in action, even the slightest link or change is observed.

Furthermore, nowadays, people often seek only from the outside and neglect to change the inside. They feel that they are smart in doing so, but in reality they are simply grasping at reflections. For instance, according to an ancient Taoist saying:

**When our luck turns sour, even gold can change into copper. However, when fortune smiles upon us, even copper can turn into gold.**

This is a particularly important verse. People often consider skills or assets to be the tools which will help them realize their dreams. Most believe that by using schemes or gaining degrees, capital and connections, lasting advantages can be obtained. For

instance, the unemployed often consider further education to be the solution that will help them attract recruiters or find new jobs.

However, the truth is that these external things are useless in the grand scheme of things. The only thing that matters is the karmic situation. If we have too many sins, then even ironclad status, wealth and intelligence will disappear in an instant. However, if we have accumulated many merits, our miseries will be automatically turned into bliss within a blink of an eye.

For instance, according to a true account recorded in an edition of the Treatise on Response and Retribution:

*Fang Shih-k'o, a native of Hsing-an, had been very sickly from a child. Afterwards he began to enquire into the mysteries of Taoism, with a view of procuring the secret of immortality. Arrived one day at the Cloud-capped Mountain, he met a person of strange appearance, who said, "With such a face as yours, how can you expect to get the blessings that you seek? It is impossible—unless you first plant a root of goodness." Then Shih-k'o went home; and although he was a poor man he found means to print off an edition of the Book of Recompenses and distribute copies among his friends. By the time he had printed ten pages, his sickness was half-cured; when the work was completed, he found himself entirely recovered; and from that time forward he became [p. 115](#) robust in body, and quite different from what he had been before in appearance.*

In this case, the merits derived from printing sutras turned Fang Shih-K'o—a poor, sickly and unattractive man—into a strong and handsome person. As stated before, the world and our bodies are composed of the four elements and five skandahs. These factors change in accordance with our karma, which in turn is changed by our good deeds and virtue. Thus, if we diligently accumulate good deeds and support worthy causes—such as printing sutras, creating Buddha images or liberating life—our dreams will certainly come true, like copper turning into gold.

Thus, the takeaway message of Venerable Master Chin Kung's commentary on Liao Fan's Four Lessons is that by cultivating virtue and purity (i.e. doing good deeds and practicing mindfulness), the outside will change for the better. However, forceful seeking or machinations yield only karmic obstacles and whatever that is gained are just rump remnants of an once larger blessing. Lastly, instead of spending money on astrology readings, it will be wiser to use the money on creating merits.

## THE POTENT MERITS OF NON-VIOLENCE AND VEGANISM

As the previous section has explained the workings of fate and how to change it, we should hereafter diligently do good deeds to improve our destiny. However, unbeknownst to many, the taking of animal life is the single most serious cause of evil karma in this world. For instance, according to the Discourse on the Forty Eight Inquiries of Non Violence by the eminent Upasaka An Shi:

*Whenever slaughter and death comes calling, it is always a pitiful scene. A human being may not meet violence or conflict for tens of years or even hundreds of years. However, the horror of slaughter happens daily to animals. Everyday, as soon as sunrise, knife wielding butchers loom over livestock while hunters prowl the land. Even though animals cry out for help, their efforts are always in vain. These rakshasas masked as humans repeatedly disembowel and boil, inflicting great pain and suffering on animals of all kinds. It takes only a short span of time for hundreds of millions of animals to lose their lives.*

*As animals have no recourse against the never-ending slaughter, they must silently swallow their grievances. This leads to a dismal atmosphere of mounting evil karma. Eventually, as the evil karma of killing accumulates to the limit, demon kings will descend into the human realm as a response.*

*The Zen Master Ci Shou once said: "As a result of the sin of animal slaughter, violence and wars will break out. Those who have taken life will in turn lose their lives. Those who have maliciously refused to repay their debts will lose their homes in the chaos. Furthermore, those who have destroyed burrows and nests will have their family members scattered. Each sin will result in the appropriate retribution. Thus, do not fail to heed the Buddha's words."*

*Therefore, violence and wars are caused by the evil karma of killing. If we are faced with impending violence or conflict, the only recourse is to abstain from killing. The merits from such abstinence is the most potent and materializes speedily. Other good deeds cannot match it.*

Hence, the desire to eat meat (something that most people do three times a day) is the main cause of the karmic obstacles that keep us mired in misery and deny us the strength and faith to follow the Buddha's profound wisdom teachings.

Many people may feel that eating meat is natural or that God and Heaven made animals to feed humans. However, this is actually a common wrong view. According

to Upasaka An Shi:

**1.) Question:** *The ancients have said that Heaven and Earth are the mother of all living beings, and mankind is the paragon of all beings. Therefore, animals were certainly created by Heaven for the benefit of mankind. Thus, why not kill?*

**Answer:** *As Heaven and Earth are the mother of all living beings, all animals are the beloved offspring of Heaven and Earth. No mother can be happy if among her children, the strong bully the weak and the successful exploit the poor. If you eat meat and feel that it is your right to do so, then by this logic, as tigers can eat humans and mosquitoes suck our blood—are humans not created by Heaven to nourish beasts and pests?*

**4.) Question:** *If Heaven wishes for mankind to refrain from eating meat, then why isn't the meat of animals disgusting and foul as a deterrence?*

**Answer:** *The truth is that Heaven already considers meat to be foul and disgusting. However, people believe the taste of meat to be delicious—like how maggots revel in putrid feces. As this is a matter of deep-rooted habits, it is difficult to change perceptions. For instance, if a man was a cat in his past life, he would have craved for rodents during that life. Likewise, if a man was a crane in his past life, he would've craved for snakes. However, as they are now men, they no longer yearn for rats and snakes. Thus, each body has its own habits. Variations in preferences and habits are due to karma, causes and conditions. Differences in karma, causes and conditions are in turn caused by differing intentions. If people's hearts and intentions can accord with Heaven's virtuous will, they will naturally understand that meat is indeed foul and disgusting.*

Furthermore, Upasaka An Shi also points out that the common arguments for culling and hunting are similarly misguided:

**3.) Question:** *There are so many animals in the world. If no one hunts or slaughters, wouldn't their populations grow out of control?*

**Answer:** *There are plenty of insects and animals that humans do not eat or kill ; their numbers are numerous without issue. Furthermore, the reason there are so many beasts and animals is due to the karma of killing. Animal rebirth is caused by the cycle of retribution and revenge. People who kill animals are reborn as animals to*

*even up the debt. If everyone abstains from taking animal life, the karma that supports the realm of animals will gradually dissipate while the prosperity and ranks of devas and men will increase. For instance, if people do not trap frogs, the population of frogs will decrease. Likewise, if people do not fish for crabs, the population of crabs will gradually decrease. Thus, the laws of karma are quite clear.*

Therefore, we should never again be so arrogant to think that it is permissible to kill animals. We must remember Confucius's words on reciprocity, for how can we expect long life, health and cleanliness if we partake in slaughter and bloodshed on a daily basis? Moreover, how can we expect freedom and happiness if we cage animals, exploit them and inflict fear and anxieties on them all the time?

For instance, according to the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua:

*Not caging birds in this life, we will not be put into the jail in future lives; Not fishing in this life, we will not become beggars in future lives; Not killing in this life, we will not encounter difficulties in future lives;*

*“Not caging birds in this life, we will not be put into the jail in future lives.”*

*Think about it. When someone puts a bird in a cage, he takes its freedom away. By doing that, the person is not abiding by the constitution of this country. This country advocates freedom. Caging a bird is the same as putting the bird behind bars. The bird will start chanting the mantra, “retribution, retribution...” In the future, the bird will go before the Jade Emperor, who is the Lord of the Heavens, and file a suit against the person who caged it.*

*The Heavenly Lord will say, “Okay, this person has not been fair. He shall undergo the retribution!” You will then go to jail in future lives. This is because the bird has been chanting the mantra of retribution from morning to night. When the Heavenly Lord hears it, his verdict is that the person who caged the bird should be put behind bars.*

Thus, if we look at the world and feel that abuses are rampant, all we need to do is to look at our own habitual and institutionalized cruelty towards animals and the causes of tyranny and our social ills will become fully visible.

In fact, today, hundreds of billions of animals are slaughtered each year just to satisfy the desires of a few billion humans. No wonder the Buddha said in the Infinite Life

Sutra that those who cultivate virtue in this world for ten days can reap the same amount of merits that would take those in other worlds a whole millennium to amass. Furthermore, it is also the tradition in many parts of the world to make sacrifices of animals to gods and deities. This is actually a grave mistake. According to Upasaka An Shi's:

***18.) Question: There is no question that those who are vegan should make vegan offerings to deities and their ancestors. However, if those who normally eat meat were to make vegan offerings, wouldn't that be cheap and disrespectful?***

***Answer:*** *The I Ching states: "A family that sacrifices a cow to honor their ancestors derive inferior merit compared to the family that regularly makes modest offerings." Moreover, the Zuo Zhuan states: "Even the wild plants next to the mountain streams or the algae can be offered to gods and spirits." Thus, do you think the gods and spirits who dwell in the skies will quibble over a few pieces of meat?*

***19.) Question: Will gods and deities who accept meat offerings be reborn in the evil realms?***

***Answer:*** *Sentient beings are reborn as gods and deities because they have cultivated virtue in their past life. Even though they are all virtuous, some are more merciful than others. The more merciful gods will reject offerings of meat. However, the gods that still have habits of anger will accept meat offerings. The merciful gods have more wisdom than blessings ; the angry gods have more blessings than wisdom. Therefore, once the heavenly blessings of the merciful gods end, they will not be reborn in the evil realms. However, the gods that are given to anger will most likely be reborn in the lower realms. Everyone must understand that Heaven cherishes all living beings, not just human life.*

Hence, not only are animal sacrifices unnecessary and pointless, severe negative karma also results from such sacrifices. Moreover, like low quality incense, animal sacrifices will actually repel compassionate gods and attract more malicious deities and spirits. Such deities will bring negative influences and fail to bestow the selfless, profound and reliable blessings that we all seek. Therefore, pure vegan offerings such as fruits, flowers and candles are the best way to honor our ancestors and show respect to the Buddha and Heaven.

Furthermore, according to Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's commentary on the

## Shurangama Sutra:

*During the reign of the Emperor Wu of Liang, the Buddhadharma flourished. Whenever there was a wedding reception Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras. On children's birthdays, Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras. In short, no matter what the occasion, Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras and give their blessing. They would give a short speech about the auspiciousness of the event - what a lucky occasion it was. At that time there was a wealthy man who was celebrating the marriage of his son. He invited Ch'an Master Chih Kung to recite Sutras and give the blessing. When Ch'an Master Chih Kung arrived and looked around, he said:*

***How strange! How bizarre!***  
***The grandson marries the grandmother.***  
***The daughter eats the mother's flesh.***  
***The drum the son beats is stretched***  
***with the father's skin.***  
***Pigs and sheep are on the seat.***  
***The six close kin cook in the brazier.***  
***People gather to celebrate.***  
***I see all this as a form of suffering.***

*Why was the grandson marrying his grandmother? It was because when the grandson was two years old, his grandmother died. As she was dying, she grabbed her grandson's hand and said, "I'm at the point where I can let go of everyone else, but I can't forget about my grandson. Who will take care of him in the future?" And she died clutching her grandson's hand.*

*After her death she went before King Yama and he said, "Oh, you love your grandson so much? Fine. Go back and be your grandson's wife." So she was reborn as a woman and when she came of age, her grandson chose her as his wife. How did Ch'an Master Chih Kung know this? Because he had the ability to know others' thoughts and the ability to perceive past lives - he had the Buddha Eye.*



*When he looked in front of the house he said, "The daughter eats the mother's flesh," because he saw a little girl chewing on a chunk of pork. Her mother had died and been reborn as a pig. The pig had been slaughtered and cooked, and she was actually eating the flesh of her own mother!*

*When he inspected the musicians in the band by the entrance way, he said, "The drum the son beats is stretched with the father's skin." The drummer was hitting a drum stretched with deer-hide. His father had died and been reborn as a deer. The deer had been slaughtered and its hide tanned and the drummer was actually beating his own father!*

*Then Ch'an Master Chih Kung noticed that "Pigs and sheep are on the seat." He saw pigs and sheep sitting like guests on the k'ang - the high brick beds in the house. They were people now, but in their former lives they had been pigs and sheep. In their former lives they themselves had been eaten, so now they were reborn as people who in turn ate pigs and sheep to even up the debt.*

*When the Ch'an Master took a look at the cooking pots' he exclaimed, "Six close kin cook in the brazier." The six kinds of close kin refer to relatives on the father's side and the mother's side, kin of the brother and sisters, and so forth. They had been close relatives of these people but now had been reborn as pigs and sheep, had been slaughtered, and were being cooked in the brazier.*

*Ch'an Master Chih Kung summarized, "People gather to celebrate." Everyone who came was saying, "Congratulations!" and "Best Wishes!" But the Master notes, "I see all this as a form of suffering." What I see is actually suffering.*

Master Hsuan Hua makes it clear that people are reborn together as family members due to interconnected karmic affinities, debts and credits that have accrued since time immemorial. Thus, it is very likely for deceased parents to be reborn as livestock that will be eaten by their still living children. So imagine that! How many people have unwittingly killed and eaten their loved ones while still grieving over their losses?

Furthermore, the Buddha has said that those who refrain from taking animal life will accumulate merits that will allow them to be long lived, healthy, safe and fortunate. The two accounts below are clear verifications of the Buddha's words. These true historical accounts are from an edition of the Jade Record written by a Chinese cultivator who met King Yama during meditation.

### **The Merciful Scholar:**

**During the Song dynasty, there was a young scholar who had tried and failed several times to pass the imperial examinations. Four years after his first failed attempt, he again travelled to the imperial capital to take part in the latest round of examinations.**

**He lodged himself in an inn and proceeded to study through the night in preparation for the upcoming exam. However, he soon became fatigued and dozed off. Just as he was about to slip into deep sleep.....a vision of a distressed and bloodied white rabbit suddenly appeared! The rabbit pleaded with him to free it along with several other small animals held in the inn cellar.**

**The scholar immediately awakened and was initially doubtful at what he had just seen. Nevertheless, curiosity prompted him to silently sneak into the cellar. Surprisingly—there was indeed several animals locked in a cage. What he saw reflected his vision perfectly.**

**He soon realized that these trapped pheasants and small game were to be later served as main courses. Feeling ashamed over the fact that he too ate game, he hastily helped the animals to flee by opening the cage and cellar window. However, the injured white rabbit that had appealed to him for help remained traumatized and huddled in the corner. Thus, the scholar silently packed his bags in the middle of the night and personally carried the rabbit with him on his way out.**

**Eventually, while trying to find a new place to stay, the duo stopped to rest under an arbor. Suddenly—out of the blue— a celestial devi appeared before him. She was fair beyond imagination and possessed a radiant golden complexion. As soon as she stretched her elegant hands towards the scholar, the rabbit quickly jumped into her arms. The devi then revealed that the rabbit he saved belonged to her. It had been violently captured while patrolling the mortal world. As the**

rabbit reassumed its celestial form, the injuries it had sustained miraculously disappeared. She explained that even though he was not a man of high wisdom, his kind and merciful heart had generated enough merits to gain high office. She reminded him to be kind towards the citizenry and to diligently protect living beings for the rest of his life. Having said that, the devi instantly disappeared. The young scholar was left in awe at the magnificent sight he had just witnessed.

The scholar proceeded to lodge himself at another inn and took the imperial exams the next day. Even though he did not achieve the prestigious academic honors he had sought after, he was still awarded a magistracy. Furthermore, he was quickly and continuously promoted by his superiors. Reflecting on this, he finally understood the power of good deeds and henceforth liberated life everyday. In addition to buying captive animals slated for slaughter and setting them free, he also became vegan and promoted veganism.

Years soon passed and the young scholar was now 54 years old. Furthermore, he had also reached the exalted post of Chancellor of State. Despite his unceasing efforts to liberate life and the fact that he had convinced many to stop eating meat, he still felt that his impact was limited. The courtiers, aristocrats and members of the imperial family all scoffed at his scruples and continued to feast sumptuously on various meats such as lamb, shellfish, bear paws and beef. They did not feel even a hair's breadth worth of shame at their cruelty and excess.

The scholar felt sorrow over the never ending slaughter and thus tendered his retirement. After returning to his hometown, he spent his remaining years using his substantial pension to adopt stray dogs and suffering animals.

When he turned 76, he again saw the white rabbit that he had previously saved perched gracefully on his window sill. The scholar (who was on his deathbed) understood that his lifespan was up. Regretting that he could not turn the tide against meat eating, he expressed his apologies. However, the white rabbit quickly led him to his front gate where to his amazement, all the souls of the countless animals he had saved over the years were crowded around his residence. The rabbit then said: "As your stocks of merit are full to the point of overflowing, the Heavenly Lord Lao Tzu wishes to bestow upon you a place among the gods. Otherwise, you could have your lifespan extended by 30 years. Your choice!" The scholar replied that 30 years was too short and expressed his wish to rise to the side of the Heavenly Lord and assist him in promoting virtue.

Hence, he peacefully closed his eyes and ascended towards his celestial villa, accompanied by the white rabbit he had saved so many years before.

### **Guanyin Bodhisattva's Visit to a Butcher:**

In 1908, there lived in Shanxi province a butcher named Chang. His parents (who were also butchers) had already passed away, leaving him alone in the world with only his sickly younger sister for company. Everyday, he slaughtered a pig and sold the meat for a living.

Ironically, when Chang was young, he had detested the cruelty involved in slaughtering pigs. However, as he was the only heir to the family butchery, his parents forced him to learn the trade. By the time he was 25, he was already known in his village as the guillotine that all pigs fear. In fact, the total number of pigs he had slaughtered was so numerous that if all the skulls of the pigs he had killed were lined up in a straight line, it would span several miles.

One day, a old woman visited the village and approached Chang's butchery. She said to him, " I will show you the way to a future fortune if you could give me two porkers free of charge." Chang thought that the old woman was mentally ill and thus ignored her. However, the old woman responded to this snub by recounting in detail his life, history and family situation. She also warned him that this was his last chance to extricate himself from his evil karma.

Startled by the fact that this stranger knew everything about him, Chang immediately suspected that she was a deity and proceeded to comply with her request for two porkers. She left right after taking possession of the two porkers, leaving Chang somewhat bewildered. Nevertheless, he was happy to have not offended a potential deity. However, before she disappeared from sight, she turned back towards Chang and shouted —"I'll be back tomorrow!"

The next day, she came back to Chang's butchery and requested that he give her four pigs. Chang immediately became irate and accused her of being a greedy fraud. However, she paid no heed to his anger and simply repeated her request for four pigs. Chang then demanded to know what happened to the two porkers he gave her the day before. She replied that she had released them.

Incensed, Chang immediately launched into an angry tirade. However, the old

woman remained completely calm and simply asked, "Do you understand why I asked for those two porkers?"

Chang ignored the question and continued his tirade. Suddenly and without warning, the old lady ascended into the air and transformed into Guanyin Bodhisattva! Faced with such a majestic and august sight—Chang promptly fell to his knees in reverence despite not being a Buddhist.

The Bodhisattva did not wait for Chang to compose himself, immediately, Chang was shown a vision which revealed that the two porkers were actually his parents. They had been reborn as pigs to atone for their sins. Hence, he was just a few moments away from committing patricide and matricide had the Bodhisattva not intervened. Feeling immense shock and guilt, Chang begged the Bodhisattva to show him the way forward.

The Bodhisattva said, " Your lifespan has been reduced considerably because of your offenses. Thus, if you wish to save yourself , you must henceforth cease all acts of killing. Furthermore, you must protect the pigs currently in your pigsty for the rest of their natural lives. Afterwards, you must liberate 10,000,000 pigs in order to fully rectify your karmic situation. The first pig to die in your pigsty will show you the way."

As soon as these words were spoken, the Bodhisattva vanished into thin air. It was not difficult for Chang to keep the pigs currently in his pigsty, but he was doubtful that he could ever liberate 10,000,000 pigs. Nevertheless, after thinking of the Bodhisattva's assurances, he diligently proceeded to do as instructed. From that moment on, he treated his pigs like family. Eventually, word spread that he had renounced his career as a butcher. However, he never told anyone about his encounter with Guanyin Bodhisattva. He simply exhorted people to liberate life and refrain from slaughtering animals.

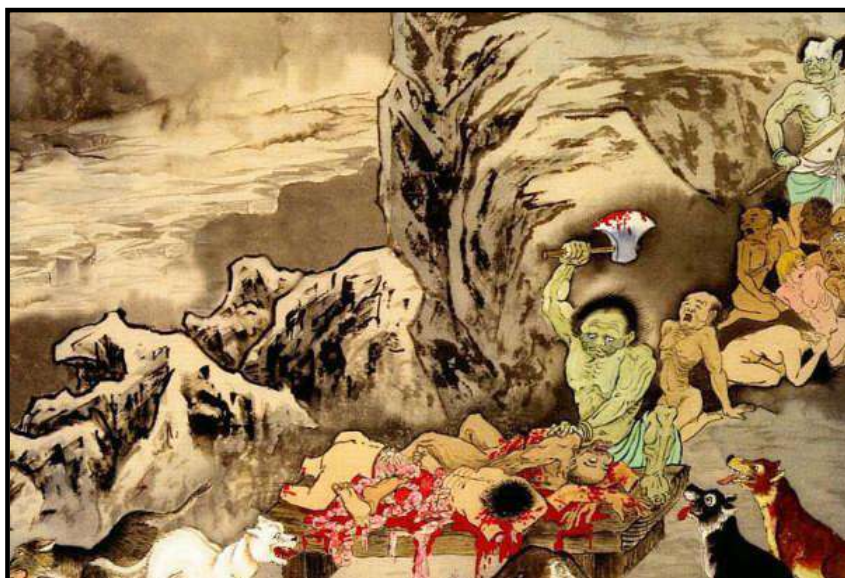
After a few years had passed, one of the pigs fell ill and was on the verge of death. As he was comforting the dying pig, it suddenly started to repeatedly oink towards a spot on the ground. A curious Chang immediately started to dig.... and to his great surprise, crude oil begun to seep out! A short while later, surveyors concluded that his pigsty was located above an oil reserve. He promptly sold his property and mineral rights for tens of thousands of silver dragons. He then used this capital to engage in commerce, generating for himself a fortune in the

process. Everyday, he would send men into the market to purchase live pigs, thereafter depositing these pigs into Buddhist animal sanctuaries. After doing so for 50 years, he finally managed to save 10,000,000 pigs.

**Chang lived to the ripe old age of 78. When he died, he left behind a wealthy family. Also, due to the karma created by his good deeds, he was able to avoid the wars of that period—safely retreating to Taiwan after the Communist takeover.**

By simply saving the lives of several small animals, the scholar was able to amass enough merits to gain a lifetime of high offices. Furthermore, his remuneration and pension likely amounted to a fortune of tens of thousands of silver taels. In comparison, a small family could live for a year on just a few taels of silver during that time. He did not originally have such good fortune pending, but that one act of opening the cage yielded these rewards. Moreover, due to his further efforts to promote veganism and liberate life, he was able to ascend to a blissful heavenly rebirth at the time of death. Besides, he was also offered a lifespan extension of thirty years ; long life is an inalienable karmic reward for those who do not kill.

The same goes for the butcher. By simply renouncing his butcher's knife and protecting his remaining sounder of pigs for a few years, he managed to create such a large stock of good fortune that oil manifested below his land. Furthermore, his further efforts to liberate life extended his originally meager lifespan by over half a century! All this does not include the additional benefit of having the entirety of his prior evil karma eradicated. Thus, Chang went from a man on the verge of rebirth in the hells to a long lived and wealthy merchant. Chang's case is the epitome of the Buddhist maxim: **The butcher who drops his knife can become a saintly Bodhisattva on the spot.** Besides, in the latest edition of the Jade Record, illustrated by Jiang Yi Zi (江逸子) through psychography, the hellish rebirth that would have awaited Chang had he not changed is illustrated below:



The deity that guided Jiang's hand when he drew these pictures is actually the Demigod Magistrate Cheng Huang. He holds the rank of Praetor in the administration of the Four Heavenly Kings and his duty is to promote the laws of karma. Thus, these pictures provide us with an accurate idea of the horrifying karmic retributions that awaits those who slaughter animals.

Furthermore, in a set of short ancient historical accounts verified by Master Yin Guang, two of them reveal the supreme merits that result from not eating beef. While the killing of any animal for its meat is a severe offense, the gravest is the killing of cows.

According to the first of the two accounts: A member of a travelling theater troupe once met the wandering ghost of his deceased neighbor (who had died abroad). The ghost asked for permission to share the ferry he had hired, so that he (the ghost) may return home to take up abode in his ancestral shrine. The actor agreed. Eventually, the actor asked the ghost, "What does King Yama consider to be the gravest karmic offense?" The ghost replied, "Eating beef is the most serious sin—those who eat beef are devoid of fortune and bereft of divine protection—on the other hand, those who abstain from it will be blessed by the gods and accrue excellent stocks of merit!"

Hearing this, the actor immediately vowed that he would never eat beef again. However, the ghost immediately burst into tears and exclaimed: "I can no longer return home! The auspicious spirits of good karma who now protect you will not allow a sinful being like me to accompany you." Dejected, the ghost climbed overboard and wandered away. Overawed by this revelation, the actor quickly rushed back to his village and convinced everyone to refrain from eating beef.

Unfortunately in this account, the actor did not know that he could dedicate his merits to the ghost. If he had done so, the poor ghost would have been immediately transformed into a radiant deva possessing a celestial palace (see the Petavatthu for more info).

Likewise, according to the second account: A minor local official of Suzhou province once circulated letters that encouraged people to abstain from beef. He did so after the spirit of a deceased colleague appealed to him to make merits on his behalf. As a result of this deed, the deceased colleague became a deva and the local official's lifespan was extended by six twelve year periods! Furthermore, his stocks of merit were filled to the brim.

In Lao Tzu's Treatise on Response and Retribution, it is stated that grave sins result in one's lifespan being shortened by a period of twelve years and vice versa. Thus, the local official increased his lifespan by a whopping seventy two years by simply encouraging the local community to refrain from eating beef. This increase in lifespan was also accompanied by wealth, happiness, offices and future heavenly rebirth.

Therefore, how much more will be our reward if we abstain from all types of meat and diligently promote veganism? If everyone could abstain from animal slaughter, the whole world can become the utopia of our dreams!

Furthermore, according to Upasaka An Shi:

***16.) Question: What should we do if we find ourselves powerless to stop acts of fishing, trapping and slaughtering?***

***Answer:*** *Anyone who finds themselves in such a situation should sincerely recite whatever mantra they are familiar with, or sincerely recite **Namo Amitabha**. They should repent the animals' sins on their behalf and dedicate the merits of the recitation to them. This way, the animals will naturally receive karmic benefits.*

*If you see someone fishing or trapping, then focus your attentions on that person. Do not entertain other thoughts. Single-mindedly recite **Namo Duo Bao Tathagata** (南無多寶如來) for a few dozen times. If you do so, the fish and animals will all be able to evade capture. This Buddha's name is very potent, so do not fail to do as instructed.*

Upasaka An Shi's answer reveals to us a little known but important mantra. Just like reciting Guanyin Bodhisattva will extricate us from imminent danger, sincerely reciting **Namo Duo Bao Tathagata** while focusing on a fisherman or trapper will allow fish and animals to escape capture. Furthermore, this mantra can also be pronounced as **Namo Duo Bao Rulai**.

As this important mantra is a convenient method to save lives and cultivate compassion, we should not forget to recite it whenever the situation presents itself. Furthermore, we should not fear that reciting this mantra will interfere with the livelihoods of hunters and fishermen, for according to Upasaka An Shi :



**5.) Question:** *There are many who eke out a living by fishing or working in the meat packing industry. If we exhort them to change professions, we would be causing them financial ruin. Isn't it unreasonable to favor animals over humans?*

**Answer:** *Those who support themselves in such a manner are like a man who eats poisoned meat to satiate his hunger. Even though they may be able to live comfortably off the earnings for a while, they will soon have to undergo many kalpas of excruciating karmic retribution. The reason we urge hunters, fishermen, ranchers, butchers and so forth to change professions is because we are concerned about them. Thus, how can we be considered unreasonable? Aren't there plenty of people who support themselves very well without having to kill animals?*

Lastly, many people may feel that it is their filial duty to slaughter animals in order to furnish their parents or loved ones with the dishes they are partial to. However, Upasaka An Shi also addresses this:

**20.) Question:** *It is indeed wrong to slaughter animals for the purpose of making meat offerings to gods and deities. However, is it also wrong to slaughter animals to feed one's parents?*

**Answer:** *It is even worse! The Book of Rites clearly states that: "Filial sons and daughters offer all that which is good to their parents and retain only the inferior for themselves." Therefore, if we slaughter animals for the sake of offering meat to our parents, we would be saddling them with undesirable karmic offenses. How could we do something so unfilial? If we must provide our parents with meat, we should offer only thrice clean meat (i.e. meat that did not come from an animal that one personally ordered slaughtered or heard and or seen slaughtered). Meat from an animal that died naturally is permitted as well. These are the only two exceptions for this case.*

In conclusion, it should be very clear by now that hunting, animal sacrifices, fishing, meat eating or engaging in the meat packing business will lead to heavy karmic debts. Thus, if we wish to be long lived and happy—and if we want to avoid atrocities and hellish karmic retributions—then we should diligently liberate life, abstain from meat and encourage others to do the same. If we sell food and provide catering services for a living, we should not sell meat products or dishes containing meats. The good karma generated from such abstinence will ensure happiness in this life and heavenly bliss in the next. If we dedicate these merits towards Buddhahood in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, we will surely realize our aspiration!

**Recommended Charity: Tainan Avalokitesvara Homeland Buddhist Association**



**Website:** <http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Donation.php>  
**Sanctuary gallery:** [http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Pet1\\_pic.php](http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Pet1_pic.php)  
**Email:** [a0981552011@gmail.com](mailto:a0981552011@gmail.com)  
**Facebook:** <https://zh-tw.facebook.com/avalokitesvara2013>

This charity is registered with the government of Taiwan. Their mission is to save cattle, pigs, rabbits, poultry, goats, fish and the like from slaughter by purchasing and moving them to their sprawling animal sanctuary in Tainan county (pictured).

## AMITABHA MINDFULNESS, THE EPITOME OF THE DHARMA

The Buddha spoke many sutras and Dharma-doors (ways to enlightenment) throughout his life. Nevertheless, the Buddha has foretold that the Dharma-door of Infinite Life (Amitabha Mindfulness) is the only practical method for our time. This is not to say that Zen, Vipassana and the like are no longer valid, it simply means that most of us no longer have the underlying ability to cultivate them.

The difference between the Dharma-door of Amitabha and the other Dharma-doors is that cultivators of the former can rely on Amita Buddha's great vows while the cultivators of the latter must rely solely on their own abilities. For instance, in the Shurangama Sutra, the Buddha warns that those who wish to cultivate samadhi on their own will have to navigate through the lies and temptations of deviant heavenly demons as well as the false beliefs of Buddhahood that often arise during advanced meditation (e.g. 50 Skandha Demons). Failure to successfully navigate through these dangers often condemns the cultivator to rebirth in the Relentless Hells.

Thus, even though the Shurangama Sutra is commonly associated with the Zen school, it is actually an indirect Pureland Buddhist Sutra. The Buddha is highlighting the difficulties of relying on your own power and contrasting these perils with the effortless ease that those who cultivate Bodhi via Amitabha Pureland Buddhism enjoy. In fact, the last paragraph of Chapter 5 of the Shurangama Sutra was selected by Patriarch Yin Guang as one of the five principle texts of Pureland Buddhism (this treatise is included on page 88).

Furthermore, according to the Shurangama Sutra and eminent Dharma Masters such as the Ven. Master Chin Kung and Ven. Master Hsuan Hua, all major world religions (e.g. Catholicism) were actually spoken by transformations of Guanyin Bodhisattva to benefit those who could not yet accept Buddhism. Hence, that is why Christianity stresses absolute faith in God as the key to eternal salvation. As Pureland Buddhism is based on single-minded faith in Amita Buddha, such beliefs are to acclimate sentient beings to the principle of single-mindedly taking refuge in Amitabha. This is so that when they are finally reborn as Buddhists, they can more easily give rise to profound faith and concentration in Amitabha.

Thus, due to the simplicity and effectiveness of the Dharma-door of Amitabha, the Buddha gave many sermons of the Infinite life Sutra during his life. This is why there are so many existing versions of the Infinite Life Sutra. However, even though all

versions are valid, the compilation version by Upasaka Xia Lian Ju (夏蓮居) is the most comprehensive and universally recognized version. Not only does Upasaka Xia combine the last five remaining extant versions of the Infinite Life Sutra into one grand version: **The Buddha Speaks the Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra** (佛說大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經), he also did so without changing a single character! Moreover, the Venerable Master Chin Kung has repeatedly stated that Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra is the most important sutra of our time and the only one he would recommend.

In order to understand the numerous advantages of Pureland Buddhism, we need to first read Amita Buddha's 48 Great Vows. According to Chapter 6 of Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra, Amita Buddha (then a Bodhisattva named Dharmakara) had vowed that when he attained Buddhahood (which he did 10 kalpas ago), the following 48 Vows will take effect and be valid in perpetuity:

### **THE FORTY EIGHT VOWS OF AMITA BUDDHA**

#### **Introduction:**

*The 48 Vows of Amitabha represents the cornerstone of Pureland Buddhism. They signify Amita Buddha's eternal promise to all sentient beings—be they devas, humans, insects, microbes, ghosts or hell beings. Lastly, any reference hereinafter to "the Way" or "Dharma" etc. generally refers to the Dharma-door of Pureland Buddhism.*

#### **Sutra Vows 1-2 : The Vows of No Evil and Suffering**

***"If I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my Buddha-land will be adorned with infinite and inconceivable merits. There shall be no hell beings, emaciated ghouls, wild beasts, pests and pestilences in my land. Sentient beings arriving to dwell in my land, even from the hells or evil paths, will all share my merit and become Bodhisattvas at once. They shall never again fall back into the states of suffering. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."***

#### **Sutra Vows 3-5 : The Vows of Equal and Majestic Appearances**

***"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings from the ten quarters who are reborn in my land shall assume majestic appearances as august as Tyrian purple and as fair as the finest gold. They will be regal in countenance and possess***

*all of the Buddha's 32 fine features. Furthermore, their bodies will be upright, pure and without outflows. The splendor of their appearances shall all be equal. If some are handsome while others hideous, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vows 6-8: The Vows of Clairvoyance and Clairaudience**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land will have the Divine-Ear and Buddha-Eye. They shall, without limit, be able to recall all of the good and evil habits of their innumerable past lives. Also, their acuity and powers of postcognition and precognition will be unlimited. Every event occurring across the ten directions will be known to them. Neither the slightest sound nor the faintest sight could escape them. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vow 9: The Vow of the All Knowing Heart**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be able to see through the hearts and minds of each and every being living across the incalculable and inconceivable world-systems. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vows 10-11: The Vows of Transcendental Powers and Limitless offerings**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be complete with perfect ease and the six transcendental powers. Furthermore, they will be able to instantly manifest anywhere they desire and simultaneously make offerings to innumerable Buddhas across the ten directions. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vow 12: The Vow of Samadhi and Perfect Wisdom**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be bestowed with Samadhi that will free them from every outflow and attachment. They will all become irreversibly established on the path towards perfect wisdom (Bodhi). Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vow 13-14: The Vows of Infinite and Serene Light**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my light shall shine brightly across the ten directions. When I appear before sentient beings— as soon as my light touches them—they shall feel bliss as their afflictions dissolve. They will immediately be reborn in my land. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vow 15-16: The Vows of Infinite Life and Incalculable Populace**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall have infinite life. Even if an entire congregation of as many Paccekabuddhas as there are living beings in a great trichiliocosm should spend hundreds of thousands of kalpas trying to calculate the lifespan of any one of the countless Sages in my land—a figure would still be unreachable. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Commentary:**

*A finite lifespan is one of the greatest threats to those seeking Bodhi. This is because death and rebirth dampens the momentum of their cultivation. For instance, if a diligent cultivator suddenly died and was reborn as a deva, he would likely become so distracted by his impermanent newfound luxuries that he could no longer concentrate on seeking liberation. If he was reborn as a human (womb born), it would take him some time to grow up and refresh his roots of wisdom. However, rebirth in Pureland guarantees infinite life. As all beings who are reborn in Pureland become Bodhisattvas due to Amita Buddha's blessings, they have naturally far transcended the Samsara and the pains of birth and death. With infinite life and the exalted environment of Pureland, Unsurpassed Bodhi is easefully attained.*

**Sutra Vow 17: The Vow of Universal Recognition**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all the Buddhas across the ten quarters will join in unison to praise the infinite merits of my name and the peerless virtues of my Buddha-land. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Commentary:**

*According to Venerable Master Chin Kung, the name of Amita Buddha represents the names, teachings and combined merits of all the Buddhas across the ten quarters. Hence, this is why all the Buddhas across the ten quarters commend Amita Buddha and his Land of Ultimate Bliss.*

**Sutra Vow 18: The Pureland Rebirth Upon Ten Recitations Vow**

***"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who joyously and single-mindedly seek rebirth in my land after hearing my name—wholeheartedly dedicating all their merits towards this aspiration with each new thought—will be reborn in my land upon reciting my name for ten times. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."***

***Note:** The Chinese text includes an exception for those who slandered the Dharma or committed the five grave offenses. However, Vow 21 contradicts this prohibition. Hence, this contradiction means that this exception was meant only as a warning to prevent people from committing such heavy evil offenses. As long as they repent, Pureland will certainly accept them with open arms.*

**Sutra Vows 19-20: The Resolve For Bodhi Vow and the Vow of the Sagely Welcoming Party**

***"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who resolve to attain Bodhi in my land after hearing my name, who subsequently dedicate all the merits and virtues from their lifelong practice of the Six Paramitas towards this aspiration, and who single-mindedly recites my name through day and night without cease, will meet me during their last moments. I shall welcome them into my land while surrounded by an august retinue of Sages. They will instantly become Mahabodhisattvas. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."***

**Sutra Vows 21: The Vow of Forgiveness**

***"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, there would not be one virtuous and willing sentient being who could not easily attain rebirth in my land. However, if sentient beings who have long committed evil repent after hearing my name, and thereafter***

*adheres to the Buddhadharma while yearning for rebirth in my land, then such beings will be saved from the evil paths and rise to my land upon their deaths. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vows 22-24: The Vows of No Womanhood and the Vow of the Lotus Bud Transformation**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, the retribution of womanhood will not exist in my land. If women who loathe the burdens of their gender become sincerely resolved upon attaining Bodhi in my land after hearing my name, then they shall be transformed into Bodhisattvas upon such a rebirth. Sentient beings of the ten quarters who are reborn in my land will be transformed while dwelling in palatial lotus buds floating upon the glistening waters of the Seven Jeweled Lagoon. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Commentary:**

*Sentient beings who are reborn in Pureland will become Bodhisattvas by transformation. This means that if you achieve such a rebirth, you will instantly manifest as an enlightened Bodhisattva. There is no pain of birth or inconvenience of growing up in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.*

**Sutra Vows 25-27: The Vows of Good Karma and Virtue**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are inspired by my name to sincerely cultivate the Bodhisattva Way shall be respected by both men and devas. Moreover, sentient beings who merely hear my name will be reborn as virtuous aristocrats possessing wealth, knowledge and auctoritas. Their bodies will be healthy and complete. Lastly, they will enjoy cultivating the highest Dharma. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Commentary:**

*These vows represent the most basic benefits of reciting Amita Buddha's name. Simply hearing or perceiving this name will guarantee a good rebirth and future opportunities to learn Buddhism. Furthermore, in the Contemplation Sutra, it is stated that just one recitation of Amita Buddha's name can eradicate eight billion eons worth of heavy karmic offenses. Hence, those who fail to achieve Pureland rebirth despite*



*having recited the name will still amass enormous stocks of merit.*

**Sutra Vows 28-31: The Vows of Virtue, Purity, Detachment and No Outflows**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my land will be free from even a hint of evil. All sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be united in proper virtue and purity. They will be forever free from afflictions and attachments. Moreover, they will enjoy the same bliss as a bhikshu without outflows. If residents of my land should retain false thoughts and attachments to the body, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vows 32-34: The Vows of Incorruptibility, Eloquence and Expoundance**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, those who are reborn in my land will all possess infinite good roots. Hence, their bodies shall be as incorruptible as the Buddha's. They will also have radiant halos above their heads. An affirmation of their infinite wisdom, omniscience and eloquence. Thus, they will naturally expound the Dharma like clockwork. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vows 35-36: The Vows of Swift Perfection**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are reborn in my land shall swiftly attain Buddhahood. Excepted are Bodhisattvas who have made Mahayana vows to liberate beings across the ten quarters. Using various expedient devices, they will unfailingly inspire sentient beings to bring forth faith in the teachings of Samantabhadra. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vows 37-38: The Vows of Abundance and the Receipt of Offerings**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be instantly furnished with whatever food, drink, attires and requisites that they wish for—no one will be left unsatisfied. If those dwelling in my land shall seek to make offerings to Buddhas across the ten quarters, rich offerings will instantly appear before all the Buddhas of the ten quarters as a response to that thought. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vow 39: The Vow of Infinite Augustness**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all aspects of my land shall be infinitely well adorned and be of indescribable beauty. Even though the residents of my land have the Divine-Eye, they would still be unable to describe the infinite beauty of my land. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vows 40-41: The Vows of Jeweled and Mirrored Trees**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, the jeweled trees of my land shall be hundreds of thousands of yojanas in height. However, the Bodhi trees next to the Way places will be even taller. No Bodhisattva of my land would fail to perceive this. Those who wish to view the august lands of other Buddhas may do so by simply gazing at the jeweled trees, and what they seek will appear as clear as one's reflection in a mirror. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vow 42: The Vow of Resplendence**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my land shall be boundlessly expansive and as bright and unblemished as a gleaming mirror. Its light shall pervade warmly across the ten quarters. Any sentient being who can see this light will become irreversible upon the path towards Bodhi. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vow 43- The Vow of Widespread Treasures and Fragrances**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, everything in my land, from the ground to the skies above, such as the lagoons, arbors, rivulets, villas, halls and pavilions, shall all be composed of untold treasures and scented woods. The fragrances of my land will saturate the entirety of the ten quarters. Any sentient being who can sense it will become resolute in cultivating the Dharma. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vow 44-45: The Vows of Samadhi and Buddha Offerings**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, Bodhisattvas of the ten quarters who hear my name will immediately gain the Samadhi of purity, release and equality. They shall dwell in the highest Samadhi until they become Buddhas. They will also make*

*offerings to countless Buddhas while meditating. Unless these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Sutra Vow 46-48: The Vows of Dharani, Patience and Non-Retrogression**

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, Bodhisattvas from other worlds who hear my name will immediately become Mahabodhisattvas. They shall abide in equality and dwell in purity, impartiality and perfect wisdom. Lastly, they will instantly reach the state of Avivartika and attain the three stages of endurance. Unless these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

**Commentary:**

*Vows 44-48 are geared primarily towards Bodhisattvas (although they apply to all sentient beings as well). As everyone who achieves rebirth in Pureland attains the level of Avivartika Bodhisattvahood, even a microbe or hell being can become a peer of Guanyin Bodhisattva by sincerely reciting Amita Buddha's name. This benefit is so profound and great that according to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, even Arhats and junior Bodhisattvas do not believe it. With Avivartika Bodhisattvahood, one is practically a Buddha and only a step away from full Buddhahood.*

Thus, if we resolve upon Bodhi and single-mindedly recite Amita Buddha's name, sincerely dedicating all of our merits towards rebirth in Pureland, we will be able to see Amita Buddha and be reborn in Pureland. Once we attain such a rebirth, we immediately become a fully enlightened Bodhisattva due to Amita Buddha's blessings. Furthermore, Vow 12 mentions that samadhi capable of eliminating outflows and attachments will be bestowed upon rebirth in Pureland. As any person who is free from outflows and attachments is enlightened, Vow 12 is Amita Buddha's ironclad guarantee of instant enlightenment upon rebirth in Pureland. Thus, we should not entertain any doubts. Buddhas and Sages have only Great Compassion and are completely selfless, their conduct unfailing conforms with the 5 precepts and 10 virtues, thus, their word is their bond.

It is also important that we understand the meaning of the terms "merit" and "virtue" in the context of the Infinite Life Sutra. Normally, all good deeds are considered meritorious and virtuous. However, in the Infinite Life Sutra, it refers solely to the samadhi of reciting Amita Buddha's name. This is because mindfulness of Amita Buddha is actually the utmost act of merit and virtue ; such mindfulness is all

inclusive and encompasses the combined meritorious qualities of every other type of virtue and good deed. If we sincerely recite Amita Buddha's name, we are amassing unmatched stocks of merit and cultivating the Six Paramitas all at once. In fact, all of the great sutras such as the Shurangama Sutra and Flower Adornment Sutra are simply expansions of Amita Buddha's name. They were spoken by the Buddha to serve as indirect Dharma-doors for those who still doubt the unsurpassed advantages of Amita Buddha mindfulness.

For instance, according to Chapter 45 of Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra,

***"In the Dharma extinction age—when the last of my teachings perish and evil flourishes—I will use my powers to protect this Sutra and allow it to last for another hundred years. People who feel joy upon encountering this Sutra and who do their best to cultivate in accordance with it will be able to realize their dreams—no matter what those aspirations may be."***

***"The appearance of a Buddha is rare and meeting a Thus Come One is even harder. The various sutras spoken by the Buddhas are hard to obtain and difficult to hear. Those who can cultivate in accordance with the proper teachings are even rarer. However, If a person can joyfully hear and accept this Sutra and cultivate in accordance with it, then such a person has accomplished a task of unsurpassed difficulty."***

Thus, the merits of the Dharma-door of Amita Buddha are so great that it alone will last for an additional century after all the other Dharma-doors are lost. Moreover, this Dharma-door is so rare and profound that someone who can joyfully cultivate it is doing something that few can ever do. The Buddha once said that human rebirth is as rare as a handful of earth compared to all the soil on the entire planet. However, people who can cultivate this Dharma-door are even rarer.

Therefore, the name of Amita Buddha is unparalleled in terms of merit, wisdom and virtue. It extinguishes all sins and is surpassed by no other sutra or good deed.

The reason for such exalted fruits is that the Dharma-door of Amitabha is the only method that can guarantee Bodhi within one lifetime ; all the other Dharma-doors require numerous kalpas of cultivation before Buddhahood can be achieved. Furthermore, as all sentient beings who are reborn in Pureland become Bodhisattvas made in the image of Amita Buddha, they have the same transcendental powers and

unlimited wisdom that the Buddha possesses. This means that once a man is reborn in Pureland, he can simultaneously save, assist and or liberate all kinds of living beings across the entirety of the ten quarters.

So think about it, as humans, even if we managed to feed a whole country and save millions of lives, there would still be multitudes of people suffering across the world. Moreover, innumerable sentient beings would still be mired in the acute suffering of the hells, animal realms and ghost realms. However, if we instead turn our attentions towards Bodhi in Pureland, we would swiftly achieve Buddhahood and go on to exercise boundless Great Compassion. Therefore, there is no greater good than seeking rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Furthermore, the exalted environment of Amita Buddha's sagely paradise of Pureland cannot be rivaled. As Amita Buddha created his Pureland by amalgamating all the positive attributes of each and every one of the innumerable Buddha-lands in existence, no other Buddha-land can rival its splendor and uniqueness. There is neither impermanence nor suffering there, only the highest bliss and happiness.

The Infinite Life Sutra also provides us with detailed descriptions of the wonders of Pureland. Below are a few selected chapters:

**CHAPTER 14, 15, 16 & 17 : THE JEWELLED TREES, BODHI TREES, WAY PLACES AND THE MERITORIOUS RIVERS, PONDS AND LAGOONS**

**Sutra (Chapter 14):**

***"Arising from the golden soil of the Land of Ultimate Bliss are countless magnificent jeweled trees. Some are composed of gold or silver while others are made from crystal, elegant cast glass, amber, imperial jade or agate. Each of these trees are purely composed of one type of treasure. However, other jeweled trees are made from two, three or even seven types of precious jewels and treasures. For instance, some trees may have cameo glass bodies, agate berries and crystal blossoms. Others such as the seven jeweled trees may have golden roots, silver trunks, cast glass branches, crystal twigs, amber leaves, imperial jade petals and agate berries. There are innumerable seven jeweled trees of various combinations in the Land of Ultimate Bliss."***

***"Furthermore, the jeweled trees of Pureland are not only composed of exquisite***

*treasures—but are also completely balanced and perfectly symmetrical. Even the twigs, flowers, berries and leaves are uniformly well formed and proportioned. The glorious aura and warm radiance of these trees are of indescribable beauty. Moreover, whenever pleasant breezes gently ruffle the leaves, it is as if a celestial concerto grosso is being masterfully performed. Divine music naturally emanate from these wonderful jeweled trees."*

**Sutra (Chapter 15):**

*"In addition, there are grand Bodhi trees next to the Sermon Pavilion. These Bodhi trees are four million Han miles in height and five thousand yojanas in circumference. The crown of each tree covers a radius of two hundred thousand Han miles. Composed purely of countless gems and adorned with multitudes of jeweled blossoms and berries, their warm radiance naturally pervades boundlessly."*

*"Furthermore, wish-fulfilling jewels of various colors such as emerald, ruby and ivory—the foremost of all precious stones—are used prominently as decorative wreaths. The jeweled trunks are wrapped in ribbons made from celestial stars while bells composed of gold and pearls adorn the branches. Moreover, rare and supremely wonderful jeweled meshes adorn the canopies. The hundreds of thousands of divine colors compliment each other to create a glorious aura of majestic and infinite brightness. What a marvelous sight! Such augustness reflects the purity of those who dwell in Pureland."*

*"When delightful breezes ruffle the leaves and twigs, countless divine sounds of Dharma immediately fill the air. Exquisite, elegant, enlightening and refreshing, these sounds are the foremost of all sounds found across the ten quarters. Anyone who merely sees a Bodhi tree, hears its sounds, tastes its fruits, breathes in its fragrant scents, comes into contact with its august brightness or contemplates its merit will attain Avivartika Bodhisattvahood. Immediately, they will be freed from outflows and afflictions. Moreover, they will become irreversibly established on the path to Unsurpassed Bodhi and attain the three stages of endurance."*

*"The Buddha said to Ananda: "The rare flora of Pureland turns the Dharma Wheel and creates Buddhas. They exist because of the infinite merits and powers of Amita Buddha and his great vows."*

**Sutra Chapter 16:**

*"In the Land of Ultimate Bliss, the Sermon Pavilion and the other structures are also composed of the same exquisite jewels that make up the trees. Furthermore, numerous ornately carved webbed panels and screens—all decorated with white pearls and wish-fulfilling jewels—adorn the splendorous Pavilion and surrounding architecture. The gilded halls, grand villas and celestial palaces of the Bodhisattvas are similarly well adorned and of unmatched beauty.*

*Moreover, the Bodhisattvas of Pureland are constantly cultivating with great diligence. Some are speaking the Dharma while others are accepting and listening to it. Some may cultivate Zen or Vajrayana while effortlessly suspended in the air. Protected by Amita Buddha's merits and vows, all of them easefully progress through the various stages of Sagehood and soon attain Unsurpassed Bodhi. They joyfully cultivate in accordance with their wishes."*

**Sutra Chapter 17:**

*"Moreover, the Sermon Pavilion, halls and palaces are all surrounded by divine streams, ponds and lagoons. These bodies of water are perfectly proportioned in accordance with their surroundings. Some are ten yojanas, twenty yojanas or even hundreds of thousands of yojanas in size, depth and length. The waters are pristine, fragrant and endowed with the eight meritorious virtues. These glistening waters are always sweet, soft, serene, light and clear. They can wash away every affliction and defilement. On the banks and beaches are numerous sandalwood trees and arbors bearing auspicious fruits. They are divinely radiant and diffuse perfumed fragrances. Moreover, their long elegant branches and lush bejeweled leaves form lovely shades above the azure lagoons. The marvelous aromas produced by such flora are simply undreamed of. When gentle breezes ruffle the branches, auspicious blossoms and berries fall gracefully into the waters. They drift along the gentle ripples and exude untold fragrances."*

*"These rivers and lagoons are all adorned with the seven types of gems, even the river beds are carpeted with golden sand. Furthermore, multitudes of exquisite lotus flowers and water lilies—utpalas, padmas, kumudas and pundarikas—of various rich and celestial colors, adorn the surface of these divine bodies of water. Their vivid complexions and stunning brightness pervades across the entire surface."*

*"If a Bodhisattva of Pureland chooses to bathe one of these jeweled rivulets, ponds and lagoons, the water will obey their every fancy. If they wish for the water to rise to their ankles, it rises to their ankles. If they wish for it to rise to their waists, it rises to their waists. If they wish for it to rise to their necks, it rises to their necks. If they wish to be completely immersed, it will spontaneously pour over their bodies. If they wish for it to recede, it will immediately recede and leave them as dry as before. Additionally, if they wish for cool water, it will turn cool. If they wish for warm water, it will turn warm. If they wish for the rapidity of the water to change, it will change in accordance with their wishes. These meritorious waters exist only to serve. It comforts the body, eases the mind and washes away the six kinds of dust. It is so pure that it appears formless and so clear that the brightness of the aurulent river bed shines forth from all depths. These delightful and enticing waters swirl gently in graceful overlapping circles."*

*"Furthermore, the mild waves produce countless wonderful and soothing sounds. Depending on one's wishes, one can hear the sounds of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha or of the paramitas. One may hear the sounds of stillness and purity or the sounds of what neither arises nor ceases to be. One may also hear the sounds of the Ten Strengths of Valor or the sounds of Non-abidance. The sounds of Great Compassion, loving kindness, empathy and equanimity or the anointing of the crown of wisdom with sweet dew may also be heard. Once these sounds are heard, the roots of virtue quickly mature and the heart becomes pure, unattached, upright and impartial. Everything that one hears is in accordance with the Dharma. One alone hears what one wishes to hear and does not hear what one does not seek to hear. One can neither retrogress from Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi nor retreat from the heart of Bodhi."*

*"Sentient beings of the ten quarters who are reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss will be spontaneously transformed while dwelling in palatial lotus buds floating upon the glistening waters of the Grand Seven Jeweled Lagoon. They instantly obtain radiant bodies that are pure, ethereal, formless and without outflows. They will never again hear even a whisper of terms such as anxieties, burdens, evil realms and the kleshas. Thus, if there exists not even the notion of suffering, how could there be any actual suffering?"*

*"On the other hand, the sounds of bliss are ever present in Pureland. This is why it is called the Land of Ultimate Bliss."*



## CHAPTER 19: A DREAM COME TRUE

### Sutra:

*"Furthermore, sentient beings who have been, will be or are about to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss will all possess wonderful golden bodies and majestic appearances. Their wisdom and merit will be unlimited. Additionally, they will have perfect ease and transcendental powers. No one is left wanting and everything is plentiful. Elegant palaces, rich ornaments, exquisite flowers, perfumed incense, lush streamers, plush canopies and various other beautifully adorned requisites all arise spontaneously on demand."*

*"When nourishment is sought for, alms bowls made from seven different kinds of gems will immediately manifest as a response. Divine food, nectar and refreshments of a hundred flavors will appear in sumptuous quantities and disappear when not needed. However, no one actually consumes these aliments. Instead, upon perceiving the profound insight of Dharma's gourmet flavors, they dine only on the pure thoughts resulting from their observation. Thus, they are naturally immortal, refreshed, pure and delighted. They have no attachments to food and drink. What's more, those who dwell in Pureland wear divine tunics and togas woven from soft jeweled threads. Their coronets, laurel wreaths and ornate accessories are likewise composed of numerous precious stones. With such august adornments, their bodies naturally exude infinite light and a myriad of splendorous colors."*

*"Moreover, the various aspects of their palatial abodes—such as the size, shape or location—are all customized in accordance with their wishes. For instance, some palaces are terrestrial and surrounded by tranquil pools of divine water while others glide among the stars. Furthermore, all residences are adorned with ornate and bejeweled domes. Countless bells composed of precious stones also lend their splendor to these heavenly palaces and villas. The colors and brightness of such elegant celestial dwellings are naturally glorious. Such purity, bliss and peace arise in response to nothing more than a thought. Thus, no one could be unsatisfied."*

As we have now seen the exalted environment of Pureland, the only matter that remains are the details on how to get there. Since Amita Buddha's vows makes it clear that resolving for Bodhi and single-minded concentration are the two cardinal factors, we should sincerely cultivate these virtues.

According to Pureland teachings, all who have succeeded in achieving single-minded concentration in Amita Buddha displayed the following tenets in their practice:

**Faith:** The most important factor is faith in the Amita Buddha. The Dharma-door of Pureland is doubted by many, this is because it is the Dharma in its purest form. Thus, people doubt the Buddha's Great Compassion as they are used to difficulty, quid pro quo and delusion. They cannot believe that the Buddha will offer them everything for nothing on the spot. According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, the wisdom found in the Infinite Life Sutra is simply unsurpassable. When we read the Infinite Life Sutra, we are in effect reading everything the Buddha had taught!

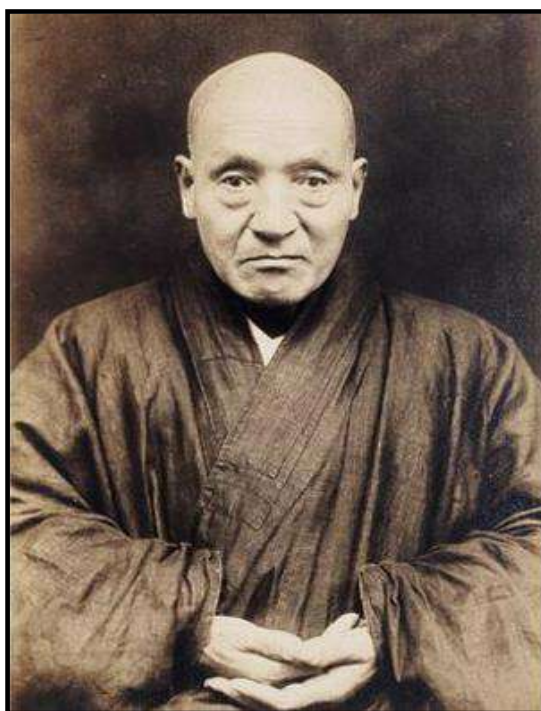
Furthermore, People often admire knowledgeable, intellectual, sophisticated or well learned people. However, people with such traits are superficial and not profound ; the reason they frequently indulge in doubts, arrogance, debates or grand maxims is because they have not recovered their Buddha-nature. The simple illiterate who single-mindedly recites Namo Amitabha without doubt or attachment is actually the true epitome of the Mahayana ideal. Such people will soon become omniscient Buddhas. Hence, single-minded faith in Amitabha, born from selfless virtue, is the most profound wisdom that ever was and will be.

**Willingness:** Those who have faith in Amitabha have planted roots of virtue with innumerable Buddhas in lives past. However, if coarse attachments to desire still grip them, they will fail to take advantage of the opportunity to attain Bodhi within one life. Thus, it is important to let everything go and sincerely seek Bodhi.

**Action:** The truly sincere recite the name of Amita Buddha at all times. They resist all temptations, attachments and provocations, Moreover, they do not mix their cultivation with other practices. They recite either silently or loudly and are mindful of Amita Buddha even during their sleep and meal times. The meaning of single-mindedness is to unceasingly recite Amita Buddha ; wandering thoughts, intentions, desires and so forth are completely suppressed by the constant string of recitations. Except for Amita Buddha, there should be nothing else.

Perhaps no one could put it better than the great Master Yin Guang himself. In his famous Exhortation, he succinctly outlines what one must do in order to achieve rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss:

## PATRIARCH YIN GUANG'S EXHORTATION



**Patriarch Yin Guang (1861-1940)**

*"Whether we are laymen or among the robed and ordained, we must respect our superiors and show kindness to our subordinates. We must bear what others cannot bear and practice what others are too weak to cultivate. We must shoulder other's burdens and help everyone succeed in their cultivation."*

*"During solitary moments, we must self reflect and repent. However, we should never prattle about the mistakes or scandals of others."*

*"We must be mindful of Amita Buddha from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn. It makes no difference whether we are undertaking great feats or engaged in mundane daily chores, we must unceasingly recite the Buddha's name."*

*"When we are reciting—whether loudly, quietly or silently—we must refrain from entertaining false and wandering thoughts. There should not be a single thought which is not the Buddha's name in our minds. If false and wandering thoughts arise, dispel them immediately."*

*"Always feel remorse and be penitent. Even if we are skilled in cultivation, we must be humble and regard our own abilities as inferior. Never should we indulge in superbia."*

*"Instead of prying into the affairs or feuds of others, we should focus on ordering our own house. Furthermore, we should see only the merits of others, and not their faults or evils."*

*"For humility's sake, we must consider everyone else to be exalted  
Bodhisattvas—but ourselves as mere mortals."*

*"Those who observe these instructions will definitely achieve rebirth in the Western  
Land of Ultimate Bliss."*

*BUDDHISM IS NONE OTHER THAN CULTIVATING VIRTUE,  
DISCARDING VICES AND PURIFYING THE MIND.*

*NAMO AMITABHA!*

*NAMO AMITABHA!*

*NAMO AMITABHA!*

One of the greatest obstacles to successfully reciting the Buddha's name is our habit of duality and blaming/seeking the external. According to Liao Fan's Four Lessons:

*Master Yun-Gu said that Master Hui-Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of the Zen School taught, "All the fields of merit are within one's own heart. If one seeks from the true mind within, one can be in touch with all one wishes for"*

This is why Patriarch Yin Guang stressed self reflection, humility, repentance and introspection in his Exhortation. We often blame others or external factors when things are unsatisfactory or do not go our way. However, the truth is that **whatever happens on the outside is just a reflection of the inside**. If we continue to look at the world with a heart of duality and egocentrism, our life and living environment will forever reflect the impurities of the false and wandering thoughts that plague our hearts and minds.

On the other hand, if we refrain from blaming others and instead repent, all that which is negative can be eradicated. It does not matter whether we are at fault or not, as long as negative situations such as hostility, misfortunes and deprivation occur, it is our fault as such things only materialize because we harbor impure wandering thoughts. For instance, if we are insulted for no reason, it is because we still have the roots of contempt in our heart. It is not the man delivering the insult that we should blame, it is

actually ourselves. **If we did not harbor contempt inside, the outside could not give rise to anything contemptuous.**

The Patriarch Huineng famously said that our self-nature is self sufficient and can generate myriads of forms, persons and images. Thus, if our self-nature has been restored to its original purity (i.e. Bodhi), we can see no evil and feel no suffering. For instance, the Buddha once revealed how he saw the world by tapping the ground with his leg—the land around him instantly changed to reflect the beauty of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Thus, even though the Buddha lived the life of a homeless monk, he was actually in the Land of Ultimate Bliss the whole time due to his Non-abidance (no matter where he goes, he will always be among the bliss of Pureland). As the common people around him were not enlightened, they only saw the Buddha living what appeared to be an uncomfortable life. This is because they saw only through their own lens, which were tainted by duality, greed, hatred and delusion. The brilliance of their self-nature was obstructed by karmic obstacles.

Thus, from this we can understand that a pure and virtuous heart gives rise to a pure world while passions give rise only to discomfort, dirtiness, pains, enemies and so forth. Life is like a movie that we direct. As duality is a delusion, all the people we meet in our life are actually just disinterested actors and actresses acting out a script we have written in a film set we have built. There are no other people, just our self-nature and the images it generates. So if we do not do good deeds, we write our own tragedy ; if we accord with Heaven's will and cultivate pure and kind thoughts, we write our own happy ending. In fact, the Shurangama Sutra even points out that if two populations of vastly different karma and mental purity were to gaze at the same sky, the virtuous ones will see only beauty while the sinful ones would see various bad omens. Therefore, by constantly reciting Amita Buddha's name, we can eliminate our karmic obstacles and achieve Buddhahood in Pureland— restoring our self-nature to its original purity.

As it is clear that our heart determines our environment, we should never blame others or harbor anger. Whenever anything negative happens, we should feel contrition for harboring impure thoughts and repent our past evil karma by reciting Amita Buddha's name with equanimity. **If you do so, you will find that many bad situations will suddenly resolve by itself.** This is because sincerity and modesty allows us to conform with our pure, boundlessly compassionate and omnipotent Buddha-nature. On the other hand, hatred and duality ties us to the wandering thoughts that shackle us to an illusory world of evil and volatile reflections.

For instance, a mother once asked a Sage to cure her son of cancer. The Sage said that her son was not in fact sick, the illness was actually in her heart. She later cleared her heart of hatred, greed and delusion by repenting and chanting the Buddha's name. Soon afterwards, her son recovered completely. From this, **we must understand that the outside is merely a mirror that reflects our heart**. If we are sick or see others suffering, it is because our heart harbors impure wandering thoughts based on greed, hatred and delusion. No one is to blame but ourselves.

Thus, if we recite the Buddha's name and the results are not efficacious, it is because we still harbor a blatantly egocentric, blame shifting and unrepentant mentality. In other words, our mouths may recite the Buddha's name but our hearts are not whole heartedly with the Buddha or Patriarch Yin Guang's instructions.

The same goes for larger events such as disasters, wars, oppression, rioting, earthquakes and so forth. For instance, faithlessness towards proper teachings (i.e. Buddhism, Christianity etc.) leads to unstable ground and greed leads to floods. If we wish to avoid such disasters, we must purify our hearts and rectify our actions. Our mind and body must conform with faith, temperance, forgiveness, kindness and charity. The world we live in is nothing than a mirror that reflects the various grades of delusions we harbor. If we have no delusions (i.e. attained Buddhahood), we would see only the brightness and bliss of our original self nature.

For instance, a Taiwanese woman once complained about the mismanagement of the economy at the hands of the government. A Sage overheard her complaints and told her that the state of the economy was actually her fault and not the government's. He told her that the roots of greed in her heart were generating the images of economic strife that she was seeing. If she purified her heart with repentance and mindfulness, her environment would change into that of abundance!

Ordinary people often blame God, Heaven, nature, animals, bad luck, other people and so forth for whatever does not go their way. However, the wise and sagely understand the following wisdom from Liao Fan's Four Lessons:

***“Destiny exists but is difficult to be believed by most people because it is very changeable”. “Destiny is not set, but is only created and determined by ourselves”. These are all true. I came to understand that both good fortune and misfortune are incurred by our own actions. These are truly the words of sages and virtuous people! If one were to say that good fortune and adversity are all determined by the heavens,***

***then I would consider that person to be ordinary.***

Hence, the wise take control of their own lives by self reflection and constant repentance through sincere recitation of Amita Buddha's name. Once their hearts become pure enough, they can see Amita Buddha and be reborn in Pureland. Their environment now reflects the exalted purity of Amita Buddha and Non-abidance.

Moreover, the Patriarch also cautions us against arrogance. Arrogance or pride is a common turbid state that taints our cultivation and attracts the attention of demons. For instance, some people may see spirits or other ethereal signs while they are cultivating mindfulness of Amita Buddha, this is because such people have a more profound spiritual nature. However, if we experience these signs and become overly confident or proud, we will fall into the habit of arrogance. The only goal of Amita Buddha Pureland Buddhism is to diligently recite until rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss is attained. Any ethereal phenomenon, any sign and any attainment before we meet Amita Buddha are of no importance. For instance, the Shurangama Sutra ends its description of each of the 50 Demonic States with the following advice:

*It is a temporary state and does not indicate Sagehood. If he does not think he has become a Sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence."*

Thus, by disregarding every distraction, we will attain rebirth in Pureland unhindered. However, by becoming arrogant over false or petty attainments, we lose our sincerity and will fall. As Amita Buddha's 48 Vows and blessings provide cultivator's with unrivaled security against demonic influences and wrong views, all that is required to succeed is modesty and single-mindedness on our part. According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, demons, delusions and wrong views cannot touch or sway those who are resolute in seeking rebirth in Pureland.

Furthermore, the reason many people cannot cultivate mindfulness of Amitabha to a profound degree is because of emotion and attachments. They are held back from Pureland by their passions and attachments. The only way to eliminate such obstacles is to understand that the world is impermanent and cannot be kept:

***"People of this world all hanker after matters of little importance. Thus, they must toil and slog under an oppressive atmosphere of evil and suffering. Whether rich or poor, patrician or plebeian, young or old, male or female, they are all worried about***

*the future and tormented by the past. Shackled by desire, they cannot rest. For instance, those without dwellings yearn for them while those without land wish for it. All seek to gain or retain wealth, family and servants. If they have one they feel they lack the other. These people of feeble merit are forever afflicted. If they should by some chance amass all that they wish for, impermanence will visit them in the form of wars, disasters, bandits, creditors, extortionary governments and karmic enemies. Overwhelmed by sorrow over their losses, they become consumed by obstinate loathing. Unable to let go, all that they care for are torn from them upon their deaths anyway. This causes them to suffer ceaseless pain and anxiety. Such misery does not discriminate between aristocrats and paupers."*

*" Look around you, fathers inevitably shed tears for their deceased offspring while children weep over their late parents. Siblings and couples all become grief stricken when the one they love is lost. They do not know that their attachments are false and impermanent. Consumed by love and emotion, they are shackled to the Samsara. Consequently, they squander their years and neglect to diligently and properly cultivate the Dharma. Few become Sages while many drown in their own delusions."*

*- Infinite Life Sutra*

Thus, why must we suffer the hells, ghost realms, animal realms as well as misfortune, loss and impermanence over passions and things that are not real? Why must we be chained to the Samsara for eons without end over things that we cannot keep, beauty that slips away like water in joined palms, affections we cannot retain, matters we cannot control, hatreds we cannot eliminate and bland dreams that mostly remain unfulfilled anyway? Why cling to a nightmare of birth, death, illness, impermanence and weary cycles? Why not single-mindedly seek Bodhi in Pureland and live forever in the Land of Ultimate Bliss?

For instance, as mentioned previously, the reason people are reborn together as family is due to past karmic debts and credits. For example, if a man owes someone a favor for kindness shown in past lives, he will likely be reborn as a loving spouse or parent to the person he owes kindness to. Likewise, if someone owes another money, the creditor will most likely be reborn as the debtor's offspring and heir. **Once the debt or favor has been repaid, the relationship naturally ends and any remaining affection usually disappears as new karmic relationships manifest. Thus, there really is nothing to be attached to.**

This is not to say that we should disregard our obligations towards our family, it



simply means that we should not be emotional. Filial piety is a virtue that mindfulness is built on, and no virtue can be successfully observed with emotionalism.

Furthermore, as every one of us have been turning in the Samsara since time immemorial, all of the innumerable sentient beings in the universe have at some point been our family members. Hence, we should cultivate the true compassion of Bodhisattvas while shedding the false emotional partialities rooted in the three poisons. For instance, if we achieve Bodhi, countless generations of our family (including those of prior rebirths) will share our merits and become devas or Sages.

Moreover, to understand in detail what the standard of single-mindedness calls for, we should look no further than the following:

**MAHASTHAMAPRAPTA'S TREATISE ON PERFECT  
ENLIGHTENMENT THROUGH MINDFULNESS OF AMITAYUS**

*As Mahasthamaprapta, a Prince of Dharma, arose from his seat, the 52 Bodhisattvas who formed his august retinue immediately followed suit. He and his retinue proceeded to reverently prostrate before the Buddha. His Serene Highness then spoke the following to the assembly:*

*"In a time before time immemorial, a Buddha titled Infinite Light appeared in this world. He was the first of twelve Buddhas who emerged in the that kalpa. The last one was a Buddha whose glorious light outshined the majestic brightness of both the Sun and the Moon. Thus, he was known as the Brightness Upon the Sun and the Moon Buddha."*

*"That Buddha personally taught me the Mindfulness of Amitayus Samadhi. For example, if a father who adores his son should have a son who does not requite, then the son's back will always be turned on his father. However, if both father and son were to yearn for each other, and if they unceasingly cherish thoughts of each other, then not even death could separate them. They will be together for life after life like a shadow following the form. The Buddhas of the ten quarters are like the father. They constantly show tender concern towards sentient beings who rarely requite. If those sentient beings could instead single-mindedly hold the Buddha's name, they will surely meet the Buddha. The Buddha's hands are always extended, but it is up to you to grasp it."*

*"Furthermore, if a man were to habitually burn scented incense, his person will naturally exude fragrant aromas. Likewise, a man who is mindful of the Buddha's*

*name will be adorned with the Buddha's infinite light and merit. Hence, it was through such mindfulness that I gained insight into the fact that all dharmas neither arise nor cease. Today in this world, I tirelessly exhort all to faithfully practice the Dharma-door of Pure Land. There is no better way to attain Perfect Enlightenment and the state of no outflows than by pure and unceasing mindfulness of Amitayus. Such Samadhi is the foremost."*

This treatise, which is the last paragraph of Chapter 5 of the Shurangama Sutra, was inducted as the fifth principle text of Pureland Buddhism by Patriarch Yin Guang during the early 20th century. In fact, it was later determined after Master Yin Guang's passing that he was actually Mahasthamaprapta manifesting in human form! Therefore, this treatise represents the Buddha's timely gift of Dharma to us all. It is also the most important part of the Shurangama Sutra.

In this treatise, Mahasthamaprapta concisely explains the mechanics behind single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha's name. The example of the father and the son is a masterful choice of words as it explains the level of devotion required in a way that most people can relate to. **If we (i.e. the son) can yearn for the Buddha (i.e. the father) as strongly as a loving father adores his child, we will certainly achieve single-mindedness.** Once single-mindedness is achieved, the terms of the treatise are fulfilled and one immediately becomes a Bodhisattva of Pureland.

Lastly, to conclude this section, Chapter 38 of Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra, the chapter where the Buddha used his transcendental powers to reveal Amita Buddha to Ananda and the congregation, is included below:

### **CHAPTER 38: PURELAND SHOWN TO CONGREGATION**

*The Buddha said to Ananda: "If you wish to witness the Buddha of Infinite Purity, Equality and Wisdom as well as the attendant lands of Bodhisattvas and Sages, then sincerely prostrate towards the west and single-mindedly recite Namó Amita Buddha."*

*Ananda quickly arose from his seat, joined his palms and faced the west. He prostrated and declared: "Today, I wish to see the Land of Ultimate Bliss and Amita Buddha—to revere, make offerings and cultivate roots of virtue!"*

*At that time, Amita Buddha appeared in full view. His body was vast and august ;*

*his countenance regal and upright. Like a golden colossus rising from the sea, his enormous and majestic form rapidly eclipsed the entire universe of countless world-systems. In addition, the Buddhas of the ten directions all became visible as well. The multitudes of Buddhas were seen ceaselessly praising and admiring Amita Buddha's numerous virtues and merits.*

*The Venerable Ananda said: "The Land of Ultimate Bliss is a place like none other! I have already sought and attained rebirth there—I am now a Bodhisattva of Pureland."*

*The Buddha replied: "Those who attain rebirth there have met countless Buddhas in their past lives. They have also accrued abundant stocks of merit. If you wish to reach the Land of Ultimate Bliss, you must single-mindedly take refuge in Amita Buddha."*

*As the Buddha spoke, Amita Buddha let out a supreme and infinite light from his palms. This light instantly enveloped all of the innumerable world-systems belonging to the multitudes of Buddhas, making them plainly visible to the assembly. Every single detail of those worlds—such as the Adamantine Mountains, snowy peaks, whitewater rivers, dense forests and celestial vimanas—became clearly visible to everyone due to Amita Buddha's pure and glorious light. Akin to sunlight illuminating the Earth. Even the dismal realms of the ghouls, hell beings and animals were visible under Amita's golden light. His aurulent colored brightness filled up the entire universe like a great flood consuming the world. Needless to say, the radiance of a Buddha naturally outshines the halos of Bodhisattvas and Shravakas.*

*The monks, nuns, upasakas, upasikas, devas, celestial dragons, yakshas, asuras, kinnaras, mahoragas, gandharvas, garudas, humans and non humans that formed the Buddha's congregation all witnessed the magnificent and august splendors of the Land of Ultimate Bliss with their own eyes. They also saw Amita Buddha in his jeweled Pavilion ; he was seated upon an ornate settee composed of fragrant lotuses. His upright appearance naturally exuded virtues and radiated merits. Moreover, Sages and Bodhisattvas could be seen reverently attending to him. He was like the King of Mount Sumeru, a pure and shining beacon surrounded by the calm and meritorious waters of the vast ocean. Untainted by anything strange, evil or impure but adorned with countless treasures and surrounded by Sages.*

*Ananda and those present were so jubilant that they proceeded to prostrate before Amita Buddha with their heads touching the ground. Sincerely, everyone recited Namó Amita Samyaksambuddha. The multitudes of men, devas and even the little insects all benefited greatly as Amita Buddha's light shrouded them. All of their sufferings, anxieties and afflictions ceased completely at that moment—swiftly replaced by bliss and compassion.*

*Devas promptly made wonderful offerings of celestial bliss. With elegance and poise, they masterfully played their heavenly mandolins, clarinets, harps and clavichords. The atmosphere soon resounded with exquisite and ethereal music. Moreover, multitudes of gods and goddesses were seen scattering fragrant incense and flowers across the skies out of awe and veneration.*

*Due to the limitless powers of the Buddha, a land hundreds of thousands of kotis of nayutas away was seen in plain sight on the Saha world. Those who have the Buddha-Eye can still witness this sermon and scene in a future time.*

The most important aspect of this Chapter is that it proves the Rebirth Upon Ten Recitations Vow and illustrates the vow in action. Everyone in that congregation yearned for Pureland rebirth, thus, the Buddha told them to single-mindedly seek rebirth in Pureland. They did so and instantly met Amita Buddha, becoming Mahabodhisattvas in the process. For instance, Ananda was only a Sotapanna at the beginning of this chapter but became a Bodhisattva of Pureland the instant he took refuge in Amita Buddha. Such exalted fruits arose due to nothing more than a moment of genuine faith in Amita Buddha.

In the Theravada scriptures, Ananda only became an Arhat after the Buddha's parinirvana. However, the truth is that he was already a Bodhisattva of Pureland. He was simply putting on the show of attaining Arhatship later on to help those who were not ready for the Mahayana teachings. The Mahayana sutras were spoken by the Buddha in Samadhi and stored in the minds of Bodhisattvas until they were recorded. Thus, the view that the Mahayana Sutras were not directly spoken by the Buddha is wrong and false. Both the Theravada and Mahayana teachings were spoken by the Buddha.

Thus, we must not delay our cultivation of Amita Buddha mindfulness. This is our one chance to speedily achieve Bodhi in this turbid world. The Venerable Master Chin Kung often warns us: *"This is our only chance, a rare breach in the opaque walls of the Samsara, whence come another?"*

**Recommended Resources:**

**Going Home to the Pure Land**

**Venerable Master Wu Ling**

**<https://archive.org/details/purelandhome/v1>**

This excellent book provides detailed instructions on how to integrate mindfulness of Amita Buddha into your daily life. It also teaches techniques for Buddha name recitation.

---

**Ven. Master Hai Xian Pureland Rebirth Biographic Documentary (English Subtitles)**



**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoritpHKxm4>**

Ven. Master Hai Xian (1901-2013) achieved Pureland rebirth during the wee hours of January 17th 2013. The Venerable Master Chin Kung has said that he is the new Patriarch Huineng and that his life of cultivation will serve as a beacon of light for thousands of years to come. Hence, all are recommended to watch this documentary.

## HOW TO HELP THE DEAD AND DYING

There is a popular Taoist/Confucian saying that goes: **Few since ancient times have managed to live to seventy, yet the roads are littered with the penniless who have sold everything to buy medicine!**

This maxim is particularly important in our day and age. Nowadays, people often neglect to prepare for their inevitable death and rebirth but fight tooth and nail to squeeze out a few more years of life. For instance, many parents will often spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to save a terminally ill child. However, the same parents would most likely neglect to cultivate merits on the child's behalf.

Unfortunately, most people only weep when the one they love is lost. Moreover, relatives often spend large amounts of money on expensive funerals to show respect. However, grieving and splurging are of no help whatsoever for the soul of the deceased. In fact, if animals are slaughtered as sacrifices or for the purpose of serving meat during the memorial ceremony (a common occurrence across the world), that would actually add to the karmic burdens of the deceased!

Thus, everyone must heed and propagate the teachings found in Chapter 7 (Benefiting the Living and the Dead) of the Earth Store Sutra (translated by the BTTS) :

*At that time, Earth Store Bodhisattva Mahasattva said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I see that every single movement or stirring of thought on the part of beings of Jambudvīpa is an offense. Beings tend to use up any wholesome benefits they accrue, and many of them end up retreating from their initial resolve. If they encounter evil conditions, they magnify them with every thought. They are like people trying to carry heavy rocks while walking through mud. Each step becomes more difficult and the rocks more cumbersome as their feet sink deeper. If they meet a mentor, he may be strong enough to lighten or even totally remove their burdens. Helping them thus, the mentor will then advise them to stay on solid ground and be mindful never to go back into that treacherous path.*

*“World Honored One, the bad habits of beings range from minor to major. Since all beings have such habits, their families or relatives should create blessings for them when they are on the verge of dying in order to assist them on the road ahead. That may be done by hanging banners and canopies; lighting oil lamps; reciting the sacred sutras; and making offerings before the images of Buddhas or sages. Another way to assist them is by reciting the names of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and*

*Pratyekabuddhas so that the recitation of each name passes by the ear of the dying one and is heard in his fundamental consciousness.*

*“Suppose the evil karma created by beings were such that they ought to fall into the bad destinies. If their relatives cultivate wholesome causes on their behalf when they are close to death, then their manifold offenses can be dissolved. If relatives can further do many good deeds during the first forty-nine days after the death of such beings, then the deceased can leave the evil destinies forever, be born as humans and gods, and receive supremely wonderful bliss. Their surviving relatives will also receive limitless benefits.*

*“Therefore, before the Buddhas, World Honored Ones, as well as before the gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division, humans and non-humans, I now exhort beings of Jambudvīpa to be careful to avoid harming, killing, and doing other unwholesome deeds; to refrain from worshipping ghosts and spirits or making sacrifices to them; and never to call on mountain sprites on the day of death. Why is that? Killing, harming, and making sacrifices do not even have a tiny hairbreath of power with which to benefit the deceased. Such acts only bind up the conditions of offenses so that they grow ever deeper and heavier. The deceased might have been due to increase his potential for sagehood or gain birth among humans or gods in his next life or in the future.*

*“But if his family commits offenses in his name, his good rebirth will be delayed. How much more would that be the case for people on the verge of death who during their lives had failed to plant even a few good roots. Each offender has to undergo the bad destinies according to his own karma. How could anyone bear to have relatives add to that karma? That would be like having a neighbor add a few more things to a load of over a hundred pounds being carried by someone who had already traveled a long distance and who had not eaten for three days. If that extra weight were added, that person’s burden would become even more unbearable.*

*“World Honored One, I see that beings of Jambudvīpa will themselves receive the benefit of any good deeds they are able to do that accord with the Buddha’s teachings. That holds true even when the deeds are as small as a strand of hair, a drop of water, a grain of sand, or a mote of dust.”*

*After that had been said, an elder named Great Eloquence rose in the assembly. He had realized Non-Production long ago and was appearing in the body of an elder only to teach and transform those in the Ten Directions. Putting his palms together*

*respectfully, he asked Earth Store Bodhisattva, “Great Lord, after people in Jambudvīpa die and their close and distant relatives cultivate merit by making vegetarian meal offerings and doing other such good deeds, will the deceased obtain merit and virtue significant enough to bring about their liberation?”*

*Earth Store replied, “Elder, based on the awesome power of the Buddhas, I will now expound this principle for the sake of beings of the present and future. Elder, if beings of the present and future when on the verge of dying hear the name of one Buddha, one Bodhisattva, or one Pratyekabuddha, they will attain liberation whether they have committed offenses or not.*

*“When men or women laden with offenses who failed to plant good causes die, even they can receive one-seventh of any merit dedicated to them by relatives who do good deeds on their behalf. The other six-sevenths of the merit will return to the living relatives who did the good deeds. It follows that good men and women of the present and future who cultivate while they are strong and healthy will receive all of the benefit derived.*

*“The arrival of the Great Ghost of Impermanence is so unexpected that the deceased ones’ consciousnesses first roam in darkness and obscurity, unaware of offenses and blessings. For forty-nine days the deceased are as if deluded or deaf, or as if in courts where their karmic retributions are being decided. Once judgment is fixed, they are reborn according to their karma. In the time before rebirths are determined, the deceased suffer from thousands upon thousands of anxieties. How much more is that the case for those who are to fall into the bad destinies.*

*“Throughout forty-nine days, those whose lives have ended and who have not yet been reborn will be hoping every moment that their immediate relatives will earn blessings powerful enough to rescue them. At the end of that time, the deceased will undergo retribution according to their karma. If someone is an offender, he may pass through hundreds of thousands of years without even a day’s liberation. If someone’s offenses deserve Fivefold Relentless Retribution, he will fall into the great hells and undergo incessant suffering throughout hundreds of millions of eons.*

*“Moreover, Elder, when beings who have committed karmic offenses die, their relatives may prepare vegetarian offerings to aid them on their karmic paths. In the*



*process of preparing the vegetarian meal and before it has been eaten, rice-washing water and vegetable leaves should not be thrown on the ground.*

**Note: According to the Venerable Master Chin Kung: In order to demonstrate utmost sincerity, the water used to wash the rice and the bits of vegetable that are not used should be placed in bowls and left on the side. They should not be thrown away until after the ceremony is finished.**

*Before the food is offered to the Buddhas and the Sangha, no one should eat it. If there is laxness or transgression in this matter, then the deceased will receive no strength from it, but if purity is rigorously maintained in making the offering to the Buddhas and the Sangha, the deceased will receive one seventh of the merit. Therefore, Elder, by performing vegetarian offerings on behalf of deceased fathers, mothers, and other relatives while making earnest supplication on their behalf, beings of Jambudvīpa benefit both the living and the dead.”*

Moreover, the moment of death is also a critical moment that if used correctly, will result in rebirth in Pureland. For even a person who has never heard of Pureland teachings can achieve rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss if they become sincerely mindful of Amita Buddha during their last thought.

Thus, this is the reason why we need to recite the name of Amita Buddha to the dead and dying. Even if a person has died, it is likely that the consciousness has not yet left the body (it usually leaves 8-12 hours later). Hence, it is important to **not disturb the body and to recite Amita Buddha's name to them during this time.** This will allow their consciousness to remain calm and become mindful of the Buddha. Furthermore, the 26th Vow of Amita Buddha also states that those who merely perceive his name will have a splendid rebirth even if they do not leave the Samsara. As a person's hearing is actually the last faculty to fail, their consciousness can still hear for the full 8-12 hour period after their breathing stops.

Lastly, even in the worse case scenario, such as if the 49 day period has long passed before these teachings were encountered by relatives, transference of merit will still help regardless of where the deceased has been reborn or how much time has passed. The merits from good deeds dedicated to someone else will always be able to instantly find its way across the Samsara to the intended recipient. **For instance, if we regularly make offerings (e.g. incense, flowers or water etc.) to an image of Earth Store Bodhisattva, all of our forefathers and ancestors will achieve heavenly rebirth and the lives of our living parents will be greatly prolonged.**

To conclude this section, the excellent example of Dr. Chiang is included:

## **The Story of Dr Chiang**

*Published in Vajra Bodhi Sea, Bodhi Field section, November 2008 Edition p33-37*

### **A talk by Alice Chiang on September 14, 2008**

Dharma Master Yo asked me to share with you what Dr. Chiang and our family have gone through these past 5 months. Life is so very unpredictable! Just a few months ago, Dr. Chiang was at the peak of his medical practice. We were in the process of moving into a brand new house. It was his dream home. It's got everything he ever wanted built in it. The new house was surrounded by woods and lots of trees, which he loved. He was very excited about it. At the end of February and the beginning of March, we began to pack our valuables and important documents into boxes and move from our old house to the new one. His back then began to hurt. We thought he probably just pulled some muscles while lifting boxes and did not take too much notice of it. Well, the back pain got worse for the next two weeks and began to pinch the nerve, causing numbness of the left leg. He decided to get an MRI of the spine to make sure everything was okay.

I will never forget March 20th, Thursday, at 3 p.m. [Our son] Andy was still on his spring break. We all accompanied Dr. Chiang to have the MRI. As he came out of the test, he was wearing a smile on his face. Andy and I were relieved. But he then went on and told us that the radiologist had shown him the film, and he had seen a large tumor inside one of the vertebrae. Subsequently, a CT Scan confirmed that Dr. Chiang had stage IV lung cancer, which had already spread to the spine. It was so shocking and devastating for me! I didn't know what to do. The first thing that came to my mind was: what's going to happen to all his patients? Who would be willing to cover for Dr. Chiang? And what's going to happen to his medical practice that he cares so very much about? Coincidentally, March 20th was also the day that we had just signed the contract to list our old house for sale.

Even though Dr. Chiang was ailing, he went back to the office over the next two days, performed 15 endoscopies and colonoscopies, and saw 25 patients. He was still laughing and joking with the patients as if nothing had happened. But starting Sunday, three days after he was diagnosed, his condition continued deteriorating. He was in so much pain and couldn't get out of bed any more. After that, he was never able to go back to his office ever again. Taking care of Dr. Chiang and bringing him to various

tests/scans and treatment/therapy was already a full time job for me. But being his medical practice manager, I had to handle the transition of the patient care as well as the business and operation of the office, including finding a good physician to cover for Dr. Chiang as well as coordinating with pharmacies and other health care professionals. In addition, I had to deal with selling the old house and eventually moving. To me, it was almost mission impossible! It was a tremendous and overwhelming burden for me. Being a Buddhist, it is very clear to me that this was karmic retribution appearing right in front of us. We were in this together. These karmic situations came chasing us like a huge hurricane and totally caught us off guard! I know this was the karma from Dr. Chiang's previous life, because in this life he was such a good, kindhearted man who had saved so many people's lives. So, I began to repent to the Buddha on Dr. Chiang's behalf and recite the Great Compassion Mantra vigorously, incorporating the recitation into my daily activities all day long. I know I was being blessed by Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Venerable Master Hua because in addition to the Dharma Masters' caring and support, all of a sudden I felt an enormous and irresistible power and strength in me at all times helping me overcome so many karmic obstacles.

Recently, Dr. Chiang did back surgery to remove the tumor in the vertebrae, four sessions of chemotherapy, and over 30 sessions of radiation treatment, yet the cancer cells continued to grow and to spread! I made many attempts to share the Buddhadharma with him using my own experience as an example. I also urged him to accept some alternative medicine and food therapy for body and mind healing, but I could never totally convince him. Being not only a physician but also biochemist and immunologist himself, Dr. Chiang was very skeptical of my advice.

In mid-July, Dr. Chiang was admitted to the hospital due to side effects from chemotherapy. He couldn't keep any food down and was constantly throwing up. His condition started gradually going downhill. A week later, his arms and legs were all swollen, and he lost his voice. The oncologist told us that it was about the time to put his hands in his pockets, as there was nothing he could do medically to help Dr. Chiang. When we were told Dr. Chiang only had weeks to live, he was surprisingly very calm. This was when I told him that only Buddhas and Bodhisattvas could save him now. I asked him to begin vigorously reciting Amitabha's name, and explained to him that the land of Ultimate Bliss is covered by gold and surrounded by so many treasures and that there will be no suffering, only enjoyment of every bliss. If he recited Amitabha's name wholeheartedly, he would attain rebirth in the land of Ultimate Bliss. He agreed and began to do so. I told him that if he recited the

Buddha's name one time, he would liberate one cancer cell; if he recited 10,000 times, he'd liberate 10,000 cancer cells. He laughed. I went on and told him to recite with as much diligence as if his patients were very sick, and he needed to save their lives. He listened and acknowledged my words. He also took Dharma Master Yo's advice and agreed to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and receive the Five Precepts.

On July 27th, Dharma Master Yo and Dharma Master Jai along with disciple Kao came to visit Dr. Chiang in the hospital. Dr. Chiang took refuge with Venerable Master Hua and received the five precepts from Dharma Master Yo and Dharma Master Jai. Inconceivably, the very next day, the swelling of his arms and legs diminished! He looked so much healthier with pink cheeks. Not only did he begin to talk out loud but also he was able to start eating and keep the food down without vomiting! The oncologist was so stunned and amazed and couldn't figure out why. This gave Dr. Chiang so much confidence and encouragement. All of sudden, he was able to totally let go of his worries and be totally at ease. After that, he began reciting Buddha's name even more vigorously.

As we were thinking Dr. Chiang was stable enough to come home, he started to develop difficulty in breathing. His heart was pounding very fast. Coughing and fever complicated the condition. I knew the end was coming. Andy and I followed the Dharma Master's suggestion to recite along with him. A few times when I asked him whether he saw Amitabha coming, he nodded his head and said, "Yes!" Right before and after Dr. Chiang's passing, we did encounter a few incidences of interference from creditors of Dr. Chiang's previous lives. Andy will briefly describe what happened during and after Dr. Chiang's passing later. Although Dr. Chiang was seeking help of the Buddha at the very last minutes, he did have good roots, blessings, virtues, and causal connections as described in The Buddha Speaks of Amitabha Sutra, and he was reciting Buddha's name so vigorously and wholeheartedly without confusion. Therefore, I believe he will attain rebirth in Amitabha's land of Ultimate Bliss.

In his Dharma Talks, Venerable Master Hua often spoke of how sincerity brings a response that intertwines with the Way. It is truly an inconceivable phenomenon. I myself have felt and witnessed Buddhas and Bodhisattvas' compassion, wisdom, and boundless light shining on me during this most difficult time of my life. I would like to share a phrase with you which best describes what I went through during the past five months. The phrase is from Incense Praise: "If our hearts are sincere and earnest, all Buddhas will manifest."

### **A talk by Andy Chiang on September 14, 2008**

My dad passed away on Saturday, August 16th, in the afternoon. Heading into that Thursday, August 14th, we knew that my dad was probably nearing the end of his life, so Mom and I made sure that we were in my dad's hospital room at all times. Around 3 p.m. on Friday, my mom and I had an appointment at the funeral home to discuss the arrangement. But pretty much right as we got back to the hospital from the funeral home around 6 p.m., my mom received a call from our home's security company. They called to tell us that the alarm system had gone off at home and to see if we were okay. Naturally, my mom told them that we hadn't been in the house since 2 p.m.; Therefore, it was really strange that the alarm went off around 6 p.m. ; This was the first time our alarm had ever gone off, so my mom was afraid someone had broken into our house. We decided to rush back home to make sure things were okay. We waited for two police cars to show up. When we opened the garage door, we noticed that the rear door to the house was open. The police went in the house and checked every room and found no trace of anyone breaking in. When we were confident that our home was fine, my mom and I rushed back to the hospital to be with my dad.

That night we were reciting the Amitabha Buddha's name all night long. When dad was listening to us reciting the Buddha's name, he would move his lips trying so hard to recite with us and often breaking into huge smiles. These smiles were different than his usual smiles--as if he were experiencing something he'd never experienced before. And indeed, when my mom asked him, "Did you see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas?" he nodded to say yes. The next day, on the morning of the day that my dad passed away, he could not really move anything but his eyes. As we recited the Amitabha Buddha's name to him, I saw tears coming down from his eyes. That's how I knew he could hear me. So I was reciting even louder and more vigorously, because I knew the end was near.

My dad passed away that Saturday afternoon at 2:22 p.m. But just a few minutes before and after dad's passing, something very strange was happening. The intercom speaker kept coming on (at least three times), and the front desk nurse kept asking us, "How can I help you?" even though no one had pressed the emergency button. In fact, I had gotten so annoyed by it that I left my dad's room to go tell the front desk that we were trying to recite the Amitabha Buddha's name, and the intercom speaker kept distracting us. At 2:30 p.m., my mom asked the nurse to come in and unplug the IV machine. When dad passed away, his face froze in the suffering state he was in when he took his last breath. Our heartfelt thanks to so many of you who came to the

hospital to help us recite Amitabha Buddha's name. After several hours of recitation, my dad's face began to change, even though he had died hours earlier. The suffering state of his mouth changed into a decidedly noticeable smile. It was unmistakable! I was in absolute shock and awe at what I had seen. A little after 10 p.m. towards the end of the recitation of the Amitabha prayer, all of a sudden, the unplugged IV machine started beeping again as if it were on, for a few times in a row! (But it had been turned off for almost eight hours by that point!).

The next day, when I finally had a chance to think about all the incredible things that happened in the last two days, and I had a chance to talk to my mom about it, I was then able to make sense of everything. The rear door opening by itself, the hospital intercom speaker going off by itself, and the IV beeping after it had been turned off... This was all the work of enemy spirits that were trying to distract my family and I from focusing our attention on my dad as he was about to die. I understood then that these spirits were from my dad's past lives and were trying to keep us away from my dad. I realized that the smile from my dad's face even after he passed away was his way of communicating to us that he had found Amitabha, through the light that our prayers had created for him and that he would find his way to the Pure Land. My dad's eyes had closed, but he opened mine. Thank you very much.

Amitabha!!

## HOW TO COUNTER OCCULT INFLUENCES, NEUTRALIZE GRAVE ILLNESSES, ELIMINATE EVIL KARMA & SAVE YOURSELF DURING EMERGENCIES

As mentioned in the beginning of this book, the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva is a profound mantra of great potency and merit. Nowadays, people often meddle in forms of occult divination or séances, consequently attracting ghosts and spirits. Moreover, the lack of virtue (i.e. 5 precepts) in our age makes our bodies more yin than yang ; this is a vulnerability that malevolent ghosts and spirits can exploit. Furthermore, practitioners of deviant rituals, wrong views and occult mantras can easily corrupt the minds of those who do not have enough merit and virtue to protect themselves. Alarmingly, there are also many who would summon malicious spirits or cast evil spells and hexes for the right price.

For instance, according to the Shurangama Sutra:

*"Ananda, why do I call collecting one's thoughts the precepts? If beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no sexual desire, they would not have to undergo a continual succession of births and deaths. Your basic purpose in cultivating Samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not renounce sexual desire, you will not be able to get out of the dust. Even though people may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Dhyana Samadhi, if they do not exterminate sexual desire, they are certain to enter demonic paths. At best, they will become demon kings; on the average, they will become members of the retinue of demons; at the lowest level, they will become female demons. **These demons all have their groups of disciples. Each claims that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way. After my Nirvana, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of demons will abound, spreading like wildfire as they openly practice greed and lust, while claiming to be Good Knowing Advisors. They will cause beings to fall into the pit of love and views and lose the way to Bodhi.**"*

Thus, those who do not keep the precepts will more easily succumb to evil influences, ideas or spells. Unfortunately, our current era is the Dharma-ending age, a time where not only are people less virtuous but deviant teachers masquerading as good knowing advisors abound across the world.

Furthermore, many people today are afflicted by chronic conditions, cancer and incurable illnesses. Such conditions are the result of karmic retributions caused by the

spirits of karmic creditors. For instance, according to the Ven. Master Hsuan Hua:

*The most urgent issue is that there are countless little ghosts in the world right now. Why are there so many little ghosts? Because there have been too many abortions. The fetuses are killed even before they have developed into a fully human form. The vengeance wreaked by little ghosts is very grave. Therefore, the injunction to liberate life and avoid killing includes not having abortions. It is not easy to get free of these little ghosts. As it's said, "King Yama is easy to meet; the little ghosts are hard to handle." Everyone should pay attention to this. In all the countries of the world right now, there is a greater abundance of little ghosts than big ghosts, and more big ghosts than old ghosts. It is a very serious problem.*

Thus, the spirits of aborted babies often follow the mother or abortionist and cause trouble sooner or later. In cases of illness caused by ghosts and spirits, regular medicine will be of no avail.

Nevertheless, people who are troubled by such unhealthy occult influences, threatened by ghosts or experiencing other dangers and karmic retributions should heed the advice of Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra (commonly referred to as the Universal Dharma-door of Guanyin Bodhisattva):

***World Honored One, complete with wondrous marks,  
I now ask again,  
Why is this disciple of the Buddha Called Guanshiyin?***

***The Honored One of Perfect, Wondrous Marks,  
With verses answered Inexhaustible Intention:  
Listen to the practice of Guanyin,  
Who skillfully responds in all places.***

***With vast vows, as deep as the sea,  
Throughout inconceivable eons,  
He has served many thousands of kotis of Buddhas,  
And has made great, pure vows.***

***I shall now tell you in brief,  
That for those who hear his name or see him,***



*And who are mindful of his name unceasingly,  
He can extinguish the suffering of all realms of existence.*

*If someone is the victim of another's harmful intent,  
And is pushed into a pit of fire,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
The pit of fire will turn into a pool.  
If someone is being tossed about in the great sea,  
And is surrounded by the dangers of dragons, fish, and ghosts,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
The waves will not drown him.*

*If someone is on the peak of Mount Sumeru,  
And another person tries to push him off,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
He will stand firm as the sun in space.*

*If someone is pursued by evil people,  
Who want to throw him off a Vajra Mountain,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
Not a single hair on his body will be harmed.*

*If someone is surrounded by vicious bandits,  
Who threaten him with knives,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
The bandits will all give rise to compassion.*

*If someone is in trouble with the law,  
And on the verge of being executed,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
The knives will break into pieces.*

*If someone is imprisoned, shackled, or chained,  
Or if his hands and feet are in stocks,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
His bonds will open and he will be free.*

*If someone is about to be harmed,  
By mantras, spells, or poison,*

*If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
The harm will all return to the sender.*

*If someone meets with evil rakshasas,  
Poisonous dragons, or ghosts,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
They will then not dare to harm him.*

*If someone is surrounded by vicious beasts,  
With fearsome fangs and claws,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
The beasts will quickly run far away.*

*Poisonous snakes and scorpions,  
Have blazing lethal vapors,  
But if one evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
At the sound of one's voice, they will disperse.*

*Clouds of roaring thunder and lightning  
May send down hail or great floods of rain,  
But if one evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
The clouds will immediately scatter.*

*Living beings are beset with hardships,  
And oppressed by limitless sufferings.  
The power of Guanyin's wondrous wisdom  
Can rescue the world from suffering.*

*Complete with the power of spiritual penetrations,  
Vastly cultivating wisdom and expedient means,  
Going throughout countries in the ten directions,  
He manifests everywhere in all places.*

*The various evil destinies,  
Those of the hells, ghosts, and animals,  
And the pain of birth, old age, sickness, and death  
Are all gradually wiped away.*

*True Contemplator, Pure Contemplator,  
Contemplator with Vast, Great Wisdom,*

*Compassionate Contemplator, Kind Contemplator,  
May we constantly behold you with reverence!*

*Undefiled pure light,  
The sun of wisdom that breaks through the darkness  
Is able to quell calamities of wind and fire  
As it shines on all worlds.*

*Compassionate substance: the thunder of precepts.  
Kind intent: a wondrous great cloud.  
He rains down sweet dew and Dharma rain,  
Which extinguish the flames of affliction.*

*In the midst of contention, when faced with lawsuits,  
Or when someone is terrified on the battlefield,  
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,  
All his many enemies will scatter and leave.  
Wondrous your sound, Contemplator of the World's Sounds  
A pure sound, a sound like the sea tide,  
A sound beyond all worldly sounds,  
We shall always bear it in mind.*

*In thought after thought we have no doubt:  
Guanshiyin is pure and sagely.  
In times of suffering, agony, danger, and death,  
He is our refuge and protector.*

*Complete with all merit and virtue,  
His kind eyes watching living beings,  
He is endowed with massive blessings, limitless as the sea.  
Therefore we should reverently worship him.*

The meaning of these verses (translated by the BTTS) is that the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva is a life saving mantra that can smash through any threat or danger. By sincerely reciting it, all evils and misfortunes will be wiped away by the power of the Bodhisattva's merits. Even those who have followed evil teachings and willfully broken the precepts can be saved from their karmic retributions and have their delusions turned into wisdom if they sincerely recite Guanyin Bodhisattva's name.

Furthermore, in Lao Tzu's Treatise on Response and Retribution, it is stressed that the virtuous do not damage even the little insects, flowers, trees and grasses. This is because destroying and disrespecting nature may attract the wrath of normally benign ghost and spirits.

For instance, before we cut down a tree that is taller than the average human, we should first declare our intention to the resident tree spirit and give at least three days notice. We should also amass merits in the Buddhadharma (e.g. recite Buddha names or mantras) and dedicate the merit to the tree spirit as compensation. If we do not, we might offend the a tree spirit of rank. Furthermore, the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua has stated that not all animals are animals. For instance, some bees are actually spirits who temporarily assume the form of bees to drink pollen. Additionally, even grasses and flowers are often the abodes of minor spirits. Hence, we should never indiscriminately kill insects or tread on grass.

Things which appear unassuming to the human eye often hold great significance to sentient beings in different dimensions. Hence, the greatest problem with people today is that they offend the spirits, destroy natural habitats and eat meat without measure. With such habits of negligence and self will, it becomes hard for them to cultivate the Dharma ; consequently, they focus on making others the victims of their greed, hatred and arrogance. A man without deference, virtue and humility will always be troubled by evil ghosts, wrong views, evil people and wild beasts.

Therefore, if we cultivate deference, virtue, respect and humility, we would never be troubled by occult influences, evil ghosts or karmic retributions etc. This is because virtue dissolves bad karma, eliminates wrong views and easefully deflects the yin energy of evil curses and spirits.

In addition, according to the Medicine Master Sutra (translated by the BTTS):

***"Moreover, Manjushri, there may be beings who delight in perversity and engage in legal disputes, bringing trouble to others as well as themselves. In their actions, speech, and thoughts, they create ever-increasing amounts of evil karma. Never willing to benefit and forgive others, they scheme to harm one another instead. They pray to the spirits of the mountain forests, trees, and graves. They kill living beings in order to make sacrifices of blood and flesh to the yaksha and rakshasa ghosts. They write down the names of their enemies and make images of them, and then they hex those names and images with evil mantras. They summon paralysis***

*ghosts, cast hexes, 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 will seek to benefit one another."*

Hence, if you feel affinity with the Medicine Master Buddha, reciting his name will work just as well as reciting the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva.

Lastly, the Ven. Master Chin Kung has stated that the reason a person is born to a particular set of parents is because of past life debts and hatreds. For example, if a person owed someone money in past lives or if he had wronged somebody in the past, it is highly likely that his victims would be reborn as his son or daughter to take revenge on him or squander his wealth. The best way to guard against such dangers is to practice natal moral education.

According to the wisdom of the Ancient Sages: **A child is already learning as soon as conception. Hence, a fetus can already feel the thoughts, actions and emotions of their parents.** If these thoughts and actions are negative, lustful, hateful and so forth, the child will grow up influenced by passion and their past hatreds will surface unhindered. However, if the parents can, during the pregnancy and early years of the child, conduct themselves in accordance with virtue, temperance, chastity, charity, filial piety and kindness, and if they also recite Buddha names, sutras or mantras and listen to Dharma talks, then any past life hatred can be neutralized and the child will grow up to become a Sage. Thus, first impressions are important.

However, if the children are already grown and causing trouble, then diligent accumulation of yin (i.e. selfless and unostentatious) merit can help resolve past life enmity between parent and child. According to Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way, the merit accumulated by elders and parents will be enjoyed by their sons, daughters and grandchildren. Thus, by saving the roots, the leaves and berries will be saved as well.

## **THE THREE GREAT BENEFITS OF FORBEARANCE**

**By extinguishing a moment of anger, years of misfortune are avoided.**

**-The Ancient Sages**

**Power and authority should not be exercised to the maximum, blessings should not be abused and wealth should not be spent extravagantly.**

**-Jade Record**

**Generosity creates blessings and forbearance retains it.**

**-Ven. Master Chin Kung**

**There can be no wisdom without diligence and no diligence without patience.**

**-Ven. Master Chin Kung**

**Acceptance of losses and slights is the root of fortune ; contending invites only disasters.**

**-Traditional Chinese Maxim**

**Only lengthily journeys can gauge a horse's strength and endurance. Likewise, only long term undertakings can prove a man's devotion.**

**-Traditional Chinese Maxim**

**Those who are tolerant, patient and forgiving are not fools. However, those who are vindictive and selfish are fools.**

**-Traditional Chinese Maxim**

**If a veteran monk remains as enthusiastic about Bodhi as when he first joined the Sangha, he will become a Buddha very soon.**

**-Traditional Chinese Maxim**

Nowadays, tempers flare easily and frustration is in the hearts of many. Few today understand the power of forbearance. According to the Infinite Life Sutra:

***"People of this world are confused about good and evil. Their faith in the laws of karma are weak. Hence, they tenaciously cling to their own delusions. Being foolish, they reject the Dharma and embrace wrong and deviant views. Their upside-down ways trap them within the Samsara. As they seek only instant gratification, they are addicted to hatred and gripped by lust and avarice. Isn't that pitiable?!"***

These words of wisdom should resonate deeply within us, for they clearly describe the mentality and values of most people in this world. As most people habitually indulge in their hatred and greed, they create the following harmful dilemma described in the same Sutra:

***"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of enmity in the lives to come. Thus, we should be cautious. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims and suffer their vengeance."***

Thus, most people casually create karmic seeds that result in future pain and enmity. The reason people cannot avoid such misery by keeping the precepts or diligently cultivating virtue is because they failed to exercise forbearance.

However, in this world full of temptations and provocations, it is understandable that people will indulge their passions. Shortsightedness is the main cause of this problem. Hence, the purpose of this section is to elaborate the top three profound benefits of patience, equanimity and forbearance.

### **1.) Boundless Merits**

Forbearance prevents transgressions of the 5 precepts, allowing good karma to accrue and evil karma to be eradicated. The reason human rebirth is considered significant is because it offers a rare opportunity to make profound impacts on one's karmic situation with seemingly small acts.

For instance, by simply cultivating virtue, the Dharma and forbearance in this one short life, eons of past evil karma can be eradicated and hundreds of thousands of good rebirths can be obtained. According to the Diamond Sutra:

*"Furthermore, Subhuti, if a virtuous man or woman, while reciting and practicing this sutra, is disdained or slandered, his or her misdeeds committed in past lives, including those that could bring about an evil destiny, will be eradicated, and he or she will attain the fruit of the most fulfilled, awakened mind."*

Therefore, if a man recites the Diamond Sutra, and afterwards experiences slander or insults, it is actually a good sign. Because of the immense virtue and merit being amassed, that little bit of slander is actually eons of hellish rebirths being reduced to just a few unkind words. This is the profound principle of karma that few understand. Many people erroneously think that if some slight misfortune happens when they are doing good, then that must be because virtue is of no use. In fact, the opposite is true.

Furthermore, according to Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra:

***"In fact, if you practice virtue in this world for ten full days, the merits derived will surpass that of cultivating elsewhere in the Samsara for a whole millennium. The reason is that the other worlds are naturally pleasurable due to the superior virtue and merit of their inhabitants. Thus, there are no grounds for committing evil. Conversely, the world we reside in has little good but plenty of evil. People here are harassed by scarcity and must toil for a living. In addition, the food and drink here are toxic and bitter. The evil habits of this world increases with each passing day."***

What the Buddha is saying here is that our world is considerably more evil than most of the other worlds of the Samsara. Even our food is tainted with various chemicals and hormones. Thus, virtue and good deeds done in this world not only generates disproportionately large rewards, it also eradicates all evil karmas. Therefore, if we have no forbearance, we will accumulate only karmic obstacles during our life and squander this rare chance to change our future for the better.

Furthermore, it is stated in the Di Zi Gui (Standards on Being a Good Pupil and Child) that filial piety is easy when your parents are kind. However, if you remain filial towards a cruel or negligent parent, you are virtuous without peer.

Thus, contrary to what most people think, we must not abandon or disdain bad parents. We must be filial to them like Emperor Shun was to his wicked stepmother and half-brother. As family relationships are brought about by unresolved past karma, it is inevitable that we will have both karmic enemies and karmic friends as our parents or



siblings. The key is to treat all of them kindly regardless of how they treat us. By being constant in virtue against inconstancy, we will eradicate the evil karma that our past life whims, biases and caprice have created. However, if we give love for love and hate for hate, we will create even more emotionalism and complicated karma that will trouble us in future lives.

Moreover, according to the Jade Record:

*Good deeds done sincerely and often will yield great and profound rewards. Trivial rewards come quickly — but profound bliss and unimaginable rewards come only after a while."*

*"In this world, there are many who do good. Nevertheless, there are hardly any people who steadfastly do good. A man who insincerely does a few good deeds— and immediately stops when his own sloth and doubts rise to test him—will never reap the true and profound benefits of virtue. Such a man has had his judgment compromised by his lack of patience."*

Therefore, it is clear that unwavering virtue will bring limitless rewards and eradicate multitudes of past evil karma. However, given that temptations and provocations are rife in this world, only forbearance and sheer will can allow us to take advantage of this opportunity. If we fail to diligently do good while we can, we will cycle back into the evil realms where there is no hope and no escape.

Furthermore, people nowadays often curse God or lose their faith in religion if their prayers are not answered or if things don't go their way. However, this is actually a grave mistake. Heaven does not need sycophants or hanger-ons. While Heaven loves all sentient beings, only those who are pious through thick and thin can earn the admiration of Heaven. So the only way to have prayers answered is to give offerings in good times and bad times, whether something is sought for or not, when sunny or rainy, always.

Thus, whenever tempers flare or temptation entices, always remember the aforementioned saying: **Acceptance of losses and slights is the root of fortune ; contending invites only disasters.** These words cannot be more true.

## **2) Speedy Enlightenment & Bodhi**

Furthermore, according to the Diamond Sutra:

*"Subhuti, the Tathagata has said that what is called transcendent endurance is not transcendent endurance. That is why it is called transcendent endurance. Why? Subhuti, thousands of lifetimes ago when my body was cut into pieces by King Kalinga, I was not caught in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. If, at that time, I had been caught up in any of those ideas, I would have felt anger and ill-will against the king."*

*"I also remember in ancient times, for 500 lifetimes, I practiced transcendent endurance by not being caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. So, Subhuti, when a bodhisattva gives rise to the unequalled mind of awakening, he has to give up all ideas. He cannot not rely on forms when he gives rise to that mind, nor on sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, or objects of mind. He can only give rise to that mind that is not caught up in anything."*

King Kalinga was a regional ruler who once killed an earlier incarnation of the Buddha through slow slicing. However, as the Buddha (then a Bodhisattva) had already transcended attachments to the body and forms, he felt neither pain nor hatred. In fact, this atrocity actually confirmed his Non-abidance and allowed him to immediately achieve Bodhi.

Therefore, it is no surprise that forbearance is one of the Six Paramitas (i.e. virtue, charity, samadhi, wisdom, diligence and patience). The only way for us to achieve transcendent endurance is to single-mindedly recite Amita Buddha (in fact, the Buddha reveals in the Infinite Life Sutra that he too attained Bodhi by practicing mindfulness of Amita Buddha). Once we have only Amita Buddha on our minds, we will no longer be influenced by attachments and passions. However, that too requires forbearance to achieve. Therefore, there can be no diligence without forbearance. If there is no diligence, there will be no samadhi, virtue, charity and wisdom (all of which require constant efforts to perfect). Thus, it can be said that the root of Bodhi is forbearance. All Dharmas are attained by forbearance (Diamond Sutra).

## **3) Success in the present life**

In the Treatise on Response and Retribution, it is stated that the virtuous do not hold

grudges or seek revenge. It is also states that the virtuous are protected by auspicious gods and bestowed by Heaven with wealth, status, health and so forth. Furthermore, depending on their level of virtue and forbearance, they will have their lifespan increased by either 12 year or 100 day periods.

Furthermore, at the end of the treatise, it is mentioned that Heaven will bestow fortune within three years onto those who diligently do good. Thus, by bearing slights or injustice with patience, we lay the seeds for a bountiful harvest. However, by giving hate for hate, even if we manage to gain the upper hand, we would just be doing the equivalent of pawning our seeds for a pittance while allowing our fields to fall into ruin.

The same applies to pride. Many cannot exercise forbearance because of their pride. They worry that if they do not retaliate, people might think of them as somehow less worthy and inferior. The truth could not be more different. Respectability and nobility never fall onto the laps of the petty, loud, insolent and vindictive. Such people are disdained by Heaven and all under it ; even if people outwardly admire them, they secretly despise them in their hearts. On the other hand, the meek, forgiving and kind are loved by all (even if it is not obvious) and cherished by Heaven. Any fool can lash out, but only the great can restrain themselves. Thus, do not let this imaginary feeling called pride interfere with the display of forbearance. **No one looks down on the humble and forgiving, only the humble and forgiving may make the mistake of looking down on themselves.**

In conclusion, we must never neglect the importance of patience. The precepts must be kept at all costs, the name of Amitabha must be recited regularly and opportunities to do good deeds must never be neglected.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRECEPTS

Nowadays, many who are interested in Buddhism often focus only on meditation or the study of the high principles found in the sutras. They often neglect the precepts and may even indulge in drugs, wrong views and licentiousness, erroneously thinking that they are "transcending" to a higher state.

However, the Buddha could not be more clear when he said that the five precepts are the foundation of the Dharma ; the Threefold Training unambiguously states that Sila (higher virtue) is the key that leads to Samadhi and Prajna. No one can attain liberation while committing sins and offenses. The five precepts are:

- 1.) NO STEALING AND GREED**
- 2.) NO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**
- 3.) NO KILLING AND PHYSICAL ABUSE**
- 4.) NO SLANDERING, LYING, PROFANITY AND TACTLESSNESS**
- 5.) NO ALCOHOL AND DRUGS (I.E. BE DISCIPLINED AND FILIAL)**

For monks and nuns, these virtues would include the additional rules found in the Monastic Vinaya. These precepts apply equally to thought, speech and action.

Furthermore, the Venerable Master Chin Kung has stated that the profound wisdom found in the Shurangama Sutra, Lotus Sutra, Avatamsaka Sutra, Diamond Sutra and so forth are akin to the fruits and blossoms of a tree. The soil that supports the flora is the precepts. Hence, if we do not cultivate the precepts, we would never understand the deeper meanings of the sutras beyond the superficial surface level. For instance, Patriarch Huineng truly understood the Diamond Sutra the first time he heard a gatha of it despite being illiterate and having never studied Buddhism. On the other hand, many scholars have studied the Diamond Sutra for their whole lives but have neither gained profound insight nor achieved the Buddha's highest wisdom.

Thus, it is clear that Patriarch Huineng's filial piety, forbearance, modesty and simple virtuousness was the reason for his sudden liberation.

Furthermore, the Buddha offers more important advice in the Shurangama Sutra:

*"When you teach people of the world to cultivate Samadhi, they must first of all cut off the mind of sexual desire. This is the first clear and decisive instruction on purity given by the Tathagatas, the Buddhas of the past, the Bhagavans. Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Dhyana Samadhi do not exterminate sexual desire, they are like someone who cooks sand hoping to get rice. After hundreds of thousands of eons, it will still just be hot sand. Why? It wasn't rice to begin with; it was only sand. If you seek the Buddha's wonderful fruition with a body of sexual desire, then even if you attain a wonderful awakening, it is still based on sexual desire. With sexual desire at the source, you will revolve in the three paths and not be able to get out. Which road will you take to cultivate and be certified to the Tathagata's Nirvana? You must exterminate the sexual desire which is intrinsic to both body and mind, then get rid of even the aspect of extermination. At that point you have some hope of attaining the Buddha's Bodhi. What I have said here is the Buddhas' teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan(demon king)."*

*"Further, Ananda, if beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of killing, they would not have to undergo a continual succession of births and deaths. Your basic purpose in cultivating Samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not renounce your thoughts of killing, you will not be able to get out of the dust. Even though people may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Dhyana Samadhi, they are certain to enter the path of spirits if they do not cease killing. At best, they will become ghosts of great strength; on the average, they will become flying yakshas, ghost leaders, or the like; at the lowest level, they will become earth-bound rakshasas. These ghosts and spirits all have their followers. Each claims that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way. After my Nirvana, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of ghosts and spirits will abound, spreading like wildfire as they argue that eating meat will bring one to the Bodhi Way. Ananda, I permit the Bhikshus to eat five kinds of pure meat. This meat is actually a transformation brought into being by my spiritual powers. It basically has no life-force. You Brahmans live in a climate so hot and humid, and on such sandy and rocky land, that vegetables will not grow; therefore, I have had to assist you with spiritual powers and compassion. Because of this magnanimous kindness and compassion, this so-called meat suits your taste. After my extinction, how can those who eat the flesh of beings be called the disciples of Shakya? You should know that, even if these meat-eaters may enter the heart-open state similar to Samadhi, they are all great Rakshas. When their retribution ends, they are bound to sink into the bitter*

*sea of birth and death. They are not disciples of the Buddha. Such people as these kill and eat one another in a never-ending cycle. How can such people transcend the Triple Realm? "*

*"When you teach people of the world to cultivate Samadhi, they must also cease killing. This is the second clear and decisive instruction on purity given by the Tathagatas, the Buddhas of the Past, the Bhagavans. Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Dhyana Samadhi do not stop killing, they are like one who stops up his ears and calls out in a loud voice, thinking that no one hears him.. He tries to cover up the sound, but only makes it greater. Pure Bhikshus and Bodhisattvas who practice purity will not even step on grass in the pathway; even less would they pull it up with their hands. How could anyone with great compassion consume the flesh and blood of beings? Bhikshus who do not wear silk, leather boots, furs, or down, whether imported or found locally, and who do not consume milk, cream, or butter, can truly transcend this world. When they have paid back their past debts, they will not have to re-enter the Triple Realm. Why not? When someone wears anything taken from a living creature, he creates relationships with the creature, just as when people ate the hundred grains, their feet could not leave the earth. Both physically and mentally one must avoid the bodies and the by-products of beings, by neither wearing them nor eating them. I say that such people have true liberation. What I have said here is the Buddhas' teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan(demon king)."*

*"Further, Ananda, if beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of stealing, they would not have to undergo a continuous succession of births and deaths. Your basic purpose in cultivating Samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not renounce your thoughts of stealing, you will not be able to get out of the dust. Even though people may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Dhyana Samadhi, they are certain to enter a deviant path if they do not cease stealing. At best, they will become spirits; on the average, they will become evil ghosts; at the lowest level, they will become deviant people who are possessed by various sprites. These deviant hordes all have their followers. Each claims that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way. After my Nirvana, in the Dharma-ending Age, these evil and deviant entities will abound, spreading like wildfire as they surreptitiously cheat others. Calling themselves good knowing advisors, they will each claim that they have attained the Unsurpassed Dharma. Enticing and deceiving the ignorant, or frightening people out of their wits, they disrupt and lay waste to households wherever they go."*

*Ananda, although beings in the six paths of any mundane world may not kill, steal, or lust either physically or mentally, these three aspects of their conduct thus being perfect, if they tell various major lies, then the Samadhi they attain will not be pure. They will become demons of love and views and will lose the seed of the Tathagata. They claim that they have attained what they have not attained, and that they have been certified when they have not been certified. Perhaps they seek to be foremost in the world, most venerated and superior people. They announce to their audiences that they have attained the fruition of a Shrotaapanna, of a Sakridagamin, of an Anagamin, of Arhatship, of the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle, or the various levels of Bodhisattvahood up to and including the Ten Bhumi(stage)s, in order to cause others to revere and repent in front of them and because they are greedy for offerings. These icchantikas destroy the seeds of Buddhahood just as surely as a tala-tree is destroyed if it is chopped down. The Buddha predicts that such people cut off their good roots forever and lose their knowledge and vision. Immersed in the sea of the Three Sufferings, they cannot attain Samadhi."*

*"I command that after my Nirvana, Bodhisattvas and Arhats appear in response-bodies in the Dharma-ending Age, and take various forms in order to rescue those in the cycle of rebirth. They should either become Shramanas, white-robed laypeople, kings, ministers or officials, virgin youths or maidens, and so forth, even prostitutes, widows, profligates, thieves, butchers, or dealers in contraband, be confreres of these kinds of people, praise the Buddha Vehicle and cause them to enter Samadhi in body and mind. But they should never say of themselves, 'I am truly a Bodhisattva'; or 'I am truly an Arhat,' or let the Buddhas' secret cause leak out by speaking casually to those who have not yet studied, other than at the end of their lives and then only to those who inherit the teaching. Otherwise, aren't such people deluding and confusing beings and indulging in gross false claims?"*

As we now live in the turbid Dharma-ending age, the Buddha's advice here serves as an vital litmus test that will help us determine which views are proper and which are not. However, we must remember to never use the Buddha's words to harshly criticize others, even if they are indeed wrong. **Buddhism can only prosper when cultivators praise each other.** If we see something controversial, it is better to say nothing and continue to recite Amitabha's name. This way, we will avoid slandering others by accident.

For instance, Tibetan Buddhism is an esoteric Dharma-door that is often misunderstood. The Ven. Master Chin Kung has stated that the Dharma-door of

Tibetan Buddhism is meant for Bodhisattvas (cultivators who rank higher than Arhats) and not ordinary people. These Bodhisattvas cultivate samadhi by directly testing themselves against attachments. That is why they may eat meat and some Tantric statues have a courtesan sitting on the Buddha's lap. If they are successful in having no attachments to these temptations, they become Buddhas. This is just like how the Buddha achieved Bodhi by not being angry in an earlier incarnation when King Kalinga killed him through slow slicing. However, if regular people were to practice this Dharma-door, they would not be able to resist the temptations and will fall into the Relentless Hells. Therefore, the reason these teachings are kept secret is because the public will twist and abuse it if they get their hands on it. People, in their ignorance, will think that such a Dharma-door promotes lust, attachment and killing and consequently misuse these esoteric teachings to falsely defend their own outrageous conduct.

Thus, such cases are the reason we should only mind our own business. If someone who does not understand the situation were to make indiscriminate and blind accusations against Tibetan Buddhism, they would be slandering the Buddha's teachings. The karmic retribution that follows those who slander the Buddha are the heaviest

Therefore, it is no surprise that both the Treatise on Response and Retribution and Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way stipulate that it is a sin to openly talk negatively about others. In fact, it is a great virtue to praise all that which is good and refrain from criticizing and making accusations, even when they are true. According to the Shurangama Sutra, sentient beings who are half merit (i.e. wisdom and good deeds) and half emotion (i.e. bad karma and evil habits) are reborn as human beings. Thus, we all have relatively coarse habits of greed, hatred and delusion. Therefore, it would be hypocritical for us to harshly criticize or ostracize others. After all, people in glass houses should not throw stones.

Lastly, the reason many today regularly break the five precepts is because they do not understand the karmic implications of their actions. The Buddha frequently warns in every sutra that karmic retributions are no laughing matter. Once a man is reborn as a hell being, emaciated ghoul or animal, he will have to undergo kalpa after kalpa of unspeakable suffering. Even death will not give him relief as rebirth in the evil realms are repeated for eons. For instance, people who have fallen into the Relentless Hells die from their sufferings every minute, but are instantly restored to life to suffer the punishments again. Thus, everyone must heed the following exhortations:



## EXCERPTS FROM THE JADE RECORD

The following illustrations are selections from the most recent edition of the Jade Record. They were drawn by Jiang Yi Zi (江逸子) through psychography. The deity that guided his hand when he drew these pictures is the Demigod Magistrate Cheng Huang. He holds the rank of Praetor in the administration of the Four Heavenly Kings and his duty is to promote the laws of karma. Thus, these pictures provide us with an accurate idea of the suffering in the evil paths that awaits those who commit karmic offenses.



**Amita Buddha with his retinue of Sages welcoming a successful aspirant into Pureland. This is the august sight that welcomes virtuous cultivators such as Ven. Master Hai Xian when their last moment arrives.**

**Moreover, according to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, people who are reborn in Pureland have not actually died but simply acquired infinite life. Thus, some cultivators (such as Ananda) have instantly returned to their old bodies to continue their Dharma work, but now with the powers of a Bodhisattva.**

## KING YAMA'S JUDGMENT



Those who failed to seek rebirth in Pureland and instead committed evils are brought before King Yama. There are numerous lesser courts and countless punishments due to the wide variety of specific offenses.

However, as mentioned before, there is a 49-day grace period before rebirth in the evil paths is finalized and punishments are inflicted. If the relatives of the deceased can diligently amass good deeds on behalf of the departed within that time frame, the deceased can have their karmic situation rectified. They will be freed from their original fate and achieve rebirth as aristocrats or devas on account of the merits created on their behalf.

## AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

Punishments in the evil paths are neither ordered by King Yama nor devised by the Jade Emperor. They are purely the result of an offender's own karma. King Yama and Praetor Cheng Huang are merely messengers who try to teach the laws of karma to the obstinate, arrogant and evil beings who fall into such states of woe. For instance, according to the Shurangama Sutra:

*"Ananda, it all comes from the karmic responses which living beings themselves invoke. They create ten habitual causes and undergo six interacting retributions. What are the ten causes? Ananda, the first consists the habit of lustful intercourse which gives rise to mutual rubbing. When this rubbing continues without cease, it activates a tremendous raging fire, just as warmth arises between a person's hands when he rubs them together. Because these two habits set each other ablaze, there come into being the Iron Bed, the Copper Pillar, and other such experiences. Therefore the Tathagatas of the ten directions look upon the act of lust and name it the 'fire of desire.' Bodhisattvas avoid desire as they would a fiery pit."*

Thus, those who indulge in lust and adultery create pertinent seeds of karma that are stored in their consciousness. When they die, these seeds manifest from their Alaya-consciousness and spontaneously arrange the five skandhas and four elements into a realm and state of suffering. The same goes for all the other types of offenses.

For example, there once was a person of high meditative ability and virtue who appealed to Praetor Cheng Huang to abolish the punishments found in the hells on the grounds that they were inhumane. However, the Praetor simply guided the cultivator to the place where punishments were inflicted and told him to see for himself. The virtuous cultivator looked around but saw nothing at all. Hence, he realized afterwards that the punishments of the evil paths were not created by anyone but instead caused by the evil habits and delusions of the offenders themselves.



## RETRIBUTIONS FOR LUSTFUL MISCONDUCT



**Those who have indulged in lust, promiscuity, adultery and depravity will be forced to hug a flaming copper pillar as one of their punishments after their lives draw to a close.**

**Lust is considered the foremost offense by Sages since it gives rise to countless ills and faults. For instance—lying, violence, crimes of passion, divorce, disintegration of marriages, broken families, social decay, jealousy, venereal diseases, abortions, disrepute, decadence, feuds, legal penalties, poverty and even wars often result from lust and love.**

**Furthermore, according to an edition of Master Yin Guang's Treatise on Response and Retribution, those who create and publish pornography and erotic literature will fall into the Relentless Hell and suffer there for eons without end.**

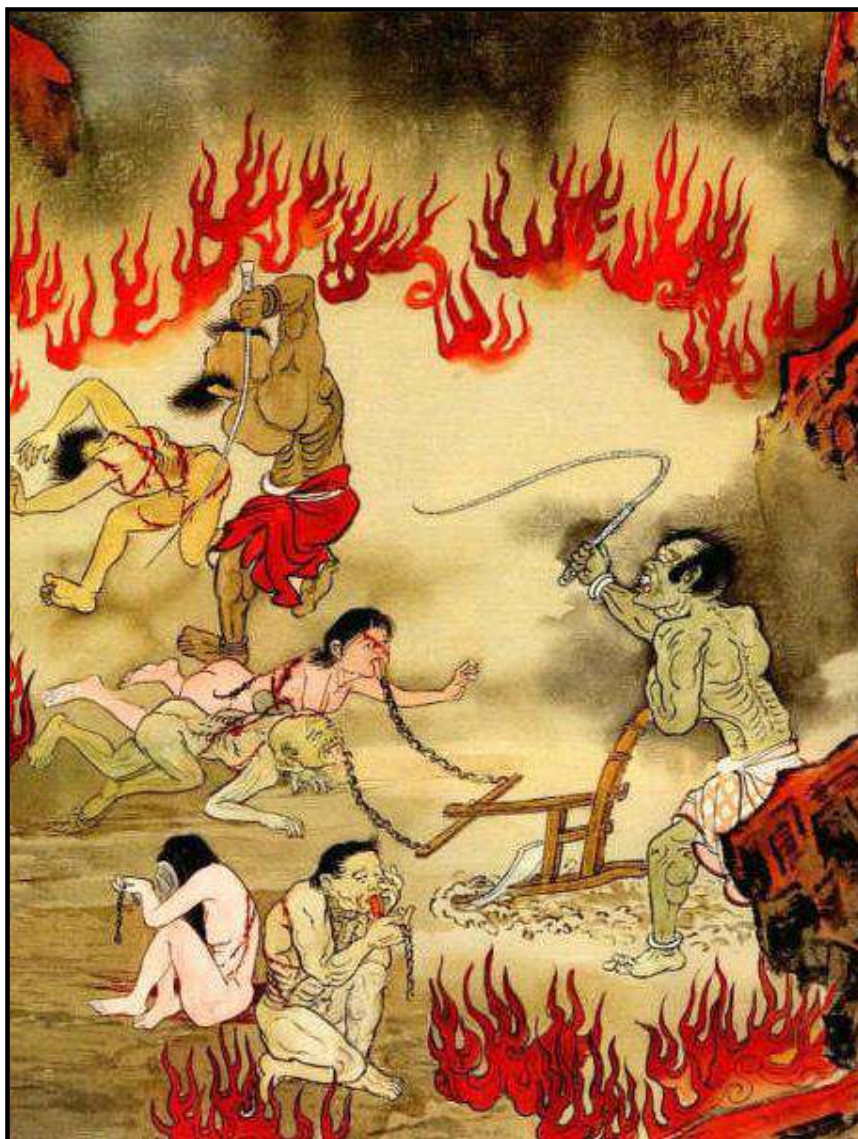
## RETRIBUTIONS FOR KILLING ANIMALS



**Those who had bred, slaughtered, skinned and butchered animals for meat and leather will meet a similar fate after their passing.**



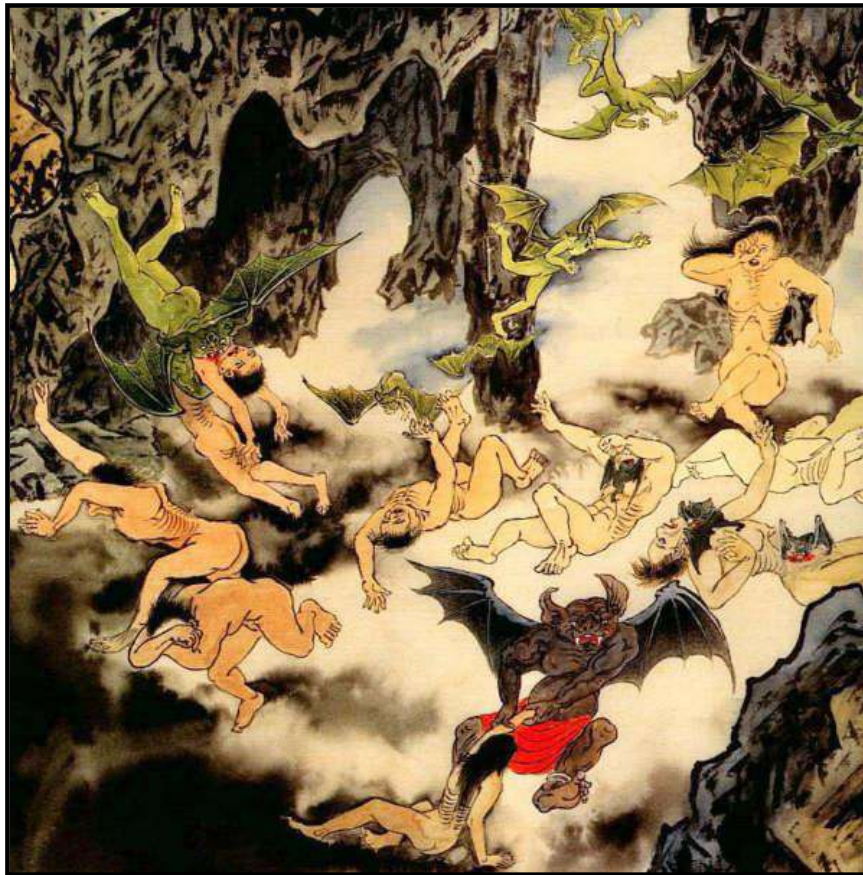
## RETRIBUTIONS FOR CAPRICIOUS SPEECH



**People who are fond of verbal abuse, lies, divisive speech, cajolery, slander, libel, incitement, ridicule, gossip and the like will have their tongues pulled out as one of their punishments.**

**Furthermore, orators, statesmen, professionals and intellectuals who use their status and skills to spread deviant ideas, ruin the innocent or engage in demagoguery will also be punished in this manner.**

## RETRIBUTIONS FOR AVARICE



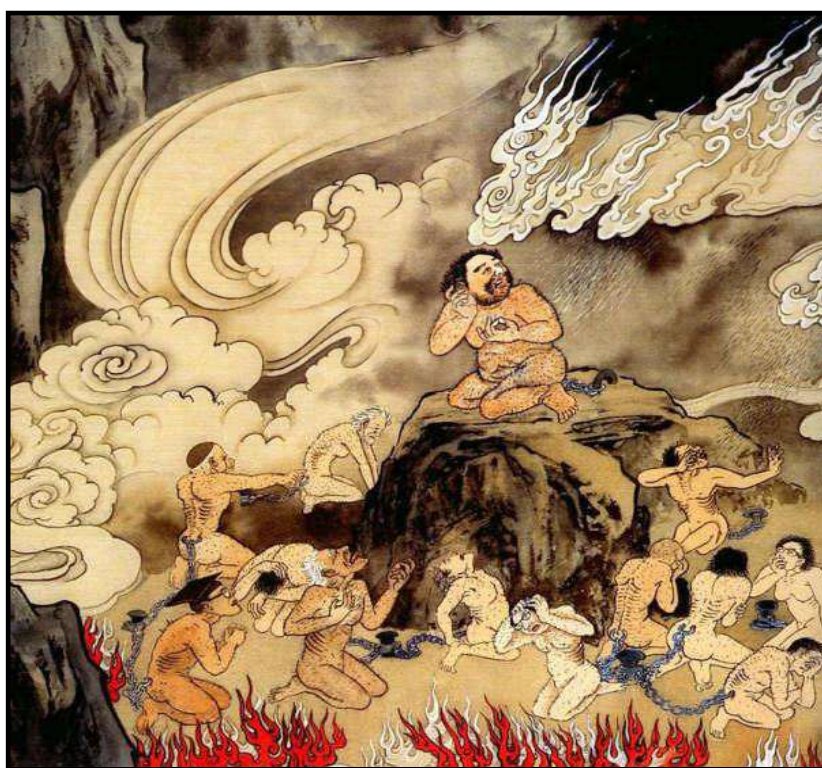
**Those who have engaged in usury, fraud, corruption, embezzlement and extortion will be punished by being repeatedly sucked dry by vampires and harpies.**

**Furthermore, inhumane officials, judges and rulers who confiscate, fine, expropriate, impose taxes and or employ policies such as penal labor, asset freezing, eminent domain, forfeiture and the like will also be punished in this manner after their passing.**

**Moreover, men of wealth who are greedy and callous will likewise be punished in such ways if they do not become kind and charitable before their deaths.**



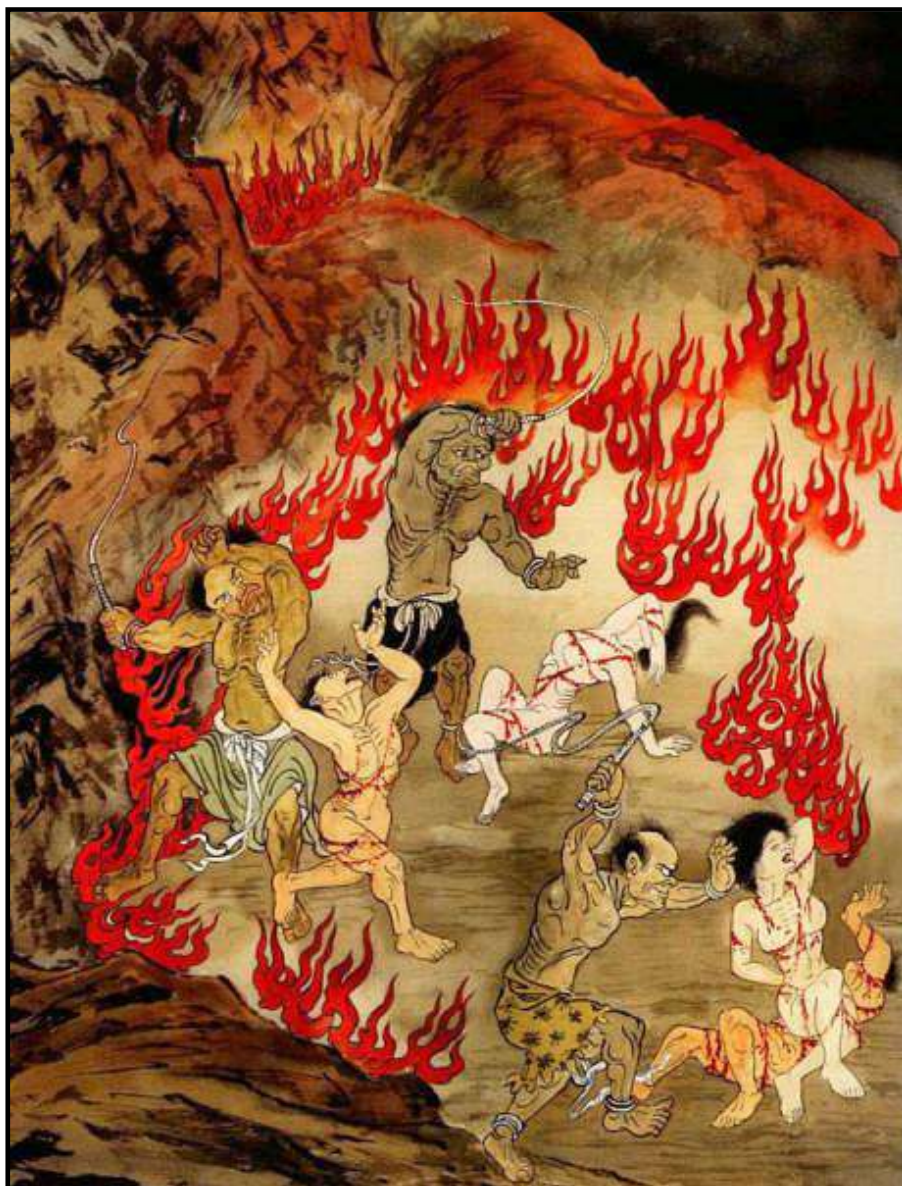
## RETRIBUTIONS FOR ABORTION



**People who abort unborn babies will be mauled and devoured by fierce tigers.  
Those who justify and incite abortions will be punished by raining needles.**



## RETRIBUTIONS FOR DISCRIMINATION AND TYRANNY



People who have abused their authority or strength will be lashed by barbed wire whips amid flames once their lives end. A Sage once said: " Even though ants are weak and small, their lives are cherished by Heaven." Hence, offenses such as racism, inequality, stigmatization, xenophobia, child abuse, animal abuse, bullying, tyranny, oppression, cruel and inhumane punishment, military action and the like will lead to the aforementioned punishment.

## RETRIBUTIONS FOR MISERLINESS

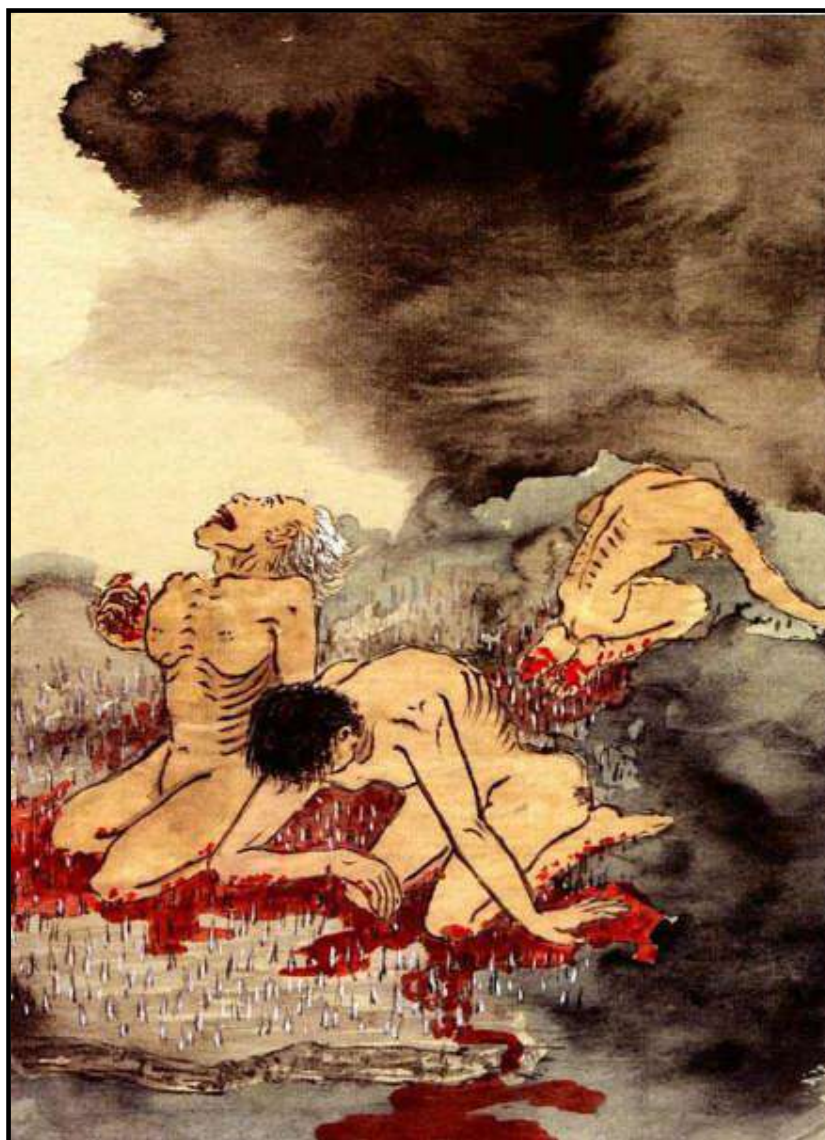


Those who refused to give alms or be charitable within their power will be reborn in scorching deserts as emaciated ghouls. Their hideous bloated stomachs have insatiable appetites but their barren abode offers nothing for them to eat. If they happen to chance upon something edible—as soon as they try to eat it— a plume of fire will shoot out from their throats and reduce the food to crisp. Thus, they can never ease their thirst and hunger.

The Bodhisattva seen giving food to the ghouls is Guanyin Mahabodhisattva. Because special mantras are chanted, the ghouls are able to eat the food given by the Bodhisattva. However, each of us can also help ease the suffering of these hell beings and emaciated ghouls by dedicating the merits from our good deeds to them.



## RETRIBUTIONS FOR IMMORAL MEDICAL PRACTICES



**Doctors and medical professionals who violate the Hippocratic Oath or are inhumane, deceitful and immoral will suffer the above punishment after their deaths. According to Buddhist teachings, doctors who are not interested in profit and tirelessly donate their skills will gain limitless merits.**

**Furthermore, the teachings of the Sages require that doctors not charge fees for their work. They must never discriminate against those who are poor, weak or stigmatized. The compensation that they receive should be strictly limited to voluntary gifts from the patients and their families. Moreover, the same principle applies to teachers. For instance, Confucius and Mencius never asked for pomp, power or aristocratic titles—they simply taught those who sought their wisdom and lived off whatever was offered to them.**

## RETRIBUTIONS FOR DESIGNING AND SELLING WEAPONRY

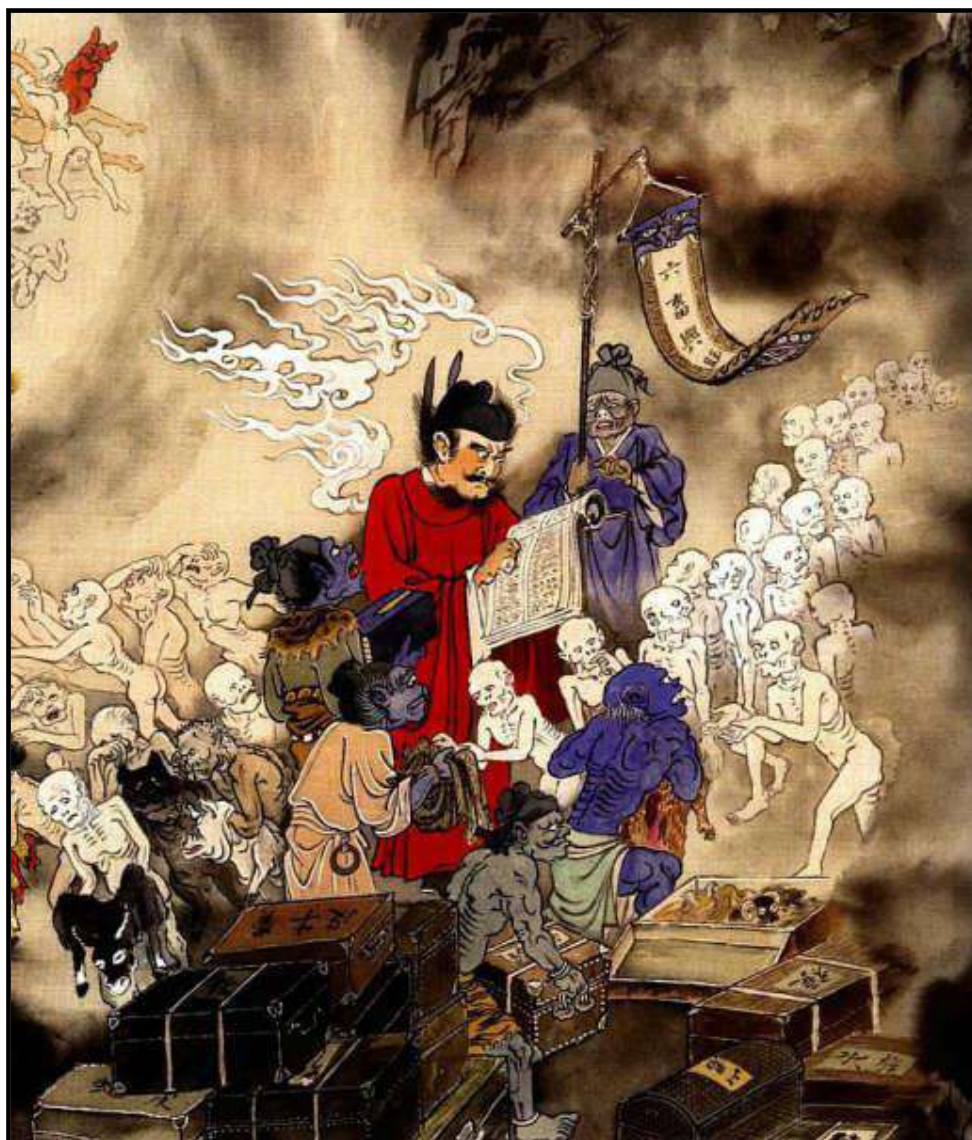


**This gruesome scene illustrates the suffering that befalls upon those who have designed, produced and sold arms and weaponry during their lives.**

**Wars are in direct opposition to the principles of benevolence that the Buddha and other Sages such as Lao Tzu, Confucius and Mencius have taught. Hence, those who create the tools that make armed conflict possible will bear heavy punishments once their lives end. Nations and statesmen often rally around military action and praise those who help with the war effort. However, the laws of karma does not subscribe to such obstinate hypocrisy and will mete out retributions to all those who kill and help others to kill.**



## RESIDUAL RETRIBUTIONS



Once those who have been punished in the hells and evil paths have exhausted their stocks of evil karma, they become eligible for rebirth in a higher plane of existence. However, human rebirth is often unobtainable since evil habits still taint them. Hence, they are punished by their residual evil karma to be reborn successively as animals.

For instance, in a eye-witness account originating from the Qing Dynasty, a butcher once discovered that the liver of a pig he had just slaughtered had the words "Cao Cao" burnt onto it. Cao Cao was one of the main warlords of the Three Kingdoms era. Thus, all his former power and Machiavellian deviousness was of no avail to him after his sins forced him to assume the body of a pig.

## CONCLUSION- HOW TO REFORM

**If a man who has long committed evil repents and thereafter does all good and refrains from all evil, then he will be bestowed with great fortune after a while.**

### **-Treatise on Response and Retribution**

Having seen the horrific nature and severity of the retributions for evil, we should diligently discard our vices and amass virtues. As the above quote states that virtue and good deeds can neutralize past evils—we should never again kill, steal, lie, indulge in excess, or fail to be filial towards our parents and elders. Furthermore, we should regularly give what we can to charity and protect animal life by purchasing and liberating captive animals slated for slaughter. Moreover, we ought to print Buddhist texts and produce images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas for free distribution. The merits from turning the great Dharma Wheel—printing Buddhist texts and making Buddha images— are particularly exalted. The following is Patriarch Yin Guang's summarization of the main rewards for turning the great Dharma Wheel:

- 1.) Any pending karmic retributions will be eradicated, the most heavy ones will be reduced greatly.
- 2.) You will gain the protection of auspicious devas, gods and deities. Furthermore, you will avoid wars, disasters, bandits, thefts, diseases, floods and fires. Also, you will never be imprisoned or arrested.
- 3.) You will be released from the cycle of hatred and revenge as your past karmic enemies will share your merits and become devas or Sages.
- 4.) Vicious beasts, evil ghosts and demons cannot harm you.
- 5.) Your anxieties will fade away. No misfortune will befall upon you during the day and your dreams at night will always be sweet. Your strength will be full and your complexion will be radiant and healthy. Anything you do will be successful.
- 6.) As you are sincere and devoted to the Dharma, you will naturally have good fortune, long life, a harmonious family and abundant stocks of all the necessities of life.

7.) Yours words and actions will please the gods. Moreover, you will be welcomed and respected in all the places you go to.

8.) You wisdom, happiness and health will increase everyday. If you are a woman, you will be reborn as an eminent man.

9.) You will be forever free from rebirth in the hells and evil paths. You will always be reborn as a deva or member of the aristocracy. Furthermore, you will be wise, handsome and fortunate.

10.) You will help convert sentient beings towards the Way. Moreover, you will be perpetually close to the Buddha and Dharma until you attain liberation.

Lastly, if we look back to Amita Buddha's 48 Vows, we can see that taking refuge in Amita Buddha is the only way to truly and permanently free ourselves of the threat of the evil paths:

**Sutra Vows 21: The Vow of Forgiveness**

***"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, there would not be one virtuous and willing sentient being who could not easily attain rebirth in my land. However, if sentient beings who have long committed evil repent after hearing my name, and thereafter adheres to the Buddhadharma while yearning for rebirth in my land, then such beings will be saved from the evil paths and rise to my land upon their deaths. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."***

Thus, we must have faith that Pureland rebirth is open to all who are willing. Even those who are in the hells can manifest in Pureland within a space of a thought by taking refuge in Amita Buddha. Once in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, they will never retrogress and will dwell in the bliss of Bodhisattvahood ; the evil paths have forever collapsed behind them.

For instance, Venerable Yin Ke was a Song dynasty monk who had flagrantly broken several important precepts. One day, he read the Earth Store Sutra (which contains detailed descriptions of all the hells) and realized that his heavy sins will force him into the Relentless Hell (the worst of all the hells). Fearing this, he searched for a way to escape this retribution and later came upon the Infinite Life Sutra. He then retreated back to his room and diligently recited Amita Buddha's name unceasingly for 3 full days. At the end of that period, Amita Buddha appeared before him and he was saved!

## ONE HUMANITY, MANY FAITHS

VENERABLE MASTER CHIN KUNG AM

AN INTERFAITH SUMMIT FOR PEACE AND HARMONY

IN AUSTRALIA AND THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

18-21, FEBRUARY 2009

Distinguished faith elders, scholars, and guests:

Hello, everyone! It is quite rare that I have this opportunity to listen to your valuable opinions. I am truly grateful.

Australia is a country where many cultures, many ethnic groups, and many faiths intermingle. This country pays particular attention to the human spirit of equality, harmony, mutual respect, and mutual help. The reality is that, because of ease of travel, advanced technology, and availability of information, the whole world has become a village, and we are now in an era of the intermingling of religions, of ethnic groups, and of cultures. I deeply believe that determining how to strengthen interfaith communication and cooperation, and to achieve the ideal of social and world harmony is an important issue that everyone present is concerned about.

### UNEARTHING THE ROOT OF CONFLICT

After the September 11 attacks, the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Queensland invited me to participate in a symposium at the university attended by professors from the centre. During the panel, I presented my view, explaining that the true root of conflict is the conflict between our true nature and our acquired habits within us.

The true nature is of the utmost purity and virtuousness. It is perfect and radiant. Habits are the bad thoughts and views that one acquired after birth. Simply put, the conflict between the true nature and acquired habits is the conflict between altruism and self-benefit. Compassion, loving-kindness, and all virtues are innate in the true nature of all beings, but selfishness and all bad thoughts are not.



Therefore, if those who engage in the teaching of peace can (1) truly resolve in their minds their conflicts with anyone, any matter, and any thing, (2) let go of all selfish thoughts and actions of controlling and possessing, and (3) interact with others and engage in tasks with sincere love, then this would truly be the basic way to resolve all contradictions and conflicts in the world.

A harmonious world must begin with our minds.

Modern science has gradually come to prove this fact. Dr. Masaru Emoto of Japan has conducted water experiments for more than a decade and found that water can understand human thoughts, react naturally to them and thus change accordingly. When water was introduced to thoughts of love and gratitude, it displayed beautiful crystals. When the same water was bombarded with thoughts of hatred and disgust, it displayed broken, ugly crystals. Dr. Emoto once said with deep feeling, “In hundreds of thousands of experiments, the most beautiful water crystals are elicited by the thoughts of love and gratitude. ‘Love’ and ‘gratitude’ seem to be the core of the universe.”

I deeply agree with this view. Consider this: water, which is only a mineral, can react this way. So, if human beings, who have the highest spiritual awareness of all creatures, can communicate with one another with sincere love, there is no reason that conflict and contradiction can not be resolved.

In October 2005, I met with Elder Mahathir, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia. The elder asked if there would ever be any peace in the world. I have humbly learned the teachings of the Buddha and the sages for fifty-eight years and dare not slack off for even one day. I believe the ancient teachings and affirm that human nature is originally good.

Therefore, I sincerely proposed that if every country, every ethnic group, every political party and faction, and every religious group can broaden their minds and horizons, treat one another equally, get along with them harmoniously, seek common ground and put aside differences, and exist and flourish side by side, then an ideal harmonious society and world will definitely be realized. It is difficult to achieve this, but if we start with achieving religious cooperation, it will have a positive impact on the cooperation of countries, of ethnic groups, and of political parties. Elder Mahathir readily agreed with this proposal. The next day, he invited me to attend the Perdana Global Peace Forum to be held in Kuala Lumpur under his sponsorship in December 2005.

## WHY CAN RELIGIOUS COOPERATION RESOLVE CONFLICT?

In 1998, I was living in Singapore. At that time, there were nine major religious groups there. I interacted with them with sincerity and we became good friends. Later on, I also had wonderful opportunities to interact and seek advice from religious elders in countries such as Japan, Indonesia, China, Malaysia, and Australia. I learned tremendously from them.

I deeply feel that all religious sages used the intrinsic essences of “compassion, loving-kindness, sincerity, respectfulness, humility, and harmony” to teach all beings to end wrongdoings and practice virtuous conduct, to break through delusion and attain enlightenment, and to get along harmoniously with one another and treat one another equally. Their teachings encompass the teachings of morality, virtues, the law of cause and effect, philosophy, and science.

For example, Hinduism teaches “No harming, no stealing, chastity, kindness, impartiality, patience, perseverance, a moderate diet, and cleanliness. These are the ten precepts.”

Zoroastrianism teaches “Consider them as thine own, and this is thy religion.”

Catholicism teaches “You love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

Christianity teaches “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

Confucianism teaches “Human beings, regardless of nationality, race, or religions, everyone should be loved equally. We are all sheltered by the same sky and we all live on the same planet Earth.”

Islam teaches “There is only one moral norm, which is the principle of universal love originating from selfless and virtuous deeds.”

Taoism teaches “Be loyal to one’s superior, be filial to one’s parents, respect one’s brothers, and be a trustworthy friend.”

Sikhism teaches “More than all else do I cherish at heart that love which makes me to live a limitless life in this world.”

Bahaism teaches “The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness...” and “The peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God.”

Buddhism says “Be filial and provide for parents, and be respectful to and serve teachers,” “Do nothing that is bad; do everything that is good,” “Be greatly compassionate. People will abide by morality. The land and people will be enveloped in peace.”

Therefore, we know:

***Love is the true mind, the true nature, truly what it is (suchness), and Dharma nature.***

***Love is the original nature, the innate goodness, the utmost purity, and the utmost virtuousness.***

***Love is the truth, true meaning, life, and eternity.***

***Love is holiness, God, Allah, and the holy spirit.***

***Love nurtures everything in the universe. Everything in the universe is born and grows from love.***

***Love is the root of all virtues, all abilities, and all good fortune.***

From this we can deeply believe that if the religious groups whose teachings are based on sincere love can truly work together and propagate their teachings extensively, they will definitely be able to help all beings uncover their innate goodness and resolve all contradictions and conflicts.

## **ALL RELIGIONS ARE ONE FAMILY**

Although the texts of each religion give different descriptions of the origin of life and the universe, my religious friends all affirm that the one and only True God has perfect wisdom and extraordinary powers and his teaching varies according to the geographical environment, lifestyle, culture, education, and the needs of each ethnic group. In China, he manifested as Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi. In Buddhism, he manifested as Sakyamuni Buddha. In Christianity, he manifested as Jesus, in Judaism, as Moses, and in Islam, as Muhammad. Buddhism teaches that

everything is one entity; everything is “manifested by the true mind and altered by the consciousness.” The true mind is actually another name for Allah and God. The same True God has various manifestation bodies, which are ultimately the same. Their common goal is to help all beings end wrongdoings and practice virtuous conduct, and break through delusion and attain enlightenment.

The concept of holomovement proposed by modern scientist David Bohm is a great inspiration to us. The core of this concept is that the universe is an undivided wholeness. The whole has closely interconnected parts. Any one of the parts carries the information of the whole. In other words, the whole is included in every one of the parts.

All the religions are like the different departments of a university. The chancellor is the one and only True God. The professors of each department are the manifestation bodies of the True God.

From this concept, we can deeply appreciate that all of the different religions in the world are one family. We should completely let go of arrogance, jealousy, and greed, treat one another equally, get along with everyone harmoniously, and work together to help people awaken. Suffering arises from delusion. Happiness arises from awakening. Only when we are truly awakened will we naturally leave suffering behind and attain happiness.

## **TRAVELING WILL ENHANCE COMMUNICATION**

When I was living in Singapore, I invited the nine representatives from the Inter-religious Organization of Singapore (IRO) to come to our lecture hall to teach and to have dialogs with the Buddhist practitioners. I also visited them and lectured at their invitation. We learned from one another. During the millennium dinner party, the representatives of the IRO sincerely prayed together for world peace. In addition, a group was formed to visit China in 2000. In 2003, when the Pure Land Learning College held its grand opening, the IRO came and conveyed their best wishes. During the trips, all the religious representatives shared ideas and truly communicated, and thus became close friends.

In July 2004, an Indonesian interfaith delegation visited Cairo, Egypt and the Vatican. On that trip they met with the elders at Al Azhar University, an Islamic university that has a history of over one thousand years, and then Pope John Paul II.

In December of the same year, an Indonesian interfaith delegation, led by the former president of Indonesia, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, visited Chinese religious representatives. As the proverb says: “Read ten thousand books and travel ten thousand miles.” Being invited on these trips as advisor, I, too, benefited a great deal in the harmonious atmosphere of such various interfaith visits.

In October 2006, at the invitation of Dr. Preeyanuch Jariyavidyanont, Deputy Permanent Delegate of Thailand to UNESCO, the Pure Land Learning College co-hosted the three-day “Celebration of the 2550th Birth Anniversary of the Buddha” with UNESCO at its Paris headquarters. We sincerely invited representatives of the religions from Singapore and Australia to pray together for world peace on stage. With the lectures and an exhibition, we successfully proved three things to the delegates from the 192 countries in UNESCO and participants from all over the world.

Religious groups can indeed work together. There is only one True God in the universe. This True God is love.

One can indeed be taught to be a better person. In the township of Tangchi, Lujiang, China, the teachers at The Lujiang Centre of Cultural Education practiced and taught the Confucian Guidelines for Being a Good Person. These actions deeply moved the local residents. Within three months, good social values were restored significantly, which serves as proof [that one can indeed be taught to be a better person].

From this we can see that the teaching of traditional culture of the sages around the world can truly be applied to resolve contradiction and conflict and achieve world peace today.

In May 2008, I was invited to join a Malaysian religious delegation visiting Islamic groups in Xinjiang Province, China. We visited the Islamic Institute and amiably exchanged views with local Muslims. It was a rare opportunity in learning.

The aforementioned trips and visits greatly enhanced interfaith learning, communication, and understanding, and these generated very good results. Generally, religious leaders have limited contact with one another. Even when they meet occasionally, their time together is short. If they can travel together, they will be in one another’s company from morning till night and the best communication in every aspect will be achieved.

## DELVING DEEPLY INTO RELIGIOUS TEACHING

For religious groups to get along harmoniously and to understand and help one another, the most important foundation is to understand the core teachings of every religion and to practice them. Therefore, it is indeed necessary for religious groups to learn one another's religious texts.

In Chinese etymology, religion, or Zongjiao, has profound meanings. Zong conveys the meaning of “fundamental,” “main,” and “revere.” Jiao is “education.” Therefore, Zongjiao means “a fundamental, main education; a teaching that is worth respecting and praising.”

Once an Indonesian practitioner asked me, “How can different religious groups get along harmoniously without conflict?”

I answered that the most important thing is to diligently learn one's own religious teaching. For example, Indonesia acknowledges five religions: Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. These five religions are like a person's five fingers. They differ in length, but when one traces them back to the palm, the wrist, and the arm, one will know that the fingers share the same root and the same origin. Therefore, as long as one continues to delve deeply into one's religious texts, when one gets to a certain level, one will naturally comprehend the teaching. When one is exposed to the texts of other religions, one will also be able to understand them. An ancient saying speaks of “delving deeply into one teaching and immersing oneself in it for a long time.” When one delves deeply and reaches a certain level, one will attain a pure mind and will naturally have a thorough understanding.

I feel that when different religious groups begin to interact with one another, they should seek common ground and put aside differences. They should especially point out the common teachings in the texts and put aside the teachings that are different. The teachings of the sages come from great minds, and great minds think alike. We see differences because our level of cultivation is not deep enough. If we continue to learn and delve deeply into our own teachings and elevate our level, we will naturally understand and all the differences will dissolve.

A proverb says: “Everyone shares the same heart. Since they share the same heart, they would think in a similar fashion.” Different religious groups will naturally be like brothers and sisters, respecting, loving, and working with one another.

For years, I have diligently learned various religious texts such as the Old and New Testaments and the Qur'an. When I study the Bible, I become a devout Christian or a devout Catholic. When I study the Qur'an, I become a devout Muslim. My sincerity and respect for Allah and God are pure and impartial, just like my sincerity and respect for Buddhas and bodhisattvas. I deeply understand that only when I completely put down the three obstacles of jealousy, anger, and greed and affirm that all sages are my best teachers will I benefit from studying the texts and really understand the true meanings of the sages' teachings.

## **TAKING UP THE MISSION OF PROPAGATING THE PROPER TEACHINGS**

Today, the world is in chaos. The root reason is that Easterners neglect the teaching of the sages and Westerners neglect religious education. Take traditional Chinese teaching for example. The two most important subjects for children are the classics and history. Chinese classics are the basis of the teaching of the sages. History books are the accumulation of previous generations' experiences. If one does not study the classics, one will not grow in learning and virtue. If one does not study history, one will not be enriched in knowledge and experience. People today neglect the classics and history and abandon religion. They do not know that religious teaching and the teaching of the sages are about natural law. Or that truth, virtuousness, beauty, and wisdom are innate in the minds and nature of all beings. Therefore, they are at a loss; they do not know what to do. From individuals and families to society, countries, and even nature and the universe, enormous conflict arises and cannot be resolved.

At this critical moment, propagators of each religion, without a doubt, should take up the great mission of "reviving and passing on the teachings of the ancient sages and achieving everlasting peace for future generations" and fulfill the sacred aspiration of propagating and protecting the proper teachings and saving the world from pending disasters.

When we carefully look at history, it is easy for us to see that the teaching of every religion in the world is a perfect multicultural social teaching of the utmost virtuousness. The founders of all the religions were voluntary multicultural social educators. Jesus taught for three years. Muhammad taught for twenty-seven years. Confucius taught for five years. Sakyamuni Buddha taught for forty-nine years. They all completely let go of prestige, wealth, and greed. They were pure in mind and body. They engaged in cultivation and taught people from all walks of life, without

discrimination. Therefore, they were able to exert profound and wide-reaching influence on people of their times and later generations.

I sincerely hope that the United Nations or the government of each country will establish a university of religions to nurture good teachers of religions, who will delve deeply into their own religious teachings and learn from one another. The students will give lectures every day. After being assessed by a governmental review board as to whether it is truly beneficial to social stability and harmony, approved lectures can be broadcasted to people on national television and around the world via the Internet and satellite television for long-distance learning.

Important religious maxims can be extracted and compiled into books to enhance interfaith communication and understanding, truly affirming “One Humanity, Many Faiths.” Indeed, all of the cultures, all ethnic groups, and all learning are one entity.

This way, all the contradictions and conflicts will naturally be resolved. We can gladly expect a harmonious world. All beings will be happy.

I hope that everyone present today will share this great wish and have the same mind and the same aspiration. I sincerely hope that everyone here will courteously invite the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Kevin Rudd to be the first one to establish a global university of religions or a global multicultural university, so that Australia will lead the world to peace and stability and set the best example for other countries. This will be the true contribution that everyone present today makes to their countries and people and to the humanity.

In conclusion, I wish the summit every success! And I wish all of you good health! May the propagation of your teachings be truly successful!

I also wish Prime Minister, Mr. Kevin Rudd good health. May Australia continue to enjoy every prosperity.

*Shí Chín Kung*

**President, Pure Land Learning College, Australia**

**Honorary Professor, University of Queensland, Australia**

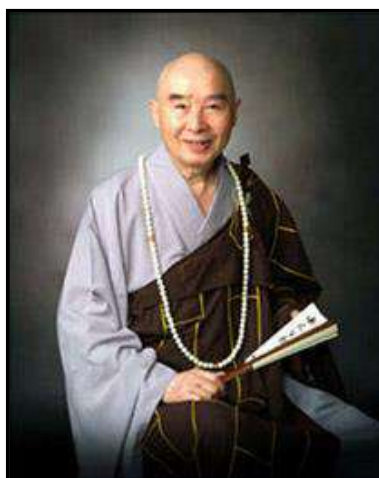
**Honorary Professor, Griffith University, Australia**

**Honorary Ph.D., Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Indonesia**



---

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



**Ven. Master Chin Kung**

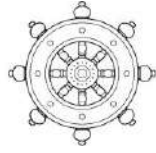
This translation would not have been possible without the excellent new Chinese edition of the Guanyin Spiritual Response Oracle printed by the Buddha Educational Foundation (<http://www.budaedu.org/en/>), a nonprofit founded by Master Chin Kung to continue the legacy of Patriarch Yin Guang's life work of distributing sutras.

Thus, I will like to express my undying gratitude and utmost admiration for the Ven. Master Chin Kung. He is the radiant sun of Dharma, for his teachings have illuminated the hearts of not only myself, but also the hearts of countless sentient beings across the boundless Dharma-realm. Where there was once ignorance and darkness, there is now light and hope ; where there was once suffering and vengeance, there is now the indescribable bliss of Infinite Life. It is without a shadow of doubt that the Buddha's rarest, highest and most profound teachings could be found in his every word, and even in his slightest expression.

If not for his generous, diligent and century spanning efforts in lecturing and promoting Pureland Buddhism, I would never have encountered the profound Dharma of Amitabha. Furthermore, even though he is now approaching his 90s, he still tirelessly lectures the Infinite Life Sutra for several hours everyday all year round. Thus, it is my sincere wish that this modest work can be my small token of gratitude, to repay the Great Compassion and unconditional benevolence that he has shown to me and the world.

**Namo Amitabha!**

---



# MAXIMS OF THE SAGES

A TRANSLATION OF KEY VERSES WITH  
COMMENTARY

增廣賢文精簡英文版

BRIAN CHUNG

作者：鍾佰晟

2015



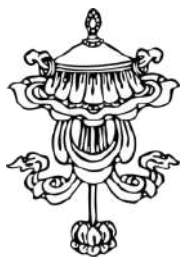
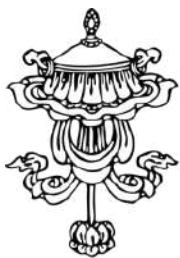
---

---

THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT

---

---



NAMO AMITA BUDDHA

南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



---

**NO RIGHTS RESERVED**

**As the author of this text, it is my express intent that the entirety of this text be released into the Public Domain. I reserve no rights to this work. If the laws of a particular jurisdiction should make it impossible to reserve no rights, then I hereby grant permission to anyone who seeks to use and reproduce this work for any purpose.**

***Brian Chung***

---

*"Anywhere a Buddha goes—whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet — people will be  
converted and brought towards the Way.  
All the lands beneath the stars will be serene and harmonious.  
The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be luminous.  
Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm.  
Plagues, intrigues and calamities will not occur.  
Society will be prosperous and peaceful.  
Soldiers and arms will be of no use.  
Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished.  
All will feel compelled to refine themselves with etiquette and deference.  
Society will be free from thieves and bandits.  
There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice.  
The powerful will not exploit the weak,  
And everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."*

**-Infinite Life Sutra**

*As the Self-nature alone is empty and ethereal, it transcends all forms of evil.*

*As the Self-nature is wondrously perfect, it holds all splendor and beauty.*

*As the Self-nature is unobstructed, it gives rise to the six divine powers.*

*As the Self-nature does not abide anywhere, it can neither be ceased nor obliterated.*

*As the Self-nature is not attached to action, it can neither be limited nor exhausted.*

*As the Self-nature has no exterior, it is boundless like the wind.*

*As the Self-nature has no interior, it manifests as everything, just like how a gleaming mirror can reflect anything.*

*As the Self-nature is luminously bright, it shines forth like the radiant sun.*

*And as the Self-nature is impartial, it pervades everywhere like incense.*

**-The Discourse on Giving Rise to Faith in the Infinite Life Sutra**

**(By Qing Dynasty Upasaka Peng Ji Qing 彭際清)**

### **DEDICATION OF MERIT**

**May the merits and virtues accrued from this work  
repay the kindness of my Mother, Father, Elders and Ancestors  
and relieve them from their sufferings.**



**May my Mother, Father, Elders and Ancestors  
bring forth the heart  
of understanding and compassion and,  
at the end of this life,  
be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.**



## FOREWORD

The 增廣賢文 (Maxims of the Sages) is a collection of adages spoken by the Ancient Sages of China. The first known edition of this book originated from the Ming dynasty. Afterwards, it was continually improved by later scholars, who augmented it with wise sayings from other important scriptures.

The wise and clever maxims found in this book are especially relevant in our current age of stress and turmoil. Furthermore, these maxims are in full accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. As a matter of fact, the Sagely wisdom of Confucius, Mencius and the other Ancient Sages are considered to be the foundational knowledge that all Buddhists should study. The Venerable Master Chin Kung has stated that the great Mahayana sutras are the august fruits of the Dharma, but the roots are the precepts and the wisdom of the Ancient Sages.

Moreover, in August 2013, the Venerable Master Chin Kung commissioned an excellent new edition of this book— using a long forgotten edition published during the early years of the Republic of China as the manuscript.

Thus, this book is a rare gem that is hard to come by in our age. Therefore, we should diligently study the selected maxims found herein. The wisdom acquired will without doubt calm our hearts and ease our minds.

This edition contains a selection of 168 key maxims from the Chinese text, along with some commentary.



## SELECTED MAXIMS

**1.) By being close to the sea, we naturally become experts of marine life. Likewise, by living near to mountains, we can eventually discern between all the different sounds of diverse species of birds.**

### **Commentary:**

This verse stresses the importance of long term single-minded cultivation. If we only dabble superficially in a variety of subjects, we will master nothing and have nothing to show for our efforts—just like how a man who merely visits the seaside for a day will have scant knowledge of marine life.

The Ven. Master Chin Kung often stresses that a student who adheres to the modern academic curriculum will become a jack of all trades but master of none. This is because too many subjects are being studied concurrently. Therefore, he exhorts us to read one sacred text at least a thousand times in order to truly understand the limitless hidden meanings. The key to success is to cultivate one Dharma-door unceasingly. For example, the impressively dense branches of a grand oak tree are still supported by one single strong tree trunk. Likewise, constant cultivation and immersion in a particular subject or environment is needed to master any subject matter.

The Buddha-nature possessed by each of us is self sufficient and capable of generating infinite wisdom and knowledge. Thus, Sages single-mindedly cultivate one Dharma-door until the unlimited wisdom of the Buddha-nature is recovered, at which point there is nothing they do not know.

**2.) When our luck turns sour, even gold can change into copper. However, when fortune smiles upon us, even copper can turn into gold.**

### **Commentary:**

This is a particularly important verse. Nowadays, we often rely on methods, skills or assets to help us realize our dreams. If we have degrees, capital or connections, we expect that these assets will protect us or give us advantages that cannot be easily taken away. If we don't have them, we plan various ways to achieve advantages. For instance, the unemployed often consider further education to be the solution that will help them attract to recruiters.

However, the truth is that these external things are useless in the grand scheme of things. The only thing that matters is our karmic situation. If we have too many sins, then even ironclad status, wealth and intelligence will disappear in an instant. However, if we have accumulated many merits, our miseries will be automatically turned into bliss within a blink of an eye.

For instance, according to a true account recorded in an edition of the Treatise on Response and Retribution:

*Fang Shih-k'o, a native of Hsing-an, had been very sickly from a child. Afterwards he began to enquire into the mysteries of Taoism, with a view of procuring the secret of immortality. Arrived one day at the Cloud-capped Mountain, he met a person of strange appearance, who said, "With such a face as yours, how can you expect to get the blessings that you seek? It is impossible—unless you first plant a root of goodness." Then Shih-k'o went home; and although he was a poor man he found means to print off an edition of the Book of Recompenses and distribute copies among his friends. By the time he had printed ten pages, his sickness was half-cured; when the work was completed, he found himself entirely recovered; and from that time forward he became [p. 115](#) robust in body, and quite different from what he had been before in appearance.*

In this case, the merits derived from printing sutras turned Fang Shih-K'o—a poor, sickly and unattractive person—into a strong and handsome person. All external things such as this world, our bodies and our intelligence are composed of the four elements and five skandahs. These factors change in accordance with our karma, which in turn is changed by our good deeds and virtue. Thus, if we diligently accumulate good deeds and support worthy causes—such as printing sutras, creating Buddha images or liberating life—our dreams will certainly come true. As the maxim states: *"Even copper can turn into gold."*

In the Buddha's Infinite Life Sutra, it is stated that reciting **Namo Amitabha** is the greatest good. According to the Contemplation Sutra, just one recitation of this Buddha's name can eradicate eight billion eons worth of heavy karmic offenses. Even the 5 grave offenses that warrant rebirth in the Relentless Hell can be wiped away by reciting Namō Amitabha. Moreover, according to Amita Buddha's 48 Vows,

*Amitabha Vows 25-27: The Vows of Good Karma and Virtue*

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are*

*inspired by my name to sincerely cultivate the Bodhisattva Way shall be respected by both men and devas. Moreover, sentient beings who merely hear my name will be reborn as virtuous aristocrats possessing wealth, knowledge and auctoritas. Their bodies will be healthy and complete. Lastly, they will enjoy cultivating the highest Dharma. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

Thus, if merely hearing Amita Buddha's name can yield such great rewards, how much more could be achieved if we sincerely recite it on our own accord?

### **3.) Wealth and power are like chaff, but honor and virtue are worth thousands of gold taels.**

#### **Commentary:**

Like the previous maxim, this verse also stresses the importance of good karma. Wealth, power and status are merely the fruits of doing good. Thus, they come easily when good deeds are done. However, if a man is immoral, then even if he has a great fortune and extensive clout—he still owns nothing but chaff. This is because he is merely enjoying his past merits. Eventually, his evil deeds and lack of virtue will create an avalanche of sins that will wipe away all his temporal blessings.

### **4.) Only lengthily journeys can gauge a horse's strength and endurance. Likewise, only long term undertakings can prove a man's devotion.**

#### **Commentary:**

According to the Jade Record,

*"Good deeds done half-heartedly and rarely will yield trivial rewards. Good deeds done sincerely and often will yield great rewards. Trivial rewards come quickly. However, profound bliss and unimaginable rewards come only after a while."*

*"In this world, there are many who do good. Nevertheless, there are hardly any people who steadfastly do good. A man who insincerely does a few good deeds—and immediately stops when his own sloth and faithlessness rise to test him—will never reap the true and profound benefits of virtue. Such a man has had his judgment compromised by his lack of even a hairs-breadth worth of patience."*

Thus, there are many people in this world who are willing to do good. unfortunately, most are unwilling to do more than a few half-hearted deeds on the rare occasion.

If we wish to truly change our karma, we must diligently do good deeds within our reasonable mental and physical capacity. The actual impact of our goodness is not the decisive factor. What matters is that we do what we can bear to do.

**5.) If two people wholeheartedly cooperate, they can earn enough to purchase gold bricks. However, if they are selfish and suspicious, they will not be able to purchase even a needle.**

**6.) Those who are tolerant, patient and forgiving are not fools. However, those who are vindictive and selfish are without doubt fools.**

**7.) Sometimes, water can be thicker than blood and blood lighter than water.**

**8.) Everything— be it people, delicacies or vintages— is better back home.**

### **Commentary**

Echoing playwright Royall Tyler's famous words: *"Why should our thoughts to distant countries roam, when each refinement lies at home?"* This maxim enlightens us to the fact that everything is better back home. It doesn't matter if it is actually better, it naturally feels so. The grass may seem greener on the other side, but once the other side has been seen, it will not seem so anymore.

Thus, we should check our ambition and stay put. Where we are born is the place that suits us the most. If it does not, then nowhere else on Earth can give us happiness. Even if we immigrate, we will never be at ease and must battle discrimination, cultural barriers and the like. The only way to future prosperity is the accumulation of merits. With merits, even a desolate war zone can become a blissful paradise.

**9.) Just like how the flowers and orioles fear the passing of Spring, we should carefully avoid squandering our youth on idle pursuits.**

**Commentary:**

Nowadays, teenagers and young people often spend their youth having fun or doing things that may appear to be useful (e.g. college education etc.) but are actually not.

According to Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way,

*If you are old and established, the fortune you accumulate will be experienced by your descendants—your own rewards are in heaven. If you are young and unmarried, you will personally experience bliss in this very life from the good deeds you do.*

From these words, it is clear that if we start to amass merits from childhood or our early teenage years, we will create for ourselves an unimaginably blissful life of happiness. If we can continue without cease, a splendid heavenly rebirth will also follow. This is because early goodness melts away pending bad karma, thereby allowing current and past merits to manifest fully without being weighed down by negative karma.

However, if we only start to cultivate when we are well into adulthood, the personal benefits we experience will be less dramatic. Nevertheless, our descendents will enjoy great fortune. The bulk of the good karma can only be enjoyed after death.

Thus, we should ensure that our children start cultivating merits and virtue as young as possible. From the moment of conception, we should do no evil and do all that is good (e.g. recite sutras). If the child can be immersed in such an atmosphere of merit and purity while in the womb, he or she will surely attain Buddhahood before long.

Moreover, the Infinite Life Sutra also stresses the importance of cultivating merits when one is still young, capable and strong.

**10.) Those who do not show hospitality at home will be snubbed when they journey outside.**

**12.) When a rich man raves, the world still listens attentively. When a poor man speaks reason, people still ignore him.**

**13.) While urban areas offer superior financial opportunities, rural and quiet places can allow you to ease your mind and recuperate.**

**14.) Events may occur like a raging storm, but they always end up as tiny dust.**

**Commentary:**

This maxim reminds us of impermanence. Epic battles, violent power struggles, glorious feats and august coronations may have been as noticeable as a storm during their time—but today, they are nothing but bygone memories existing in dusty pages of history books.

Thus, instead of expending time, attention and effort on the impermanent, we should do good deeds and diligently cultivate virtue.

**15.) The men of times past cannot see the moonlight today. Nonetheless, the same moon had once shone upon them.**

**16.) Be very wary of hypocrites who harbor malice in their hearts while prating kindness or honesty.**

**17.) While there are straight trees, there are few men without a crooked heart.**

**18.) Blame the lack of leaves rather than accuse the sun of bias.**

**Commentary**

If a tree cannot harness sunlight, the problem lies with its own inadequate number of leaves rather than the way the sun shines. Likewise, we should not blame God, the Jade Emperor or the like for our misfortunes or unrealized ambitions. Our grievances are due to our insufficient stocks of merit, which are too few to bring about what we wish for. We should instead diligently do more good in order to realize our goals.

**19.) Everything is due to karma, not even one minute aspect is caused by others or by luck.**

**20.) Each year begins at Spring. Each day starts between the 3rd and 5th hour of the morning. The pillar that upholds the family is harmony, and success in life rests on diligent cultivation of merits.**

**Commentary:**

Time management is very important in life. Thus, both sleeping late and staying up late are taxing and inefficient habits. We should rise from bed by 4 or 5 A.M. in order to make use of the hours available. According to Ven. Master Hsuan Hua, while the average person may live for eight decades, only a small portion of that time could be devoted towards constructive endeavors. For example, one cannot do much in the first two decades and one is often too old and sick during the later decades to do anything. This leaves the middle three or four decades. However, half of that time is spent on sleeping, eating and other mundane routines. Furthermore, even more time is spent on work and other neutral activities. Thus, how much time do we really have to accumulate merits?

If we add bad time management or laziness into the mix, there would be barely any time left. Human rebirth is rare and short. If we fail to accumulate stocks of merit during our time here, our lives would be wasted.

Furthermore, family harmony is of paramount importance. Harmonious families are the building blocks of stable societies. Very little could be done if families are divided. Thus, family members must exercise cooperation and forbearance and refrain from causing discord or harboring grudges against each other.

**21.) Judge your own conduct using the same strictness you judge others with. Tolerate others using the same lenient standards you judge yourself with.**

**22.) Guard your tongue as firmly as you would cork a bottle. Guard against evil or wandering thoughts like you would a citadel.**

**23.) It is better to be bullied than to be a bully.**

**Commentary:**

Bullying creates evil karma that has serious consequences. According to the Infinite Life Sutra:

*"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of enmity in the lives to come. Thus, we should be cautious. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims and suffer their vengeance."*

Therefore, we must exercise forbearance if we are bullied or abused. Such virtue will eradicate countless past demerits and augment our stocks of merit. However, those who bully only invite future strife and karmic retributions.

**24.) Always think thoroughly before making choices and starting new undertakings. More importantly, never deceive or betray your own conscience.**

**25.) Those who enjoy discussing discord, wrongdoing and scandals are themselves low and scandalous.**

**Commentary:**

According to the Buddha, how we act defines what we are. For instance, a man once asked a Sage what he thought of him. The Sage replied that he saw him as a Buddha. The man decided to insult the Sage by saying that he saw him as feces.

When the man got home, he gleefully recounted his outrageous display of arrogance to his wife. She was not amused and pointed out that Buddhas see all other people as Buddhas, and he who sees others as feces are feces themselves.

Thus, that is why nobility comes from humility and lowliness from pride/arrogance. The prideful hold everyone else in contempt, thereby filling their hearts with contempt. As the outside is simply a manifestation of the inside, their inner contempt will manifest as ugliness and lowliness. The humble revere everyone else. Thus, the reverence that fills their heart becomes karma which gives them nobility and dignified appearances.



**26.) A friendly relative living far away is not as helpful as a neighbor who lives nearby.**

**27.) When a man has plenty of largesse to spread, many will call him brother. However, only in times of peril can he tell if he has any true friends.**

**28.) Human relationships are as fragile as paper. Worldly affairs and events often unfold like rounds of chess, with each new move changing the status quo.**

**Commentary:**

Do not rely on favors or friendship. As the world is full of intrigue and variable change, nothing temporal is reliable. Therefore, we should rely on our merits and good deeds. For instance, according to the Pettavathu, a Earth deva once spoke the following verse after being reborn as such:

***'What he gives becomes not just that. Just give the gift. Giving he traverses both (worlds); by it he goes to both , Be not slothful.'***

He had gifted a wooden axle to a merchant whose cart axle was broken. On account of this merit, he was soon reborn as a Earth deva after making the gift. By "traverses both (worlds)", he means that **merits can both protect you in this life and the next.**

**29.) There are thousand year old trees in the mountains. However, centenarians on the street are a rare sight.**

**30.) Do not bear burdens that will cause you mental distress or physical strain.**

**31.) By being constantly vigilant against committing offensive acts, no one will hold grudges against you.**

**32.) Sages are national treasures ; disciples of Confucian teachings are like rare delicacies, the highlight of any banquet.**

**33.) The best way to convince a man to give up alcohol is to simply have him observe drunks while sober.**

**34.) When you are in need of help, seek assistance from men of virtue and upright thought. When seeking to help others, help those who are in urgent need.**

**Commentary:**

According to Ven. Master Chin Kung, a wise man saves the distressed and desperate but not those who are merely poor. Instead, they teach the poor the Dharma so they can make merits for themselves. This is because those who have no merits have not the ability to retain wealth even if gold was delivered to them on a silver platter.

**35.) By overstaying one's welcome, one becomes an irritation. Likewise, constant interaction—even between beloved kinsmen—will cause weariness.**

**36.) Those who still speak measured words while drinking wine are true gentlemen. Those whose financial records are honest and in order are honorable men.**

**Commentary:**

This verse perfectly mirrors the conduct of Roman statesman Cato the Younger. Cato had a reputation of keeping perfect accounts in an era riddled with corruption. Furthermore, his austerity and self restraint was legendary. Thus, an important sign of virtue is honesty in financial dealings (i.e. to counter greed) and restraint against temptation.

**37.) If a veteran monk remains as enthusiastic about Bodhi as when he first joined the Sangha, he will become a Buddha very soon.**

**38.) It would be better to single- mindedly cultivate a sutra instead of amassing a fortune.**

**39.) If parents fail to furnish their sons and daughters with Sagely wisdom , then they might as well breed donkeys and pigs.**

**40.) If a family has sutras and sagely books, they must teach it to their children. If they do not, their descendants will be deluded and unwise.**

**41.) The gain derived from conversing with a Sage for one night is superior to studying sutras for ten years.**

**Commentary:**

The wisdom derived from conversing with a Sage or Buddha is superior to that of studying a sutra. This is because whatever a Sage or Buddha says to an individual represents a Dharma-door tailored completely to his habits, karmic situation and inclinations. On the other hand, the sutras are more general and geared towards a wider audience. Even though sincere cultivation of the sutras will yield Bodhi, it is easier to achieve it if you could meet a Buddha.

If you wish to meet the Buddha Maitreya (the next Buddha) and study under him, you must diligently amass merits. According to the Buddha Pronounces the Sūtra of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Attainment of Buddhahood, the following good deeds will yield this opportunity:

*“Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit, whether by reading and reciting the Tripiṭaka—the Sūtras, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma—by praising their tenets and expounding them to others, or by, without jealousy, teaching and enabling others to accept and uphold [the Dharma]. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by giving others food and clothing, observing the precepts, and developing wisdom. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by offering Buddhas music, canopies, flowers, incense, and bright lamps. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by offering food regularly to Saṅghas, erecting monks' living quarters, providing monks with the four necessities, or observing the eight precepts regularly for purification and for cultivation of loving-kindness. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by invoking profound compassion for sentient beings in suffering and by personally bearing their suffering to give them happiness. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by observing their precepts, enduring adversities, and developing the pure mind of loving-kindness. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by building temples or offering food to the monks who came from everywhere to attend Dharma assemblies. Among you, there are those who have*

*been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by observing their precepts, hearing much [of the Dharma], practicing meditation, and developing affliction-free wisdom. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by erecting pagodas, making offerings to holy relics, or thinking of the dharma body of Buddhas. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by rescuing and liberating people in hardship, poverty, solitude, or bondage to others, people about to be tortured or executed by the law, or people in tremendous suffering because of their tribulation of the eight difficulties. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by skillfully bringing to union and harmony people in tremendous suffering because of love, separation, faction, or dispute.'*

However, the coming of the Buddha Maitreya is still millions of years from now. Thus, it would be better if dedicate our stocks of merit to rebirth in Amita Buddha's Pureland. If we are mindful of Amita Buddha during our last moment, Amita Buddha will personally appear to welcome us into Pureland. As soon as his light shines upon us, we instantly become Bodhisattvas. Thereafter, we will attain Unsurpassed Bodhi under the tutelage of Amita Buddha in Pureland.

**42.) If a man does not (within his power) cultivate virtue or study the wisdom of the Sages, then he is no better than an ox or horse clad in human attire.**

**Commentary:**

Delusion is the unwholesome mental state that defines the realm of animals. Thus, if a person does not try to plant roots of wisdom in the Buddhadharma, he is likely to be reborn as an animal in the future.

**43.) There are countless people living within the Four Seas and Nine Provinces, yet few of them are Sages.**

**Commentary:**

The "Four Seas and Nine Provinces" refer to the boundaries of Ancient China—the known world. This maxim echoes the famous line of the Infinite Life Sutra, *"Few become Sages while many drown in their own delusions."* Thus, this maxim reminds

us of the importance of cultivating the Dharma. If we can cultivate good in a world as evil as ours, our merits will be incomparable.

**44.) The reason one painstakingly distills excellent liquor is to provide hospitality. Likewise, spending a fortune to collect or publish Sagely scriptures is money well spent.**

**Commentary:**

This maxim highlights the importance of printing sutras. According to Venerable Master Chin Kung, a man who offers just one bowl of rice to a Paccekabuddha will be wealthy for 9 billion eons. However, if a man cultivates the Infinite Life Sutra and introduces it to others, his merits will be one billion times greater than making offerings to countless Arhats and Paccekabuddhas living in one galaxy. Thus, all of us must print, preserve or promote sutras whenever we have the chance.

**45.) It is better to give a man the mind seal of the Buddha than to build a seven tiered pagoda.**

**Commentary:**

The meaning of this maxim is that there is no deed higher than introducing a man to the name of Amita Buddha. This is because the only way to achieve Unsurpassed Bodhi is by seeking rebirth in Pureland. In fact, even great Bodhisattvas seek rebirth in Pureland. Thus, Amita Buddha is the sum of all Dharmas.

**46.) If the city gate catches fire, everyone will rush to the surrounding ponds and empty it of water. Thus, by saving the gate, countless fish will die.**

**Commentary:**

This maxim addresses moral dissonance and misguided priorities. People and statesman often advocate various policies that backfire. For instance, by spending most of the nation's resources on warfare, the economy and people will suffer. Even if the wars seem superficially justifiable, they are actually not. For instance, if the city gate catches fire, it is the fault of the officials for commissioning one out of wood instead of one made from metal. Draining the surrounding bodies of water to save it

(killing the fish in the process) simply creates more bad karma. It would be better to let the gate burn down so you could build a new one.

Likewise, wars and conflict are caused by the karma of eating meat and butchering animals. According to the eminent Upasaka An Shi:

*As animals have no recourse against the never-ending slaughter, they must silently swallow their grievances. This leads to a dismal atmosphere of mounting evil karma. Eventually, as the evil karma of killing accumulates to the limit, demon kings will descend into the human realm as a response.*

*The Zen Master Ci Shou once said: "As a result of the sin of animal slaughter, violence and wars will break out. Those who have taken life will in turn lose their lives. Those who have maliciously refused to repay their debts will lose their homes in the chaos. Furthermore, those who have destroyed burrows and nests will have their family members scattered. Each sin will result in the appropriate retribution. Hence, do not fail to heed the Buddha's words."*

Thus, by making vegetarianism law and keeping treasury money for the development of the country, everyone will have peace and prosperity,

**47.) By not flaunting and by keeping a low profile, one can remain free from unwanted trouble.**

**48.) If you wish to achieve wealth and aristocratic status, you must diligently cultivate merits.**

**49.) Great undertakings are fragile, they require many years to accomplish but only a moment to destroy.**

### **Commentary:**

This maxim again reminds us of impermanence. Great fortunes, vast empires and lofty status often take generations to acquire and create. However, they can all be lost in one moment. Thus, it is better to use our time and energy to diligently accumulate merits instead of chasing phantoms or building an impermanent house of cards.

**50.) It is difficult to turn people towards virtue, but very easy to entice them into committing evil.**

**51.) Sterile waters are devoid of marine life. Likewise, pedantry and scrupulosity robs one of wisdom.**

**52.) Unmarried women should obey their fathers ; married women should obey their husbands. Only a fool turns his back on his wife and sagely women revere their husbands.**

**53.) There will always be scandals and bad news. However, if you ignore them, they cease to exist.**

**Commentary:**

According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, the internet and television are the chief karmic obstacle that troubles people today. Most of the things found in the media are negative and cause fear, anxiety, greed or turbid emotions. Moreover, the internet, social media and so forth often causes idleness and induce people to waste time.

Thus, true cultivators of the Dharma ignore the constant stream of gossip, opinions, temptations, sensationalism, arguments and temporal matters that flow through the media. Instead, they concentrate all attention towards the single-minded recitation of Amitabha. After all, those who are pure at heart can hear no evil and suffer no pain.

**54.) It is much better to be virtuous and deprived than to be prosperous and immoral.**

**55.) It is much better to be prepared for something than to assume that it will never happen.**

**Commentary:**

This maxim again reminds us on the importance of having a stock of merit. Only with merits will we have friends, resources and options when confronted by dilemmas, for fortune favors those with virtue and merit. Even if untimely death strikes, a stock of merit (bolstered by numerous good deeds) will award a good and blissful rebirth.

**56.) You will always get what you deserve. However, no amount of effort can yield what you don't.**

**Commentary:**

As stated before, most people seek only the external. For instance, they try very hard to realize their goals by hard work, obtaining expensive degrees, building networks, scheming or misconduct. However the truth is that how high they can climb has already been determined by their karma. That is why we often see the efforts of a few rewarded and the hard work and intelligence of many go unrewarded. The few that are rewarded have merit and even if they did not work at all, blessings and power would still find its way to them. Thus, the only wise thing to do is to accumulate good deeds. Only merits can yield improvement and change the karmic situation.

**57.) When making friends, seek those whose talents and wisdom are superior to your own. Otherwise, you would be wasting your time.**

**Commentary:**

According to the Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way, we should distance ourselves from evil people and associate with the virtuous. By doing so, we will avoid being caught in the misfortunes that shadow the evil. Moreover, we will be able to share the surplus merits that naturally emanate from the virtuous and enjoy the protection of the virtuous spirits that shadow them.

**58.) When one is sharpening a knife, one fears not sharpening it enough. However, an excessively sharp knife can easily injure one's own fingers.**

**59.) Those who are content are always happy. Unlike the greedy, those who have little desire will never be humiliated. The reserved and restrained cannot be shamed or disgraced.**



**60.) When those with stocks of merit encounter misfortune, they sustain only monetary loss. However, when those without merits meet misfortune, they often sustain injury or lose their lives.**

**Commentary:**

Stocks of merit are like invisible armor that deflects the blows of evil karma and cushions against misfortunes.

For instance, a man who has accumulated many merits is like a great body of water. Even if buckets of manure were to be dumped in, it will quickly wash away. However, a man who has not done good is like a small pond, vulnerable to even a small amount of negative karmic retribution.

**61.) Even a minute error can lead to massive losses.**

**62.) Those who wish to climb a mountain must start at the base. Likewise, those who wish to travel to distant lands must first walk familiar roads.**

**Commentary:**

All the Dharma the Buddha has spoken over the course of his life can be summed up in three words: Sila, Samadhi and Prajna. No matter which Dharma-door you choose to cultivate, you will have to start by cultivating virtue and the precepts. Virtue is the soil that equanimity and samadhi grows from.

**63.) Always be cautious. However, do not become overly cautious.**

**64.) Rather than asking others to do something, do it yourself. Instead of appealing for help, fight alone.**

**Commentary:**

Nowadays, human relationships are complicated. Large organizations are even more so. Thus, it is better to rely on yourself. However, as humans are dependent and often cannot stand alone, the only course of action is to achieve Buddhahood.

The true message of the Buddha is to achieve liberation yourself and then liberate others. For instance, the first task the Ven. Master Hai Xian undertook when he was ordained was to recite Amitabha until single-mindedness was attained. Moreover, the Buddha himself sought enlightenment first and on his own before he formed the Sangha and propagated the Dharma. The only way forward is to become self sufficient, and the only way to become self sufficient is to rediscover our self sufficient Buddha-nature.

Furthermore, according to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, it is very difficult to clear the head of defiling and wandering thoughts. Thus, the Dharma-door of Amitabha Pureland is unique among all of the 84,000 Dharma-doors, for it does not require the practitioner to cultivate Zen or master esoteric forms of meditation. The Pureland door is simple to practice and straightforward: The mind concentrates on Amitabha, the mouth recites Amitabha and the body prostrates to Amitabha.

With diligence, the practitioner will eventually sees only Amitabha and hears only Amitabha. This state represents success in cultivation and assured rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss (Pureland). This is because Amitabha is our Buddha-nature and the Buddha-nature is Amitabha.

**65.) It is not outrageous to be envious of the wealthy, but never envy a man for having enough to eat. Likewise, you may despise a living man, but you must let go of all grudges against the dead.**

**Commentary:**

It is inevitable that common people will be influenced by their defilements of greed, hatred and delusion. Thus, it is not wrong per se to feel such emotions or be pushed by them as long as conduct remains subject to restraint and reason. According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, if one's behavior is not outrageous and proper restraint is exercised, there is no karmic offense.

Thus, while most would feel envious of the rich, as long as their envy remains only in the heart and does not spawn spiteful words in public or criminal actions, and as long as the resentment is not so outrageous as to extend even to those of modest means, then there is no offense.

**66.) Those who are content and self sufficient are unburdened. On the other hand, the rich are crushed by anxieties.**

**67.) Some people not only feel no gratitude, but also mistake kindness shown for enmity.**

**68.) Always do things through proper channels. Do not use back doors, bribery or improper connections.**

**69.) Do not idle away days of mild weather only to start undertakings when the storm arrives.**

**Commentary:**

This maxim stresses the importance of accumulating merits regularly. Don't wait until death or disease comes knocking. Moreover, opportunities to accumulate merit may not always be available, or our health may fail us. Thus, if we are young, healthy and have resources, we should be especially diligent in amassing good deeds.

**70.) Water that has mixed into the sea cannot be recovered. Likewise, do not complain about things that have already happened.**

**71.) Most arguments and troubles are caused by failing to guard one's tongue. Likewise, anxieties are caused by greed and ambition.**

**72.) By controlling one's rage, one can avoid lengthily troubles later on.**

**73.) Human life is as short as blossoms during springtime.**

**74.) Your sons and grandsons have their own merits. Thus, don't slave away for them.**

**75.) While the human lifespan does not even reach one century, it is packed with a thousand years worth of anxieties.**

**76.) If you have good wine today, enjoy it. Worry about tomorrow's problems tomorrow.**

**77.) Calm waters do not ripple. Likewise, men with serene hearts are neither agitated nor argumentative.**

**78.) If the one horse refuses to move, all the other horses will be troubled.**

**79.) When one is favored, adored and successful, it is time to retire. Don't wait until things turn sour.**

**Commentary:**

The gravest mistake one makes is to go all in when at the height of fortune. Wise men are frugal with their stocks of merit. They retain their merits for future security and not for fleeting vainglory. In fact, those who refrain from ambition and hubris despite having the merits to attain greater glory can have their stocks of merit multiplied. Thus, once we have enough to live comfortably, we should retire. Lastly, remember the old Chinese adage: Extreme bliss leads to tears of misery.

**80.) Do not leave places with plenty of fish ; do not cling to shallow waters.**

**Commentary:**

The meaning of this maxim is that one should not cling to superficial things while ignoring the Buddhadharma or other merit fields. For instance, if a rich man despises the poor but revels in luxury, he is foolishly disregarding this maxim. If he gave to the poor and needy, his stock of merit would increase exponentially. By clinging only to luxury, he will become poor in either this life or the next.

**81.) Hold your tongue and extinguish your anger. If you show mercy and forgiveness, others will respect you and become compliant.**

**Commentary:**

This verse reminds us of the importance of forbearance. By holding our tongue and suppressing our anger, we will avoid countless troubles later on. Furthermore, we should not be too harsh and strict. By being merciful, we will inspire offenders to change or become more restrained. Sages teach by inspiring feelings of shame towards bad conduct, not by brute force.

Furthermore, the laws of karma are always fair. Hence, by not acting out, we protect our merits. Those who hurt us will fall to deserved fate in the evil realms. But if you take revenge, you will fall with them.

**82.) Humans are like birds living in a forest. When death comes, all will fly away in different directions.**

**Commentary:**

According to the Infinite Life Sutra:

*"Moreover, amidst temporal desires and attachments one is born alone and dies alone. The departed transmigrate to either a painful or to a pleasant state of existence. Each receives individual karmic retributions that no one else can bear in their place. Once a person has been reborn in a different realm due to his own karma, he can no longer meet or remember anyone he once knew. Since everyone's path of rebirth is uniquely tailored to their own habits and deeds, it is impossible to tell the time of their reunion."*

Thus, we should focus on amassing merits instead of trying to retain friends, family or the like. Everything here is impermanent and will be short lived.

**83.) People are afraid of the wicked and tyrannical. However, Heaven is not afraid of evildoers. People abuse the kind and virtuous. Conversely, Heaven never bullies the kind.**

**84.) Rewards always shadow the virtuous while punishments never fail to pursue the wicked. It is only a matter of time.**

**Commentary:**

According to the Infinite Life Sutra,

*"Good and evil both have distinct consequences that always unfold. Once they do, those who have for so long done as they please will be filled with unspeakable fear as their souls descend into the evil realms. Do not doubt what I have said."*

*"Between Heaven and Earth, there is naturally justice. Even though consequences may*

*not be immediate, rewards inescapably shadow the virtuous while retributions naturally pursue the wicked."*

Hence, we should never do evil and strive to do all good. No one gets away with anything. Rewards and retributions will arrive in due course.

**85.) As even the yellow river will one day turn clear, why wouldn't your time come?**

**Commentary:**

If you have accumulated merits, you do not need to worry no matter how dire the situation has become. With merits and good deeds, nothing is impossible. Just wait and fortune will turn your way.

**86.) When managing the affairs of others, be as careful as you would when crossing an unreliable wooden bridge.**

**Commentary:**

Many people are dishonest or less devoted and careful when they are managing other people's affairs and money. However, Sages are even more careful when managing the affairs of others than when they are managing their own. The laws of karma ensure that all malfeasance and negligence will be compensated doubly or more by the offender in this life or the next.

**87.) When enjoying favor, be mindful that disgrace and ruin can be just around the corner. When in a safe place, be cautious of potential danger.**

**88.) Mind your own business. Don't prattle about or comment on everything you see, and if others ask—just say you don't know. If you have finished your work, go home.**

**89.) Do all good and refrain from all evil.**

**Commentary:**

This maxim could be found in many Sagely texts such as the Treatise on Response and Retribution and the Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way.

Furthermore, this maxim is often found in Buddhist sutras as well. In fact, the great Master Yin Guang has stated that Buddhism is simply: "Do all good, refrain from all evil and purify the mind." Thus, we should all keep this adage in mind at all times.

**90.) When dragons swim in shallow waters, even little prawns can jeer at them. Likewise, when tigers are forced out into the open, even dogs can harass them.**

**91.) If you have declared homage or made a solemn promise, you must keep it even in the face of bribe and temptation.**

**92.) After ten years of diligently amassing good deeds, one will certainly rise to fame, fortune and lofty rank.**

**93.) Indebtedness caused by medical expenses is a common sight. However, how many have managed to live past 70 anyway?**

**94.) We raise children in order to provide for ourselves in our old age. Likewise, we stock up food to guard against famines.**

**95.) A honest official is thin and lives modestly.**

**96.) Forgiveness is the root of victory ; patience and forbearance is the secret key that opens the doors to victory.**

**97.) kind words and praises are hard to come by, however, scathing words are easy to utter and often spoken.**

**98.) Promises made in haste or words spoken without consideration cannot be taken back by even a chariot drawn by four steeds.**

**99.) Drink liquor in the morning and you will be drunk all day. Quarrel with your wife at night and you will be alone all night.**

**100.) If you harbor virtuous intentions, Heaven will notice and bestow aid upon you.**

**101.) By planting sesame seeds, you harvest sesame. By planting beanstalks, you harvest beans. You reap what you sow.**

**102.) Heaven's justice may seem obscure, but neither the most minute error nor the slightest unfairness occurs under its watch. All will get their due.**

**103.) To be man and wife for just a day is the result of a hundred lifetimes of karmic causes.**

**104.) Causes and conditions are inconceivable. It takes hundreds of lifetimes of karmic conditions to cause a group of persons to share a ferry ride. Likewise, it takes thousands of lifetimes of karmic causes for two people to share a marriage bed.**

**103.) Seek neither gold nor jade, only seek to ensure that your descendants will all be Sages.**

**Commentary:**

According to Ven. Master Chin Kung's commentary on Liao Fan's Four Lessons, even after we die, we can still share the merits of our descendants. If our descendants are virtuous and become Buddhas, we will rise to Heavenly bliss.

**104.) A man bent on short term gain is oblivious to looming danger.**

**105.) Critical words cut like a knife through the heart.**

**106.) The rich think of the upcoming year while the poor think only of the next day.**



**107.) Life and death are due to karma, and wealth and power comes from Heaven alone.**

**Commentary:**

According to the Treatise on Response and Retribution, various demigods shadow each individual and report his merits and offenses to Heaven on a regular basis. For instance, the Hearth Spirit reports at the end of each lunar month. Good deeds are rewarded by honors, offices, ease, fulfillment in family life, increased lifespan, and wealth. Evil deeds are punished by reduction of lifespan (by either 12 year or 100 day periods) and various misfortunes. The treatise also states that it takes approximately three years (1000 days) for significant rewards or retribution to materialize. Thus, a man who does good deeds daily or diligently for three years can expect significant good fortune to be bestowed at the end of that period. The opposite happens to evildoers.

**108.) The superior man commends wealth obtained through virtuous means.**

**109.) It is a fact that virtue begets rewards while evil attracts retribution. It is not that there is no justice, it is simply because the proper time has yet to come.**

**110.) If a man does not even have the basic virtues of trust and honesty, he will find it difficult to function in life.**

**111.) Do not laugh at the old and elderly, for you too will be old soon enough.**

**112.) If you wish to do something properly, you must first consult three virtuous elders. Furthermore, pedantry will mislead you from the main point.**

**Commentary:**

According to the Ancients Sages: " Failure rears its ugly head to those who ignore the wise words of elders."

Thus, before we wish to do something, we should carefully seek advice from the virtuous and experienced.

**113.) When it is time to drink and toast, do so gladly. When it is time to sing, do so joyfully.**

**114.) By allowing the wind to blow the fire, you can conserve your own energy.**

**115.) By refraining from making incessant requests or constant appeals for help, your friendships and social relations will not be strained.**

**116.) By ignoring all that which is not necessary to know, your mind becomes calm and free from anxiety. By insisting to interact or speak with someone that you do not need to know, controversies and incidents will increase.**

**117.) Fear not the tigers in the woods. Fear the two faced and those who harbor secret malice and ulterior motives.**

**118.) Amongst the strong there are the even stronger. Likewise, the evil and wicked will naturally meet and be defeated by an even greater evil.**

**119.) A fortune in gold is inferior to a peaceful life, the true gem.**

**120.) All professions of this world are base and inferior, only scholars who study the sutras and the works of past Sages are truly noble.**

**121.) A man who regularly does good deeds will be happy. On the other hand, the evil are tormented by fear and shadowed by retribution.**

**122.) Even if you are in a rush, other people aren't and they won't make exceptions for you. People's hearts often remain clouded by anxieties even when they are resting.**

**123.) Even lambs kneel to drink their mothers milk and crows catch food to feed their mothers.**

**124.) A virtuous and cultivated wife will help her husband avoid disasters and controversies. Filial sons and grandchildren will bring ease to their father's heart.**

**125.) When someone else does something, it looks very simple and straightforward. Only when you do it yourself will you understand the difficulties.**

**126.) It is easy to transition from hardship to luxury and ease. However, to transition from luxury to hardship is a task of cruel difficulty.**

**127.) Pay no attention to the gawking eyes and gossip of others. Moreover, when you see someone who is busy or in trouble, do not rush to help lest you end up in their quagmire.**

**128.) It is better to light one lamp in the darkness than to light all the lamps in a radiant jeweled tower.**

**129.) Do not fret over your children's future, their lives will be determined by their own merit and karma.**

**130.) The gluttonous cannot be satiated even if they sold their house to buy delicacies.**

**131.) If you do good deeds, you need not worry about your future.**

**132.) If people are not educated in morality, they will fall astray. Just like a bell will not ring unless tapped.**

**133.) Closely above each person's heads are demigods who record good and evil deeds. Thus, do not ever betray your conscience.**

**134.) By extinguishing the fires of passion, the light of the Buddha can finally be seen.**

### **Commentary:**

The truth is that the Buddha is always at our side and within our hearts. Moreover, he unceasingly sends blessings our way. However, we never see this because of our own karmic obstacles. Our hearts reject the Buddha's pure wisdom and instead yearn for coarse desires such as pride, lust, hatred and the attendant sufferings they bring.

According to Mencius, the difference between men and animals is slight, but a superior man ardently guards the difference. The difference is our ability to collect merits, cultivate the Dharma and achieve liberation.

Thus, in order to see the Buddha's light (e.g. achieve liberation), we will need to first wipe away our defilements with Dharma cultivation such as Buddha name recitation.

According to In Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra,

*Amitabha Vow 42: The Vow of Resplendence*

*"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my land shall be boundlessly expansive and as bright and unblemished as a gleaming mirror. It's light shall pervade warmly across the ten quarters. Any sentient being who can see this light will become irreversible upon the path towards Bodhi. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."*

What this means is that anyone who can see Amita Buddha's light will become a Bodhisattva of Pure Land. The light is always visible, it is just that we remain ignorant to it. Thus, by single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha (i.e. Buddha name recitation samadhi), we will eventually be able to see this light and leave the sufferings of the Samsara behind.

**135.) By planting the seeds of virtue within the hearts of your sons and daughters, you ensure that they will become diligent farmers of all fields of merit.**

**136.) Do not bully the young for you do not know what they may become, perhaps you will one day be at their mercy. Moreover, those who wish to bully are dull at heart.**

**137.) The talented and virtuous are often unappreciated and given no opportunities to accomplish their dreams. However, fools regularly become high officials.**

**138.) If you can bear a slight, bear it ; if you can yield and retreat, do so. If you can't bear slights or yield to others, even a small matter will escalate into great calamity.**

**139.) The virtuous deeds of one powerful or influential person can allow the masses to find security and happiness.**

**140.) Respect the Will of Heaven and you will never fall ; disobey and you will perish.**

**141.) Propriety and virtue can only arise when the people are secure in their livelihoods. On the other hand, poverty begets banditry and thievery.**

**Commentary:**

This maxim echoes Mencius' wise advice to the King of Liang:

*"Mencius replied, 'They are only men of education, who, without a certain livelihood, are able to maintain a fixed heart. As to the people, if they have not a certain livelihood, it follows that they will not have a fixed heart. And if they have not a fixed heart, there is nothing which they will not do, in the way of self-abandonment, of moral deflection, of depravity, and of wild license. When they thus have been involved in crime, to follow them up and punish them;-- this is to entrap the people. How can such a thing as entrapping the people be done under the rule of a benevolent man?'"*

*"Therefore an intelligent ruler will regulate the livelihood of the people, so as to make sure that, for those above them, they shall have sufficient wherewith to serve their parents, and, for those below them, sufficient wherewith to support their wives and children; that in good years they shall always be abundantly satisfied, and that in bad years they shall escape the danger of perishing. After this he may urge them, and they will proceed to what is good, for in this case the people will follow after it with ease."*

**142.) People die for money ; birds die for food.**

**143.) Married couples must be as harmonious as an orchestra.**

**144.) Sumptuous food taxes the body ; lack of restraint and outrageous conduct leads to misfortune.**

**145.) When wealthy and powerful, be conservative and refrain from abusing your position. When poor, do not scheme or wantonly seek profit at any cost.**

**146.) By greedily seizing a dou of rice that belongs to another, you will lose half a years worth of grain.**

**Commentary:**

According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, even if a robber manages to successfully seize money from a victim, he has gained nothing. This is because by robbing, he has simply made a withdrawal from his stock of merit. Nobody can gain what was not meant to be gained. However, robbery creates negative karma and reduces existing merits. Thus, the robber not only gains less than what he would originally have gotten, but also has incurred for himself future karmic retribution as well. If he had simply done nothing, he would have received more money once his past merits materialize. Moreover, if he had done charity work, his stock of merit would have been multiplied. Thus, there is no gain to be derived from evil conduct. Only loss results from karmic offenses.

**147.) Some people do nothing but criticize and mock others all their lives, however, a wise man looks only to correct his own faults.**

**148.) When you see virtue being performed, fear only that you have not yet done such a good deed. When you see evil, run like you would from fire and boiling water.**

**149.) When someone offends you or infringes on your rights, bear it and do not contend. Eventually, it will pass and your indignation will give way to calmness.**

**150.) A man cannot be judged by his looks, just like the ocean cannot be measured by a small scale.**

**151.) Tall grasses may conceal precious herbs, likewise, a modest residence or small hut may harbor a future king, general, chancellor or lord.**

**152.) If you send a small gift while thousands of miles away, it will still greatly cherished by the recipient.**

**153.) Even though innumerable things have already been determined by Heaven, people still engage in futile plotting, worrying and scheming.**

### **Commentary**

The demigods of Heaven have already determined how future events will play out based on the merit and demerits of individuals. Woe and weal are caused by karma alone and not through any worldly intervention. Thus, plans, plotting and so forth are futile. If something is gained, it was already to be gained. If no gain is deserved, all plans will fail. Thus, craving and restless scheming yields nothing. Only good deeds can result in positive change.

**154.) The affairs of the world are as volatile and complicated as a game of Weiqi ; a man's life passes as quickly as a stallion's leap.**

**155.) Many esteemed and prominent families are brought to ruin by incompetent heirs. However, many great men are raised in modest households.**

### **Commentary**

According to the teachings of the Sages of Ancient China, a child will begin to learn and take in information as soon as conception. The Ven. Master Chin Kung has stated that what a child learns and senses between the moment of conception and age 3 will influence him until age 80 ; the cumulative influences experienced by the age of 7 will determine his views for life.

Thus, natal moral education is actually very important. If the parents are celibate, virtuous, filial and observing of etiquette from conception onwards, the child will pick up only positive influences during his first years. Moreover, if the parents cultivate the Dharma (e.g. recite sutras, listen to Dharma talks, make offerings etc.), it is highly likely that the child will attain Sagehood soon.

**156.) A man with hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland still eats only a few measures of rice a day. A man with thousand room mansions still occupies only a bed's worth of space at night.**

**157.) Once mired in lawsuits or court cases, even nine strong oxen cannot pull you out of such a quandary.**

**158.) Even though the courts and government offices are open to the public, those who have just cause and reason but no money should not bother entering.**

**159.) Everyone's life will play out in accordance with their karma. Whether they eagerly pursue life or are laid back, the results would still be the same.**

**commentary:**

A person will not experience more happiness than his good karma allows or suffer more hardship than those brought by his own past karmic offenses. Recognition, fame, academic attainments, ease, power, wealth and family relationships are all determined by karma.

Thus, those who eagerly seek success will not get more than they originally deserve or get anything faster. Those who live leisurely will still receive the luxuries and happiness they are entitled to at the predetermined time, one way or the other.

Life exists solely for living beings to work off karma, both good and bad. Everyone will get what they deserve whether they want it or not.

Therefore, the only matter of utmost urgency is the accumulation of merits and the cultivation of virtue. By doing good deeds, past offenses and pending bad karma can be eradicated, and needless to say, blessings will be multiplied.

**160.) Do not quarrel or quibble over benefit, you gain nothing by doing so. Everything in life is due to karma.**

**161.) Private whispers are as loud as thunder to Heaven's ears ; secret crimes are fully visible to the eyes of the gods.**

**162.) Do not fail to discourage the slightest evil and encourage others to do even the smallest act of good.**

**163.) To take advantage of another is to invite future disasters ; to forgive and tolerate is to garner merit and fortune.**

**164.) Everyone has their own mind, and in each of those minds are different opinions, feelings and views.**



**165.) Wounds can heal, but a heart torn by scathing words is exceedingly difficult to mend.**

**Commentary:**

As mentioned before, according to the Infinite Life Sutra:

*"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of enmity in the lives to come. Thus, we should be cautious. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims and suffer their vengeance."*

Thus, it is very important to speak kind words and be tactful. Many are liberal with insults and think that doing so is harmless. However, even though wounded pride may not immediately lead to any trouble, it often will in the lives to come.

**166.) Some people do not burn incense even when they have spare time, however, in times of crisis, they immediately cling to the Buddha's legs.**

**Commentary:**

Many people idle away their spare time or spend it only on hobbies and entertainment. However, when something happens, they suddenly pray and do good deeds. Afterwards, they fall back to their old habits again.

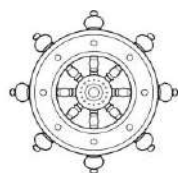
However, accumulation of merit must be done regularly to achieve maximum effectiveness. Therefore, nobody can afford to procrastinate in regards to doing good deeds. Human life is but a short blur and all the important temporal affairs that dominate life today will mean nothing in the generations to come. Thus, resist distraction.

**167.) Only when the country is stable and not corrupt will men of talent be appreciated.**

**168.) The most egalitarian thing in this world is that all men will one day have grey hair.**

### **Acknowledgments**

**I would like to express by utmost gratitude to the Upasika Karen Lin of the Hong Kong Buddha Educational Foundation for generously gifting me a recent Chinese edition of the 增廣賢文. This translation would not have been possible without it.**



# PATH TO PURE LAND

THE FINAL TEACHING OF UPASAKA XIA LIAN JU

淨修捷要英文版

TRANSLATOR: BRIAN CHUNG

翻譯者：鍾佰晟

JUNE 17 2015



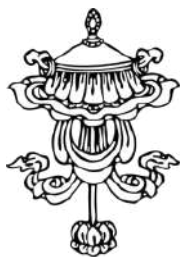
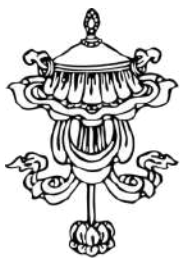
---

---

THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT

---

---



NAMO AMITA BUDDHA

南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



---

---

## **NO RIGHTS RESERVED**

**As the author of this text, it is my express intent that the entirety of this text be released into the Public Domain. I reserve no rights to this work. If the laws of a particular jurisdiction should make it impossible to reserve no rights, then I hereby grant permission to anyone who seeks to use and reproduce this work for any purpose.**

**Moreover, I sincerely exhort everyone to turn the great Dharma Wheel and propagate this important Dharma teaching. Translate it into other languages so that all people of every culture can cultivate it and plant seeds of Dharma.**

***Brian Chung***

---

### **DEDICATION OF MERIT**

**May the merits and virtues accrued from this work  
repay the kindness of my Mother, Father and Elders  
and relieve them from their sufferings.**



**May my Mother, Father and Elders  
bring forth the heart  
of understanding and compassion and,  
at the end of this life,**



**be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.**

*"In fact, if you practice virtue in this world for ten full days, the merits derived will surpass that of cultivating elsewhere in the Samsara for a whole millennium. The reason is that the other worlds are naturally pleasurable due to the superior virtue and merit of their inhabitants. Thus, there are no grounds for committing evil. Conversely, the world we reside in has little good but plenty of evil. People here are harassed by scarcity and must toil for a living. In addition, the food and drink here are toxic and bitter. The evil habits of this world increases with each passing day."*

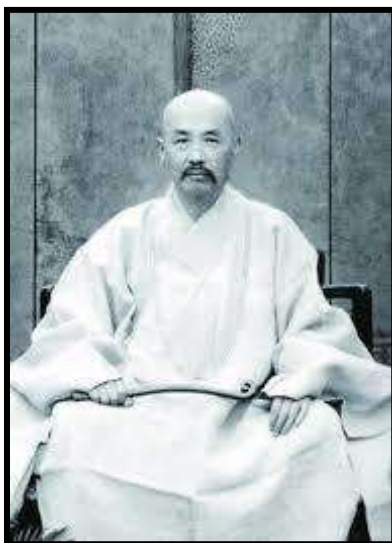
**- Infinite Life Sutra**

*"Anywhere a Buddha goes—whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet — people will be  
converted and brought towards the Way.  
All the lands beneath the stars will be serene and harmonious.  
The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be luminous.  
Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm.  
Plagues, intrigues and calamities will not occur.  
Society will be prosperous and peaceful.  
Soldiers and arms will be of no use.  
Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished.  
All will feel compelled to refine themselves with etiquette and deference.  
Society will be free from thieves and bandits.  
There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice.  
The powerful will not exploit the weak.  
Everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."*

**-Infinite Life Sutra**



## TRANSLATORS FOREWORD



Upasaka Xia Lian Ju (夏蓮居居士)

**The Path to Pure land is the profound final teaching of the eminent Upasaka Xia Lian Ju. The 32 recitations and prostrations of this practice can be easily and quickly done, but deliver just as much merit as fully reciting the great Mahayana Sutras.**

**However, in order to truly benefit from this practice, you must approach it with a sincere and empty mind. Buddhist sutras are about profound meaning that extend beyond mere words. This meaning and wisdom can only be unlocked with diligent mindfulness. Thus, whenever you are practicing this teaching, you must diligently and sincerely do so. Moreover, you must not try and figure out its meaning or analyze it, just mindfully cultivate it. The wisdom of the Buddha transcends logic and any speculation by an unenlightened being will only result in more delusions and superficial opinions.**

**According to the Venerable Master Chin Kung, sacred texts must be sincerely recited for at least 1000 times before defilements are wiped away, allowing wisdom to shine forth from the Buddha-nature. Thus, if you cultivate this teaching for three years, and in accordance with the previous instructions, you will most likely gain profound insight. If you single-mindedly dedicate the resulting merits towards rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, it is without doubt that Pure Land can be achieved.**

## UPASAKA XIA LIAN JU'S FOREWORD

**The Dharma-door of Amitabha Pureland is the rarest and most profound Dharma ; even though it is simple to cultivate, few ever have the extraordinary privilege to faithfully do so. Unless a person is willing to be devotedly courageous and venture forth into the deep blue Sea of Dharma, he will never realize the profound insight of the Buddha.**

**In the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Ten Great Vows of Samantabhadra takes refuge in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Furthermore, the Bodhisattva Vasubandhu cultivates the path towards Pure Land through the five virtuous intentions of reverence and refuge, praise and admiration, great vows, discernment and merit dedication.**

**Today in the Dharma-ending Age, many practice Buddhism only superficially. Such cultivators cannot easily understand the Dharma-door of Amitabha, which is the Buddha's highest and deepest teaching. Only by diligently reading and becoming familiar with the great Mahayana Sutras can one experience the profound wisdom of Amitabha.**

**Furthermore, a majority of those who cultivate the Dharma-door of Pureland today uphold only the Shorter Sutra of Amitabha, and only the version translated by Kumarajiva. It is rare indeed to find someone who also practices Xuanzang's translations and upholds the Longer Sutra of Infinite Life.**

**Thus, even though many study this Dharma-door, only a few truly, sincerely and faithfully cultivate it. A man with insufficient faith and wavering resolve cannot hope to truly benefit from this Dharma-door.**

**In 1880, when I was gravely ill, I vowed to consolidate and streamline the Buddha's sutras so as to facilitate easy acceptance and understanding--to realize the Patriarch's vision of creating a simplified practice (Path to Pure Land) for the masses and beginners. Enabling them to receive the Buddha's responses within the three karmas of body (prostration), speech (recitation) and mind (mindfulness).**

**This practice is also in full accordance with the five virtuous intentions. Those who cultivate this practice will be able to expel all of their wandering thoughts.**

Moreover, as each prostration is immediately followed by recitation of the Buddha's name and passages from the sutras, right mindfulness can manifest while false thoughts are given no opportunity to creep in. Not only can one accomplish the thirty two recitations and prostrations of this practice within in a short amount of time, the merit and virtue accumulated will be vast and incomparable. As of now, the Path to Pure Land is on its fourth printing and many have benefitted greatly from it.

Compared to other ways of cultivation, this practice saves both time and energy, thus proving itself to be a great convenience in today's busy environment. Anyone who regularly cultivates this practice will see their heart fuse with the Sagely sapience found herein. Eventually, they will be at one with their Buddha-nature and profound wisdom will arise naturally without the need for deep study, discourse or analysis. Cultivation of this practice is the same as cultivating Non-abidance and achieving the purity of the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Afterwards, when they read the great sutras, they will encounter no obstacles ; achieving rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss becomes as easy as sailing downstream amid favorable winds.

Every word herein is sourced from the sutras and must therefore be treated with respect and recited with sincerity. Cultivate it in the manner of Bodhisattva Vasubandhu's five virtuous intentions and four principles of deference, single-mindedness, uninterrupted recitation and lifelong devotion. Do so and the rare, esoteric and subtle wisdom of the Buddha will reveal itself to you.

Upasaka Xia Lian Ju

## THE THIRTY TWO RECITATIONS AND PROSTRATIONS

### *Incense Praise*

*Let this true incense of Sila and Samadhi constitute a pious offering, and may its virtuous smoke saturate and increase the good roots of all who are touched by it.*

*May delightful fragrances and bright inner light pervade across the ten quarters, sincerely drawing in the Buddha's compassionate blessings and protection.*

*Namo Incense Cloud Canopy Bodhisattva Mahasattva (recite thrice)*

1) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Patriarch of the Saha World, the Teacher of the Nine Realms, the Tathagata and World-Honored One. He patiently displayed the Eight Stages of Attaining Bodhi whilst dwelling among the five turbidities, and it was he who showed joyous Great Compassion towards sentient beings by speaking the Dharma, opening their Dharma-eye, blocking the path to the evil realms, opening the way to virtue and propagating the simple but profound Dharma-door that liberates all beings. A great benefactor and esteemed eminence, the Original Patriarch of Dharma, Shakyamuni Buddha.

*Namo Original Patriarch Shakyamuni Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)*

2) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Patriarch of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. When he was still sowing the seeds of Bodhi he heard the profound Dharma. Henceforth, he vowed to attain Unsurpassed Upright Realization, to abide in true wisdom and to deracinate the causes of the never-ending pain of birth and death. Thus, he abdicated his crown and joined the Sangha, becoming a monk called Dharmakara. He cultivated the Bodhisattva Way and amassed merit and virtue for limitless kalpas. His great and exalted vows were soon perfected and his name now encompasses tens of thousands of virtues. Moreover, his name is praised across the ten quarters for he is the guide to salvation—Amita Buddha.

*Namo Amita Buddha ( prostrate once and recite thrice).*

3) With one heart, contemplate and revere the western direction, where hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddha-lands away, there is a Buddha-land called Ultimate Bliss. When Dharmakara attained Unsurpassed Bodhi, he became known as Amita and assumed the title Tathagata of Infinite Life and Light, Worthy of Offerings, Impartial and Enlightened. This title perfectly represents the ten honors of Buddhahood. He dwells amidst complete augustness and boundless merit, in the Pure Land—Amita Buddha.

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

4) With one heart, contemplate and revere the pure Dharmakaya. It exists everywhere, neither arises nor ceases to be, neither comes nor goes, and cannot be truly understood or expressed through language and duality. Fulfilling the vows promising salvation to all sentient beings, the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss and the Land of Sole and Lasting Light welcomes sentient beings from the entire Dharma-realm, allowing them to leave the sufferings of the Saha World behind and attain everlasting bliss. Greatly Benevolent Greatly Compassionate, Amita Buddha.

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

5) With one heart, contemplate and revere the perfect Sambhogakaya. Wherever it abides, there is never even a hint of suffering, calamities, evil realms and demon skandhas. Moreover, there will also exist not the harsh and volatile phenomena of summer, winter, rain, storm clouds and darkness. Always boundless, spacious, smooth, upright, full of wondrous beauty and surpassing all the worlds of the ten quarters—the adorned and exalted Pure Land—Amita Buddha.

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

6) With one heart, contemplate and revere the infinite lifespans, infinite bright light, the Bodhisattva disciples, the Shravakas and devas, all endowed with everlasting life. The land and the name surpasses anything found in the ten quarters and are free from both decline and impermanence ; rare, exalted and built to last for all eternity—Amita Buddha.

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

7) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Buddha of Infinite Life, also known as the Infinite Light Buddha and the Buddha of Boundless, Unhindered and Unsurpassed Light. Moreover, he is also praised as the light of wisdom, everlasting light, pure light, joyous light, light of liberation, light of peace and refuge, light surpassing that of the sun and moon and unimaginable light. Peerless and unrivaled, the King of Buddhas, Amita Buddha.

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

8) With one heart, contemplate and revere infinite light and life. The brightness of the Tathagata and World-Honored One shines across the entirety of the ten quarters. Sentient beings whose cultivation allows them to meet such light will see their virtues bloom and their defilements wither to dust. Their minds and bodies become easeful and flexible ; all afflictions cease and every anxiety dissolves. Of all such mighty and divine bright light, his is the foremost and even the light of all the Buddhas of the ten quarters cannot match it—Amita Buddha.

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

9) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Land of Ultimate Bliss and its Patriarch, who is seated upon his throne and exuding majestic merit. His august appearance and shining brightness illuminates all the worlds of the entire universe without exception. Like a radiant golden colossus rising from the sea, drowning out the light of everything and everyone else. The Buddha's light is pure, clear, bright and resplendent. Reverently surrounded by innumerable Shravakas and Bodhisattvas, Amita Buddha.

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

10) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Patriarch and Guru of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, who presently appears there to speak the profound Dharma to multitudes of sentient beings. He allows them to reap immense benefit and enjoy the utmost peace and bliss. The Bodhisattvas of the ten quarters all prostrate before him, hear his Dharma, receive his blessings, and praise and make offerings to him, Amita Buddha.

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**11) With one heart, contemplate and revere the fact that the Buddha arises from within the heart and that the heart manifests along with the Buddha. Outside the heart, there is nothing and the Buddha is nothing but the heart. Outside, there is no heart as all are one. When a man recites the name of Amita Buddha, he is at one with his inner self-nature, and Pure Land rebirth is the only way to return to the original self-nature. As seeking begets simultaneous response, the Pure Land, which is hundreds of thousands of millions of worlds away, can be reached in a blink of an eye. The heart does what the heart is, Amita Buddha.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**12) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Mahayana and Vajrayana teachings, which are one. Moreover, the body and its milieu are one and not separate. Reciting Amita Buddha is the same as reciting any mantra and the Patriarch is the Guru. The Great Light Vairocana Buddha is rooted in Infinite Light and Life. Thus, the Land of Vairocana and the Pure Realm of Ghanavyuha are not independent from the Land of Ultimate Bliss, they are one and the same. Primordial and encompassing the entirety of the ten quarters, Amita Buddha.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**13) With one heart, contemplate and revere the six words that unify tens of thousands of Dharma-doors ; the one door that is the universal door. All matter and form are truth. All wandering thoughts can be converted into what is real. The entire self-nature lies in cultivation and full cultivation lies in the self-nature. Broad learning is rooted in profound focus ; exclusive cultivation is the same as upholding every virtue and practicing every wisdom. With each utterance, one becomes awakened, and no thoughts stray from the Patriarch Guru, Amita Buddha.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**14) With one heart, contemplate and revere the truth that infinite light and life is your original wisdom. By resolving to recite the Buddha's name, the seeds of wisdom are sown. Rely on the Pure Land's august virtue to illuminate your self-nature. The seeds of wisdom never parts with original wisdom ; know this and you are directly upon the path to enlightenment. However, even a moment of separation will cause you to fall into delusion. Omniscient and easefully aware of the thoughts of all sentient beings, with Sole Light and true purity, not partaking in the intrigues of emotion, profound and without duality, Amita Buddha.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**15) With one heart, contemplate and revere the name adorned with tens of thousands of virtues. It can eradicate any offense and if one single-mindedly recites it, all defilements and obstacles will naturally dissolve. Not only will the Way- heart become mature, both merit and wisdom will grow and increase. At the moment of death, a host of Sages will appear and benevolently bestow their blessings, ensuring that one's heart remains unconfused. One will be welcomed into the Land of Ultimate Bliss to dwell in the Seven Jeweled Lagoon, and when the lotus blooms the glory of Bodhi is achieved. Amita Buddha**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**16) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Land of Ultimate Bliss, its virtuous breezes, blossoms that rain down like confetti, its wondrous fragrances, and its divine bliss, springs, lagoons, jeweled trees, bejeweled screens and celestial peafowls. Such beauty, light, scents and serene sounds pervade across the entire land. Such accomplished merit and augustness are solely for the benefit of sentient beings, to help their good roots to grow. Created by grand vows and immense strength, Amita Buddha.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**



**17) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Land of Ultimate Bliss, and what lies upon its golden soil, between its rows of jeweled trees, inside its lotus lagoons and within its bejeweled pavilions. Having vowed for Bodhi, recited the Buddha's name and achieved rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, they now abide in upright stillness and the permanent state of Avivartika. Appearance and countenance wondrous and regal, rare beyond the world, equally beautiful and without any variation in quality. Body ethereal and devoid of coarse or solid forms. These are the virtuous who inhabit the Land of Ultimate Bliss, fitting reward for having recited Amita Buddha with unceasing concentration.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**18) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Land of Ultimate Bliss, and those who sit under its Bodhi Tree and stand beside its jeweled balustrades. Upon hearing the profound sounds of Dharma, they gain Anutpattika-dharma-ksanti and enjoy all kinds of Mahayana Dharma bliss. These Bodhisattvas are complete with merit, wisdom and august virtue. Moreover, they easefully enjoy transcendental powers and whatever they wish for appears on demand. These Mahabodhisattvas are the heirs of the Buddha, for they have all recited Amita Buddha with unceasing concentration.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**19) With one heart, contemplate and revere The Land of Ultimate Bliss, and its Way-places, pavilions, lecture halls and viharas. The multitudes of beings who are reborn in Pure Land, whether Sage or commoner, now blissfully speak the Dharma, hear the Dharma or practice divine powers while suspended in the air or on the ground. As they cultivate in accordance with their will, no one fails to achieve perfection. These Bodhisattvas and Sages have all recited Amita Buddha with unceasing concentration.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**20) With one heart, contemplate and revere those of the ten quarters who possess the eminent long tongue of honesty and speak true words. They praise the incredible merit of the Buddha of Infinite Life and strive to allow all sentient beings to hear his name, give rise to the pure heart, pensively accept and hold his name, take refuge in and make offerings to him, single-mindedly dedicate all their good roots, follow the vows, and attain Avivartika and Unsurpassed Bodhi. They are the multitudes of Buddhas as numerous as sand grains in the Ganges.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**21) With one heart, contemplate and revere those of the six directions who praise the Original Patriarch's monumental undertaking of preaching the simple but profound Dharma across every realm. They exhort all sentient beings to single-mindedly develop faith and acceptance ; they protect cultivators of the ten directions and those attaining Pure Land rebirth. They are the multitudes of Buddhas as numerous as sand grains in the Ganges.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**22) With one heart, contemplate and revere the words of the Infinite Life Sutra: "In a future time when the Dharma perishes and evil flourishes, the Buddha will retain this one Sutra out of compassion, and allow it to last for another hundred years. Those who meet it will realize their dreams no matter what they may be." Thus, single-mindedly prostrate to the boundless, perfect, simple, straightforward, convenient, complete, most rare and hard to meet Dharma-treasure: The Mahayana Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra (大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經).**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**23) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Dharma-door that is the Buddha vehicle of true teachings, the sea where all virtues flow into, open to both Sages and commoners and cultivated by both the brilliant and base. The door that encompasses the Eight Teachings, perfectly amalgamates the Five Houses, cuts sideways through the Samsara to reach the Four Lands, and allows the nine grades of rebirth to be attained within one life. Praised in unison by the Buddhas of the ten quarters, the true meaning of thousands of sutras and tens of thousands of discourses, the Jeweled King of Samadhi, the unimaginably profound Dharma-door.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**24) With one heart, contemplate and revere the transformation body of Amita Buddha, he who entered Samadhi through the process of hearing and reflecting, returned to the self-nature and attained Unsurpassed Bodhi. He who cultivated the Bodhisattva-Way, attained Pure Land rebirth and made great and profound vows. He who is the Universal Dharma-door, the savior of those who cry in pain, and he who gives immediate relief and response. Anyone who sincerely takes refuge in him while in dire need or danger, will be extricated to safety. A colossus as regal as Tyrian purple and the finest gold, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**25) With one heart, contemplate and revere the first Patriarch of the Pure Land School, he who entered Anutpattika-dharma-ksanti through reciting the Buddha's name, tamed the six senses through pure and unceasing recitation, which also gave true Bodhi and allowed Samadhi to be entered. His is the foremost way. Dwelling with Avalokitesvara in this Saha World to show the path to immense benefit and bliss, he does not forsake anyone, especially those who are willing to recite the Buddha's name. Helping all to leave the evil realms and attain unsurpassed benefit, the boundless body of light and wisdom, Mahasthamaprabhata Bodhisattva.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**26) With one heart, contemplate and revere he who majestically sits upon the seat of honor in the Tathagata of Infinite Life's congregation. He who is the master of the Avatamsaka Sutra, exudes augustness at all times, transforms into the Vajra-sattva, and is the eternal first Patriarch of the Vajrayana School. Humble and always collecting the Avatamsaka and Lotus Dharma, the King of Ten Great Vows who is sworn to the Land of Ultimate Bliss, of grand vows and great conduct, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**27) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Crown Prince of Dharma, Teacher of Seven Buddhas, Exalted, Wondrous, Auspicious, and Defilement Free Grand Sage. He who vows to ascend to the Land of Ultimate Bliss together with all sentient beings, to cherish only one Buddha, exclusively recite his name, and to meet Amita while mindful of him. Of great and profound wisdom and boundless Samadhi, Manjursi Bodhisattva.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**28) With one heart, contemplate and revere he who, at the assembly of Rajgir hill, was personally entrusted with the Mahayana Infinite Life Sutra and the duty to spread the Dharma-door of Pure Land. He who is currently in the Inner Court of Tushita, waiting to achieve Perfect Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree at the future Thrice Dragon Blossom Assemblies. Of boundless merit, Maitreya Bodhisattva.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**29) With one heart, contemplate and revere Sariputta, the esteemed great disciples, Sagely protectors, and the Sixteen Lay Bodhisattvas of the Tathagata of Infinite Life's congregation. All of them follow the eminent Samantabhadra, who is complete with limitless virtues, vows and firmly abides in all meritorious Dharmas. These are the multitude of Mahabodhisattvas.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**30) With one heart, contemplate and revere the past and present Dharma Masters of the Pure Land School. They have established disciplines, spoken the sutras, taken refuge in Pure Land, reconciled the various proper teachings to the Pure Land, received the precepts, spread the Dharma and anointed the heads of the pious. They are the multitude of Dharma Masters.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**31) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Three Treasures, dharma protectors, Bodhisattvas of the ten quarters, Vajras, Brahma-devas, gods, dragons, protector spirits, Sages and wise men of the universe and Dharma-realm.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

**32) With one heart, bear the burdens of your current and past life parents, relatives, teachers and karmic enemies. Dedicate your cultivation to them all, prostrate to the Three Treasures in their place, repent their offenses on their behalf, and carry all sentient beings of the Dharma-realm towards the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, to attain rebirth there and perfect wisdom together.**

**Namo Amita Buddha (*prostrate once and recite thrice*)**

### **Praise to the Buddha of Infinite Life:**

**The Buddha of Infinite Life and King of Sweet Dew has majestic merit and potent vows. Sincere and pious recitation of his name will eradicate calamities, eliminate obstacles, and transform burning houses into delightful breezes. By Welcoming the Buddha's light within the heart of Bodhi, roots of merit, wisdom and virtue naturally increase. Recite it single-mindedly and without doubt. Allow the smoke of the incense of Sila and Samadhi to regularly adorn you. Faith, Resolve and Action are the three nourishments that sustains your practice. He is the benevolent ship of salvation that sails upon the sea of suffering, Namó Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Benevolent, of Great Strength and Great Vows, Guide and Savior, Amita Buddha of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.**

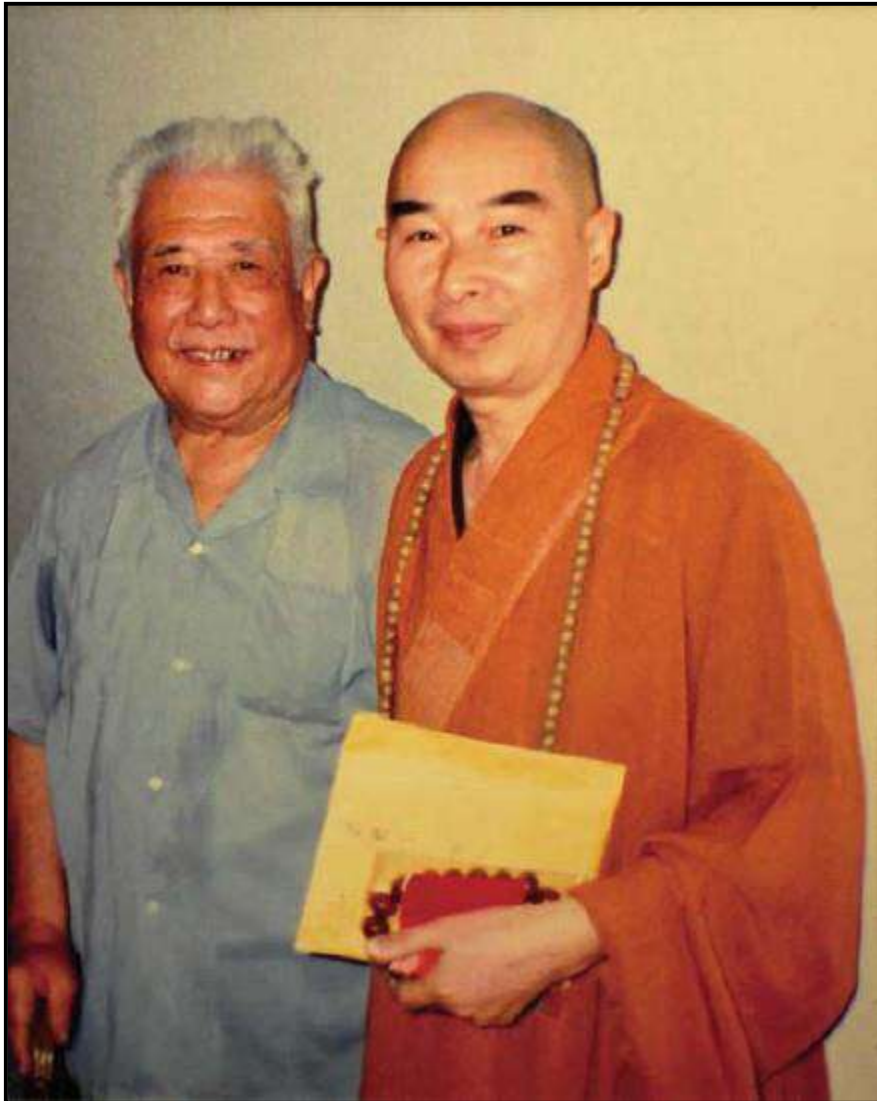
**NAMO AMITA BUDDHA**

**(*Recite either one thousand times or ten thousand times*).**

**Dedication of Merit:**

*I hereby dedicate the merit derived from this practice to all sentient beings of the Dharma-realm, all beings of the Samsara and four types of birth, and to all current and past karmic creditors. May they, through the power of the Dharma, gain liberation. Let those who are alive receive increased merits and have their lifespans prolonged, and may the departed achieve Pure Land rebirth. Let us all escape the wheel of suffering and reach the shores of liberation together.*

**Acknowledgments:**



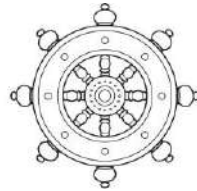
**Left: Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu (黃念祖老居士)/ Right: Ven.**

**Master Chin Kung (淨空法師)**

**This translation would not have been possible without the nine hour long deathbed commentary of the Path to Pure Land by Upasaka Xia**

**Lian Ju's great disciple, the Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu (one of the teachers of the esteemed Ven. Master Chin Kung). Spoken just before his Pure Land rebirth in order to repay his Upasaka Xia's kindness, it is his last and most important teaching.**

**The commentary (Chinese) is titled: 淨修捷要報恩談**



# THE DHARMA BEHIND BUDDHA IMAGES

BRIAN CHUNG

作者：鍾佰晟

2015



---

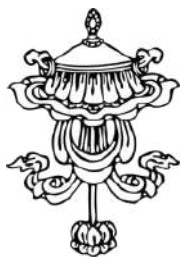
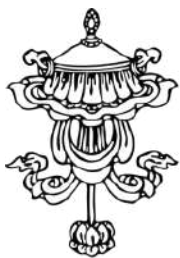
---

THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT

---

---





NAMO AMITA BUDDHA

南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Foreword: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Mahayana Ideal: Earth Store Bodhisattva.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Mahayana Ideal: Guan Yin Bodhisattva.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Mahayana Ideal: Manjursi Bodhisattva.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Mahayana Ideal: Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The Four Heavenly Kings: King of the East.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Four Heavenly Kings: King of the South.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>The Four Heavenly Kings: King of the West.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Four Heavenly Kings: King of the North.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Buddha Maitreya-Venerable Budai.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>18</b>

## DEDICATION OF MERIT

May the merits and virtues accrued from this work  
 repay the kindness of my Mother, Father and Elders  
 and relieve them from their sufferings.



May my Mother, Father and Elders  
 bring forth the heart  
 of understanding and compassion and,  
 at the end of this life,



be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

## NO RIGHTS RESERVED

As the author of this text, it is my express intent that the entirety of this text be  
 released into the Public Domain. I reserve no rights to this work. If the laws of a  
 particular jurisdiction should make it impossible to reserve no rights, then I  
 hereby grant permission to anyone who seeks to use and reproduce this work for  
 any purpose.

Brian Chung

*"Anywhere a Buddha goes—whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet — people will be converted and brought towards the Way.*

*All the lands beneath the stars will be serene and harmonious.*

*The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be clear.*

*Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm.*

*Plagues, intrigues and calamities will not occur.*

*Society will be prosperous and peaceful.*

*Soldiers and arms will be of no use.*

*Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished.*

*All will feel compelled to refine themselves with etiquette and deference.*

*Society will be free from thieves and bandits.*

*There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice.*

*The powerful will not exploit the weak.*

*Everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."*

**-Infinite Life Sutra**

## FOREWORD: A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

***"Moreover, Earth Store, in the future, good men or women, upon encountering images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, or Wheel-Turning Kings, may give gifts or make offerings to them. Such persons will obtain limitless blessings and will always enjoy supremely wonderful bliss among people and gods. If they can dedicate that merit to the Dharma Realm, their blessings and benefits will be beyond compare."***

– EARTH STORE SUTRA

The merits derived from making offerings to images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Sages are simply without peer. However, such exalted rewards are not only the result of showing reverence to the Buddhadharma. Unbeknownst to many, each Buddha image contains profound Dharma. By simply looking at one, principles of both Theravada and Mahayana teachings are planted in the mind. Eventually, these seeds of wisdom will manifest and cause Bodhi to be attained. Also, seeds of wisdom are implanted into the mind regardless of whether one understands the meaning of the images or not.

Thus, it is no surprise that by reverently making offerings to Buddha images, countless merits are accrued. This is because if you see a Buddha image, you are in effect reading and contemplating important Mahayana and Theravada sutras such as the Shurangama Sutra, Earth Store Sutra, Infinite Life Sutra and so forth.

Furthermore, according to the Diamond Sutra,

**"The Buddha has no fixed Dharmas to speak. All Dharma is Buddhadharma."**

Therefore, the Buddha speaks the Dharma through myriads of different ways, some are obvious while others are less so. Thus, all of the various styles of Buddha images and renditions have profound meanings attached to them. For instance, many Vajrayana Buddha images depict a courtesan wrapped around a Buddha or Bodhisattva. However, this is not blasphemous or profane. The Venerable Master Chin Kung has stated that such a statue symbolizes being free from all outflows and the six kinds of dust. It illustrates that even if temptation is present, there is no attachment. However, Master Chin Kung also warns that this Dharma-door is high risk and appropriate only for cultivators who are already exalted Sages.

THE MAHAYANA IDEAL:  
EARTH STORE BODHISATTVA



This Bodhisattva is referred to as Earth Store because the soil is the source of all treasure. Food, grain, crops, minerals and trees all spring from the Earth. Thus, the teachings of this Bodhisattva represent the soil that supports the growth of wisdom.

Therefore, filial piety, the precepts and virtue are what we should have in mind when we see this Bodhisattva or hear his name. The Buddha has said that Sila Samadhi Prajna is the formula for Bodhi. Therefore, it is only natural that virtue, respecting one's teachers and filial piety are the roots of the Dharma.

Only by cultivating filial piety, virtue and the precepts can we gain Samadhi and Prajna. Hence, we must not kill, steal, lie, indulge in lust or abuse intoxicants. Furthermore, we must be filial towards our parents and respect our teachers.

THE MAHAYANA IDEAL:  
GUAN YIN BODHISATTVA



Guan Yin Bodhisattva represents Great Compassion. When we see an image of this Bodhisattva, we will think of kindness and compassion.

The difference between the compassion most people hold and Great Compassion is that common people still discriminate. For instance, some are awfully kind to their family but indifferent towards everyone else. Others may love their friends but ignore their parents. Either way, such kindness is based on nothing but attachments and aversions.

However, Great Compassion is boundless and equal. It flows from the Buddha-nature and encompasses the entirety of the ten directions. Thus, those with Great Compassion feel only goodwill at all times to everyone. Their unlimited kindness does not recede even in the face of overwhelming malice and hostility.

THE MAHAYANA IDEAL:  
MANJUSRI BODHISATTVA



Manjursi Bodhisattva represents wisdom and reason. Emotion is rooted in attachments, aversions and delusions. Thus, emotions represent the very defilements that we must wipe away in order to rediscover our Buddha-mature.

The sword in the illustration is the Sword of Dharma. It teaches that only by cultivating wisdom can we slice through the Gordian Knot of afflictions and delusions. For instance, the Venerable Master Chin Kung has said that if we sincerely recite one sutra for 1000 times, we will develop profound wisdom and our defilements will recede.



THE MAHAYANA IDEAL:  
UNIVERSAL WORTHY BODHISATTVA



Universal Worthy Bodhisattva represents action in implementing the principles of Dharma into daily life. Whether at work or at home, we must diligently cultivate the Buddha's teachings.

For instance, if we meet malice, hostility or difficult situations, we should exercise patience and forbearance. In the Infinite Life Sutra, it is mentioned that the merits derived from cultivating virtue in this world for ten days is equal to the merits derived from cultivating virtue for 1000 years in another world. Thus, we must turn difficult situations into golden opportunities by cultivating forbearance. Our rewards for doing so will be immeasurable.



FOUR HEAVENLY KINGS:  
KING OF THE EAST (PROTECTOR OF THE REALM)



The Four Heavenly Kings are the protectors of the Dharma. The King of the East is known as the Protector of the Realm. This is because his teachings show people how to protect themselves.

The reason he holds a Pipa (Chinese lute) is because it symbolizes moderation. If the strings are either too tight or too loose, the instrument would be useless. The tightness of the strings must be just right in order for it to be playable.

Hence, the main lesson of this image is that if we live in accordance with the principles of moderation, temperance, virtue and etiquette, our merits will protect us in this life and the next.

FOUR HEAVENLY KINGS:  
KING OF THE SOUTH (FARMER OF GOOD ROOTS)



The King of the South is considered the farmer of good roots. Wisdom can only increase when defilements obstructing the Buddha-nature are wiped away.

Thus, like Manjursi Bodhisattva, he also holds a Sword of Dharma. Similarly, this symbolizes that diligent single-minded cultivation is like a sharp sword that cuts through delusions, thereby allowing the boundless wisdom of the Buddha-nature to shine forth.

Thus, we should remember to sincerely read sutras, recite Buddha names and cultivate the Dharma.

FOUR HEAVENLY KINGS:  
KING OF THE WEST (THE VISIONARY)



The King of the West is seen as the visionary—he is farsighted and understands the pain of impermanence. He holds a dragon and possesses pearls or jewels. The dragon symbolizes the volatility of impermanence while the jewels signify timelessness.

If we can hold onto the Dharma in this world of impermanence, our farsightedness will allow us to save ourselves. This is because by cultivating virtue, doing good deeds and single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha, we amass formidable stocks of merit that will protect us like a mighty sea wall against relentless waves.

Furthermore, the Dharma will also allow us to attain Bodhi and transcend the impermanent Samsara altogether.

FOUR HEAVENLY KINGS:  
KING OF THE NORTH (ONE WHO HEARS EVERYTHING)



The King of the North represents purity, equality and enlightenment. Therefore, he holds an umbrella as his main accessory. For even if there is a torrential downpour, the umbrella will block the water and allow it to drip away at the edges.

Furthermore, this king is the foremost of the four. Thus, the teachings his name and appearance represents are also the most important.

This King is referred to as one who hears everything. In the Shurangama Sutra, the Buddha mentions that hearing is the doorway to liberation and profound wisdom. No other sense organ can match it. It is through this doorway that Bodhi can be obtained. As one could only become pure, impartial, enlightened and without outflows by leaving the Samsara, hearing becomes the key that allows us to do so. According to the following excerpt from the Shurangama Sutra:

**"The Buddha appearing in the Saha world:  
 In this land the true substance of teaching  
 Resides in hearing the sounds purely.  
 If one wants to attain Samadhi,  
 Hearing is the best way to enter.  
 Apart from suffering, liberation is found.  
 How excellent is he who contemplates the world's sounds!  
 Throughout eons as numerous as Ganges' sands.  
 He enters Buddhalands as many as fine dust motes.  
 Obtaining great power of self-mastery,  
 He bestows fearlessness on living beings.  
 Wonderful is the sound of Contemplator of the World's Sounds,  
 A pure sound, like the ocean's roar.  
 He saves the world and brings peace to all within it.  
 He has transcended the world, and his attainment is eternal.  
 I now evaluate, Tathagata,  
 What the Contemplator of Sounds has just explained:  
 Consider someone in a quiet place, who,  
 When drums are rolled throughout the ten directions,  
 Can hear at once the sounds from all ten locations.  
 That is actual true perfection.  
 The eyes cannot see through solid forms.  
 The mouth and the nose are much the same.  
 The body registers awareness only through contact.  
 The mind, tangled in thoughts, lacks clear connections.  
 Sounds can be heard even through solid walls.  
 The ears can listen to things both near and far.  
 None of the other five organs can match this.  
 It, then, is penetrating true and real.  
 The nature of sounds is based in motion and stillness.  
 One hears according to whether there is sound.  
 With no sound, there is said to be no hearing.  
 But this does not mean that the hearing-nature is gone.  
 In the absence of sound, the nature is not ended;  
 Nor does it arise in the presence of sound.  
 Entirely beyond arising and ceasing.  
 It is, then, truly eternal.  
 Ever-present, even in dream-thinking,**



**It does not disappear when conditions and thought are gone.  
 Enlightened, this contemplation transcends cognition,  
 Reaching beyond both the body and the mind.  
 Now, in the Saha world, the theory of sounds  
 Has been proclaimed and understood."**

Here, the Buddha explains that hearing is the true way to realize the profound Dharma in this world. This is because hearing and sounds are not subject to the falseness of arising and ceasing. Thus, it is like an express way to the Buddha-nature.

Therefore, the deeper message of the King of the North is that one must cultivate by reciting Amita Buddha's name. In the Infinite Life Sutra, Amita Buddha vowed that:

**Sutra Vow 18: The Pureland Rebirth Upon Ten Recitations Vow**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who joyously and single-mindedly seek rebirth in my land after hearing my name—wholeheartedly dedicating all their merits towards this aspiration with each new thought—will be reborn in my land upon reciting my name for ten times. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

Thus, if we can recite Amita Buddha's name with such sincerity that our ears and minds resound solely with the name of Amita Buddha—free from all wandering thoughts—then we can meet Amita Buddha and be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Once we are reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, we become Bodhisattvas. Having transcended the Samsara, we are completely pure, impartial and enlightened.

## BUDDHA MAITREYA : THE VENERABLE BUDAI



The above picture is a common depiction of Buddha Maitreya. The depiction is based on the real life physical characteristics of a famous Later Liang dynasty monk called Venerable Budai, who was named after the cloth sack he carried. Venerable Budai was actually a manifestation of Maitreya, thus his appearance is a mirror image of Maitreya's teachings.

The large belly and jolly disposition symbolizes generosity, tolerance, impartiality and loving-kindness. The canvas sack contains only the essential requisites of a monk—it represents Non-abidance (i.e. wandering from place to place but never settling down).

In one account, a Zen monk once asked Venerable Budai what the meaning of Zen was. In response, Venerable Budai simply dropped his bag onto the floor and picked it up a moment later. While such an act would no doubt perplex most of us, it is actually a masterful act that contains profound wisdom.

According to the Diamond Sutra,

復次，須菩提！菩薩於法，應無所住，行於布施，所謂不住色布施，不住聲、香、味、觸、法布施。須菩提！菩薩應如是布施，不住於相。何以故？若菩薩不住相布施，其福德不可思量。」

**"Furthermore, Subhuti! Bodhisattvas should practice generosity in accordance with Non-abidance. They should not be attached to forms, sounds, scents and tastes when practicing generosity, nor should they be attached to dharmas or the feelings that arise from touch! Bodhisattvas who practice generosity in this manner are without attachments to illusory forms and concepts. Why so? Because if a Bodhisattva can have no attachments, he garners inconceivable merit."**

Thus, by dropping the bag, Venerable Budai is explaining that the meaning of Zen is to **let go** of all attachments to forms and the five skandhas. By picking up the bag, he is saying that after one lets go, one goes on to cultivate the Six Paramitas just like before. However, the difference is that these virtues now flow easefully from the Buddha-nature.

However, it is practically impossible to reach the state of Non-abidance by our own efforts. Everything we do is based on attachments. For instance, when we give, we have in our minds the concepts of donor, donee and gift. Even if we consider our gift to be completely selfless, the fact that we still retain notions of these concepts is a sign that we still have attachment to forms, dharmas and the like.

Therefore, Venerable Budai's true message is that we should stand on the shoulders of giants. We should single-mindedly seek rebirth in Amita Buddha's Pureland. Once we achieve rebirth there, we become blessed by Amita Buddha and instantly become enlightened Bodhisattvas. Afterwards, we will effortlessly cultivate the Six Paramitas in accordance with Non-abidance.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as we now understand the profound merits and wisdom that can be obtained from making offerings to Buddha images, we should not let this opportunity slip away. We should set up an altar where we can place an image of the Buddha or the like. Everyday, we should gaze at it and reverently make offerings to it. Appropriate offerings include vegan food (i.e. fruits), incense, valuables, butter lamps, pure water, flowers, banners and canopies.

Even if we cannot afford all of these offerings, just one type would suffice. If you do not have a Buddha image, you can print out the image of Amita Buddha on the second page of this booklet.

In the Sutra on the Production of Buddha Images, it is stated that those who produce one Buddha image will never again be reborn in the three evil paths. Furthermore, the merits generated will give them clear eyes, excellent bodies, handsome features, aristocratic titles, unlimited wealth and harmonious families. Moreover, they will be reborn in pure and blissful places. Eventually, they will attain liberation.

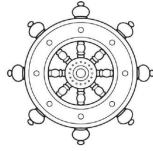
Thus, you should print out several copies of the image of Amita Buddha and distribute them to friends and family. The merits will be without compare.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This text would not have been possible without Venerable Master Chin Kung's Dharma lecture on the meaning of Buddha images. The lecture (Chinese) can be found here:

[http://www.amtb.tw/rsd/jiangtang\\_ch.asp?web\\_choice=93&web\\_rel\\_index=2775](http://www.amtb.tw/rsd/jiangtang_ch.asp?web_choice=93&web_rel_index=2775)

I will also like to thank the Buddhist Text Translation Society for their excellent translations of the Earth Store Sutra and the Shurangama Sutra.



# **THE MERIT LEDGER**

**HOW TO CHANGE YOUR FATE IN THREE YEARS**

**2014 EDITION**

AUTHOR: BRIAN CHUNG



---

**THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT**

---

---

## INTRODUCTION

---

In the Treatise on Response and Retribution (Kan Ying Pien), Lao Tzu states that:

故吉人語善、視善、行善，一日有三善，三 年天必降之福。凶人語惡、視惡、行惡，一日有三惡，三年天必降之禍。胡不勉而行之？

*A virtuous man speaks only good, does only good and sees only good. Hence, he does at least three good deeds everyday. After 3 years (1000 days), karmic rewards are guaranteed to manifest. The evil man does the opposite and amasses evil deeds daily. Therefore, disasters and misfortunes will certainly befall upon him after three years*

Furthermore, in the instructions on how to implement the teachings of the Kan Yin Pien, one important passage states that:

*The third requisite is Determination and Perseverance. Now goodness in little things brings a speedy recompense; the rewards of great virtue come slowly. But speedy rewards consist of only trivial blessings; those which delay their coming consist of very great ones. There are people in the world who believe this, but very few who act it out with any resolution. And why? Because, after they have walked in the ways of virtue for little while, they meet with difficulties or obstacles; whereupon they are discouraged, and say, foolishly, that the laws of Heaven are really very hard to understand; so that finally they abandon [p. 110](#) all the progress they have made so far, and allow their impatience to hinder them from reaping the rewards of their well-doing.*

These two passages succinctly illustrate the key to significantly changing one's fortune for the better. If we wish to create enough good karma to change our fate, we must show sincerity and determination in accumulating merits. If one does 3 good deeds daily for 3 years, 3000 good deeds would have been done. The power of the merits created by such diligence would not only melt away all your pending evil karma, but will also cause good fortune to manifest immediately at around the end of the three year period. **Note: Technically, it does not have to be three years, the 3000 deed mark is the important factor here. Thus, if you can accumulate 3000 good deeds in 6 months or one year, you will see your reward immediately.**

As stated above, Lao Tzu's advises us to do at least one good deed of the body, one

good deed of the mouth and one good deed of the eyes every day. Hence, below is a recommended list of good acts for each category. Also, it should be stressed that the amount or value of our donations are not the important factor here. The most important thing is that one does good and gives in accordance to his or her power and income ability. For instance, a one cent donation from someone experiencing severe financial pressures would still be extremely significant from a karmic perspective. However, a donation from a rich man that forms only a miniscule portion of his wealth and income would yield weak fruit even if the amount was large.

Moreover, in one story of the Pettavatthu ( a Theravada scripture on the importance of giving), a Earth Deva (who had acquired such status after making one wood axle and gifting it to someone whose cart axle was broken) once spoke the following stanza:

***'What he gives becomes not just that. Just give the gift. Giving he traverses both (worlds); by it he goes to both , Be not slothful.'***

This stanza, in the context of the aforementioned, clearly means that the amount of the gift does not matter. As long one does what is in one's power, the merit will be very great. Furthermore, by "*traverses both (worlds)*", he means that he who gives can expect fortune both in this life and the next.

Lastly, in Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu's commentary of the Infinite Life Sutra, it is stated that there are four fields of merit, they are:

1. One's parents and elders.
2. Triple gem (i.e. the Buddha, Dharma & Sangha).
3. The poor, sick and needy.
4. Animals and the environment.

This means that acts planted in any of the four fields (i.e. causes) will be very worthwhile and yield abundant karmic rewards.

### **SUGGESTED GOOD DEEDS:**

#### **Meritorious Actions of the Eyes:**

- 1.) Reading and studying the Mahayana Sutras (e.g. Diamond Sutra, Infinite Life Sutra, Amitabha Sutra, Lotus Sutra and Shurangama Sutra etc.).**

**2.) Gazing reverently at images of Buddha's and Bodhisattvas.** Note: Buddha images are not idols but are instead personifications of the Buddha's teachings. The statue is the physical representation of the Four Immeasurables and Six Paramitas. Hence, you are learning dharma simply by gazing at them.

**3.) Gazing reverently at holy objects such as Stupas, Pagodas and the like.**

### **Meritorious Actions of Speech.**

**1.) Reciting Buddha names such as Namo Amitufo or Namo Guanyin**

**Bodhisattva.** Note: Everyone should recite Buddha names as often as possible. For instance, the Buddha has said that each sincere recitation of Namo Amitufo can eradicate 8 billion eons worth of heavy karmic offenses. Furthermore, according to Chapter 9 of the Earth Store Sutra:

***"Furthermore, in the past, a Buddha named Lotus Supreme Thus Come One appeared in the world. If men or women hear this Buddha's name or if the sound of his name merely passes by their ears, those people will be reborn one thousand times in the Six Desire Heavens. How much more will that be the case if those people sincerely recite the name of that Thus Come One.***

***"Furthermore, in the past, a Buddha named Vipashin appeared in the world. If men or women hear this Buddha's name, those people will eternally avoid falling into the Evil Paths, will always be born among people or gods, and will abide in supremely wonderful bliss.***

Thus, it should be clear by now that reciting Buddha names yield great merit. Even if we have no time to recite the Sutras, we must never neglect to recite Buddha names.

**2.) Reciting Mahayana Sutras and Mantras.** Note: Reciting Sutras and mantras yield great merit. For instance, the Buddha described the merit of reciting the Shurangama Sutra and Mantra by saying "***Ananda, if living beings are able to recite this Sutra and uphold this mantra, I could not describe in endless kalpas how great the advantages will be.***"

**3.) Encouraging other people to do good deeds.**

- 4.) Helping people reconcile and keeping an atmosphere of harmony (e.g. persuading a married couple to stay married instead of divorcing).**
- 5.) Advising someone to refrain from committing evil or encouraging someone to discard vices and bad habits.**
- 6.) Speaking and expounding the dharma.** Note: The greatest deed that a person can do is to teach the dharma to someone else, thereby reinforcing their roots of wisdom and Bodhi resolve.
- 7.) Writing texts that encourages people to be virtuous and charitable.**
- 8.) Praising the good deeds, talents and virtues of others.** Note: jealousy and selfishness are among the most serious karmic offenses. Hence, by constantly praising others, you can uproot such evil inclinations.
- 9.) Defending the innocence and reputation of others.**
- 10.) Giving sound moral advice.**
- 11.) Advising someone to become a vegetarian and or to refrain from hunting and fishing.**
- 12.) Being respectful to the elderly or being kind and friendly to the young.**

**Meritorious Actions of the Body:**

- 1.) Donating money, time and or resources to help the poor, sick and needy.** Note: It is stated in the Sutras that the merit from giving medicine and food to the needy are boundless.
- 2.) Making offerings of incense, pure water, light, flowers and or vegan foods to images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.** Note: It is stated in the Earth Store Sutra and various other Sutras that making offerings to the image of a Buddha, Bodhisattva, Paccekabuddha or Arhat is no different from making offerings to the Buddha himself. Hence, a image of the Earth Store Bodhisattva is included in the last page of this document for your convenience.

**3.) Making offerings to Dharma Masters, Bhikkhus and Bhikkunis.**

**4.) Donating to Buddhist temples or to Churches and Synagogues.** Note: The working of karma transcends cultures and religions. Hence, as long as the teachings of the religious institution (regardless of faith) in question reflects true morality, then donations to them will count as a meritorious act.

**5.) Purchasing or producing Sutras and Buddha images for free distribution.**

Note: The Buddha has said that a gift of dhamma excels all gifts. Hence, those who print sutras or make Buddha images can expect unrivaled karmic rewards. For instance, in the Sutra on the Production of Buddha Images, it is stated that those who make but one Buddha or Bodhisattva image can reap the following merits:

1. Handsome and upright appearance.
2. Wealth, power and nobility.
3. Health and long life.
4. Rebirth in blissful realms where evil and suffering is non-existent.
5. Be never again reborn in the evil realms of suffering.

**6.) Contributing money/resources etc. to help spread and teach the dharma.**

**7.) Purchasing captive shellfish, fish, animals and poultry slated for slaughter and setting them free or depositing them into animal shelters.**

**8.) Performing acts of filial piety and helping relatives who are poor or in urgent need.**

**9.) Refraining from acting immorally when presented with the opportunity to do so. Admitting and changing existing faults and bad habits.**

**10.) Assisting a person or animal in urgent need (e.g. saving a life or neutralizing danger).**

**11.) Helping someone succeed in doing good works.**

**12.) Forgiving debt and remaining calm in the face of provocation.**



## HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALTERED THEIR FATES BY DOING GOOD (FROM THE KAN YING PIEN):

Note: "Book of Recompenses" is another name for the Kan Ying Pien.

*Fang Shih-k'o, a native of Hsing-an, had been very sickly from a child. Afterwards he began to enquire into the mysteries of Taoism, with a view of procuring the secret of immortality. Arrived one day at the Cloud-capped Mountain, he met a person of strange appearance, who said, "With such a face as yours, how can you expect to get the blessings that you seek? It is impossible—unless you first plant a root of goodness." Then Shih-k'o went home; and although he was a poor man he found means to print off an edition of the Book of Recompenses and distribute copies among his friends. By the time he had printed ten pages, his sickness was half-cured; when the work was completed, he found himself entirely recovered; and from that time forward he became p. 115 robust in body, and quite different from what he had been before in appearance.*

*A certain man of Huei-chou, named Wu Ta-tso, had great difficulty in procuring a son. He prayed in all sorts of temples and in every variety of manner, without receiving any answer. But one day a friend sent him a copy of the Book of Recompenses, saying, "This contains the secret of procuring children and securing happiness." Wu bowed to the ground, and accepted the gift. Then he studied the book with all his heart and soul. Whenever he was able to perform a virtuous action he performed it; whatever vice he had to be discarded, he discarded; and in a very short time he found himself the father of three sons. Whereupon he was led to place implicit faith in the supernatural proofs thus afforded of the truth of the book; so he printed off a number of copies at his own expense, in which he recorded his personal experiences. This occurred in the reign of T'ien Ch'i of the Ming dynasty.*

*When Wang Yuen, a native of Ch'ien-tang, was still a child, he met with the foregoing essay, and took great delight in studying it. And not only so; he followed all the admonitions therein contained, with great p. 111 reverence and care. As Mr. Ching Hsü, his father, was prevented by death from fulfilling his intention of having additional copies of it prepared, he spent his own money in the work: leaving no stone unturned to enlist the pecuniary assistance of certain other men of worth. He printed in all ten thousand copies, which he distributed broadcast. One night he dreamt that his father appeared to him, and said, "Not only have you completely carried out the design I was prevented from fulfilling, but, you have succeeded in securing the assistance of others in the good cause. In consequence of this, I have already ascended to the Halls*

*of Paradise; your mother will be blessed with a long life; while your own name and the names of your coadjutors are conspicuous upon the roll of virtuous men."*  
*Subsequent events proved the truth of these predictions.*

*Wang Chu, a native of Hsien-chü Hsien, had a son named Wang Tsing, who fell sick and died when only four years old, to his father's deep-felt grief. Whereupon Wang Chu formed a resolution to print a number of copies of this book, which he distributed among the people with the object of causing his lost son to enter once more into his mother's womb. Some time afterwards, his wife found herself enceinte; p. 112 and one night she dreamt she went to the Ting-kuang Temple at Huang-yen Hsien, whence she returned carrying her little boy home in her arms. When she awoke she experienced a movement in her womb, and soon gave birth to a son, vastly resembling the one that she had lost. In fact, the same body was born twice over; the bones and flesh had actually been brought together a second time!*

*Yang Ch'ên, a native of Huang-yang Hsien, came of a very poor family. He saw his fellow-villagers printing off copies of the Book of Recompenses, and longed to assist them; but he was powerless to do so, by reason of his poverty. Still, he managed to cut one block for the seventeenth page; and on a certain night he dreamt that a spirit appeared p. 113 to him and said, "As a reward for doing the little you are able to, Sir, you shall meet with success in the examinations;" and he actually did come out seventeenth in the examination for the degree of Doctor! Note: This degree is not simply academic but actually guarantees a high ranking magistracy for the bearer, with substantial remuneration.*

### **Commentary:**

In Liao Fan's Four Lessons (an autobiography of a Ming dynasty scholar who changed his fate by accumulating merits), it is recorded that Mencius once said that whatever one wishes for can be obtained by doing good. This is because the outside is merely a reflection of your past karma. So your family life, career, health, looks and so forth are all the result of past actions.

Therefore, if we sincerely decide to do good, the goodness will not only eradicate our past bad karma but will also create such a powerful stock of merit that our lives are bound to improve. If we only do a good deed every now and then, then the merit will manifest in our next life. However, if we follow Lao Tzu's advice and accumulate 3000 good deeds over 3 years, we are bound to receive extreme blessings in this very life (at the end of that period).

PERSONAL MERIT LEDGER

**Instructions:** The following grid has a total of 1000 squares (representing 1000 days). Fill in your starting date and place one mark for each good deed you do. Ensure that there are at least 3 marks per square. For the purpose of simplicity, limit the number of marks to three per square. If you have done several good deeds in one day, then reserve the surplus good deeds on a separate sheet of paper for use as a reserve. Thus, if circumstances should cause you to fail to be able to accumulate the three minimum deeds in one day, you can draw from this reserve.

**Example: Sample routine for a person of average means:**

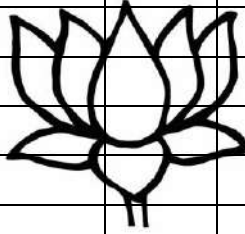
- 1.) Sincerely recited Namo Amitabha for at least 10 times.
- 2.) Reverently burned incense in front of a Buddha image.
- 3.) Bought a sandwich for a homeless person and donated bills/change to collection boxes.

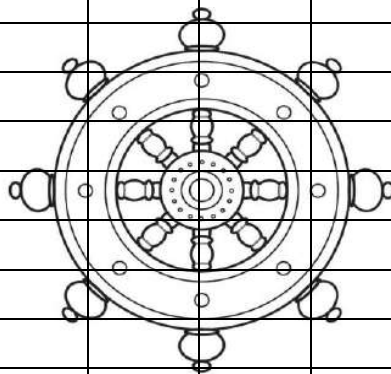
✓ ✓ ✓	
-------	--

-----

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Starting Day: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (D/M/Y)







*aspiration for the highest Enlightenment, single-mindedly think on Amitayus, perform some good deeds, observe the precepts of abstinence, build stupas, donate Buddhist statues, give alms to mendicants, hang banners, light candles, scatter flowers, burn incense, and so forth. They transfer the merit of those practices to his land, aspiring to be born there. When they are about to die, Amitayus will manifest his transformed body, which is fully possessed of the same radiance and physical characteristics and marks as those of the real Buddha, and make it appear before them, together with a host of sages. Then they will follow this transformed Buddha and be born in the Pure Land, where they will dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. Their virtue and wisdom will be next to those of the higher grade of aspirants."*

*- Larger Infinite Life Sutra of Amitabha*

Hence, you should dedicate your accumulated merits towards Pureland rebirth. You can do so by declaring such a intention in front of a Buddha statue.

## **Namo Amitabha**



*Amitabha & Retinue of Bodhisattvas in Pureland*

# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva





---

---

# **BUDDHISM & INTERFAITH GIVING**

AUTHOR: BRIAN CHUNG

**2014 EDITION**

---

---

**THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT**

---

---

---

---

### **Introduction**

This short booklet was written to serve as a reminder to the importance of interfaith generosity. As Buddhists, it is our duty to print sutras, make offerings to the Triple Gem and to release live fish, shellfish and animals being sold for consumption. Furthermore, Buddhism is about cultivating Great Compassion and the Bodhisattva Heart. Hence, we must not neglect the importance of interfaith giving to help the poor and needy.

The Great Master Yin Guang (印光大師) has stated that anyone who does good and abstains from all evil is practicing Buddhadharma. Thus, the Venerable Master Chin Kung (淨空法師) donates (on a monthly basis) generous portions of the offerings he receives to Catholic charities that provide food, shelter, medicine and clothes to the poor, old and sick of any faith. As long as the charity earnestly helps those who are suffering, it does not matter if they are Christian or Hindu. A Buddhist must assist anyone of any faith with a heart of equality, great compassion and sincerity.

It is stated in the Earth Store Sutra, that the merit derived from earnestly and sincerely giving to the poor and suffering equals the merit of making offerings to countless Buddhas.

Hence, as Buddhists, we must not hold back from assisting those in need simply because they do not practice Buddhism. Instead, we must sincerely help them like if we were making offerings to the Buddha himself, for there is actually no difference.

**Note: The merit from this work is dedicated towards Amitabha Pureland Rebirth.**

---

---

### **All 84,000 Dharma Doors are Equal**

In the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's commentary on the Shurangama Sutra, in the section that addresses the part of the Sutra where the Buddha states that he appears in different forms to teach different sentient beings, an excerpt goes:

**Sutra:**

*"If there are living beings who wish to be the Heavenly Lord, leader of heavenly beings, I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.*

**Commentary:**

*"If there are living beings who wish to be the Heavenly Lord": this refers to the Christian God. They want to be the "leader of heavenly beings." They want to rule the heavens. "I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish. I will manifest as Shakra for that kind of living being." Shakra is the Heavenly Lord - God.*

*Did you know that the Holy Mother of Catholicism is Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva? Catholics believe in the Holy Mother, because they want to be born in the heavens. So Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests as a goddess to teach and transform them, enabling them to be born in the heavens. Of course, they will have to come back again from the heavens, but gradually they will make progress. Why does Gwan Yin manifest and speak a dharma to help people get born in the heavens? His ultimate aim is to get them to believe in the Buddha. But since at present their wish is to be born in the heavens, he teaches them how to get reborn there. When they return from there, they will eventually come to believe in the Buddha. Ordinary people feel that the time involved in this process is quite long, but actually in the Buddhas' eyes, it is a mere moment, a blink of an eye.*

*This method can be likened to that of parents who want their child to master an excellent profession, but whose child does not wish to study that profession. The parents comply and allow the child to study what he wishes, but after several false starts, he eventually winds up studying that excellent profession his parents*

***suggested. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva's method for teaching and transforming living beings is to fulfill whatever wishes they might have. But the ultimate aim is always to bring living beings to the accomplishment of Buddhahood.***

Hence, from this explanation, we can understand that not only are all the various dharma doors in Buddhism equal, but that all the great religions were founded by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to teach sentient beings who could not yet accept Buddhism. Groundwork to lead sentient beings towards the Buddhadharma. Moreover, the Venerable Master Chin Kung regularly informs us of this same truth during his dharma talks.

Thus, knowing this information, we must ensure the impartiality of our charitable giving. We should promote interfaith harmony and assist any charity (regardless of faith) when they require resources to further their work in helping the poor and needy.

Lastly, I would like to bring up the story of Saint Jeanne Jugan, the founder of the Little Sisters of the Poor, a Roman Catholic Charity that cares for the elderly and impoverished.

Jeanne Jugan (1792-1879) was a pious nun who spent her entire life dedicated to helping the poor and sick. During the winter of 1839, she came across an elderly, severely disabled and homeless woman named Anne Chauvin. Jeanne carried the women back to her apartment and took her in. She let the women have her own bed while she slept in the attic. She continued and expanded her work with the help of her colleagues. Thus, The Little Sisters of the Poor congregation was born. Every day, they went door to door, asking for donations of food, clothes and money for the elderly women under their care. In one incident, a young man hit her in the face. Instead of reacting with anger, she calmly replied "you gave that to me, now please give something to the elderly". Deeply moved by the sweetness of the reply, the young man donated all the money he had towards her cause.

Although she had founded the congregation, she was not allowed to lead it. Instead, Abbe Auguste Le Pailleur, the appointed Superior General, forced her out of her leadership position and later forced her to retire, attempting to take credit for her work. Even against such adversity, she simply replied "you have taken my life's work from me, but I gladly give it to you".

In the Diamond Sutra, an important passage goes:

須菩提！若菩薩以滿恒河沙等世界七寶布施；若復有人知一切法無我，得成於忍，此菩薩勝前菩薩所得功德。

**Subhuti, If a Bodhisattva practices generosity by donating precious metals and stones as numerous as there are sand grains in the Ganges, his merit would still be vastly inferior to the Bodhisattva who understands that the ego is false and all dharma is attained by forbearance.**

Hence, we can see that Saint Jeanne Jugan's conduct confirms fully with the part of the passage that is underlined. She was selfless and showed forbearance always. She was not attached to prestige or even the most basic self interests, but simply did all she could to help the poor and needy. Such is a conduct of someone practicing the Bodhisattva path, such is the conduct of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Hence, how could we ignore such a congregation (which is still in existence today, carrying out her work on a global scale) simply because they are Catholic?

Furthermore, in the Earth Store Sutra, a passage goes:

***“Moreover, Earth Store, in the future, leaders of nations, Brahmans, and others may have compassionate thoughts upon seeing the old, the sick, or women in childbirth, and may provide them with medicinal herbs, food, drink, and bedding so as to make them peaceful and comfortable. The blessings and benefits derived from doing that are quite inconceivable. For one thousand eons they will always be lords of the Pure Dwelling Heavens. For two hundred eons they will be lords in the Six Desire Heavens, and they will ultimately attain Buddhahood. They will never fall into the Evil Paths, and for hundreds of thousands of lives they will hear no sounds of suffering.***

Thus, it is clear that Buddhism is and has always been built on true selfless and impartial compassion, regardless of where it is found. Those who have true compassion but have not yet encountered the dharma that will allow them to end death and rebirth, will meet it in due course. This is because their compassionate hearts naturally guides them towards the Buddhadharma.

---

### **Conclusion:**

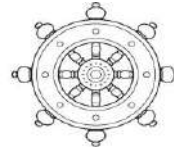
Hence, we must always be mindful of our biases. If we regularly ignore the requests of non Buddhist charities or give them only minor attention, then we are at fault. We are not cultivating Great Compassion nor emulating the conduct of the Sages if we display such partiality. If we regularly criticize other religions for not being able to transcend the six realms, then we are being arrogant, thereby drowning ourselves in ego.

Hence, I exhort all who read this to extend a hand towards charities of different faiths who are sincerely helping the poor, disabled and needy. Furthermore, praise their compassion and make their virtues known to others.

### **Acknowledgments:**

This booklet would not have been possible if not for the lectures of the Ven. Master Chin Kung(淨空法師) . Thus, I would like to express my gratitude towards him. Furthermore, the teachings of the Infinite Life Sutra, Earth Store Sutra, Diamond Sutra and the Ven Master Hsuan Hua's Commentaries on the Shurangama Sutra were all instrumental to the creation of this short booklet.

---



---

## WISDOM OF THE BUDDHA: IF YOU EAT MEAT YOU ARE EATING YOURSELF.

*"Suppose a person eats a sheep. The sheep dies and becomes a person; the person dies and becomes a sheep, The same applies in all rebirths among the ten categories. Through death after death and birth after birth, they eat each other. The evil karma one is born with continues to the bounds of the future. The basis for all that is stealing and greed."*

- Chapter 4, Shurangama Sutra

### Commentary:

Under the laws of karma, killing (regardless of whether the victim is a human or animal) is a violation of the 5 precepts. Therefore, activities such as hunting, eating meat and meat packing all generate karmic debts. Thus, if you act on a greedy desire to eat lamb, you will be reborn as a sheep to be slaughtered and eaten, and so forth.

Furthermore, the true extent of such negative karma is often even worse. For instance, according to an abridged excerpt of Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's Commentary on the Shurangama Sutra:

---

*"During the reign of the Emperor Wu of Liang, the Buddhadharma flourished. At that time there was a wealthy man who was celebrating the marriage of his son. He invited Ch'an Master Chih Kung to recite Sutras and give the blessing. When Ch'an Master Chih Kung arrived and looked around, he said:*

*How strange! How bizarre!.....*

*The daughter eats the mother's flesh.*

*The drum the son beats is stretched with the father's skin.*

*Pigs and sheep are on the seat.*

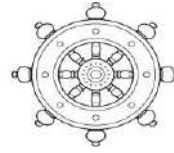
*The six close kin cook in the brazier.*

*People gather to celebrate.*

*I see all this as a form of suffering.*

*How did Ch'an Master Chih Kung know this? Because he had the ability to know others' thoughts and the ability to perceive past lives - he had the Buddha Eye. When he looked in front of the house he said, "The daughter eats the mother's flesh," because he saw a little girl chewing on a chunk of pork. Her mother had died and been reborn as a pig. The pig had been slaughtered and cooked, and she was actually eating the flesh of her own mother! When he inspected*





---

*the musicians in the band by the entrance way, he said, "The drum the son beats is stretched with the father's skin." The drummer was hitting a drum stretched with deer-hide. His father had died and been reborn as a deer. The deer had been slaughtered and its hide tanned and the drummer was actually beating his own father! Then Ch'an Master Chih Kung noticed that "Pigs and sheep are on the seat." He saw pigs and sheep sitting like guests on the k'ang - the high brick beds in the house. They were people now, but in their former lives they had been pigs and sheep. In their former lives they themselves had been eaten, so now they were reborn as people who in turn ate pigs and sheep to even up the debt. When the Ch'an Master took a look at the cooking pots' he exclaimed, "Six close kin cook in the brazier." The six kinds of close kin refer to relatives on the father's side and the mother's side, kin of the brother and sisters, and so forth. They had been close relatives of these people but now had been reborn as pigs and sheep, had been slaughtered, and were being cooked in the brazier. Ch'an Master Chih Kung summarized, "People gather celebrate." Everyone who came was saying, "Congratulations!" and "Best Wishes!" But the Master notes, "I see all this as a form of suffering." What I see is actually suffering."*

---

### **Ways to Reform**

It should be clear to everyone by now that hunting, eating meat or the like are all harmful and repulsive behavior. Fortunately, the Buddha offers us ways to change. In the Treatise on Response and Retribution (a book much promoted by Master Yin Guang), it states that ***"If one who has long committed evil deeds decides to change, abstaining henceforth from all evil while doing all good, great fortune will manifest after a while."***

Thus, we should now diligently strive to become vegan or vegetarian. If we are hunters, fishermen or involved in the meat packing and leather industry, we should change professions. Furthermore, we should purchase captive animals slated for slaughter and set them free. Lastly, we should recite **Namo Amitufo**. The Sutras state that this Buddha name mantra can eradicate eight billion eons of heavy karmic offenses per recitation, it can also guarantee for us either Bodhi in Pureland or a blissful rebirth in the human or heavenly realms.

Recommended Non-Profit Animal Shelter: <http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/>

Note: This pamphlet has no copyright, please feel free to copy and distribute.

---





# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Kairigubha Bodhisattva



# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Kairigubha Bodhisattva



# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Kairigubha Bodhisattva



# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Kairigubha Bodhisattva



# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Kairigubha Bodhisattva



# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Kairigubha Bodhisattva



# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Kairigubha Bodhisattva



# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Kairigubha Bodhisattva



# 地藏王菩薩

Namo Kairigubha Bodhisattva



---

# THE LAST RITES OF AMITABHA

---

怎樣念佛往生不退成佛

---

**HOW TO BECOME IRREVERSIBLY  
ESTABLISHED UPON THE PATH TO BODHI  
BY RECITING AMITA BUDDHA'S NAME**



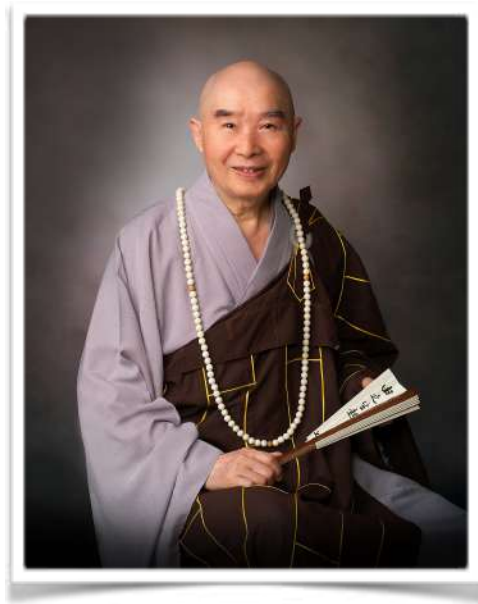
TRANSLATED BY BRIAN CHUNG

2016 EDITION

---

**THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN**

## MASTER CHIN KUNG'S FOREWORD



ESTEEMED FELLOW BUDDHISTS,

THIS HUMBLE HANDBOOK IS AN EXHORTATION OF  
UTMOST IMPORTANCE FOR THE PURE LAND SCHOOL.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE THE BENEFITS  
OUTLINED IN THE BOOK'S TITLE IS CLEARLY WITHIN  
THE REACH OF EVERYONE. THUS, WHENEVER  
CULTIVATION IS DONE IN ACCORDANCE WITH FAITH  
AND UNDERSTANDING, EVEN IF TENS OF THOUSANDS  
WERE TO CULTIVATE, NONE WOULD FAIL TO ATTAIN  
PURE LAND REBIRTH. HOW WONDERFUL! HOW VERY  
WONDERFUL! THENCE, MAY WE ALL TROTH OUR  
MUTUAL WILL AND FAITH TOWARDS THE EXALTED  
ASPIRATION ILLUMINATED BY THIS BOOK!

-VENERABLE MASTER CHIN KUNG

# TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The Last Rites of Amitabha (怎樣念佛往生不退成佛) is a collection of important last rites, instructions and principles found within the 飭終須知 (Precautions for the Eve of Death) by the Venerable Shi Liao (世了法師), who wrote it under the initiative of Dharma Master Xi Zhen (西震法師), and the人生最大的一件事 (*The Most Important Matter in Life*) by Upasaka Yu Din Xi (余定熙居士). Thus, this handbook is the fruition of their noble efforts to make profound and ancient Buddhist wisdom understandable to the general public.

The eve of death represents an uniquely critical juncture in the cycle of birth and death. Proper precautions and skillful supportive chanting during this time can help even persons of little wisdom and severe karmic burdens achieve Pure Land rebirth, and thus become Buddhas forever free from suffering. Therefore, the rites, instructions, precautions and wisdom contained herein must be studied by all.

I undertook to translate this Dharma book upon the request of a Vietnamese Upasika, who desired an English edition for the benefit of the elderly residents of a nursing home. Upasaka Andy Kao of Queensland personally relayed her excellent request to me. Thus, I thank them both for their diligent efforts in propagating the Dharma, and for giving me this opportunity to contribute to their noble efforts through the translation of this text. Therefore, The Last Rites of Amitabha contains the essence of the teachings and wisdom found within the Chinese edition, skillfully compacted and streamlined, to facilitate easy understanding and straightforward implementation by readers of any age, health situation and walk of life.

## **Merit Dedication**

**May the merits and virtues accrued from this work  
adorn the Buddha's Pure Land,  
repay the Four Kinds of Kindness above,  
and relieve the sufferings of those  
in the Three Paths below.  
May those who see and hear of this,  
bring forth the heart  
of understanding and compassion and,  
at the end of this life,  
be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss**

## **No Rights Reserved**

**As the author of this text, it is my express intent that the  
entirety of this text be released into the Public Domain.**

**I reserve no rights to this work. If the laws of a  
particular jurisdiction should make it impossible to  
reserve no rights, then I hereby grant permission to  
anyone who seeks to use and reproduce this work  
for any purpose.**

***Brian Chung***



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **SELECTIONS FROM THE 飭終須知 (*PRECAUTIONS FOR THE EVE OF DEATH*):**

DISCOURSE ON THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THOSE RECITING THE BUDDHA'S NAME DURING THE MOMENT OF DEATH .....	7
IMPORTANT PRECAUTIONS FAMILY MEMBERS MUST UNDERTAKE.....	13
SUPPORTIVE CHANTING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.....	21
IMPORTANT POINTS SUPPORTIVE CHANTERS MUST KNOW.....	23
THE MERIT ACCUMULATED BY SUPPORTIVE CHANTERS.....	26
REGARDING THE CLEANLINESS OF THE SICKROOM OR WARD.....	27
SHATTERING DOUBTS AND MISGIVINGS.....	28
CONVERTING THE DYING.....	30
DEALING WITH SEVERE PAIN AND ILLNESS AT THE TIME OF DEATH..	32
SUPPORTIVE CHANTING METHODS.....	34
WHEN TO DRESS AND WASH THE BODY AFTER DEATH.....	38
THE BEST WAY TO TRANSFER BLESSINGS TO THE DEPARTED.....	39
INQUIRIES REGARDING THE INTERMEDIATE STATE BETWEEN DEATH AND REBIRTH.....	40
CONCURRING WITH CHAPTER SEVEN OF THE EARTH STORE SUTRA: BENEFITING THE DEAD AND LIVING.....	42
REGARDING STROKE AND DEAFNESS.....	44

**SELECTIONS FROM THE 人生最大的一件事 (*THE MOST IMPORTANT MATTER IN LIFE*):**

WHERE DOES THE SOUL DEPART TO AFTER LEAVING THE BODY?.....46

DO NOT CREMATE UNTIL AT LEAST SEVEN DAYS HAVE PASSED.....48

MAKING YOUR WISHES CLEAR TO YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS.....49

**MODERN PURE LAND REBIRTH CASES.....50**

**LIVING WILL EXAMPLE.....66**

## DISCOURSE ON THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THOSE RECITING THE BUDDHA'S NAME DURING THE MOMENT OF DEATH

When Shakyamuni Buddha spoke the Amitabha Sutra while dwelling in Savatthi's Jeta Grove, he praised the exalted and wondrously adorned Western Pure Land. In the sutra, it is categorically stated that all the Buddhas of the six directions—such as the Light of the Sun and Moon Buddha of the South and the Brahma Sound Buddha of the Upper World—commend in unison the inconceivable merit adorning the Pure Land of Amitabha.

Thus, rebirth in the Pure Land is no small matter, for it is an opportunity of unmatched significance—praised by every Buddha without exception. Anyone who truly strives for Pure Land rebirth and diligently recites with unwavering faith will be reborn there. This is an unequivocal fact bolstered by numerous real life cases, therefore, do not entertain any doubts.

**Question: If it is indeed true that all who recite the Buddha's name can attain rebirth in Pure Land, why is it that many cultivators (both lay and ordained) who regularly recite and declare their intention to be reborn in the Pure Land become confused at death, and remain trapped in the Samsara?**

**Answer:**

Such failures are caused by the inadequacy of their causes and conditions. If at the eve of death, the causes and conditions are complete, then it does not matter whether tens, hundreds, thousands or millions of people cultivate, all will attain rebirth in Pure Land.



**Question: What are causes and conditions?**

**Answer:**

If a cultivator can, up to his last breath, maintain unwavering faith in Amitabha, resolve to be reborn in Pure Land and be diligent in reciting Amitabha's name, he does not lack causes. Likewise, if someone who neglects the Dharma during his life meets good counsel on the eve of death, and if he can then faithfully yearn to be reborn in Pure Land, such faith, resolve and action also represent adequate causes. Amita Buddha's omnipresent vows, protection and blessings represent conditions. Moreover, the assistance rendered by supportive chanters is another favorable condition.

**Question: What is the principle behind the fact that those with complete causes and conditions at the moment of death can achieve Pure Land rebirth?**

**Answer:**

The principle is that of reciprocity. When a cultivator who is on the verge of death recites Amita Buddha's name with true faith and unwavering resolve for such a rebirth, he is sincerely accepting Amita Buddha's open invitation. The name being recited represents the benefactor (i.e. conditions), and his willingness to recite with resolve and faith shows that he is ready to become a sincere beneficiary (i.e. causes). And so, the Buddha appears as a response to those causes and purifies the heart of the willing. Whenever causes and conditions mutually interact, rebirth in the Pure Land is assured.

**Question: If a cultivator on the verge of death simply could not gather together adequate causes and conditions, is he completely deprived of the chance to be reborn in Pure Land?**

**Answer:**

Such cases can be divided into three types:

### **1) Causes present but conditions lacking:**

People who regularly cultivate Buddha name recitation with faith and resolve, though perhaps not as skillfully as they should, could rally the necessary causes for Pure Land rebirth on the eve of death.

However, at that time, various difficulties may set upon them. These obstacles include severe illness, anxieties, lack of supportive chanters, and ignorant relatives who trouble them by howling with grief. They yearn in vain for their family and relatives' solemn support in seeking Pure Land rebirth. Thus, even though they could have mustered the causes necessary, the want of favorable conditions has doomed their initiative. They are deprived of their chance for Bodhi and the bliss of Pure Land by their own impulsive relatives.

### **2) Causes absent but conditions present**

There are some people whose faith and dedication towards the Dharma are superficial and weak throughout their lives. Nevertheless, they have the good fortune of wise and calm family members and good counsel at the time of death. However, worldly temptations confuse their hearts and provokes maudlin attachment to grandchildren, property and so forth. Thus, they squander their last moments on emotion and do not leave the Samsara.

### **3) Causes and conditions both absent**

Lastly, there are those who cultivate only for temporal karmic blessings such as wealth, long life and security. And so, when the eve of death approaches, they descend into fear. If they are ill, they recite Amita Buddha's name for health and recovery, and not for Pure Land rebirth. When it becomes obvious that death is inevitable, they become fretful and

desperately cry out to the Heavens for a reprieve. Their family members and relatives are either ignorant of the Dharma or have only superficial understanding of its profound spiritual principles. Thus, not only are they unable to render wise counsel or offer supportive chanting, they even heap unbearable anxieties upon the soon to be deceased through their wild expressions of grief and outbursts of sorrow. Therefore, such persons are trapped and cannot resist being towed into the three evil realms by their passions and confusions.

**Question: How then shall we muster the causes and conditions for Pure Land rebirth when we are about to pass?**

**Answer:**

Ideal cultivators are those who possess abundant good roots. Regularly, they sincerely recite Amitabha's name with true faith and enduring resolve for Pure Land rebirth. As they are masters of cultivation, their faith and resolve are of the utmost sincerity. Therefore, they do not need supportive chanting or wise counsel during their last moments. They naturally carry on as they have always done, reciting with faith and resolve, untainted by any undesirable attachments or manifestations of ill fortune and emotion. Their every thought abides calmly in the exalted name of Amitabha. According to the Amitabha Sutra, those who recite with one heart unconfused are swiftly reborn in the Pure Land. Such cultivators are the epitome of that standard ; their causes and conditions align perfectly.

Second to the above are cultivators who regularly recite with true faith and lasting resolve, but are unable to attain full mastery. When death approaches, their resolve for Pure Land rebirth strengthens even in the face of illness and adversity. Moreover, their relatives and family members are wise, disciplined and understand the importance of the moment of death. Thus, they remain calm and are restrained in their emotions. Besides, such cultivators can also count upon the supportive chanting and comforting counsel of virtuous friends.

Thus, their every thought abides in the name of Amitabha all the way until their last breath. As the proper causes are present at that final critical moment, the Buddha responds and guides them into the Pure Land.

Lastly, there are those who are completely ignorant of the Pure Land teachings throughout their lives. However, on the eve of death, they are furnished with wise counsel and guidance by virtuous friends. They may be informed of Amita Buddha's 48 Great Vows, or of the wondrous and pure conditions of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Thus, they become joyful and are converted. They immediately become faithfully resolute in seeking Pure Land rebirth and diligently hold Amita Buddha's name. Moreover, their relatives and family members have also been instructed by the same virtuous friends on the importance of remaining well composed and refraining from expressions of grief. As the moment of death approaches, their faithful and resolute mindfulness (i.e. causes) of Amitabha (i.e. conditions) surpasses even that of a son's pining for his beloved mother. As both causes and conditions are present, they are swiftly guided by the Buddha's benevolent hand into the Pure Land.

In all three of the above cases, both causes and conditions were mutually present at the last moment of life. Thus, Pure Land rebirth did not escape them.

**Question: How is it possible for someone who has been ignorant of the Dharma for his entire life to be reborn in Pure Land after being converted in the nick of time? And also for his family to refrain from emotional displays of grief simply because they have been advised against doing so?**

**Answer:**

As mentioned before, as long as both causes and conditions are present at the moment of death, Pure Land rebirth can be achieved. Moreover, the reason such persons were ignorant of the Dharma is that no one had informed them before. Thus, if they have the good fortune of meeting and

heeding wise counsel at such a critical juncture, it simply means they have accumulated virtuous roots in lives past. Therefore, they are different from regular people. Their action, resolve and faith constitute ample causes ; their cooperative relatives and wise friends represent strongly favorable conditions, and the Buddha's compassionate response indicates the mutual presence of both causes and conditions.

**Question: We all wish to assist our parents and relatives bring forth faith in Amitabha when their final hours arrive, so that they may be freed from the Samsara and accomplish Bodhi while dwelling in the pure and augustly adorned Buddha-land. However, our abilities are limited. We may not find wise friends to offer counsel, and we cannot easily understand the profound principles of the Dharma. Thus, where can we find practical advice on this matter?**

**Answer:**

Anyone who sincerely, and out of a sense of filial piety, wishes to assist their parents and relatives transcend the Samsara will certainly succeed in doing so if they carefully heed the wisdom, rites and instructions found within this handbook.

## IMPORTANT PRECAUTIONS FAMILY MEMBERS MUST UNDERTAKE

- 1) Our parents are our greatest benefactors in life. Thus, we must be filial. Brothers, sisters, husbands and wives must all cherish each other. Sons, daughters and daughters in law must have kindness in their hearts. However, what exactly constitutes filial piety and kindness? If we only gloss over this matter, the risk of rebellious and derelict behavior greatly increases. Therefore, heed the following teachings very carefully.
- 2) When common people are about to die, they are on the last leg of their journey through this world. Hence, those who are relatives must show compassion and filial piety at this important time. They must comfort the heart of the dying, render excellent care and fulfill all last wishes.
- 3) When the moment of death is fast approaching, volunteer supportive chanting groups and or Dharma friends must be quickly mustered and invited. If the supportive chanters are invited into the home, all family members and relatives must cooperate and follow their instructions. As these guests wish only to save the consciousness of the dying, they must be shown appropriate hospitality and respect. If circumstances should prevent such help from arriving, then family members and relatives must step in and render the appropriate supportive chanting and Dharma-rites to the dying.

Moreover, all family members must refrain from eating meat and taking life. When the moment of death arrives, supportive chanting must be diligently and sincerely performed. The objective should be to ensure swift rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Thus, there should be no desperate unilateral attempts to apply unwarranted treatment, against the wishes of the dying, in order to squeeze out a few more hours of life.

- 4) The eve of death represents the crossroads between the Sagely path of the Western Pure Land, the blissful realms of the gods, asuras and humans, and the suffering of the realms of the ghosts, animals and hell beings.

Therefore, when relatives support the dying's bid to be reborn in the Pure Land through supportive chanting of Amitabha's name, they are sending their consciousness to the wondrous bliss of Pure Land.

However, if they instead confuse the dying with tears of sorrow and emotional displays, they are condemning their consciousness to the volatile suffering of the evil realms. How could anyone do something so cruel and unfilial?

- 5) Furthermore, the sutras clearly state that the suffering of the Hells, ghost realms and animal realms cannot be imagined. For instance, those in the Hells die thousands of times a day—reborn after each time to suffer a torturous death again and again. The denizens of the ghostly realms must suffer billions of kalpas of scorching deprivation. So acute is their hardship that they do not even know what water is, never mind food. Those who are reborn as animals must suffer at the hands of butchers for thousands of great eons. Thus, if we allow our beloved parents or relatives to fall into such states of woe, when can they ever escape ?

On the other hand, those reborn in the Pure Land enjoy the daily honor of hearing Amita Buddha personally preach the Dharma. They are peers of Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. Moreover, Their eyes meet only augustness ; wonderful sounds resound in their ears. They enjoy unlimited bliss. Complete with divine powers, they can manifest in any form to expound the Dharma wherever and whenever it is desired. Everything they do is in accordance with their will and they attain Bodhi swiftly. Thus, who can have the heart to deny their parents or relatives Pure Land rebirth? Who can live with themselves if their impulsive emotions cause the deceased to become confused, attached and disturbed, thereby sending them to the states

of woe. The fate of our relatives and parents after they pass depends upon our actions during their moment of death. The duty is ours.

6) If the dying has already resolved upon Pure Land rebirth beforehand, then that is the best scenario. However, if not, relatives and family must remind them of the impermanence of human life, and of the following:

- a) The endless suffering of the Samsara and of death and rebirth.
- b) The Hells and evil realms are full of suffering and easy to tumble into.
- c) The Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is overflowing with joy and has neither death nor the three evil paths.
- d) Those who are reborn in Pure Land come into existence through transformation while dwelling in wondrous lotus buds that are soft, clean, fragrant, august, spacious and bright.
- e) Fine robes and delicious food appear on demand to those who dwell in Pure Land.
- f) The bliss of Pure Land is unlimited.
- g) Anyone who resolves to achieve such a rebirth and recites the name with faith and sincerity will meet Amitabha during their last breath. He will hold a spacious lotus in his hands and personally welcome them into the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Relatives and family must reiterate the above points at least three times a day. But, they ought to be gentle in their speech and display comforting manners. An ill and dying person's heart is extremely sensitive to stress. Thus, be mindful. Once the dying has been converted, it is no longer necessary to repeat counsel.



Thenceforth, focus on supporting their mindfulness of Amitabha.

- 7) Relatives and family members must find out if the dying has any unresolved matters or requests that they have not been able to address. Family and relatives must seek, on their own accord, such information before coherent communication becomes impossible.

If the dying has already descended into unconsciousness or lost the ability to speak, then refrain from mentioning any temporal or family matter. This is to prevent burdening them with anxieties and interfering with their mindfulness of Amitabha. Also, matters that have been settled should not be brought up again.

If the dying still retain their senses, remind them that all household and family matters will be shouldered and that they need not worry. Do so once only, and thenceforth focus on encouraging them to be single-minded in reciting and seeking rebirth in Pure Land. Moreover, point your finger towards the west and declare: “The Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is right in front of you, be single-minded in Amitabha and seek rebirth there.” Exhort in such a manner a couple times a day.

However, If the dying has lost consciousness, do not say anything. Simply recite Amitabha loudly and continuously in support.

- 8) When friends and guests of the dying arrive to visit, they must first be invited into a separate room. While entertaining them, kindly remind or instruct them on the importance of the eve of death and that calmness and proper decorum must be shown. Moreover, exhort them on the importance of helping the dying be reborn in the Western Pure Land. Such precautions are to prevent ignorance and disruptive emotional outbursts, and also to recruit supportive chanters.

- 9) If the terminally ill and dying should become uncooperative and hostile towards mindfulness of Amitabha, annoyed when others recite the Buddha's name, or if they shall see the ghosts of karmic creditors arriving to exact revenge, then these are signs of manifesting negative and obstructive karma.

In such situations, family and relatives must recite and repent on the dying's behalf in front of the Buddha in order to neutralize the negative karma obstructing Pure Land rebirth.

For instance, last year, an upasaka's mother became depressed upon hearing Amita Buddha's name and requested the supportive chanters that had assembled beside her to cease chanting. The Dharma Master present immediately recognized that this was due to her negative karma and quickly recited the Earth Store Sutra a couple times on her behalf to eradicate the obstacle. The upasaka also sincerely repented in front of a Buddha image on his mother's behalf. Subsequently, she became joyfully receptive towards their chanting and was reborn in Pure Land soon after. Thus, the Earth Store Sutra is a potent remedy for dealing with evil karma. If it is too difficult to recite the whole sutra, simply reciting the name of Earth Store Bodhisattva would suffice.

In another case, an upasaka's terminally ill father saw a female ghost and her dog approach him in a hostile manner. Once the upasaka recited and repented on his father's behalf, the two ghosts disappeared. Afterwards, the ghosts of two monks came to obstruct his Pure Land rebirth. They said that he had prevented their Pure Land rebirth in a former life and they were now going to return the favor. The upasaka then recited and repented on his father's behalf once more, and prayed to the two ghosts that once his father had achieved Pure Land rebirth, he would use his Bodhisattva powers to help them do the same. The karmic creditors agreed and left. The father then saw an old monk say: "Your sins have been eradicated, in three sevens, you will be reborn in Pure Land, and your place is fifth."

Those present initially thought the old monk meant 21 days and were doubtful that they could continue to chant for that long. However, the father attained Pure Land rebirth after 21 hours. Most likely, “fifth place” referred to aspirants of the middle of the second grade (there are three grades with three levels each).

Thus, it is very clear that the performance of rites (such as the sutra recitations and penances) and supportive chanting by family, relatives and friends are of great benefit to the ill and dying.

- 10) If when the dying are about to stop breathing, there are many supportive chanters, they should all kneel and chant in front of a Buddha image. However, if there are few chanters, then they should be positioned next to the dying. However, they should not be in a position where they are face to face. This is to prevent provoking expressions of grief and sadness. Thus, the chanters should flank the dying or station themselves behind them. Moreover, the voice of the chanters should be calm, clear, loud, consistent and free from even a hint of grief and melancholy. Supportive chanters must be well composed and focus only on properly reciting Amitabha with the sincere wish of obtaining the Buddha’s compassionate protection for the dying, and for their swift rebirth in the Pure Land.
- 11) It is absolutely **imperative** that the body of the deceased not be touched, disturbed or moved in any way. Moreover, if bugs or foreign objects should find its way onto the body, it should be carefully removed at once. The reason for such precautions is that the soul usually does not leave the body immediately after breathing stops. Thus, weeping and outbursts of emotion should also be refrained from. Any disturbance can cause thoughts of anger and attachment within the consciousness of the deceased, thereby causing them to be led by their emotions into rebirth in the evil paths (e.g. ghost

or animal). As long as there is some warmth left in the body, the soul has not yet completely left. However, nobody may touch the body in search of warmth out of curiosity. Doing so is absolutely forbidden. But, **if more than ten hours** have passed, then a wise and senior supportive chanter or Dharma friend can skillfully check for warmth. If there are no supportive chanters, then family members present can do so but only in accordance with care and proper instructions.

Furthermore, common superstitions such as sayings which demand the body be dressed and moved immediately for whatever reason are wrong. Moreover, any custom that demands open expressions of grief, such as the old superstition that those who wish to cry must cry in order to get rid of bad luck, are to be completely disregarded for they are false and harmful. The people who were sent to the evil realms by such superstitions are countless!

In the past, there was the case of King Agidatta. He was a pious sovereign who regularly made offerings to the Buddha-dharma, built temples and raised stupas. Thus, his stock of merit was very impressive. However, after he drew his last breath, one of his exhausted attendants fell asleep and dropped a fan onto his face. This provoked his anger and he was reborn as a great python. Nevertheless, because of his merit, he was able to meet a monk who spoke the Dharma to him, and after three days, he was able to ascend into the Heavens.

Furthermore, in another case, there was once a loving couple who regularly cultivated the eight precepts. However, when the husband passed, the wife openly wept. This caused strong thoughts of sentimentality to arise in him. Thus, he was immediately reborn as a bug in her wife's nostrils. When he fell out of her nose, she almost trampled him but was stopped by a nearby monk. The monk explained the situation and said that while her husband is entitled to rebirth as a god, his attachment for her (due to her weeping) caused him to stay with her in the

only capacity readily available (which was as a bug). The wife quickly repented and asked the monk to rectify the situation by speaking the Dharma. As a result, the husband left the body of the bug and ascended into the Heavens.

These two cases have been carefully documented in the sutras and are therefore authoritative references that all must heed.

Thus, we must not disturb the body while it still has warmth. Moreover, all displays of grief and sadness must be resisted. If there are experienced supportive chanters present, follow their advice. If not, then after the aforementioned period of time has passed, family members present may carefully, gently, slowly and cautiously check for warmth. Only prepare the body after it has gone completely cold (see relevant instructions in the When to Wash and Dress the Body After Death section).

## SUPPORTIVE CHANTING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Question: What does supportive chanting mean?**

**Answer:**

Supportive chanting refers to the efforts of others ( such as the chanting of Amitabha) that buttress the continuous right mindfulness of the dying.

**Question: What is right mindfulness?**

**Answer:**

Right mindfulness refers to pure thought. Such pure thoughts take place when the mind is sincerely mindful of the Buddha's name. Mindfulness of the Buddha is the proper cause of Bodhi, and as the heart that is mindful of the Buddha does not respond to the six kinds of dust, it is considered pure and serves as a cause for Pure Land rebirth.

**Question: Why do the dying need supportive chanting?**

**Answer:**

When common people are about to die, they experience the disintegration of the four elements that constitute the body. Thus, the eve of death represents the convergence of numerous pains. Such overwhelming distress causes them to fret, suffer and fear like shellfish being boiled.

Therefore, anyone who has not achieved a dependable level of mastery during their regular cultivation and reciting will need supportive chanters during their eve of death. Even if a cultivator's regular mindfulness reaches 60% or 70% proficiency, the difficulties encountered during dying may reduce those levels to less than 30%. Thus, those whose regular cultivation are weak or non existent won't stand a chance during their eve of death unless they are bolstered by supportive chanting. All must understand that autonomy and self determination forgets the dying.

**Question: Why does supportive chanting need to continue even after breathing has stopped?**

**Answer:**

Even when breathing has stopped, the soul still lingers. Thus, the next realm of rebirth has not yet been determined, and supportive chanting at such a crossroad can make or break the deceased. As all beings have committed innumerable good and evil deeds over the course of countless rebirths, good and evil thoughts race across their minds like a lengthly unbroken chain. Of these thoughts, most are evil and few are good. **If the final thought is bad, then the Hells, ghost and animal realms will appear ; if the final thought is good, then the realm of the gods will appear. However, if the final thought is that of Amitabha with the resolve to seek rebirth in the Pure Land, then the Buddha and a retinue of Sages will appear in response.** Thus, supportive chanting is meant to suppress good and evil thoughts so as to maintain the right mindfulness of the dying at the critical juncture of death. This is the wondrous benefit of supportive chanting.

## IMPORTANT POINTS SUPPORTIVE CHANTERS MUST KNOW

- 1) Those who assume the duty of supportive chanting are carrying out the Buddha's mission of liberating beings from the Samsara. Thus, they must never perform such a great undertaking as if it were merely perfunctory. Sincerity, care and caution must be ever present as any misstep or failure to go the extra mile can ruin the future of the deceased for eons.
- 2) Volunteer supportive chanters who visit the home of the dying must first assemble all of the relatives and family members. They are to be instructed on the important role the eve of death plays in determining the future rebirth of the dying, and reminded of their filial duty to cooperate and help the dying attain Pure Land rebirth.
- 3) When supportive chanters enter the sickroom, they must be polite and sincere, and their speech must be gentle and comforting. Good first impressions will establish trust. They must first praise the good deeds of the sick and dying in order to help them bring forth a positive state of mind. Afterwards, they are to skillfully help the sick to resolve upon rebirth in the Western Pure Land. Moreover, volunteer chanters must see the sick and dying as their own parents. Perhaps, in a prior life, they were. Thus, when volunteer chanters see the sick in such a light, the care and support they render would naturally be peerless.
- 4) The sickroom must be converted into a sterile environment where gossip and casual conversations are forbidden. Moreover, the sick must not be troubled by conversations regarding temporal matters. This is to prevent disrupting their right mindfulness. If guests should approach the sick room, supportive chanters must inquire if they intend to render supportive chanting. If not, they are to be invited to another room to be entertained. If so, they must be instructed properly. This is to prevent disruptive grief and sadness. Supportive chanters must know that it is their duty to create a pure environment conducive towards attaining Pure Land rebirth. Thus, they must not



shy away from their duty because of fear of causing offense. The will of the Buddha and Dharma must take precedence over worldly emotions.

- 5) The variation of the name of Amita Buddha that is chanted, the pace and volume must be in accordance with the preferences of the dying.

If unconsciousness makes it impossible to know what is preferred, then the chanting must be neither loud nor quiet ; neither fast nor slow. This is because a fast pace is hard to comprehend, a slow pace strains those chanting and causes drowsiness, a loud voice is hard to maintain and a quiet voice is hard to hear. Thus, the sound and pace must be just right to ensure that the name of Amitabha enters clearly and consistently into the ears of the dying.

Supportive chanters must never vary their chanting in accordance with their own caprice. They must know that the sick and dying are often too weak to recite themselves. Thus, they depend upon the consistent and proper chanting of others to maintain their own right mindfulness.

- 6) If after supportive chanting has been performed for a while, the dying suddenly become conscious and active, then those chanting must not be startled or curious. Just as the waning flame burns brightest before going out, the dying may become suddenly lucid before breathing stops (usually 2 hours later).

There have been many cases of chanters (who have chanted for many days) being confronted by a suddenly lucid patient. Thinking that the patient had recovered, they stopped chanting, only to have the patient die less than 2 hours later.

- 7) If the dying pass away at the same time the supporting chanters first arrive, or if breathing stopped one, two or three hours earlier, then those arriving must know that they have entered at the most critical phase of the juncture. They should first loudly counsel the consciousness of the dying once, and then start chanting.

As the breathing has stopped, the consciousness of the deceased, regardless of whether the relatives or family members present have openly wept or not, will most likely be distressed. Thus, by first loudly offering counsel, the soul of the deceased gains the opportunity to regroup, take refuge, joyfully accept Amitabha and resolve for rebirth in the Pure Land.

The statement must be brief and concise, such as: “(Name)! Do not be attached to your past good and evil. Let go of your family, property and all temporal matters. With one heart and one mind, recite the name of Amita Buddha and seek rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. We will help you do so with our supportive chanting. Let your heart be exclusively mindful of our chanting and with your every thought abide in Amita Buddha—resolve upon rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss!” (Recite underlined parts once more)

Begin chanting immediately after delivering counsel. Do so in a loud voice and recite the simplest version of Amita Buddha (which is any version without the honorific “Namo”).

If the deceased has already resolved upon Pure Land rebirth whilst living, then rebirth there is most likely assured. If not, then they benefit no matter where they go. For instance, according to the Earth Store Sutra: “Those who perceive a Buddha’s name upon their passing shall have even the five grave offenses eradicated.”

Thus, allowing the dead and dying to hear the name of Amitabha is an act of immense and unimaginable benefit.

## THE MERIT ACCUMULATED BY SUPPORTIVE CHANTERS

For every act, there is an echo. If we are willing to support others in their hour of greatest need, then when our time comes, wise friends and the like will naturally appear (due to our good karma) to render upon us the same kindness.

Those whom we have helped send to Pure Land would certainly be among the Bodhisattvas that accompany Amitabha when he appears before us. They will bestow blessings and protection that will bolster our right mindfulness.

Moreover, as we regularly assist others in managing the moment of death, we will naturally become experts of that critical moment, and make the necessary preparations (based on accumulated experiences) when our own end approaches.

We must understand that the purpose of a Buddha's appearance in this world is to help all beings become Buddhas by transcending the Samsara. This was why Shakyamuni Buddha preached the Dharma for 49 years, and it is also the reason behind Amita Buddha's 48 Great Vows and his wondrously adorned Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

As all other Dharma-doors require the cultivator to completely deracinate the root causes of their delusions, few can successfully follow such teachings as they rely solely on the self power of the individual. However, the Pure Land Dharma-door is based upon the power of Amita Buddha's compassionate Great Vows and blessings. It is the only way for those unable to practice difficult high-level Samadhi to become a Buddha within one life by accepting the open invitation to the Western Pure Land. It is a Dharma-door all people can cultivate. If we help shoulder the Buddha's burden of liberating beings by aiding the dead and dying become Buddhas, we are creating the causes of Bodhi for ourself. When the time comes, these merits will assist our own liberation from the wearisome cycle of death and rebirth. It is simply a matter of cause and effect.

## REGARDING THE CLEANLINESS OF THE SICKROOM OR WARD

The room where the sick and dying occupy must be kept clean and free of clutter. This is to avert restricting the ease of movement of supportive chanters and to prevent the sick and dying from being troubled by uncleanliness.

If the sick and dying are conscious, family members or Dharma friends present must often remind them (while facing the west) to seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land. Moreover, if they are able, they must be instructed to sleep on their right side (akin to the Reclining Buddha's auspicious resting position). However, if afflicted by pain, then whatever position they find most calming and comfortable should take precedence.

There must also be an altar with either images of the Three Sages of the West or a statue of Amita Buddha. Offerings such as flowers, fruits and the like must be placed before the images. This altar must also face the dying in order to inspire reverence and awe.

If the sheets or clothes become soiled, they should be changed immediately. However, if the moment of death has arrived, no change of sheets or clothes should be done. Instead, urgently recite Amita Buddha's name. Family and supportive chanters must understand that once the critical moment of death has arrived, any odor issue is of no importance compared to maintaining mindfulness of Amitabha. The body cannot be cleaned until many hours later, after all warmth has left.

### **Translator's Notes:**

It is also important for the sickroom or ward to be properly ventilated. Moreover, the temperature must be kept at a comfortable level, and any source of noise or sound that interferes with the sound of chanting must be kept at the minimum level possible.

## SHATTERING DOUBTS AND MISGIVINGS

When the dying are stricken with severe illness, family and friends must urgently inquire if they have any unaddressed wishes that disturb their peace of mind. If there are, they must be dealt with at once. If there aren't, then do not ask a second time to prevent disrupting their right mindfulness!

If the dying should fear being unable to enter the Pure Land due to heavy sins or a short history of cultivation, they should be reassured that the length of cultivation and heaviness of any past offense does not affect their right to enter Pure Land. All that matters is that they are unwavering and single-minded in their resolve/mindfulness to seek such a rebirth from when they first vowed to their last breath. They should also be reminded that it is written in the sutras that: "Even those of heavy sins may enter Pure Land if they resolve to do so only after being counseled on the eve of death." And that, "Eight billion great eons of heavy karmic offenses are eradicated when the name of Amitabha is recited once."

If the dying should express attachment to family and property, then supportive chanters must say: "This world is overflowing with suffering. Old age, sickness and death are all unbearably painful. On the other hand, the denizens of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss enjoy unlimited joy and are forever happy. They never age, never fall ill and never die. Once you are reborn in Pure Land, you can use your Bodhisattva powers to persuade all your family members to seek Pure Land rebirth, and thereafter enjoy eternal bliss together. Thus, discard your attachments to family and property as they only hinder your advancement. From now on, recite and be mindful of Amitabha with one heart. Whenever attachments arise, silence them by pondering upon the many sufferings of this impermanent world and of the everlasting bliss of the Pure Land. You now hold the rarest chance to attain everlasting bliss for both you and all your relatives, if it is lost, when comes another?"

Furthermore, if the dying should question why they have not seen the Buddha yet despite having recited, or if they should doubt whether Amita Buddha would actually show up, then they must be reminded that it

matters not whether they have seen the Buddha or not, for even if they have not yet any response, they certainly will at their moment of death. All that matters is that they never cease reciting Amita Buddha's name, for when their last moment comes, if their heart dwells in Amitabha, Amitabha will respond within that heart, and they will ascend to Pure Land within the same sincere and mindful heart. However, if they harbor doubts, they create barriers between themselves and Amitabha. Therefore, as long as they are **faithfully** mindful of Amita Buddha with one heart, their heart will mutually interact with that of the Buddha's. They will thus attain rebirth in the Pure Land.

Supportive chanters and Dharma friends must understand that some people see the Buddha earlier while others see him later. For instance, some see Amita Buddha appear anywhere from a day or two to a few hours or minutes before breathing stops. However, others only see the Buddha appear at the very last second (as their consciousness departs).

Moreover, if the dying should have nightmares, see frightful waking visions and or hear disturbing sounds while reciting, they must be reassured that such occurrences are merely the doing of their past life karmic creditors (who intend to sabotage their Pure Land rebirth). They are to pay no heed to such distractions and continue their right mindfulness. With unceasing right mindfulness, the evil sights and sounds will recede and disappear on their own.

Finally, if the sick and dying should see the spirits of deceased family members and relatives (such as grandparents etc.) coming to take them away, they must understand that such spirits are actually evil demons masquerading as someone they once held dear. Their purpose is to cause evil realm rebirth. If the dying should see radiant gods and goddesses arriving to welcome them into their ranks, they should also be unmoved. In both cases, they must pay absolutely no heed and focus only on being mindful of Amitabha. Only upon the arrival of Amitabha or Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprabhata are they to follow. They must remember that the response of the Buddha is caused by their own pure will, and so, a heart that is sincerely mindful of the Buddha begets such an appearance!

## CONVERTING THE DYING

Convert the dying with the following speech:

“You must understand that no person living in this world can avert sickness and death. Thus, whenever you are afflicted by the pain of illness, you must not be caught up in thoughts of anxiety and discontent. You shall focus on being mindful of Amitabha, and as your ears resound with his name, rest your resolve for rebirth in the Pure Land upon those sounds. Do so and your pains will lighten immensely. A person mindful of Amitabha must not dither in casting aside all their temporal attachments upon the arrival of their final hour of life. Their heart and mind ought to be ever pure and mindful only of Amita Buddha’s name—single-mindedly and unceasingly mindful. Moreover, it matters not if it takes three, five or seven days to attain Pure Land rebirth—your resolve for it and mindfulness of Amitabha must remain unwavering to the last. Do so and you will succeed.”

“Furthermore, you must not be gripped by foolish common fears when confronted by death. Do not panic and desperately pine for a reprieve from Heaven, spirits and deities. You should know that those who resolve upon Pure Land rebirth must rely only on Amitabha and have faith in his speedy appearance regardless of the pain or illness they meet. Heaven, spirits and deities are themselves subject to the pains of death and rebirth. Thus, what help in leaving the Samsara could they possibly offer you?”

“Only the benevolence of Amita Buddha, his transcendental powers and his 48 Great Vows can help you liberate yourself from death and rebirth. Thus, swiftly replace any thought of seeking help from Heaven and spirits with resolve for Pure Land and single-minded recitation of Amitabha. When your lifespan is up, you will be reborn there. If, however, you recite only to seek recovery, then you will squander your last chance, for if your lifespan is finished, Pure Land will not appear, and if it is not up yet, it would be supremely difficult to salvage your ailing body anyway.”

“You must understand that all human beings are cursed with numerous worries. However, the bliss and ease of Pure Land is unlimited. Thus, you must not fear death as such fear raises a wall between you and Amitabha’s Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, leaving you to flounder endlessly amidst the stormy seas of birth and death.”

“Therefore, you must chastise yourself whenever panicky fear of death arises in your heart. Remind yourself in no uncertain terms that your unwavering objective is to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Thus how could you let these hindrances block your path to salvation? Thenceforth, recite the Buddha’s name with utmost sincerity ; seek only Amita Buddha’s compassionate early arrival.”

“Lastly, you must know that both illnesses or the appearance of evil ghosts are simply maturing negative karma created in a prior life. Once you understand, you will be at peace and wholeheartedly seek Pure Land rebirth through the name of Amitabha!”



## DEALING WITH SEVERE PAIN AND ILLNESS AT THE TIME OF DEATH

If cultivators are afflicted with major illness during their eve of death, they must neither fear nor become disheartened. As even the great Tang dynasty Dharma Master Xuanzang encountered the difficulties of illness during his eve of death, common people who are so often tangled by burdensome karma cannot easily avoid such adversity.

Therefore, they must realize that such illnesses have a clear past life karmic cause, and are often simply the vanguard of even more severe karmic retribution (such as rebirth in the Hells). However, thanks to their good roots, they create great merit through their resolve to recite the Buddha's name. This commutes the entire karmic retribution to just the illness being experienced. After the short period of pain has taken course, the eternal bliss of Pure Land arises.

Thus, they must resist being provoked by their pains. They must single-mindedly and steadfastly hold onto the Buddha's name, for it is the difference between the Land of Ultimate Bliss and the suffering of the Hells. If the illness has sapped away all available strength, then just reciting the single word "Buddha" with resolve for Pure Land will suffice. If even that cannot be done, then imagine that Amita Buddha has truly appeared and is extending a warm welcome. Concentrate the mind upon such a resolve and sight, and it will become a reality when death comes.

The Ancient Sages have said in the sutras that: "If at the eve of death neither sight nor voice can be of service, but the thought knows the Buddha, then such a person can achieve Pure Land rebirth upon death."

Therefore, if those who are crushed by illness to the point that they can neither observe an image of Amitabha nor continuously recite the name can pine for and unceasingly imagine in their hearts that Amitabha has truly arrived to welcome them into the Pure Land, then based on the sheer will of their final thought and resolve, they will succeed.



**Amitabha welcoming an aspirant into the Pure Land**

## SUPPORTIVE CHANTING METHODS

Regarding the matter of supportive chanting, the severity of the illness that afflicts the dying person must be taken into consideration.

If the illness is not paralyzingly severe, perform the full opening rites before supportive chanting begins:

1.) Recite the **Lotus Lagoon Assembly Prayer** (蓮池讚) once :

**There upon the Lotus Lagoon Assembly, Amita Tathagata sits atop the lofty Lotus Dais—flanked by Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta—inviting you to ascend the golden steps while pronouncing great vows ; resolute in leaving all defilements and dusts forever behind.**

2.) Recite the **Amitabha Sutra** once.

3.) Recite the **Mantra for Pure Land Rebirth** thrice (preferably 21 times):

**NA MO A MI DUO PO YE DUO TUO CHIEH DUO YE**

**DUO DI YE TUO A MI LI DU PO PI A MI LI DUO XI DAN PO PI**

**A MI LI DUO PI JIA LAN DI A MI LI DUO PI JIA LAN DUO**

**CHIEH MI LI CHIEH CHIEH NUO ZHI DUO JIA LI**

**SUO PO HE**

4.) Recite the **Praise of Amitabha** once:

**Amita Buddha's aurulent form and appearance,  
Is august and resplendent without peer.  
His fair brows circumvent five Sumeru peaks,  
And his purple eyes are as clear as the Four Great Seas.**

**Within his radiant halo are countless Buddhas,  
And a host of Bodhisattvas limitless and boundless.  
His 48 Great Vows will save sentient beings of any rank,  
And all nine grades of aspirants shall reach the other bank.**

5.) Recite **Namo Greatly Compassionate and Benevolent Amitabha of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss** once.

6.) Recite **Namo Amita Buddha** six times.

7.) Continuously recite a shorter version of Amita Buddha's name (i.e. any version without the honorific "Namo" ).

If the illness is severe, recite only Amitabha's name. Moreover, the Dharma instruments used should consist only of the small hand bell as the wooden fish temple block would be too rough in sound. The supportive chanters should be divided into five teams. Two teams for the day shift and three teams for the night. Each team should have two or more persons. Change teams every hour. The first team of the day shift should recite loudly for one hour ; the second team follows with quiet recitation for another hour, and so forth. Teams should alternate between the roles of loud and quiet recitation. When the night shift arrives, the first team recites loudly and the two teams that follow will recite quietly.

Rotate teams so that those who recite quietly will recite loudly next time and vice versa. A rotation and shift schedule allows for continuous recitation and conservation of strength.

Supportive chanters must also remind the dying that if they are able, they should chant along. If not, they are to carefully hear each word and mentally follow. Tell them to wholeheartedly take refuge in the name of Amitabha that resounds in the room. Afterwards, begin chanting. If the dying are unconscious, gently ring the hand bell near their ears and recite with a more raised voice.

When it becomes clear that the last breath is about to be drawn, and if the supportive chanters are numerous, family members and those present are to recite while kneeling or prostrating before the altar or image of the Buddha and pray for Amitabha's swift arrival, and for his bright light of salvation to envelop the dying.

**At this time, all supportive chanters are to be consolidated into two groups that will each loudly recite for half an hour. The recitations must continue in this manner for 3 hours after the moment of death.** After that, return to the old rotation schedule, but do not recite silently.

During the moments leading up to the last breath, supportive chanters must be aware of signs of distress exhibited by the dying, such as: Sweating, anxious facial expressions, quivering, trembling and or unconsciousness. Such displays indicate that right mindfulness is unlikely to be present in the dying's mind.

Therefore, if such signs are present, supportive chanters are to loudly warn the dying with the following statement: "(Name)...The Western Pure Land is right in front of you! Reinforce your mindfulness of Amitabha! You must attain Pure Land rebirth!" Warn twice. If there is not even a slight positive change, warn once more. However, do not warn more than a total of three times. Afterwards, recite Amitabha loudly.

Furthermore, after breathing stops but before the body has gone gold, the supportive chanters present must guard against any attempt to disturb the body and prevent any and all expressions of sorrow or grief. The only thing that should be done is to continue chanting Amitabha out loud.

Only when a day and night have passed can an experienced Dharma friend or supportive chanter cautiously check for warmth. If the body has gone completely cold, supportive chanting may cease. Final dedications of the merit from the supportive chanting towards the deceased's Pure land rebirth may then take place.

If the body has not gone completely cold, those present must persevere in their supportive chanting even if it takes another one, two or three days. They must not let slothfulness rob the deceased of salvation and stand in the way of the Buddha's will.

## WHEN TO DRESS AND WASH THE BODY AFTER DEATH

When the body has gone completely cold, wait until another two hours have passed before preparing the body for burial. If the joints have become hard, wrap them in cloth soaked in warm water. After a few minutes, they will become soft. Likewise, If the eyes have not closed, drape warm soaked cloth upon them. After a few minutes, they can be closed. As for the clothes, choose the ones they usually wear. It is not necessary to splurge on expensive garments or lavish funeral displays.

The most important thing is to help deceased relatives attain Pure Land rebirth. Ostentatious and boastful funerals are unnecessary and selfish as they do not help the deceased in any way. A modest and dignified burial will suffice in fulfilling filial duty.

## THE BEST WAY TO TRANSFER BLESSINGS TO THE DEPARTED

Within the 49 day period after death, the entire household of the deceased must create merits on behalf of the dead. They should therefore recite Amitabha's name, abstain from all meat or alcohol, and hold the five precepts. They shall not steal, not kill, not lie, and imbibe neither intoxicants nor flavor with the five pungent plants (onions, garlic, shallots, leeks and chives) as they are mentioned in the Shurangama Sutra to be a cause of anger and lust.

Monks and nuns can be invited to recite the Buddha's name for the benefit of the deceased. How long and how many depends upon available funds and resources. As family members have strong relationships, their recitations are often more sincere. Either way, as long as it is sincere, there is great merit. Those reciting should dedicate these merits to the deceased's Pure Land rebirth in front of the memorial everyday. If the deceased has already attained Pure Land rebirth, these merits will help them attain Bodhi in Pure Land more quickly. If they have not, these merits will help their souls seek such a rebirth.

As mentioned before, The Contemplation Sutra makes clear that each utterance of Amitabha can eradicate 8 billion great eons of severe karmic retribution. Thus, no other ceremony, sutra, penance or prayer can match the merit created by sincerely reciting Amita Buddha's name.

Even though the other merit making practices and rites are indeed powerful if faithfully done, few nowadays have the patience and spiritual mastery necessary. Even Patriarch Yin Guang warned: "The ordained of today are often perfunctory and do not act in accordance with the Dharma. They focus only on external appearances and superficial etiquette. However, chanting the name of Amitabha is something everyone can do. The resulting merit is boundless, potent and impressive. Thus, if the merits are dedicated to the Pure Land rebirth of all the beings within the Dharma-realm, the deceased will benefit boundlessly."



## INQUIRIES REGARDING THE INTERMEDIATE STATE BETWEEN DEATH AND REBIRTH

**Question: Why do the relatives of the deceased need to abstain from meat and recite the Buddha's name for 49 days after the deceased has passed?**

**Answer:**

If the deceased has attained rebirth in Pure Land, the merits created on their behalf will help them achieve Bodhi even more quickly than otherwise possible. If the deceased has not yet been reborn, these merits will help them give rise to the causes (i.e. faith, resolve and action) of Pure Land rebirth. This rescues them from the uncertainty of the intermediate state and propels them into the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. Moreover, the family members create for themselves great merit as well.

**Question: What is the intermediate state?**

**Answer:**

The intermediate state refers to the state between death and the confirmation of a new rebirth. It is like the hallway between rooms. Only those who have attained Pure Land rebirth upon death, or those who have either great merit or immense evil do not go through the intermediate state. Those of great merit ascend to the Heavens immediately ; those of immense evil tumble into the Hells straight away. However, those of neither great good nor heavy evil wait for a period of up to (generally) 49 days before the next rebirth within the Samsara is decided by the final balance of karma. Good deeds and virtue done by family members at this time can tip the scales in favor of the deceased. Evil deeds do the opposite and actually heap additional offenses upon them—if they were good, they will have their past good deeds soiled ; if they were evil, they would be cast into the deepest Hells by the cumulative karmic burden. Thus, family members must be dutifully virtuous and vigilant during this time.

**Question: If financially challenged families must spend 49 days creating merit, how are they supposed to live?**

**Answer:**

Buddha name recitation creates the greatest merit. Thus, those of limited resources should refrain from inviting monks and nuns and instead recite themselves. Their own meatless diets and recitations will more than suffice.

They may, based upon their own schedules, set aside three times a day where they will recite the Buddha's name. After they are finished, they shall dedicate the merit in front of the memorial to the deceased. Preferably, they should recite in the morning (before breakfast) and then either before or after both lunch and dinner. When they are working or attending to other routines, they may (unless what they are doing requires their full attention) recite silently and dedicate the merit to the deceased.

Thus, there is no conflict between regular life and helping the deceased. Moreover, the merit created will benefit both the living relatives and the deceased. It is a mutually beneficial endeavor.

## CONCURRING WITH CHAPTER SEVEN OF THE EARTH STORE SUTRA: BENEFITING THE DEAD AND LIVING

In the Earth Store Sutra, an elder known as Great Eloquence joined his palms and respectfully asked Earth Store Bodhisattva: “Your Eminence, if the close kin or distant relatives of a recently deceased inhabitant of Jambudvīpa were to create merit on their behalf by holding the precepts, abstaining from meat and doing various good deeds, can the deceased obtain the greatest benefit and be thus liberated?”

Earth Store replied, “Noble Elder! When beings of both present and future die, and if they could hear the name of but one Buddha, Bodhisattva or Paṣcekabuddha at that time, then regardless of whether they are guilty of offenses or not, they will all find liberation (in the Western Pure Land).”

The Bodhisattva also said, “The Phantom of Impermanence appears so suddenly that the consciousness of the departed are cast into glooming uncertainty—unaware of their balance of karma. And so, for seven seasons of seven days each, they are as if senseless, or as anxious as an accused waiting in court for judgement to be rendered. Once their karmic path has been confirmed, they are reborn accordingly. Until then, they are stricken with thousands of fears, not to mention those who are destined for the evil realms.”

“Throughout the seven seven day cycles, those who are dead but not yet reborn ache desperately with every thought for their own flesh and blood to create the blessings to save them. Once this period of time has passed, their fate is confirmed. Those who have often transgressed will undergo punishment for thousands of centuries without chance of pardon. Those who have committed the five grave offenses will be condemned to suffer relentlessly in the deepest circles of Hell for thousands upon thousands of kalpas.”

“..... Therefore, if the kin of the the departed can eagerly raise good deed after good deed within the seven cycles of seven days each, then those who have passed may forever shun the evil realms and ascend into the ranks of men and gods to enjoy supremely wondrous bliss. The surviving kin

would likewise receive limitless benefits.”

## REGARDING STROKE AND DEAFNESS

**Question: If those who have regularly nurtured their faith and resolve for Pure Land rebirth should be rendered unconscious, senseless and mute by stroke, then how effective is supportive chanting in this case? Moreover, if it is only marginally helpful, then where are the merits they have accumulated?**

**Answer:**

The merit from reciting the Buddha's name is inconceivable. If there is a person of the described situation, then the benefits of supportive chanting by Dharma friends will still be unimaginably helpful. If their merit allows them to regain consciousness and their senses before passing, then they will attain Pure Land rebirth while blessed by the Buddha's powers upon death. If they die senseless and unconscious, then on account of the merit they have accumulated and the resolve they have nurtured, the supportive chanting rendered by kind friends will allow their consciousness to regroup and attain Pure Land rebirth during the intermediate state.

Even if they are unable to do so despite these supportive conditions, **their work is certainly not in vain!** The accumulated good roots will sprout into Pure Land rebirth in a future life. For instance, according to the sutras, an old person once shouted for the Buddha when confronted by a tiger. This one act caused him to eventually meet the Buddha. Thus, how much more secure are those who have cultivated throughout their life?

**Question: Can deaf people benefit from supportive chanting?**

**Answer:**

Deafness is caused by past offenses relating to the ear organ. Nevertheless, even the deaf can be reborn in Pure Land due to supportive chanting. How so? Even though they are deaf, their innate perception is still present. Therefore,

As long as they are of sound mind, their resolve and mindfulness for Pure Land rebirth can generate a response from the Buddha. Moreover, the united intent of their supportive chanters and the merit of Amitabha's name are both inconceivably powerful. Thus, their rebirth in Pure Land becomes as smooth as a sailboat sailing amid favorable winds!

Moreover, as the limitations of the body dissolve at death, their Eighth Consciousness reemerges and is complete in its cognition and perception.

## WHERE DOES THE SOUL DEPART TO AFTER LEAVING THE BODY?

Boundless space and endless time constitute the Universe. Within this vast body, the experiences of various consciousnesses are also diverse without limit. For simplicity's sake, they can be divided into ten levels. Of those ten, four belong to the Sagely and six belong to common souls subject to death and rebirth. Even though the innate nature of all ten levels are the same, the inhabitants differ in the purity of their habits. These differences underpin the divergence between the path of the Sagely and common. Within the path of common beings, differing good and evil karma create the Six Realms of Death and Rebirth. Thus, the saying that the Dharma-realm is dictated by the heart refers to the fact that the difference between advancement to Sagehood or karmic downfall depends only upon the will behind one's actions. It takes just one truly proper thought for Sagely realms to arise.

However, as the Dharma-ending age has already begun, the will to act is insufficient by itself. Cultivation by self power alone would be so difficult that even if hundreds of millions of people were to cultivate, there may not be even one Sage among them in the end. The people of today are dull, misguided, defiled and deluded. They are also false, tumultuous, of heavy sins and scant fortune, are unwise and saddled by obstacles.

Thus, out of compassion for such hopeless beings of the Dharma-ending age, Shakyamuni Buddha spoke the Dharma-door of Mindfulness of the Buddha's Name : That there is a Buddha in the West known as Amita who uses the awesome power of his Great Vows to make up for the shortfall of such sentient beings. Thus, both the wise and dull, the good and evil, and all other kinds of people, as long as they are willing to repent and recite Namo Amitabha with true faith and unwavering resolve, be single minded in seeking the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, Amitabha will appear at their moment of death (along with a host of Sages) to welcome them. They attain Pure Land in that final one thought. Thenceforth, they will assume

ethereal forms whilst they dwell in the Lotus Lagoon and attain infinite life ; forever free from the Samsara, they enjoy august, eternal and wondrous bliss.

Therefore, this Dharma-door is considered the method of salvation for the period immediately before and shortly after the moment of death.

Knowing this, family, friends and relatives of a dying person must neither weep nor disturb the body. They must, within a silent and undisturbed sickroom or ward, recite out loud the name of Amitabha with a sincere, pure and calm heart. With their supportive chanting, they guide the consciousness of the dying to rejoice in the Buddha's name, and to find peace within right mindfulness. With one heart, the dying seeks the Buddha's Kingdom, and so, they shall be reborn the the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.



## DO NOT CREMATE UNTIL AT LEAST SEVEN DAYS HAVE PASSED

If cremation is intended, there is the matter of cold weather and warm weather. During cold weather, cremation should be delayed for at least seven days (preferably a fortnight). This is to prevent pain and distress if the consciousness still lingers. More importantly, it is a precaution in case the deceased make come back to life.

As the consciousness experiencing the intermediate state does not belong anywhere and is mired in uncertainty, it is possible for those who have not been reborn due to strong attachment towards the body to return to life to settle more karma if their body has not decayed beyond use. There is also the situation of those who die suddenly but are later found by the Spirit Officials of the Netherworld to have not yet reached their full lifespan and are sent back as a result in less than seven days, and if their body is still fresh enough, they can also return to life. Lastly, there are those who are mistakenly declared dead despite being alive and are sent to the morgue only to regain their abilities suddenly. There are numerous records of such cases and countless hospitals, temples and morgues have also experienced such situations. For instance, there is a case where a monk regained life after being sent back from the Netherworld just as he was being placed upon the pyre. He lived for another ten years!

If the weather is hot, then on account of the hastened decay, the wait time before the cremation ceremony can be reduced on discretion. However, cremating the corpse after only two or three days have passed is the most dangerous and risky.

### **Translator's Notes:**

This section includes pertinent information from other chapters that are otherwise mostly overlap.

## MAKING YOUR WISHES CLEAR TO YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS

Those who are elders must not shy away from discussing the wisdom found within this handbook because of fear that such topic may bring inauspiciousness.\*

The moment of death and its significant implications apply to everyone. All male and female adults of the household must understand that time flies. Moreover, elderly people must discuss the teachings of this book and their final wishes with their children and family members while they are still of sound mind and able to communicate freely.

As most people who are not yet middle aged do not even think about death, elders must instruct those who will handle their moment of death so they can be properly prepared. This is to prevent uneducated sons and daughters from botching up their eve of death and causing their consciousness pain.

### **Translator's Notes:**

\*In fact, in the the Woe and Weal Sutra of the Faithful Sutra (阿難問事佛吉凶經), it is mentioned that true disciples of the Buddha are forbidden from picking out auspicious hours and days. Thus, superstitious fears (such as if discussing proper arrangements would hasten death) are invalid and rooted in ignorance .

## **MODERN PURE LAND REBIRTH CASES**

### **Pure Land is my Home The Story of my Father's Rebirth**

*by Guo Xuan Lee*

*Translated by Huali Yuan*

### ***Pure Sound From Silicon Valley***

*Issue 152, Dec. 2008*

My parents lived in Australia and they did not believe in Buddhadharma. When I first started to study Buddhadharma, I also exhorted my family to study, my mother and younger sister followed with me, and they became vegetarians and started to recite the Buddha's name, however, my father still insisted that we were being superstitious, and he even obstructed my cultivation.

One day, my parents and younger sister had a car accident when they were driving. The accident was quite serious, the whole car was almost wrecked, and my father went into coma and bled a lot, however, my mother and younger sister remained safe and sound. After this experience, mother and sister gained more faith in the Buddhadharma, while my father was sick in bed and could not walk, but he had a strong belief that his body would recover as wholesome as before, and he could walk freely, therefore, he asked many good doctors to treat him, but all efforts went in vain, his physical health did not get any better. Because of this, he lose his temper all the times, which made my mother afflicted a lot, therefore I went back to Australia to visit them.

After I got home, I explained to my father the truth of “birth, old age, sickness, death, and other Buddhадharma. I told him,” you have already gone through the suffering of birth and old age, now you are undergoing the suffering of sickness, and the last one could be the suffering of death.” I explained Buddhадharma to him everyday, so he started to gain a bit of faith, he told me that one day when he was lying in bed, he saw his room caught on a heavy fire, but strange indeed was that there were some fish amid the fire, he hurried to call my mother in, however when my mother came, she saw nothing.

My father asked me what did that mean, I told him my personal view ” Our physical body is like the house we are living in, now the house is on fire, it means that our body is being broken down; as for the fish, when did you see a fish with closed eyes? Fish always keep their eyes open, which means that you should wake up soon, don’t get attached and confused any more. You really had a lot of blessings, since Buddhas and Bodhisattvas showed you these in order to make you wake up soon! Your body condition is getting down soon, do not get attached to it any longer.” From this on, my father changed to a vegetarian diet and started to recite the Buddha’s name.

Half a year before my father’s rebirth, my elder sister visited him once. She a filial daughter with a kind heart, but being a Catholic, she believes animals are created to be eaten by human, as long as human are kind. So when she found that our father was sick, weak, and on a veggie diet, she was worried that our father did not get enough nutrition. Therefore, she explained her concern to father, and asked him whether she could cook meat for him. He took her advice at once, and was happy that he could eat meat again. So one thing led to another, and he could not stop, later on he even desired to eat pig’s feet every day. My mother called

me and asked me to talk to my father, over the phone, I just said a few words to him, "Dad, if you eat other beings' feet now, in the future, other beings will eat your feet." One week later, my mom called me again and told me that my father had returned to a vegetarian diet.

Two months before my father's rebirth, he could fall asleep every night. It seemed that he kept talking to someone, getting angry and yelling. Therefore, I went back again to Australia to visit him. I asked him why he could not sleep. He said that some beings came to bother him every night, and none of them had feet. I realized at once that they were his enemies and debtors. I told him, "It is because you ate others' feet in the past, now they all came back to you. "Then I asked him," How did you treat them?" He said," I am not afraid of them, I never did a single evil thing or harm a single person in my life, therefore I do not need be afraid of them, if they come, I will fight with them!" I advised him not behave like that, because those ghost beings are in great suffering, without blessings, they have no opportunities of encountering Buddhadharma, that is why we should be compassionate with them.

I said, "If they come again tonight, you apologize to them, and tell them because you did not understand principles, you harmed them, now you are seeking forgiveness from them. Also you can tell them to recite the Buddha's name, so that they can seek rebirth, and end birth and death. You yourself also have to recite the Buddha's name on behalf of them, recite Amitabha Buddha." The next morning, I asked father whether they came or not and how was it. He said they did come, and he addressed them as I taught, then he recited the Buddha's name on their behalf, and they did not disturb him any long, they stood there listening to the Buddha's name, after that, they left.

A week before my father's rebirth, one day, it looked like he was dying, therefore, my mother and younger sister started to recite the Buddha's name, after a whole day, my father is still alive. Suddenly, my younger sister smelt fragrant incense, which lasts for about 5 minutes. At that time, she understood that she need offer incense. Therefore, she asked mother to bring an incensory for her to lit incense, wishing the Buddha could come to welcome father and his enemies and debtees into pure land. After making the incense offering, they continued reciting the Buddha's name. At that time, my younger sister heard other voices around them, a lot of melodic voices resound in the air, reciting the Buddha's name. My younger sister said that upon hearing these wonderful sounds, she felt very pure and clear in heart. One week later, my father passed away, his mind was quite clear when he was dying, but he already put down everything, his wife, children, and houses, his only wish was to follow the Buddha and he was ready. He passed away very peacefully. His face looked ruddy and pleasant, and even had a smile on it. His body was also very soft. Some people who came to assist reciting the Buddha's name even smelt fragrant incense.

Forty-nine days after my father's rebirth, one day when my son Mingguang was in sleep, he felt someone nudging his elbows in his dream, when he opened eyes, he saw his grandfather. Mingguang said that his grandfather did not look like before, since his grandfather had the appearance of a Bhikus, with hair already being shaved, a very fresh and smooth face without any wrinkle, wearing a bright orange sash, smiling happily. Mingguang asked him, "Grandpa, how come you are here?" His grandpa answered, smiling, "I came to tell you, I have already followed with Amitabha and been reborn in the Pure Land. Mingguang, you should vigorously recite Buddha's name, and follow with Amitabha Buddha."

## **The Story of Dr Chiang**

***Published in Vajra Bodhi Sea, Bodhi Field section,  
November 2008 Edition p33-37***

**A talk by Alice Chiang on September 14, 2008**

Dharma Master Yo asked me to share with you what Dr. Chiang and our family have gone through these past 5 months. Life is so very unpredictable! Just a few months ago, Dr. Chiang was at the peak of his medical practice. We were in the process of moving into a brand new house. It was his dream home. It's got everything he ever wanted built in it. The new house was surrounded by woods and lots of trees, which he loved. He was very excited about it. At the end of February and the beginning of March, we began to pack our valuables and important documents into boxes and move from our old house to the new one. His back then began to hurt. We thought he probably just pulled some muscles while lifting boxes and did not take too much notice of it. Well, the back pain got worse for the next two weeks and began to pinch the nerve, causing numbness of the left leg. He decided to get an MRI of the spine to make sure everything was okay.

I will never forget March 20th, Thursday, at 3 p.m. [Our son] Andy was still on his spring break. We all accompanied Dr. Chiang to have the MRI. As he came out of the test, he was wearing a smile on his face. Andy and I were relieved. But he then went on and told us that the radiologist had shown him the film, and he had seen a large tumor inside one of the vertebrae. Subsequently, a CT Scan confirmed that Dr. Chiang had stage IV lung cancer, which had already spread to the spine. It was so shocking and devastating for me! I didn't know what to do. The first thing that came to my mind was: what's going to happen to



all his patients? Who would be willing to cover for Dr. Chiang? And what's going to happen to his medical practice that he cares so very much about? Coincidentally, March 20th was also the day that we had just signed the contract to list our old house for sale. Even though Dr. Chiang was ailing, he went back to the office over the next two days, performed 15 endoscopies and colonoscopies, and saw 25 patients. He was still laughing and joking with the patients as if nothing had happened. But starting Sunday, three days after he was diagnosed, his condition continued deteriorating. He was in so much pain and couldn't get out of bed any more. After that, he was never able to go back to his office ever again.

Taking care of Dr. Chiang and bringing him to various tests/scans and treatment/therapy was already a full time job for me. But being his medical practice manager, I had to handle the transition of the patient care as well as the business and operation of the office, including finding a good physician to cover for Dr. Chiang as well as coordinating with pharmacies and other health care professionals.

In addition, I had to deal with selling the old house and eventually moving. To me, it was almost mission impossible! It was a tremendous and overwhelming burden for me. Being a Buddhist, it is very clear to me that this was karmic retribution appearing right in front of us. We were in this together. These karmic situations came chasing us like a huge hurricane and totally caught us off guard! I know this was the karma from Dr. Chiang's previous life, because in this life he was such a good, kindhearted man who had saved so many people's lives. So, I began to repent to the Buddha on Dr. Chiang's behalf and recite the Great Compassion Mantra vigorously, incorporating the recitation into my daily activities all day long. I know I was being



blessed by Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Venerable Master Hua because in addition to the Dharma Masters' caring and support, all of a sudden I felt an enormous and irresistible power and strength in me at all times helping me overcome so many karmic obstacles.

Recently, Dr. Chiang did back surgery to remove the tumor in the vertebrae, four sessions of chemotherapy, and over 30 sessions of radiation treatment, yet the cancer cells continued to grow and to spread! I made many attempts to share the Buddhadharma with him using my own experience as an example. I also urged him to accept some alternative medicine and food therapy for body and mind healing, but I could never totally convince him. Being not only a physician but also biochemist and immunologist himself, Dr. Chiang was very skeptical of my advice.

In mid-July, Dr. Chiang was admitted to the hospital due to side effects from chemotherapy. He couldn't keep any food down and was constantly throwing up. His condition started gradually going downhill. A week later, his arms and legs were all swollen, and he lost his voice. The oncologist told us that it was about the time to put his hands in his pockets, as there was nothing he could do medically to help Dr. Chiang. When we were told Dr. Chiang only had weeks to live, he was surprisingly very calm. This was when I told him that only Buddhas and Bodhisattvas could save him now. I asked him to begin vigorously reciting Amitabha's name, and explained to him that the land of Ultimate Bliss is covered by gold and surrounded by so many treasures and that there will be no suffering, only enjoyment of every bliss. If he recited

Amitabha's name wholeheartedly, he would attain rebirth in the land of Ultimate Bliss. He agreed and began to do so. I told him that if he recited the Buddha's name one time, he would liberate

one cancer cell; if he recited 10,000 times, he'd liberate 10,000 cancer cells. He laughed. I went on and told him to recite with as much diligence as if his patients were very sick, and he needed to save their lives. He listened and acknowledged my words. He also took Dharma Master Yo's advice and agreed to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and receive the Five Precepts.

On July 27th, Dharma Master Yo and Dharma Master Jai along with disciple Kao came to visit Dr. Chiang in the hospital. Dr. Chiang took refuge with Venerable Master Hua and received the five precepts from Dharma Master Yo and Dharma Master Jai. Inconceivably, the very next day, the swelling of his arms and legs diminished! He looked so much healthier with pink cheeks. Not only did he begin to talk out loud but also he was able to start eating and keep the food down without vomiting! The oncologist was so stunned and amazed and couldn't figure out why. This gave Dr. Chiang so much confidence and encouragement. All of sudden, he was able to totally let go of his worries and be totally at ease. After that, he began reciting Buddha's name even more vigorously.

As we were thinking Dr. Chiang was stable enough to come home, he started to develop difficulty in breathing. His heart was pounding very fast. Coughing and fever complicated the condition. I knew the end was coming. Andy and I followed the Dharma Master's suggestion to recite along with him. A few times when I asked him whether he saw Amitabha coming, he nodded his head and said, "Yes!" Right before and after Dr. Chiang's passing, we did encounter a few incidences of interference from creditors of Dr. Chiang's previous lives. Andy will briefly describe what happened during and after Dr. Chiang's passing later. Although Dr. Chiang was seeking help of the Buddha at the very last minutes, he did have good roots, blessings, virtues, and

causal connections as described in The Buddha Speaks of Amitabha Sutra, and he was reciting Buddha's name so vigorously and wholeheartedly without confusion. Therefore, I believe he will attain rebirth in Amitabha's land of Ultimate Bliss. In his Dharma Talks, Venerable Master Hua often spoke of how sincerity brings a response that intertwines with the Way. It is truly an inconceivable phenomenon. I myself have felt and witnessed Buddhas and Bodhisattvas' compassion, wisdom, and boundless light shining on me during this most difficult time of my life. I would like to share a phrase with you which best describes what I went through during the past five months. The phrase is from Incense Praise: "If our hearts are sincere and earnest, all Buddhas will manifest."

### **A talk by Andy Chiang on September 14, 2008**

My dad passed away on Saturday, August 16th, in the afternoon. Heading into that Thursday, August 14th, we knew that my dad was probably nearing the end of his life, so Mom and I made sure that we were in my dad's hospital room at all times. Around 3 p.m. on Friday, my mom and I had an appointment at the funeral home to discuss the arrangement. But pretty much right as we got back to the hospital from the funeral home around 6 p.m., my mom received a call from our home's security company. They called to tell us that the alarm system had gone off at home and to see if we were okay. Naturally, my mom told them that we hadn't been in the house since 2 p.m.; Therefore, it was really strange that the alarm went off around 6 p.m. ; This was the first time our alarm had ever gone off, so my mom was afraid someone had broken into our house. We decided to rush back home to make sure things were okay. We waited for two police cars to show up. When we opened the garage door, we noticed that the rear door to the house was open. The police went in the

house and checked every room and found no trace of anyone breaking in. When we were confident that our home was fine, my mom and I rushed back to the hospital to be with my dad. That night we were reciting the Amitabha Buddha's name all night long. When dad was listening to us reciting the Buddha's name, he would move his lips trying so hard to recite with us and often breaking into huge smiles. These smiles were different than his usual smiles—as if he were experiencing something he'd never experienced before. And indeed, when my mom asked him, "Did you see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas?" he nodded to say yes. The next day, on the morning of the day that my dad passed away, he could not really move anything but his eyes. As we recited the Amitabha Buddha's name to him, I saw tears coming down from his eyes. That's how I knew he could hear me. So I was reciting even louder and more vigorously, because I knew the end was near.

My dad passed away that Saturday afternoon at 2:22 p.m. But just a few minutes before and after dad's passing, something very strange was happening. The intercom speaker kept coming on (at least three times), and the front desk nurse kept asking us, "How can I help you?" even though no one had pressed the emergency button. In fact, I had gotten so annoyed by it that I left my dad's room to go tell the front desk that we were trying to recite the Amitabha Buddha's name, and the intercom speaker kept distracting us. At 2:30 p.m., my mom asked the nurse to come in and unplug the IV machine. When dad passed away, his face froze in the suffering state he was in when he took his last breath. Our heartfelt thanks to so many of you who came to the hospital to help us recite Amitabha Buddha's name. After several hours of recitation, my dad's face began to change, even though he had died hours earlier. The suffering state of his mouth changed into a decidedly noticeable smile. It was unmistakable! I

was in absolute shock and awe at what I had seen. A little after 10 p.m. towards the end of the recitation of the Amitabha prayer, all of a sudden, the unplugged IV machine started beeping again as if it were on, for a few times in a row! (But it had been turned off for almost eight hours by that point!).

The next day, when I finally had a chance to think about all the incredible things that happened in the last two days, and I had a chance to talk to my mom about it, I was then able to make sense of everything. The rear door opening by itself, the hospital intercom speaker going off by itself, and the IV beeping after it had been turned off... This was all the work of enemy spirits that were trying to distract my family and I from focusing our attention on my dad as he was about to die. I understood then that these spirits were from my dad's past lives and were trying to keep us away from my dad. I realized that the smile from my dad's face even after he passed away was his way of communicating to us that he had found Amitabha, through the light that our prayers had created for him and that he would find his way to the Pure Land. My dad's eyes had closed, but he opened mine. Thank you very much.

## **Remembrance of My Father's Rebirth**

*By Kai Wen Lo*

*Translation By Laura Lin*

### **Pure Sound From Silicon Valley**

*Issue 116, Dec 2005, p8-10*

June of this year, my father experienced sudden pain around his waist, and he couldn't eat. Within one month, he lost around ten kilograms. He was admitted to Taipei's General Veteran's Hospital many times. Finally, in September, he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. According to his doctor, this type of cancer worsens very quickly. Usually, a patient with this illness only lives for another six months. Although my entire family didn't lose hope, we were finally defeated by the disease. My father peacefully passed away at the end of October. From when he first got ill to when he passed away, many inconceivable events as described in the Sutras occurred. Therefore, I put these events together to share with everyone.

#### **1. The Six Principles formed the foundation of my father's faith:**

My father was an introvert, he considered carefully before he acted, and he was a very responsible person. Ever since we were children, my father taught my brother, my sister, and me never take advantage of others and never flatter others to further our own benefits. Also, he taught us not to add to another person's burden. Because my father sincerely respected the Venerable Master Hua's merit and virtue, he took refuge with the



Venerable Master in 1994. From then on, my father recited the Earth Store Sutra, the Heart Sutra and the Buddha's name daily.

## **2. I constantly reminded my father to maintain his faith:**

During my father's stay in the hospital, the suffering that he went through was beyond description. When he realized that his illness was incurable, he was determined to be reborn in the Pure Land. I put a recording of the Buddha's name next to my father's bedside, and it played continuously. I frequently described the scene of the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss to my father. I also told him that the relationships in the Saha world are temporary, only his Dharma companions in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss are permanent. One day when my father woke up, he felt a lot of pain. However, he saw a circle of yellow light about one foot in diameter on the ceiling. All of the sudden, he experienced comfort all over his body. Since then, his faith was even firmer.

## **3. Manifestation of negative karma could not be ignored:**

Eight days before my father passed away, he dreamed that many people were chasing him to kill him. When he woke up, he was very disturbed. When my friend told me over the phone that the Three Thousand Buddhas Repentance was taking place at Taipei's Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Society, my family rushed over and set up a "Plaque to Repay Those We Owe" on behalf of my father. The next day, my father dreamed that there was an individual who blocked those who were trying to kill him. On the third day, in his dreams, my father saw that his intended killers had smiles on their faces and appeared to be joyful, and they stopped seeking retribution from him. My father's experience was similar to the teachings in the Earth Store Sutra

where it describes what a person experiences before he passes away. Everyone should be mindful of this.

#### **4. Letting go of everything and passing away amid recitation of the Buddha's name:**

On October 25, my father's illness worsened very quickly. Following my mother's reminder, my father even used his very hoarse voice to call out Amitabha Buddha's name two hours before his passing. It was incredibly touching! I told my father not to worry about the family, to let go of everything, and to concentrate on reciting the Buddha's name in his mind. At that time, my entire family started to recite the Buddha's name. When I saw my father's last breath, it was as if a knife cut my heart while it broke into thousands of pieces, and I felt as if there were explosions all around me. However, I remembered the words of Great Master Yin Kuang, so I continued to recite the Buddha's name with tears in my eyes. Under the compassionate assistance of Dharma Masters Heng Yun, Heng Tsai and others, the Dharma brothers of Dharma Realms Buddhist Books Distribution Society were contacted right away. They were very organized and took turns to recite the Buddha's name on my father's behalf. Due to their efforts, my father reached the Western Pure Land smoothly, and my family is deeply grateful.

#### **5. Amitabha Buddha appeared and radiated thousands of rays of golden light:**

When my family started to recite the Buddha's name, my younger brother smelled the scent of fragrant flowers in the hospital room, and my younger sister saw Amitabha Buddha manifesting an incredibly large body from afar while emitting golden light. Even



more surprisingly, she saw our father walking slowly towards Amitabha. At that time, my sister thought there was something wrong with her, so she left the room to get a drink of water and to take deep breaths. When she went back to the room and closed her eyes to resume her recitation, the scene she saw earlier returned. Our father was closer to Amitabha, and he appeared to be getting smaller. My sister left the room again to get a drink of water and to take deep breaths. When she returned to the room, she saw my father's hair fell off, and he was wearing a black robe as he got on a lotus to leave. What is also worth mentioning is my sister's description of Amitabha. She said the Buddha's head is the color of loyal blue and he had many flesh mounds on the crown of his head. She also said that our father appeared to be very small next to Amitabha. Two days after my father's passing, my sister continued to smell wondrous fragrance. My brother and sister are not true Buddhist disciples. They know very little about Amitabha and the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. Without the kindness and compassion of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, my brother and sister would not have experienced such auspicious states.

**Recommended Resource: Ven Hai Xian  
(1901-2013) Pure Land Rebirth Documentary  
(English subtitles):**



**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoritpHKxm4>**

**Public Domain English biography booklet available  
here: <https://www.scribd.com/user/269920848/bc1993>**

## Living Will

*To my family and all those concerned with my care:*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, of

---

being of sound mind, make this statement as a directive to be followed if for any reason I become unable to participate in decisions regarding my medical care.

Upon my death and transition into the next life, I do not wish to be reborn into the ghost kingdom or the animal kingdom. I do not wish to suffer. Instead, I wish to follow Amitabha Buddha and to arrive at his Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. To all my family and friends, I wish to ask for your assistance so that I may not suffer, but instead remain calm and peaceful to prepare for my arrival to the Western Pure Land.

In the event that I should suffer from a terminal illness to the extent that doctors foresee no possible recovery, I ask that no medical treatment be undertaken. Should I already be in the hospital at this point, I wish to be checked out and brought back home. Please notify my assigned family member or friend \_\_\_\_\_ at telephone number(s) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Once home, please position me in the most comfortable, natural position in which I may rest. The assigned family member or friend will lead others in chanting “Amituofo.”

Should I decline to the point where I lose consciousness and am no longer aware of my surroundings, the assigned family member or friend shall have full authority in making any decisions regarding my well-being. If

this person cannot be contacted, please find a Buddhist master or Buddhist believer to aid in the chanting of “Amitufo” until the assigned person can be reached.

Within twenty-four hours prior to and after my death, I would like to ask my friends and family to comply with the following:

1. Do not touch or move my body or even my bed.
2. Do not change my clothing.
3. Do not place dry ice or other substances on my body. Sandalwood incense may be burned to if there is any odor.
4. Do not let a breeze to blow directly onto my body.
5. Do not allow the scent of alcohol, onion, scallion, garlic, or chives to enter the room.
6. Do not smoke, cry, or talk in the room.

My purpose for asking this is to create an atmosphere in which I may remain calm and at peace. The only sound I wish to hear is “Amitufo,” so that he may escort me to the Pure Land. If I am at home upon my death, my family should take turns chanting “Amitufo” for eight to twenty-four hours. At this point, I am ready to be moved, washed, and dressed. This period of chanting is the best time to assist me to be calm and peaceful. All funeral arrangements can be set up afterwards. If I should pass away in the hospital, please follow hospital policy and chant as much as is allowed.

During my terminal illness and within forty-nine days after my death, all family members should adopt a vegetarian diet. I do not wish for any killing to be associated with my death. All funeral offerings must be vegetarian. The use of alcohol is strictly prohibited. Funeral arrangements should be kept simple and proper Buddhist etiquette should be followed. I do not wish for any unnecessary excess.

Within forty-nine days following my death, I sincerely ask my family members and friends to seek my rebirth into the Pure Land, and to perform good deeds such as giving offerings to the Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, printing sutras, helping the needy, and so on. These good deeds will help me to attain additional good karma, and

further assist me in arriving at the Pure Land. Most important is for my family to sincerely chant “Amituofo.”

In order for me to benefit the most and to peacefully arrive at the Pure Land, the above points must be followed. This will not only benefit me but all those involved as well. In this manner, I wish for everyone to learn and to believe in Buddhism. Thus, everyone can arrive at the Pure Land, as well.

Amituofo to all.

These directions express my legal right to request or refuse treatment. Therefore, I expect my family, doctor, and all those concerned with my care to regard themselves as legally and morally bound to act in accord with my wishes.

Signed\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Witness: I declare that the person who signed this document, or asked another to sign this document on his or her behalf, did so in my presence and that he or she appears to be of sound mind and free of duress or undue influence.

Witness\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

-----  
Note: This example of “Living Will” is translated by the Amitabha Buddhist Society of Philadelphia.



# Beagle Meets Amitabha!

Pet Beagle dying of old age ascends into Amitabha's Western Pure Land after a day and night of continuous supportive chanting.

By Brian Chung

On the morning of August 6th, at 7:45 AM, my devout Buddhist aunt's beloved pet Beagle of 12 years (she named him Micky) **attained Pure Land rebirth after five days of supportive chanting—with the**



**chanting for the last day and night being**

**continuous.** Miraculously, all of the signs of Pure Land rebirth were present: The body remained soft, clean and supple for many hours after breathing stopped, and the various symptoms and pains (such as coughing up blood and diarrhea) of age-related renal failure mentioned by the veterinarian never manifested. Clearly, this was due to Amita Buddha's inconceivable merit and compassionate blessings.

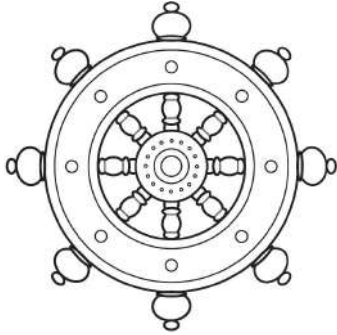


After cremation, Micky's ashes were buried under a tree.

On the day before his passing (August 5th), Micky walked into my aunt's room just before sunrise and waited calmly for her to recite Amita Buddha's name. She sensed that his end was nigh and quickly put a necklace with an aurulent image of Amitabha on him, and reminded Micky not be afraid if Amitabha appeared to welcome him. Thereafter, she recited Amitabha unceasingly and without pause, continuing even after he peacefully drew his last breath the next day.

Just before his moment of death, Micky even got up to visit each room of the apartment one last time and approached every member of the family. In many recorded cases of rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, those about to be reborn were known to have visited their friends and families just before they left with Amitabha. They all foreknew the exact time of their last moment. Thus, Micky's sudden last farewells can only be proof that he too foreknew.

Moreover, when Micky's body was placed into a crate for transport to the pet funeral home, my aunt's cats (who are usually keen to jump into any box) willingly remained solemn and respectful.



Micky's Pure Land rebirth is an epitome of the Buddha's promises in the following sutra verses:

**"...He (Amitabha) is also the Light of Wisdom, Everlasting Light, Light of Purity, Joyous Light, Light of Relief, Light of Refuge, Light Surpassing the Twain of Sunlight and Moonglow, and the Inconceivable Light. Such wondrous Light of his shines ever so brightly across all the worlds of the ten directions without exception."**

**"Any sentient being that perceives this Light will see their defilements wither and their virtues bloom. Their hearts will be calm and their bodies supple. If they are amongst the three woeful states of existence, they will find peace and be liberated upon their deaths. All beings who abide by the augustly luminous and meritorious Dharma ; single-mindedly hear Amitabha's name chanted through night and day without cease, shall ascend into the Pure Land in accordance with their will."**

*-Chapter 12, The Buddha Speaks the Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra*

Thus, the wondrous benefits of supportive chanting cannot be ignored. If we can sincerely encourage our dying pets to seek the Western Pure Land and help them become mindful of Amitabha's meritorious name during their moment of death, the causes and conditions of Pure Land rebirth can align. Thereafter, our beloved and cherished pets will be forever freed from the sufferings of the Samsara. They become Enlightened Bodhisattvas of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.



## Supportive Chanting Guidelines for Pet Owners

- When it becomes clear that your pet is on the verge of death, bring it home from the veterinarian. Make it as comfortable as possible.
- Make sure that it will not be disturbed. Moreover, remain solemn and well composed as overt expressions of grief will generate thoughts of emotion and attachments. If other pets disturb or agitate it, keep them away. This is very important as the final thoughts of a sentient being determines its next rebirth. If the final thoughts are rooted in emotion, the next rebirth will likely be negative. However, if the final thoughts are mindful of Amita Buddha, then even if Pure Land rebirth is not achieved, a superior rebirth within the Samsara is still assured. For instance, according to the *Buddha Speaks the Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra*:



My aunt's cats were all solemn and respectful during Micky's last hours.

### Sutra Vows 25-27: The Vows of Good Karma and Virtue

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are inspired by my name to sincerely cultivate the Bodhisattva Way shall be respected by both men and devas. Moreover, sentient beings who merely hear my name will be reborn as virtuous aristocrats possessing wealth, knowledge and auctoritas. Their bodies will be healthy and complete. Lastly, they will enjoy cultivating the highest Dharma. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

- Show it an image of Amitabha (one is included on the last page for your convenience) ; exhort it to be mindful of Amitabha and to resolve to leave this world with him to the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. Remind it not to be afraid and that its Pure Land rebirth is your greatest wish. Afterwards, recite the **Lotus Lagoon Assembly Prayer** (蓮池讚) once :

**There upon the Lotus Lagoon Assembly, Amita Tathagata sits atop the lofty Lotus Dais—flanked by Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta—inviting you to ascend the golden steps while pronouncing great vows ; resolute in leaving all defilements and dusts forever behind.**

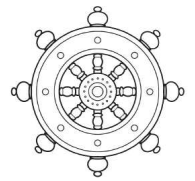
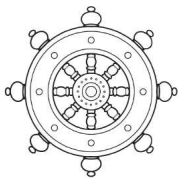
- Recite **Amitabha** or **Amita Buddha** continuously until a few hours after breathing has stopped. Keep a large glass of water nearby in case you become thirsty while reciting. If other family members are willing to recite, establish a shift system.
- After you are done, dedicate the merit from the supportive chanting towards its Pure Land rebirth. This can be done with a simple and sincere statement in front of a Buddha image.

For more free and public domain Dharma resources, visit: <https://www.scribd.com/user/269920848/bc1993>



*Amitabha's aurulent stature and splendorous appearance,  
Shines forth augustly ; marvelous without peer.  
His fair brows wreath five Sumeru peaks,  
Purple eyes as bright and clear as the Four Great Seas.*

*From his luminous halo arise Buddhas countless,  
And a host of Bodhisattvas vast and boundless.  
His 48 Great Vows redeem beings of any rank,  
Ferrying them in ennead orders to the other bank.*



## **The Light of Amita**

**Upon the earth and within men's hearth  
All wander to labor when Helios beams  
And slumber and dream to the gleam of Selene**

**Above Meru's height are devas lofty and bright  
Their wealful delight are theirs by virtuous right  
They glide beyond the skies in their very own light**

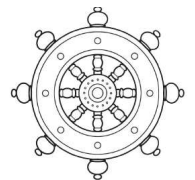
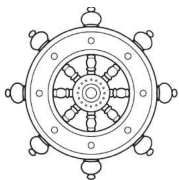
**But there is a brilliance more harmonious  
Much fairer and many times more luminous  
Than all the resplendence of heaven combined:**

**The Light of Amita hath warmth and enlightens  
It heals the afflicted and comforts the frightened  
It eases the mind and sees the heart to brighten**

**Boundless, everlasting and all-embracing  
It shines forth augustly and upon those passing  
Freeing them from falsity and Yama's lashing**

**His golden stature, peerless and splendidous  
Behold his Pure Land! Wondrous and marvelous  
Adorned with gems and devoid of the heinous**

**Thus, chant his name and have faith in his Land  
Vow to arise in the Buddha-land most grand  
To be amongst the beings redeemed by his hand**



---

---

# **Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract on the First Step Towards Non-Abidance**

**A Modern Translation With Commentary**

**文昌帝君陰騭文新中英文版**

**2014 Edition**

**Translation & Commentary by Brian Chung**

**作者：鍾佰巖**

---

---

**THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT**

---

---

## **FOREWORD**

文昌帝君陰騭文 or commonly known in English as the Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way is without doubt one of the most important texts on moral cultivation and karma ever written. Spoken by the Taoist Deity Wen Chang, the text stresses the accumulation of "Yin" virtue. The term "Quiet Way" was coined by earlier translators in order to reflect the broad meaning of the Chinese title.

However, after studying the Buddha's Diamond Sutra, I believe that the deep meaning of the words "陰騭" (or Yin Chih) can be translated into "First Step Towards Non-Abidance". My reasoning is that the cultivation of modest, genuine and selfless virtue (i.e. "Yin Chih") logically represents the first steps towards cultivating Non-Abidance. In the Diamond Sutra, a famous Gatha goes:

凡所有相，皆是虛妄  
應無所住，而生其心

### **All Concepts and Appearances are False and Illusory To Respond but Attach to Nothing & Abide Nowhere**

Hence, anyone who desires to attain Buddhahood must be able to let go of all their false and illusory kleshas and attachments. If they do not, their Buddha Nature (i.e. Non Abiding Cessation) will never be able to shine through the defilements. However, before someone can practice Samadhi and eliminate the defilements, he or she will need to first practice virtue (Śīla) and cultivate untainted stocks of merit. If this is not done, Samadhi will be impossible as the Buddha's instructions in the Threefold Training clearly states that Samadhi can only be cultivated on a firm foundation of genuine merit and strong virtue.

Therefore, an individual's first step towards Buddhahood would certainly be to cultivate virtue without attachments towards fame, prestige, pomp, arrogance, quid pro quo, temporal benefits and ulterior motives. For how can you transcend desire if you give only to attain praise and secure loyalty? How can you eliminate the ego if you observe the precepts simply to foster a sense of arrogant self righteousness?

This is the reason that so many Mahayana Sutras mention "good men and women" as



the recipients of the full boundless benefits of the dharma door at hand. Their warm hearted compassion and sincere virtue makes them good people. Such goodness allows them to be in harmony with their Buddha Nature. For example, Patriarch Huineng was unable to educate himself or become literate due to his childhood poverty. However, owing to his filial piety, honesty and genuine virtue, he was able to achieve Buddhahood by listening to just one gatha of the Diamond Sutra. On the other hand, many have studied the same sutra for their whole lives but have not transcended death and rebirth.

Consequently, it comes at no surprise that the 13th Patriarch of the Pureland School, the Great Master Yin Guang (印光大師) printed more editions of this tract than even Buddhist Sutras. For he knew that in our turbid era of greed and defilement, only texts like this can help straighten the hearts and minds of cultivators and turn them into good men and women.

Hence, I strongly encourage all who are interested in Buddhism to heed the teachings of Lord Superior Wen Chang and strive to cultivate virtue and merit with a heart of humility and genuine sincerity. Only by doing so will your Bodhi heart become strong and your foundation for the cultivation of Great Compassion and Non Abidance well formed.

**Note: I hereby dedicates all merits from this work towards Amita Buddha Pureland Rebirth.**

---

### **Part 1: Introduction**

帝君曰：

吾一十七世為士大夫身，未嘗虐民酷吏。

救人之難，濟人之急。

憫人之孤，容人之過。

廣行陰騭，上格蒼穹。

人能如我存心，天必賜汝以福。

於是訓於人曰：

*The Lord Superior (Wen Chang) recounts :*

*For seventeen past lives, I have held high office. Wielding power, I neither burdened*

*the people nor maltreated my subordinates.*

*I saved those in distress; furnished the needy with whatever they lacked and succored the orphaned and underprivileged. Furthermore, I have shown forbearance towards offenders and forgiven the penitent.*

*More importantly, my virtues were untainted by desire for popular acclaim and were certainly not the result of ulterior motives. I simply wished to accord with Heaven's way of genuine compassion.*

*If people can emulate my sincerity, then the heavens will certainly bestow fortune upon them. Thus, for posterity's sake, I have left these instructions on cultivation.*

### **Commentary:**

Here, the Lord Superior illustrates the workings of karma and rebirth. Before he became a celestial deity, he was reborn 17 times as a scholar bureaucrat and governed at least a district sized jurisdiction. His administration was humane and exemplary. For instance, he did not burden the people with taxes, laws, conscription, red tape or involuntary labor. He was able to be reborn successively as a patrician because he was virtuous in every one of those rebirths. Furthermore, his virtue created such a overflowing surplus of good that he was able to become a deity (i.e. deva) in this life.

### **Part 2: Fields of Fortune:**

昔于公治獄，大興駟馬之門。

竇氏濟人，高折五枝之桂。

救蟻中狀元之選，埋蛇享宰相之榮。

欲廣福田，須憑心地。

*Under heaven, there is no affair more important to society than public order & justice. Judges & officials must be merciful, careful, fair and compassionate. They must not be overzealous, self willed, rude or inconsiderate. More importantly, their proceedings must not burden, inconvenience or cause distress to anyone. If judges and officials can act as instructed, their blessings will accrue without cease.*

*The weak, poor, fearful and disabled are trapped in dire straits. Hence, all who are able must compassionately and diligently assist them by almsgiving or by extricating*



*them from fear. Comfort their hearts and minds. The blessings for doing so will be as dense as the branches of a grand olea tree.*

*Even the tiniest ants can feel pain like you and me. Hence, the truly virtuous feel compassion for both insects and animals alike. Good men and women do them no harm and would gladly save their lives if they should meet peril such as accumulating water. The blessings for such true compassion makes one the foremost among men.*

*Those who desire to accumulate boundless merits must start by harboring correct intentions. For only genuine faith and sincere compassion can allow a person to benefit from true fields of merit.*

**Commentary:**

In this part of the tract, the Lord Superior illustrates for us the 3 different fields of merit. Fields of merit refers to causes that bear the best karmic rewards (i.e. fertile farmland generates the best harvest). For instance, the first paragraph illustrates that maintaining public order in the correct way will generate strong blessings. However, public order cannot exist without the teachings of the Sages (i.e. Buddhism) and family harmony. Hence, Filial Piety and the Triple Gem are also causes that fall under this merit field. So if you are a merciful, gentle and considerate prosecutor or you print sutras and make offerings to Buddha images, then you will accumulate merits without cease. The same goes for the filial son or daughter.

The highest act of filial piety is to help one's parents attain Amita Buddha's Pureland, thereby allowing them to transcend death and rebirth. Hence, we should recite Amita Buddha's name into the ears of our elders or parents when they are near death and encourage them to be mindful of Amita Buddha. Furthermore, we should diligently amass merits and dedicate them to our deceased relatives within the first 49 days after their death in order to ensure them a good rebirth.

Furthermore, sincerely helping the poor and suffering should not be neglected as they are one of the three merit fields.

Finally, the Lord Superior stresses that only those who have genuine compassion can truly take advantage of these merit fields. For instance, Judges who seek only career success will naturally give out harsh sentences while those who donate to seek fame will not care about the little insects and animals or the sufferings of anyone whose

relief will not generate for them praise or temporal benefit. Moreover, such persons will not be diligent and will not devote true effort and resources towards doing good. They will simply give the little that is necessary to be photographed or pick and choose causes based on PR considerations. They are selfish, partial and superficial.

### **Part 3: Important Reminder**

行時時之方便，作種種之陰功。

*Never neglect any opportunity to do good and always accumulate "Yin" virtue.*

#### **Commentary:**

Before we start the section that lists the virtues, the Lord Superior again reminds us on the importance of our intention. We must not disregard any opportunity to do good (no matter how small) and we must do all good with selfless sincerity. We must be genuine, considerate and modest as that is the spirit of "Yin Chih". We must be careful in making sure that our kindness is not tainted by arrogance, quid pro quo, ulterior motives or desires for praise, approval and publicity. For instance, if we give simply to earn the approval of our friends, then that is not genuine kindness but if we give out of a sincere wish to help and are praised for it, then that is still genuine despite the praise. The difference is that we would still have given even if no praise was forthcoming.

Nowadays, publicity is often necessary to do great good or to encourage other people to do good. So while "Yin Chih" is often translated into "hidden virtue", the truth is that it does not have to be hidden to be "Yin Chih". For instance, in Liao Fan's Four Lessons, Confucius once told one of his pupils that he was incorrect not to accept the state reward for his work in ransoming captives. Confucius said that while he may have wanted to appear modest by refusing the reward, there will always be more poor people than the rich. Thus, he should have accepted the reward to encourage everyone to follow suit.

Hence, we do not need to reject publicity or rewards if they come our way. Moreover, we should use publicity to enlarge the effectiveness of our good deeds when possible. The key to "Yin" virtue is in our intention. It is "Yin" virtue if we use the publicity or reward to benefit others. However, if our intentions and choice of actions are tailored solely towards career success or good PR, then that is not "Yin" virtue.

**Part 4: The List of Virtues:**

利物利人，修善修福。

*Benefit both men and creatures and treat all objects with care and respect.  
Accumulate virtue and merits without cease.*

正直代天行化，慈祥為國救民。

*Be upright yourself and carry out heaven's will of promoting virtue. Exercise patriotism by promoting compassion and reform the people by taming their passions.*

**Commentary:**

A true patriot and loyal citizen cares for the virtue of the nation. Hence, his public policy views are based on the wisdom of the Buddha and Sages. Furthermore, he ensures that the people are not carried away by demagoguery or extremism.

存平等心，擴寬大量。

*Maintain a heart of impartiality, equanimity and tolerance. Be compassionate and open-minded. Avoid harboring thoughts of bigotry, spite or schadenfreude.*

**Commentary:**

The purity of one's heart is the single most important factor in cultivation. If we are not open minded, we will not be compassionate. If we are partial, we will be superficial and insincere. One cannot cultivate true goodness without a heart of diligence and kindness. Compassion breeds goodness but selfishness breeds only greed, hatred and delusion. Both shallowness and bias originate from egotism, thus, the Buddha often stresses the importance of being upright in thought. For example, the Sutra on the Ten Good Deeds lists greed, hatred and delusion as the three offenses of the mind. Therefore, we must constantly extinguish evil thoughts from our mind while harboring positive and kind thoughts. We should think about how to benefit others rather than envying or hating. More importantly, we should often recite Buddha names and sutras (i.e. Namo Amitabha or the Larger Infinite Life Sutra ) in order to rectify our minds and intentions.

Good deeds spring from a good heart. Hence, we will fail to take advantage of opportunities to do good if we constantly harbor vicious or avaricious thoughts. For instance, how could you have the time to help the poor or the ability to bear slights with patience if your heart is full of hatred, lust and greed? Furthermore, how can we honestly self reflect and improve if our first thought is to blame others?

Furthermore, evil thoughts generate karmic retribution. There are various demigods and spirits (e.g. The Hearth Spirit and Northern Deities) who shadow each individual and record all of their good or evil thoughts and actions. They are the agents of karma and the carry out the duty of punishing and rewarding. So do not delude yourself in thinking that no one is watching your thoughts.

**忠主孝親，敬兄信友。**

*Be loyal towards your superiors ; filial towards your parents; respectful towards your siblings and true and dependable towards your friends.*

**和睦夫婦，教訓子孫。**

*Be faithful and kind towards your spouse ; teach your children by displaying exemplary conduct.*

### **Commentary**

According to Confucian methods on parenting, the Fetus is already learning in the womb. The first 3 years of a child's life will influence him or her up to the age of 80 and by the age of 7, his or her habits and dispositions will be confirmed for life. Hence, the conduct of the parents and their interactions with each other must be exemplary during the pregnancy and impressionable first years in order to ensure that their offspring stays on the proper path. It is highly recommended that parents teach their children using the Confucian text Di Zi Gui (弟子規) or Standards on Being a Good Pupil and Child. Furthermore, one mustn't just lecture the text but must teach it by example as well.

**毋慢師長，毋侮聖賢。**

*With humility, respect your teachers and elders ; revere the Sages and their wise teachings*

**Commentary:**

Humility and reverence are essential. If we are arrogant and disrespectful, we will never be able to comprehend the teachings of the Sages. It is said that the more sincere you are the more wisdom you pick up. Hence, we must be modest even if we are indeed accomplished, talented or impressively cultivated.

或奉真朝斗，或拜佛念經。

*Some worship the heavens while others bow to Buddhas and recite sutras.*

報答四恩，廣行三教。

*Be grateful for the guidance the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha has given; the nurturance your parents have provided; the opportunities society has offered and the security your nation has ensured. Cultivate and promote the teachings of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism.*

**Commentary:**

These precepts are to promote gratefulness and interfaith harmony. More specifically, they are here to illustrate the important relationships between Taoism/Confucianism and Buddhism. These three faiths compliment each other and are certainly not rivals. For as we have discussed in the foreword, if one sincerely cultivates Taoist precepts (i.e. this tract) and Confucian benevolence/filial piety in addition to the 5 precepts and 10 good deeds, then one will naturally be able to develop the virtue needed to practice Samadhi and attain enlightenment.

談道義而化奸頑，講經史而曉愚昧。

*Use morality and compassion to convert the obstinate and cunning. Speak the dharma to the dull minded, ignorant and deluded, thus planting roots of wisdom within their consciousness.*

**Commentary:**

When we speak dharma, we should be mindful of the personality of the individual

listening. In the Diamond Sutra, the Buddha states that the dharma has no fixed form. Furthermore, the Buddha also mentions in the Shurangama Sutra that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas display different forms to teach different people. Hence, if we meet someone who has no wisdom, we should plant roots of wisdom within them by mentioning the Prajnaparamita Sutras. If we should meet vicious, obstinate and cunning people, we should display a unwavering attitude of kindness, honesty and compassion, thereby causing them to feel shame and change. This is why the Buddha stated that all 84,000 dharma doors are equal and that practitioners should praise each other instead of asserting that one dharma door is superior than the other. Each different dharma door is like a specific prescription, and we need to take the right medicine at the right time. Hence, this is why Shakyamuni Buddha stressed that the surest way to attain enlightenment in the dharma ending age (i.e. now) is via Amitabha Pureland Buddhism. The reason is that people of today have such turbid natures that only Pureland Buddhism can save them.

濟急如濟涸轍之魚，救危如救密羅之雀。

*Relieve those in dire need as speedily as you would save a fish deprived of water. Save those in danger with great haste lest the window of opportunity closes.*

矜孤恤寡，敬老憐貧。

*Show concern for the welfare of the orphaned and widowed. Respect the elderly and maintain their dignity; pity and help the poor and underprivileged.*

舉善薦賢，饒人責己。

*Promote virtue and recommend the Sagely. Be lenient with others but strict with your own conduct.*

### **Commentary:**

Sages teach by promoting the positive. Hence, we should emulate them by promoting virtue. If someone is truly moral and good, we should recommend them for positions of leadership and responsibility. If there is a essay, comment or book that promotes the teachings of the ancient Sages, we should publish or share it.

In the end, all good people think of other's welfare and interests as more important

than their own. In the words of Lao Tzu, "they give much but take little". Hence, we should be strict with ourselves but patient, undemanding and tolerant towards others.

措衣食周道路之饑寒，施棺槨免屍骸之暴露。

*Be thrifty with your clothes, cash and food so that you will always have some to spare if you should meet a cold or hungry person by chance. Donate caskets and coffins to those who are without the means to afford it.*

造漏澤之仁園，興啟蒙之義塾。

*Pay for the funerals of the poor or bury unclaimed bodies. Provide educational opportunities and or scholarships for those who need it.*

家富提携親戚，歲饑賑濟鄰朋。

*If your family is wealthy, you must assist with the finances of your poorer relatives. If the economy declines or scarcity arises, you should provide (if able) relief towards your friends and neighbors.*

斗秤須要公平，不可輕出重入。

*Be honest during transactions. Ensure that your weights, scales and measures are accurate and without fault.*

奴僕待之寬恕，豈宜備責苛求。

*Do not maltreat your servants or subordinates and refrain from being overly demanding.*

印造經文，創修寺院。

*Print and distribute sutras ; repair and build monasteries.*

### **Commentary:**

This is one of the more important good deeds. As we have mentioned before, Sagely teachings and the Buddhadharma are one of the most fertile fields of merit. Hence, we

should share sutras and purchase or print them for free distribution. Furthermore, we should contribute money for the upkeep of monasteries or dharma learning centers. Also, another way to earn limitless blessings would be to create or commission images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In the Sutra on the Production of Buddha Images, it is said that those who produce but one image will never again be reborn in the three evil realms of the hells, hungry ghosts and animals. Furthermore, not only will their beauty and appearance be unrivaled but they will also be reborn in places of peace and prosperity, as members of noble families with great wealth and power.

捨藥材以拯疾苦，施茶水以解渴煩。

*Donate medicine and provide healthcare for the poor, sick and needy. Make clean water available for those who lack it and relieve the thirsty by providing drink.*

點夜燈以照人行，造河船以濟人渡。

*Light lamps at night to illuminate paths and sidewalks. Donate or provide boats for the purpose of ferrying the public.*

或買物而放生，或持齋而戒殺，舉步常看蟲蟻，禁火莫燒山林。

*Purchase live fish and animals on sale for consumption and set them free. Adopt a Vegan or Vegetarian diet and observe the precept against taking life. While walking, be mindful of the little ants, insects and worms. Abstain from intentionally or accidentally setting mountains and forests on fire.*

勿登山而網禽鳥，勿臨水而毒魚蝦。

*Do not catch, trap, capture, kill or poison animals in their natural habitats (i.e. the mountain, forests and rivers). Do not pollute natural environments.*

勿宰耕牛，勿棄字紙。

*Do not slaughter the cow that plows your fields or provides milk for your family. Refrain from discarding moral texts and religious scriptures; preserve or rebind them for the benefit of posterity.*

**Commentary:**



Old sutras and tracts have benefited many cultivators over the course of time. Hence, they are holy objects that need to be treated with reverence. If they can still be used, they should be repaired. If they are too fragile in condition, then they should be kept in Stupas or on altars where offerings can be made to them. Furthermore, the text you have preserved may one day be the last copy in existence. For instance, the Ven. Master Chin Kung would not have been able to print new editions of important Chinese Sagely books if the century old copies that served as the manuscript were discarded by previous generations.

勿謀人之財產，勿妒人之技能。

*Do not scheme for or covet the wealth of others ; refrain from envying someone else's skills, advantages and talents.*

勿淫人之妻女，勿唆人之爭訟。

*Refrain from lust and adultery. Do not instigate lawsuits or stir others to litigation.*

**Commentary:**

Lust is considered to be the foremost offense by Sages as it is often the starting motivation for countless types of evils. In fact, the Shurangama Sutra and mantra was first spoken to counteract the lust driven black magic of a courtesan that almost caused Ven. Ananda to break his vows. Hence, one must be vigilant in reducing one's sexual desire as much as possible. Lawsuits are full of contention but easy to file. Hence, one must be careful not to cause it as the Buddha has stated in the Infinite Life Sutra that even small disagreements can snowball into large karmic obstacles and future feuds, let alone a lawsuit.

勿壞人之名節，勿破人之婚姻。

*Neither damage reputations nor harm interests. Do not break the marriages or engagements of other people.*

**Commentary:**

On the most basic level, the first part of this precept tells us not to libel and slander.

However, it's deeper meaning tells us not to broadcast or make known another's misconduct or scandals even if they are true. This is because a bad reputation will harm someone's interests and prospects. Sages are compassionate and therefore they do not damage the reputations or interests of anyone, regardless of whether they are indeed guilty of misconduct or not. The truth is that everyone living on this earth is sunk in karmic offenses from countless eons past so ostracizing others would be hypocritical. Thus, there is no need for us to criticize or expose wrongdoing. Instead, we should convert others by setting a good example. If we are willing to set a flawless example of virtue, then all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will help make our example known to the world.

勿因私讎，使人兄弟不和；勿因小利，使人父子不睦。

*Do not cause discord between siblings and abstain from turning parents and children against each other.*

**Commentary:**

Filial piety is a central virtue. Hence, it is a great offense to separate family members or to turn them against each other. Good people help unite families and iron out discord between members.

勿倚權勢而辱善良，勿恃富豪而欺窮困。

*If you have wealth and power, do not wield it arrogantly or abusively against the people, the underprivileged and the virtuous. Do not humiliate people in any way or for any purpose.*

依本分而致謙恭，守規矩而遵法度。和諧宗族，解釋冤怨。

*Humbly carry out your duties with consideration, care and propriety. Live in harmony with your relatives and clansman.*

**Commentary:**

Sages are always humble despite exuding competence. Hence, we must never be boastful. We should do our job well and be modest. It is also heaven's will that families should be united and harmonious. Hence, causing contention at home is not

virtuous, instead, forbearance should be exercised by all.

善人則親近之，助德行於身心。

*Cultivate friendships with good people, thereby immersing yourself in good influence.*

惡人則遠避之，杜災殃於眉捷。

*Avoid the evil and wicked, thereby ensuring that you will not be pulled into their troubles nor influenced by their misconduct.*

常須隱惡揚善，不可口是心非。

*Refrain from publishing or parroting scandals, arrests or misconduct. Diligently praise the kindness and virtues of others. Refrain from hypocrisy or from speaking what contradicts one's heart in order to manipulate.*

#### **Commentary:**

Nowadays, we love to publish arrests, stigmatize people or make criminal records available. However, Sages do not stigmatize or ostracize, instead they praise the good and set an example, thereby becoming a beacon of light that shines across the entire community. Stigmatizing people or promoting the negative only breeds resentment. This only causes contention and a general atmosphere of negative emotions.

Hypocrisy is rooted in pride, arrogance and the desire for approval. Thus, such dishonesty directly contradicts the spirit of "Yin" virtue.

恒記有益之語，罔談非禮之言。

*Diligently speak words that are kind, helpful and beneficial. Refrain from salacious gossip, abuse, sarcasm, profanity, taunting, libel and slander.*

翦礙道之荊榛，除當途之瓦石。

*Clear the roads and paths of broken bricks, rocks, vegetation and obstructions.*

修數百年崎嶇之路，造千萬人來往之橋。

*Repair ancient roads and build bridges that tens of thousands will cross.*

**Commentary:**

Here, the Lord Superior exhorts us to build and maintain useful and beneficial infrastructure. He is not telling us to ignore small or new projects but is simply reminding us not to waste tax resources on projects that benefit few or no one (i.e. ancient roads refers to roads that have proven their importance by continued use). Furthermore, private persons are welcome to build roads and bridges that the public sorely needs when the government fails to do so.

垂訓以格人非，捐貲以成人美。

*Expound moral teachings to reform others ; help other's carry out good deeds or achieve success in cultivation.*

**Commentary:**

This is very important. For instance, Patriarch Huineng would not have been able to visit the monastery where he achieved Buddhahood if he had not first met the kind Upāsaka who introduced him to Buddhism, provided him with several taels of silver and promised to look after his aged mother in his absence. Needless to say, the merit derived from helping someone attain Buddhahood is limitless.

We can emulate this conduct by reciting Buddha names to insects and animals that we meet or pass by. Since one of Amita Buddha's 48 vows states that any sentient being who hears or feels his name will at the very least have a good rebirth and be able to study the dharma. Hence, this small act of kindness will greatly help sentient beings currently undergoing retribution as an animal or insect. In addition, we should dedicate the merits from the recitation to them as well.

作事須循天理，出言要順人心。

*Anything you do must accord with your conscience, which is actually heavens will.  
Anything you say must be tactful and polite.*

**Commentary:**

No sentient being is without the Buddha nature, therefore, all people are fundamentally good. It is our false habits and attachments that give the appearance of evil. Hence, we should never ignore our conscience since it represents the little bit of Buddha nature that has managed to shine through our layers of defilements. Furthermore, it is mentioned in the Confucian moral text 增廣賢文 that words can cut as deeply as a sharp knife. Thus, tact and politeness are very important.

見先哲於羹牆，慎獨知於衿影。

*Always keep the ancient Sages and their teachings in mind ; contemplate their virtues at all times.*

**Commentary:**

The teachings and conduct of the ancient Sages represent all that we must to aspire for. Hence, we ought to always keep them in mind. If we neglect to contemplate the virtues and teachings of the Sages, we will only be allowing our defilements and passions the opportunity to cement their influence into our hearts and lead us astray.

諸惡莫作，眾善奉行。永無惡曜加臨，常有吉神擁護。

***Refrain from all evil and sincerely do all good. If you can do so, neither malevolence nor disaster can affect you while fortune will shadow you and demigods will protect you.***

**Commentary:**

The passage in bold basically sums up the conduct of a true virtuous individual. Such a person refrains from all evil and causes no distress or inconvenience to anyone. Instead, he or she shows forbearance and displays sincere kindness, gentleness and virtue. Their hearts are always forgiving, serene and without vicious thoughts.

**Part 5: Conclusion**

近報則在自己，遠報則在兒孫。

*If you are old and established, the fortune you accumulate will be experienced by your*

*descendants while your rewards lay in heaven. If you are young and unmarried, you will personally experience bliss in this very life from the good deeds you do.*

**Commentary:**

What this means is that if you start cultivating merits from your childhood or early teenage years, you will create for yourself an unimaginably blissful life of happiness. If you can continue without cease, a splendid heavenly rebirth will also follow. This is because your early goodness has melted away bad karma that was originally pending, thereby allowing your current and past merits to manifest fully without being weighed down by negative karma.

However, if you only start to cultivate when you are well into adulthood, then the personal benefits you experience would be less dramatic but your descendents will enjoy great fortune. This is not a punishment for being late but merely because your merits are so great that it can only be enjoyed with rebirth in the heavens where your mind and body will be fresh and young once more.

Thus, we should ensure that our children start cultivating merits and virtue as young as possible. From the moment of conception, we should do no evil and do all that is good (e.g. recite sutras). If the child can be immersed in such an atmosphere of merit and purity while in the womb, then he or she will surely attain Buddhahood before long.

百福駢臻，千祥雲集。  
豈不從陰鷲中得來者哉！

*A hundred types of fortune and thousands of blessings rain down and arrive by the cartloads to those who cultivate virtue and merit with sincerity, modesty and genuine selfless compassion!*

**Commentary:**

The closing of the text illustrates the great karmic reward of those who are genuinely compassionate. As stated before, true goodness are good deeds done without desire for prestige, approval, ulterior motives and the like. If you can cultivate according to Lord Superior Wen Chang's instructions, you can be what the Buddha considers to be a good man or woman.

If you are a good man or woman, you have achieved the first stage of the Threefold Training. With this foundation of true virtue and merit, you can successfully and with concentration cultivate Samadhi (i.e. meditation, nianfo, chanting mantras, sutra recitation and listening to dharma talks). Finally, Non-Abidance (i.e. Buddhahood) can be achieved.

In the Amitabha Sutra, it is stated that: "*Shariputra, if there is a good man or a good woman who hears spoken 'Amitabha' and holds the name, whether for one day, two days, three, four, five days, six days, as long as seven days, with one heart unconfused, when this person approaches the end of life, before him will appear Amitabha and all the assembly of holy ones. When the end comes, his heart is without inversion; in Amitabha's Land of Ultimate Bliss he will attain rebirth*"

Hence, this passage unmistakably illustrates my point. First, you must be a good man or woman. Then you must cultivate Samadhi (in this case, it is mindfulness of Amita Buddha) and finally your efforts will allow you to achieve Buddhahood.

Nevertheless, it must be stressed that what Lord Superior Wen Chang has taught is only the first step towards Non- Abidance. Taken by itself, the teachings can only help you achieve rebirth as a compassionate and fortunate human or deva. Only by combining it with the resolve for Bodhi will cultivators be able to fit Lord Wen Chang's advice into the Threefold Training. Thus, all cultivators are recommended to dedicate their merits towards fulfilling their vows for Buddhahood.

---

---

**Moral Tales & Ancient Commentary that Illustrate Lord Wen Chang's teachings:**

*Translated by D.T. Suzuki and Dr. Paul Carus. Edited by Brian Chung.*

**A GOOD JUDGE.**

In olden times, Yü King, judge of the criminal court, was held in such high esteem [on account of his virtue] that a gateway for four-horse carriages was erected in his honor.

Yü King of the Han dynasty (206 B. C. to A. D. 23) was judge of a criminal court on the eastern shore of China. In his district there was a young widow who, on account of her parental devotion, showed no disposition to marry again, lest her mother-in-law be left without support. The aged woman, however, was so much distressed over her helplessness that finally she hanged herself to release her daughter-in-law from the duty of self-sacrifice. Her own daughter hearing of the incident went to court and charged her sister-in-law with murder, and the latter, unable to vindicate herself, was condemned to death in spite of Yü King's protest. After this tragedy, Heaven failed to give rain all along the eastern coast for a period of three years. When a new governor was installed, Yü King explained to him the cause of the long drought. Thereupon the grave of the dutiful daughter-in-law was officially decorated, and then at last it started to rain.

Yü King showed his humane disposition in many other trials. When the elder people in his district proposed to repair his family gate which was dilapidating, Yü King advised them to have it raised and enlarged, so that a four-horse carriage could be driven through it, saying: "I have a great many times in my official life practiced true compassion and genuine virtue and I have never condemned the innocent. Among my descendants there will surely be some one who will rise high and will occupy important positions." And so things came to pass. His son became prime minister and was created a noble, and his grandson, too, was promoted to a responsible position in the government.

#### **HUMANENESS REWARDED.**

Tou Yü-Chün was not yet favored with a son when he was thirty years old. One night his grandfather appeared to him in a dream and said: "You may not have any issue at all, nor may you live long, unless you are diligent in performing benevolent deeds."

Yü-Chün was a well-to-do man and could afford to do many benevolent things. One of his servants stole a considerable sum of money from his chest. When the fact was exposed, the guilty one fled leaving his daughter thirteen years old, to whom a note was attached which read: "Offer this girl and my house for sale. With the money thus realized I wish to pay my debt."

Yü-Chün burned the note, took the girl to his own house, and had her reared by his wife. When she reached maturity he gave her a large dowry and chose for her a good husband. When her father heard of it he was greatly affected and



returned home full of repentance. His old master forgave him and did not say anything about his former crime.

Yü-Chün did many other good things. The poor who could not afford funeral services for their dead, were liberally assisted by him, and those who could not, on account of a lack of dowry, give their daughters in marriage, were handsomely supplied with gold. Poor children were educated and the helpless taken care of, while he himself lived most frugally. He also built a large library and gave employment to many learned men.

In the meantime he saw again his grandfather in a dream, who said: "You were originally destined not to have any offspring and to live only a few more years. But on account of your humane deeds, your merits have been recorded by the Heavenly Lord. Your life will be prolonged and you will have five children who will be very prosperous."

Yü-Chün's five sons successfully passed the literary examinations and were promoted to high official positions.

### SAVING MANY LIVES.

He who took pity on ants attained the highest literary honor.

Sung Chiao and Sung Ch'i (eleventh century A. D.) were brothers. When they were both at college, a Buddhist monk examined their physiognomy and prophesied: "The younger Sung will be the first on the list of literary graduates, and the elder, too, will unfailingly pass."

Ten years later, the elder Sung again happened to meet the monk on the road. The monk showed great astonishment, exclaiming: "Your fortunes have suddenly changed. You look as if you had saved millions of lives." Sung said, laughing: "How could I, a poor follower of Confucius, achieve such a feat as that?" "Yes," replied the monk, "Even the smallest creatures are enjoying their lives you know." Reflecting a little while, Sung said: "I remember that about ten days ago I found an ants' nest under my porch in danger of being flooded. I took a few bamboo sticks and made a bridge over the water to let the poor ants cross over it. May this be it?" "Exactly," answered the monk, "the younger Sung is now leading the list but you will not be second to him."

When the order of literary graduates was declared, the younger Sung was found to be the first and the elder Sung the second. But the Empress Chang Hsien decreed that the younger brother should not precede the elder, and Sung Chiao was put at the head of the list.

### **THE DOUBLE-HEADED STAKE.**

He who buried [out of sight] the snake [of bad omen] was deemed worthy of the honor of premiership.

Shun Shu-Ao, of Chu state, when a boy, used to go out very frequently. One day he saw a double-headed snake which he killed and to put it out of sight, buried it in the ground. He came home in gloom and showed no appetite at the table. An anxious inquiry of his mother brought him to tears, and he said mournfully: "People say, those who have seen a double-headed snake are doomed to die soon. I saw one to-day and fear that before long I shall die, mother, and will have to leave you alone." The mother then asked him, "Where is the snake now?" "Fearing that others might see it too, I killed and buried it." "Never mind then," replied the mother, "you will not die. I understand that genuine concern for others (*yin teh*) brings great karmic rewards. Where there is virtue, there will gather a thousand blessings. Where there is benevolence, a hundred evils are distanced. Heaven above attends to affairs below. You are sure to become eminent in this state."

When Shun was a man, he was made a minister of state.

### **Commentary:**

This historical account of the double headed snake is an excellent example of Lord Superior Wen Chang's statement that "*If you are young and unmarried, you will personally experience bliss in this very life from the good deeds you do.*"

As the young boy killed and buried out of sight the evil omen, he managed to remove a sight that would have caused deep fear to the public. Thus, the boy had done a great virtuous deed at a young age. Therefore, with his evil karma eliminated and merits manifesting without hindrance, not only was his life prolonged considerably, he also became Prime Minister (i.e. 2nd in power behind the Emperor ) despite coming from a poor fatherless background. However, we must understand that this account is to encourage us to do sincere good while young and is not a license to wantonly kill animals we don't like.

### **THE FOUNDATION OF BLISS**

All deeds originate in the heart. All the good acts that are enumerated below begin in the heart and are completed, too, in the heart. The heart's inmost recess is the very spot where there is Heaven and where there is Hell.

The difference between sages such as Yao and Shun and wretches such as Chieh or Chou, simply pivots here around the heart. Unexpected blessings grow, as it were, in a very actual field, which can be ploughed and harvested. The heart, though spiritual and mysterious, yet possesses a solid, tangible soil, which can be watered and tilled.

The soul of a true, earnest gentleman has its root in this obscure recess, which he examines and purifies in solemn silence and privacy. Merely this, a heart to save the world; not one mote of a heart for worldliness. Merely this, a heart to love mankind; not a mote of a heart for hatred of people. Merely this, a heart to have respect for others; not a mote of a heart for making light of the world. Merely this, a heart earnestly to promote one's cultivation; not a mote of a heart for indulgent self-delusion. This is the way of self-purification and the sure foundation of bliss.

### **SEEK TRUTH FOR THE SAKE OF SALVATION.**

Ch'ang-tze says: "If a respectable gentleman is at all disposed towards loving kindness, he cannot help doing things beneficial to others." Supplementing this, Ch'en An-Shan says: "If a villain is ever bent on selfishness, he will surely do things harmful to others." Both of these sayings are indisputably true.

Those who are able to think of others are called superior men, and those who think of themselves are called small men. The difference is in one's own fundamental thought, whether it is of the ego or not. Some incessantly accumulate evils, others good deeds; and when we see the result, it is the difference between Heaven and Earth.

Li Kwang-Yüen, an eminent seeker of truth, was once warned by a strange saintly personage, thus: "I see thou art seeking truth. But wouldst thou have it for thy private self, saints and gods will have no regard for thee." Are not gods and saints as well as sages and holy men bent on saving the world? Some seek saintliness in their pursuit of life everlasting and immortality; but if their hearts are tainted with a single thought of egotism, they are grievously at fault, though

it be hidden and they know it not; and there is no thought of their ever attaining to saintship.

### **THE DISEASE OF EGOTISM.**

Mother Cheng used to instruct her children to this effect: "When others do good, fall in line as if it were your work and be sure to bring it to completion. Treat others' property as if it were your own, so you will be thoughtful in using it."

Hsieh Wen-Ching says: "The reason why a man has thousands of troubles is because he clings to the idea of self: therefore, he schemes and contrives in ten thousand different ways. He alone wants to be rich, he alone wants to be honored, he alone wants to be easy, he alone wants to be happy, he alone wants to enjoy life, he alone wants to be blessed with longevity; and to others' poverty, misery, danger, or suffering, he is altogether indifferent. It is for this reason that others are disregarded and Heaven's Reason is neglected. Only be cured of the disease of egotism, and your heart will be broadened even to the vastness of infinite space, so that wealth, honor, happiness, comfort, health, longevity could all be enjoyed with others. And, then, the will to live will have its way, everything will have its natural longings satisfied, and Heaven's Reason will be displayed in an untold exuberance.

### **FILIAL PIETY.**

Filial piety is the guide of all actions. It is the ultimate root of humaneness; and is it possible that the root be rotten while the branches and leaves grow luxuriously?

Yao-Jao Hou says: "The four essential elements of filial piety are: (1) To be established in virtue; (2) To keep up the family; (3) To keep the body unimpaired (so as to not cause out parents to worry); (4) To cultivate the character."

Pious children will not let their parents' hearts be roused to thoughts of cold indifference. They will not let their parents' hearts be annoyed or harassed. They will not let their parents' hearts be alarmed or filled with fear. They will not let their parents' hearts be grieved or embarrassed. They will not let their parents' hearts be perplexed. They will not let their parents' hearts feel ashamed or indignant.

### **SEVERAL WAYS.**

In his anxiety lest all people might not be induced to goodness, the Lord Superior invites them to come to him in any way they may be pleased to follow. They may pay homage at the Taoist sanctuary; they may worship the Northern Constellation; they may bow before the Buddha and recite his Sutras: if they only do so with singleness and sincerity of heart, these roads will lead to goodness; but there should be no thought of attaining blessings or acquiring rewards.

### **BUDDHISM AND CONFUCIANISM.**

P'an Ch'ung-Mou says:

"What is to be avoided most in our life is vacillation and frivolity (*wang nien*); and what is most excellent is a reverential heart. Therefore, we Confucians endeavor to preserve sincerity of heart and consider reverence as most essential. It is needless to say that sincerity and reverence make us companions of heaven and earth, gods and spirits.

"There is, however, another class of people who adopt Buddhism as their guidance. They bow before the Buddha and recite his Sutras, always bent on preserving reverence and awe. They will never relax their vigilant guard over the heart, which will by degrees become pure and bright, free from evil thoughts and ready to do good. This enlightenment is called their most happy land. [7](#) What is necessary, then, for Buddhists as well as Confucians is to avoid vacillation and frivolity, which will render you unreliable. Keep the heart always restrained by reverence and awe. Otherwise what can be the use of the recitation of Sutras or the discourses of Confucius?"

### **A SYMPATHETIC HEART.**

The great virtue of heaven and earth is to create, and all living beings, men and animals alike, derive their vitality from this one and the same source. Nowhere under the sun is there a being that dislikes life and embraces death with joy.

To buy up captive animals for the sake of setting them free is nothing but an outburst of a sympathetic heart. Thoughtless people make light of puny creatures such as ants, spiders, etc., and wantonly kill them, having no thought of pity or remorse; but pious hearts refrain from such cruelty.

### **THE VOICE WITHIN**

**"Heaven's Reason consists of two words; but they are in your own heart. If when you do a thing, there remains in your heart some misgiving, then your deed is against Heaven and contrary to Reason. A virtuous man punctiliously guards himself when alone, solely to retain Heaven's Reason and to calm human desires. Therefore says Tung Ch'ung-Shu [a famous Confucian]: "Attend to your duty and scheme not for gain. Look after what you ought to do and measure not your merit."**

**The source of good and evil is in the heart, and the best method of controlling it is a reverential attitude of the heart.**

**Ever turbulent is the heart of him who does evil; ever wakeful is the heart of him who does good.**

**The teachings of holy men are written in the six canonical books. There are thousand gates and ten thousand doors; through which shall we enter? The main thing is to guard oneself when alone, lest one go astray; then you will see how one's strength grows.**

**Proceed in goodness for a thousand days and there will be not enough; proceed in evil for half a minute and you will have too much.**

---

---

### **A Final Word From the Author:**

As a parting word, I hereby exhort all who read this to cultivate themselves into a good person by following Lord Superior Wen Chang's instructions. Be genuine and sincere. Do good to benefit others instead of for pomp, fame and profit. Furthermore, Lao Tzu has stated that karmic blessings naturally shadow those who do good. Hence, we should not try to measure our merits or be greedy for karmic rewards. Simply do good whenever you find the chance with only the intention of helping as much as possible.

Lastly, everyone should resolve to attain Buddhahood in Amita Buddha's Pureland and every bit of good we do ought to be dedicated towards that goal. Hence, I urge all to recite Amita Buddha's name as often as possible, whether out loud or silently. It is said in the sutras that to recite the name of Amita Buddha but once will eradicate 8 billion eons worth of heavy karmic offenses. Hence, this Buddha name is the highest mantra. If you build the Samadhi of Amita Buddha name recitation upon a foundation

of true goodness, you will surely attain Bodhi and Pureland.

**Namo Amita Buddha!**

**Acknowledgments:**

This translation and commentary would not have been possible if not for the lectures of the Ven. Master Hsuan Hua and the Ven. Master Chin Kung(淨空法師). Thus, I would like to express my gratitude towards them both. Furthermore, the teachings of the Infinite Life Sutra, Earth Store Sutra, Contemplation Sutra, Amitabha Sutra, Diamond Sutra , Shurangama Sutra and Liao Fan's Four Lessons were all instrumental to the creation of this translation and commentary.

---

---

# A Mind Reborn

---

Ten Steps to Uproot Your Mental Thorns and  
Turnaround Your Life



Brian Chung

---

*1st Edition*



# Preface

This troubled mind spiked with thorns,  
Bleeding fears, taunted by shadows,  
Finding fault in all it perceives.  
Narrow, gloomy and always selfish,  
It worries paradise into perdition  
And greets peace with anxiety.  
But If only it could be tamed... and the  
Thorns of proud pettiness removed,  
Then it'll find joy here and anywhere,  
Be amused by life's challenges  
And stroll with leisure through any storm!

I wrote this booklet because recent personal experience has led me to see the matter of happiness in a completely new light. In the past, I had always thought that whenever I felt happy, the cause was external, and if I were unhappy, then the source of my unhappiness plainly evident.

However, a few weeks ago, a particularly bad case of looming deadlines changed my view. As the deadline approached, I was so paralyzed by worry that I could not find happiness or ease in anything, yet after I had managed to meet it, I found joy in everything. A strange fact considering that those very same surroundings had brought me no bliss when my mind was still weighed down with worry. Thus, I realized it was my own untamed and fearful mindset— this spontaneous fountain of streaming negative thoughts—that was the cause of my suffering and the poison in my perception. I then knew that if I could henceforth open and positively train my mind, I'd be happy anywhere and under any circumstance.

Fortunately for me, I also encountered some sagely spiritual teachings which weaved perfectly into my personal experiences. The result is this booklet, and I hope it'll help many to find the peace of mind and lasting happiness they've always sought.

*Brian Chung, April 2019*

# Introduction:

Happiness comes not from outside, it depends on our perception, and that perception is determined by our state of mind. Oftentimes, the exact same external stimuli leads to feelings of joy when observed by a generous mind but causes suffering to a narrow or afflicted mind. When our minds are narrow and pessimistic, the pressure of constriction grips us, leaving us gasping for relief as we desperately resist the panicky chokehold squeezing our stress stricken hearts. This pain causes delicious food to become as hard to swallow as tasteless rocks, beautiful surroundings to seem tainted by impending doom, and the smiles or merry laughter of others to feel like mockery. The negative mind simply refuses to find pleasure in anything but its own highly conditional definition of pleasure.

On the other hand, the generous mind is unburdened. It makes fun excitement out of challenging times, and finds happiness in anything.

Thus, it is a mistake to entrust our happiness upon that superficial and raw desire for external possessions, status and achievements. True happiness comes from the healing of the mind. From a mind that is free, independent and generous. True happiness springs forth from within.

By confronting our own flawed mindsets with antidotes, we improve our circumstances and fate. This concept is not unlike how rewriting the code can change and improve the appearance of a website. Our mind is the mirror that reflects our fate, and the kinder our intentions the better our future.

Karmic law dictates that the self centered person, narrow in mind and selfish at heart, will reap only want, misfortune and abandonment. Contrarily, the compassionate person who gives to the world, who radiates positive intentions and thoughts, will find joy and revelry wherever they go.

The next section will elaborate upon the Ten Step Method: A simple ten step program designed to change karmic mindsets from negative to positive and narrow to generous. Upon completion, it is highly likely that happiness becomes automatic and fears and worries wither away. It is not hard, with only one act needed per step. For when the universal karmic law is followed, no turnaround is too bold to become true.

# The Ten Step Method:

When we are unfortunate and unhappy, it is because our minds are afflicted to some degree with greed, fear, jealousy and rage. Tortured by worry, grievance, a sense of lack and competition. Such mental states are like cataracts to the eyes— allowing nothing to ever look good, clear or beautiful. When we view the world through such cloudy and vicious lens, nothing will ever seem remotely auspicious.

However, by systematically sowing kindness into the world, we remove our own pain just like how an eye surgeon operating on a patient will remove the impediments to their vision. Soon, everything will be joyful and all stressors recede. Thus, the principle behind the Ten Step Method is simple: **Smile facing a mirror and see it smile back ; treat the world with honest kindness, and it'll return the favor.**

## 1) Show Gratitude to a Great Benefactor

Gratitude is the foundation of the world. Like how the flora repays the nourishing sunlight with wondrous bloom and filial offspring take care of their elderly parents. If flowers never bloom, why should the sun shine? If elderly parents are abandoned without support, who would bother to raise the next generation? Thus, decay is the penalty for ingratitude and growth the reward of the grateful.

Therefore, the 1st Step is to perform one sincere act of gratitude for that special person who has sacrificed the most for us, whose care and concern we have always taken for granted. If they are no longer among the living, then a special deed to honor their name will suffice.

## 2) Forgive the Archenemy

An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind, and feuds poison the world by marinating it in the dark paralyzing venom of malice, humiliation and paranoia. Only forgiveness can set our hearts free and purify the world.

And so, the 2nd Step is to forgive the greatest rival in our life, and offer generous truce and concession to that person. By forgiving, we release our minds from the crushing torture of our own clenched fists, and reap freedom and ease in return.

### **3) Help a Person in Pain**

No one in this world does not fear pain, and even the tiniest critter strives to avoid it. Thus, the 3rd Step is to help a person in pain, to do whatever is within our reasonable power to alleviate or lessen their suffering. By carrying out this act of benevolence and compassion, we gain comforting security and the most satisfying joy.

### **4) Help a Person in Poverty**

To hold is to lose, to give is to be enriched. Money worries are universally ubiquitous and we have all experienced it at one time or another. Most likely, it is the single biggest cause of unhappiness. The more we lack, the less we give, and the less we give, the more we lack. As karma rewards only the generous, it becomes a vicious cycle.

Step 4 is to break this cruel cycle. We should go out and give whatever we can to a person in severe poverty. No matter how desperate our own finances are, we ought to give at least once, even if our offering is but a few notes and coins scrimped together. As it takes but one lit candle to challenge a thousand years of total darkness, no sincere donation is too small or ineffective. For too long we have been stingy, but this sincere act of charity will impress generosity into our minds, thereby manifesting the abundance we seek.

### **5) Mollify a Person Behaving Insolently**

Respect, deference and courtesy are the cornerstones of a civilized society. Few laws can guarantee it, but without it, no constitution or institution can function without friction or fracture. Though ligaments are weak compared to the bones, it holds them together. Likewise, though courtesy is so ethereal compared to the hardness of law, its goodwill and positivity nevertheless lubricates the wheels of society and keeps mutual enmity at bay.

It is often the case that one act of insolence begets more such acts by the slighted party. However, the opposite is true as well. Thus, in Step 5 we are to mollify someone's insolence with artful skill and kindly patience. By extinguishing the fires of insolent arrogance with the waters of deference and courtesy, we make the arrogant feel ashamed and convert them into a fount of humility. And by doing so, we reap a positive world in return, a world brimming with the mutual courtesy our patient forbearance has planted.

## **6) Instruct an Ignorant Person**

What use is a life without wisdom and proper guidance? Nowadays, many busily coast through their days in a haze of ignorance—their thoughts a mix of the monkey mindset and their own base, presumptuous understanding. It is therefore our duty to patiently acquire wisdom, and to impart that wisdom also. Thus, in Step 6 we are to share a useful piece of wisdom with someone who needs it. It could be anything from introducing a vacuous colleague to ancient scripture to encouraging a friend to adopt a healthy vegetarian diet, which is also a good way to cultivate mercy. If we have a special skill or solution, we should freely share it with someone who needs it. By sharing, we nurture our own inner wisdom and set the wheels of learning into motion, thereby increasing our own erudition in accordance with karmic law.

## **7) Entreat Someone to Drop an Evil Habit**

Evil habits are like dust. As long as it is regularly brushed away, no harm arises. However, if dust is allowed to settle undisturbed into layer after layer of thick grey, calamity eventually strikes. In the past, our selfish desires for personal advancement and ambition has caused us to become apathetic towards our own bad habits and the evils of the world. Now that we have changed, we ought to serve as the brush that keeps wicked dust from accumulating. Therefore, Step 7 asks us to counsel a person with an unkind trait or cruel habit—to patiently and skillfully convince them of the harm they are causing to both themselves and others, and to encourage them to change. By polishing the personality of another, we polish our own virtue as well.

## **8) Assist Someone in Doing Good**

The quest for mercy and justice makes the world go round. When individuals seek to improve their moral cultivation, they become good people. Where there are many good people, organizations for the benefit of the community form. When societies become driven by the good and just, humanity dwells in fair harmony. Therefore, in order that we may have a part in turning this great wheel of goodness, Step 8 demands that we go out and assist someone in doing good. If we know someone who seeks to improve their own moral cultivation, we should give them some assistance. If they wish to implement a project for the good of the public, then we ought to offer encouragement and support. By doing so, we give back to our community and fulfill our duty to humanity.

## **9) Warn a Complacent Person to Become Diligent**

We often think that our years ahead are endless. But the truth is that even if a man were to live to be a hundred years old, he would only have a fraction of that time to distinguish himself, let alone the many who are destined to fall far short of such a ripe old age. Though it would seem absurd at first glance that a man who will live for a century might want for time, we cannot ignore the fact that of his ten decades, the first two decades are spent on basic education and the last three are weighed down by old age. Of the five decades remaining, half is spent on sleeping, eating and other chores while work and leisure will severely deplete the remaining half. In the end, very little quality time within the prime of his life (perhaps less than a decade in total) remains for our hypothetical centenarian to study and cultivate the higher arts of religion, mindfulness, morality and philosophy—the very disciplines that separates man from beast.

Therefore, this 9th Step encourages us to warn at least one idle person to stop cruising through life on autopilot, and urge them to diligently realize the fullness of human potential. By doing so, we add oil to the lamp of humanity so that it may shine brighter, and thus reap robust vigor for ourselves as well.

## **10) Enlighten a Person Lost Within Temptation**

Finally, we arrive at Step 10. The world is without doubt a confusing place filled with innumerable cheap thrills. Full of seductive financial opportunities, dreams, addictions and entertainments that at first glance may seem like either a sound pursuit or harmless fun that everyone partakes in. What our rational minds reject our hearts may foolishly desire. Many have been ruined because they lacked guidance and personal discipline, because they allowed the smoke and mirrors of frivolous temptation to rob them of their caution, reason and the life they could have had.

And so, this final step asks that we enlighten at least one person lost in temptation, and set them back on the right track. By pulling someone else back from the brink of the abyss, we too will reap discernment, stability and clarity in return.

## A Final Word:

The ten actions we have just discussed are really very simple, nevertheless , as they often conflict with our inherent apathy and self centeredness, implementation may be an emotionally difficult matter. Thus, it is important for us to understand the fact that no obstacle, except those currently cluttering our mind, can stop us from carrying out these ten steps.

We must be mentally strong and take the great step forward to overcome our old ways, to plant the seeds of positive karmic manifestation. Once we've sincerely carried out this program, we will find that our minds and perceptions have changed, that the world outside (which previously was a source of our stress and anxiety) has become much more positive and hospitable, and that the happiness, friendships and opportunities which had previously evaded us are now low hanging fruit for our easy picking. Moreover, even neutral things and small pleasures now bring us great amusement and joy. Having reversed greed into generosity and selfishness into concern for others, all things are now a source of happiness. Without doubt, this new world outside is a reflection of the healthier mind and purer heart that we have cultivated.

**Lastly, as self improvement is a life long endeavor, it is needless to say that even though the Ten Step Method requires only one act and one beneficiary per step for visible results to appear, we must not restrict our cultivation to the minimum level. The potential of this program is unlimited and the more we are willing to sow, the more we'll reap. Once initial results manifest, we ought to redouble our efforts and patiently push ever onwards, so that we may one day taste a happiness few have ever fathomed, and even fewer have attained.**

*Note: Included in the last page is a checklist to help monitor our progress as we complete each step.*

# Ten Step Method Checklist:

<b>Name:</b> _____ <b>Date (Start)</b> _____ <b>Date (End)</b> _____	<b>Have I completed the required one act?</b>	<b>How did I do it and when I did it?</b>
Step One		
Step Two		
Step Three		
Step Four		
Step Five		
Step Six		
Step Seven		
Step Eight		
Step Nine		
Step Ten		

## Example:

	<b>Have I completed the required one act?</b>	<b>How did I do it and when did I do it?</b>
Step Four	Yes	Sold some furniture and donated proceeds (\$100) to local food drive (May, 2019).



# Many Roads

BODHICHARYA'S E-MAGAZINE

[ABOUT](#)[EDITORIALS](#)[ARTICLES](#)[REVIEWS](#)[THE ARTS](#)[CONTACT US](#)

## Makara

FEBRUARY 3, 2017 in POETRY, THE ARTS.

## NOVEMBER 22, 2016 PURELANDSUTRAS



Calligraphy: Sincerity, Serenity, Fairness, Enlightenment and Benevolence

### RECENT POSTS

[Autumn Editorial](#)[The Practical  
Buddhist: Coming  
Home](#)[More Than One Life](#)[Summer Days on  
the Allotment](#)[Wasp on the Prayer  
Flag](#)[Editorial](#)[No Lockdown on  
the River Garry](#)

### CHOOSE BY CATEGORY

[Subscribe here](#) to  
receive our Editorial  
Newsletter.

We use cookies on our website to give you the most relevant experience by remembering your preferences and repeat visits. By clicking "Accept", you consent to the use of ALL the cookies.

In a distant faraway land,  
There reigned a wise sovereign  
Most mighty and valiant,  
Honored by many as the  
World's Bounty and Mercy.  
Upon hearing the Dharma  
Of Lokeshvararaja Buddha,  
He melted into joyful repose  
And cast aside desire's shadow,  
The fetters of the world's cares,  
And vowed to become the heir  
Of the True and Utmost Way!  
Thus, he abandoned his crown,  
Robed himself a humble monk,  
And marched forth upon the Way,  
Cultivating through night and day  
Until he became the renowned  
Bodhisattva Dharmakara.  
With profound wisdom peerless,  
Faith and patience matchless,  
He swiftly mastered the Dharma,  
Rose far beyond the Samsara  
And high above the snares of Mara.  
In triumph, he sought the Buddha  
And piously vowed and bowed before  
Him, revering his great grandeur:

“The Buddha's august demeanor  
Is wondrous without compare,  
His halo the ten quarters illumine,  
Bright beyond the luminous moon  
And the lucent beams of high noon,  
The World Honored One's voice  
Enlightens all beings to rejoice  
Within the Dharma in native speech,  
And he appears to all and each  
In the body of their honored liege.  
I yearn to emulate you and preach  
Sermons of Dharma to everyone,

as your articles,  
reviews and creative  
outputs to  
[manyroads@bodhicharya.org](mailto:manyroads@bodhicharya.org)

#### TAGS

*Akong Rinpoche*

*Albert Harris*

*Angus Ogilvy*

*Ani Rinchen  
Khandro*

*Annie Dibble*

*Brian Chung*

*Buddhism*

*Casa da Torre*

*Choje Akong Tulku  
Rinpoche*

*Conscious Action Network*

*Elizabeth Mattis  
Namgyel*

*Ernie Buck*

*Gavin Haines Haiku*

*HH Karmapa*

*Holy Island*

*House Clearing by  
Moonlight*

*Ianthe Pickles*

*Indra Mahapurja*

*Indra Majupuria Ivory*

*Jaiya John*

*Kagyu Samye  
Ling*

*Kate Roddick*

*Kathmandu*

Without bounds like the shining sun,  
To teach Sila, Samadhi and Viriya,  
The profound and potent Dharma.  
Wisdom as vast and deep as the sea,  
Heart neither stained nor weary,  
Gliding o'er oceans of sin and woe,  
To the halcyon shores of Bodhi,  
Untainted by gloomy wrath,  
Unfettered by lustful avarice,  
And blessed with serene Samadhi.  
I shall follow the footsteps of the  
Infinite Buddhas who precede me  
And act as a great guiding light  
For the masses, to be their sight,  
Uprooting the temporal bequeath  
Of birth, old age, illness and death,  
Always generous and ever virtuous,  
With diligence and eternal patience,  
Forever within Samadhi and Prajna,  
Faithfully abiding by the Six Paramitas,  
Bestowing Bodhi upon the dull and lost,  
And lifting Sages into the Buddha host!  
As he who rains alms upon the Sangha  
Is less than he who becomes a Buddha  
Through single-minded faith,  
I vow to in diligent Samadhi stay,  
And glow brightly with everlasting light,  
I shall build a splendrous paradise  
Unrivalled across the universe entire,  
To serve as a refuge of lasting respite  
For those benighted in the Samsara!  
With kindness I will shatter every klesha  
Of every poor soul tortured by dukkha.  
I shall not waver for I am determined  
To shoulder every pain and burden,  
So let the Buddha be my witness!"

After hearing Dharmakara's great  
And dauntless resolve and praise,  
The Buddha arose from his Dais,  
Gleaming with utmost admiration  
For the one before him who is salvation

*Levekunst art of life*

*Lights in the  
Constellation of the  
Crab*

*Living and Dying  
in Peace*

**Maeve  
O'Sullivan**

*Maggie's Cancer  
Caring Centres*

*Many Roads*

**Monica  
Wilde**

*Nepal*

*New Writing Scotland*

*Ngondro*

**Ringu  
Tulku  
Rinpoche**

*Ron Hirsch*

*Samye Ling*

*Shermatang Sitar Rose*

*Soul Water Rising*

*The Joys of Nepalese  
Cooking*

*Thomas Zachmeier*

*Vocal Chords*

*Yeshe Dorje*



**Bodhicharya**

*Privacy Policy*

To the endless many lost in perdition.

He then declared:

“Your vows are not made in vain,  
For even the oceans can be emptied  
By but one who bails unceasingly,  
And all its hidden pearls revealed,  
What is there the sincere cannot attain?  
I will show you the path and Way  
To your glorious and imperious day!”

And so the Buddha parted the sky and  
Revealed to Dharmakara every plane  
Of rebirth, each and every Buddha Land,  
All the galaxies, worlds and Sagely domains,  
Revealing their cities, peaks, gorges and seas,  
Their prairies, hills and fertile valleys,  
The villas of devas dancing in divine weal,  
The nature and condition of their peoples,  
Unveiling their barren ghostly ruins, animal  
Kingdoms and bleak narakas most infernal.  
Uncovering all of their vices and virtues,  
So that Dharmakara may with ease build  
A pure and gilded land of wondrous bliss,  
Free from evil and woe, a supreme harbor  
Of every good found across the ten quarters.  
The Buddha then said: “Pronounce your vows!”

“For the relief of all sentient beings,  
Including those mired in the suffering  
Of hellish, ghostly and beastly rebirth,  
I have built a Pure Land of true mirth,  
Open to all who are willing to share my  
Merits and forfeit darkness for light!  
I have paved for you fine gilded roads  
Of precious stones, purple and gold,  
For you I have filled rivers and lakes  
With cool azure waters of soft ripples,  
Swirling with fragrant flowers most graceful,  
With beds of aurulent sand, and laid  
Before you villas, pavilions and canopies,  
Groves of beryl, emerald and agate trees

That ruffle and sway in the blissful breeze,  
Adorned by jade leaves and scented petals,  
Berries of Mani-jewels and crystal.  
I give you clear skies and peerless paradise,  
A glorious afterlife of endless delight,  
With singing songbirds perched on amber arbors,  
Humming hymns with lyrical harmony  
And the most soothing of melodies!  
I bless all who arrive in my land with  
August, aurulent and ethereal bodies  
Untainted by the greed, fear and foul odors  
That flesh, desire and delusion harbors,  
I bless thee with all the powers of Bodhi,  
Its wisdom, eminence, bliss and glory,  
Its serene Samadhi and tranquil purity!  
Divine provision shall appear on demand  
And so too the finery and robes of my land.  
Any being who chants my Buddha-name,  
Wholeheartedly abandons evil and repents  
With faithful resolve, shall enter my domain  
And rise to Sagehood upon the Lotus Lagoon.  
I am Amitabha and my vows have come to pass!”

Upon hearing Amitabha’s august vows,  
The entire assembly before him bowed,  
Moved to joyous tears by his great resolve!  
They beheld his unsurpassed compassion,  
His merciful uprooting of all evil passions,  
Granting each the chance to taste the Samadhi  
Of the highest, most true and utmost Bodhi!  
On this glorious and regal Dharma day,  
The Earth shook in the six auspicious ways,  
Gleaming gods and goddesses were seen  
Gliding over the stars stroking harp-strings,  
The ethereal heavens soon resounded with  
Gilded notes of splendid divine bliss,  
And the courts of the heavenly lords feted,  
Raining down golden lilies like confetti!

*Poem released into Public Domain*

*I started translating Chinese Mahayana Pure Land Buddhist sutras in 2014*

*after realizing that many important sutras and scriptures that I had long taken for granted were mostly unavailable in the West. What had begun as a project for a short tractate turned into a delightful three year odyssey of translations, essays, poems, discussions and correspondence with new friends. All of my posts, articles, translations, poems and essays are free and in the Public Domain, and I encourage other authors to donate their works into the Public Domain as well. In October of last year, a Dharma friend encouraged me to start a blog to serve as a doorway to my translations, and that is how this blog started.*

*Taipei, Taiwan*

[purelandsutras.wordpress.com/blog/](http://purelandsutras.wordpress.com/blog/)



← [HARRIET TUBMAN](#)

[SWEET CORN PUDDING मकैको खीर](#) →

## Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked \*

Comment

Name \*

Email \*

Website

# Many Roads

BODHICHARYA'S E-MAGAZINE

[ABOUT](#)[EDITORIALS](#)[ARTICLES](#)[REVIEWS](#)[THE ARTS](#)[CONTACT US](#)

## The Buddha's Master Plan

MAY 6, 2018 in POETRY, THE ARTS.



**Beneath the sea of glistening stars,  
Between the ethereal evening air,  
Lies a forest of glowing dreams,  
But as diverse and rich as they are,  
None escape the same Moonbeam.**

**Under the lucent morning glow,  
Roll waves of raving emotions,  
Turbid fortunes and cruel woes,  
The burning craving of billions,  
Yet the same Sun illumines them all.**

**Princes, beggars and pretenders.**

### RECENT POSTS

[Autumn Editorial](#)[The Practical  
Buddhist: Coming  
Home](#)[More Than One Life](#)[Summer Days on  
the Allotment](#)[Wasp on the Prayer  
Flag](#)[Editorial](#)[No Lockdown on  
the River Garry](#)

### CHOOSE BY CATEGORY

**[Subscribe here](#)** to  
receive our Editorial  
Newsletter.

*We use cookies on our website to give you the most relevant experience by remembering your preferences and repeat visits. By clicking "Accept", you consent to the use of ALL the cookies.*

The crown of a grand old oak  
Casts a wide and mighty shadow,  
Ruffling with a myriad of leaves,  
Adorned by blooming blossoms  
That sprout in spring and wither in winter,

With branches amber in autumn,  
Green in summer, and lean and bare  
In Saturn's season of barren frost.  
Yet for all its lush richness, it still rests  
Upon one abiding unchanging trunk.

So even as human affairs steer here and there,  
And wander and meander like wetland streams,  
The timeless source remains the same,  
For all ripe fruits return to Buddha's root.

It is often asked why it is said that there are **84,000 different Dharma-doors (i.e. innumerable forms of Dharma)**. The answer is simple: **Sentient beings are complex and have innumerable biases, different spiritual levels and varying aspirations. Thus, it is not possible for one fixed form of teaching to suffice by itself.**

Therefore, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have not only spoken a rich collection of different Sutras, but have also manifested as the Sages and founders of different religions in order to teach those who could not yet accept the Buddhadharma.

According to the Ven. Master Hsuan Hua:

**“In Buddhism, he (Guanyin Bodhisattva) appears as a Bodhisattva; in other religions he often appears clad in white robes. In Christianity, he is the Holy Mother; he appears as the Holy Mother to teach and transform a certain category of beings. He appears in white robes and Christians call her Mother Mary, but actually she is Guanshiyin Bodhisattva manifesting in that form to inspire beings to bring forth a resolve that will lead them sooner or later to understand the Buddhadharma. Once they understand the Buddhadharma, they will bring forth the resolve for Bodhi. These**

as your articles,  
reviews and creative  
outputs to  
[manyroads@bodhicharya.org](mailto:manyroads@bodhicharya.org)

#### TAGS

*Akong Rinpoche*

*Albert Harris*

*Angus Ogilvy*

*Ani Rinchen  
Khandro*

*Annie Dibble*

*Brian Chung*

*Buddhism*

*Casa da Torre*

*Choje Akong Tulku  
Rinpoche*

*Conscious Action Network*

*Elizabeth Mattis  
Namgyel*

*Ernie Buck*

*Gavin Haines Haiku*

*HH Karmapa*

*Holy Isand*

*House Clearing by  
Moonlight*

*Ianthe Pickles*

*Indra Mahapurja*

*Indra Majupuria Ivory*

*Jaiya John*

*Kagyu Samye  
Ling*

*Kate Roddick*

*Kathmandu*



are the endless miraculous functions and inconceivable states of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva.”

**-Ven Master Hsuan Hua’s 1996 Lecture “Guanyin, Guanyin, Guanshiyin” (Translated by the BTTS).**

Despite this rich varied diversity, the purpose is all the same: To promote virtue and eschew vice, which is the key (i.e. the Sila of the Threefold Training of Sila, Samadhi and Prajna) to eventually developing faith in the Buddha-dharma. For a more detailed analysis, please read my following Public Domain essay:

<https://archive.org/details/ThePurposeOfMonotheismAndItsFuture>

**Thus, interfaith harmony is important, and no one should be caught up in conflict or strife over superficial differences, for all roads lead home.**

However, even though all roads (religions) lead to the Buddha-dharma, all of the Buddha-dharma and every Sutra are united by Amita Buddha’s Pure Land School, the easiest and most wondrous Dharma door, cultivated by both the brilliant and base. The only practical way to Buddha-hood in our current Dharma-ending age.

**For an introduction to Pure Land Buddhism, please read my Free and Public Domain translations of the *The Buddha Speaks the Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra*, and the *Path to Pure Land prayer***

**JANUARY 21, 2017**

**PURELANDSUTRAS**



[← The Ringu Tulku Archive](#)

[Praise to Tara →](#)

**Leave a Reply**

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked \*

*Levekunst art of life*

*Lights in the  
Constellation of the  
Crab*

*Living and Dying  
in Peace*

**Maeve  
O'Sullivan**

*Maggie's Cancer  
Caring Centres*

*Many Roads*

**Monica  
Wilde**

*Nepal*

*New Writing Scotland*

*Ngondro*

**Ringu  
Tulku  
Rinpoche**

*Ron Hirsch*

*Samye Ling*

*Shermatang Sitar Rose*

*Soul Water Rising*

*The Joys of Nepalese  
Cooking*

*Thomas Zachmeier*

*Vocal Chords*

*Yeshe Dorje*



**Bodhicharya**

*Privacy Policy*

# Many Roads

BODHICHARYA'S E-MAGAZINE

[ABOUT](#)[EDITORIALS](#)[ARTICLES](#)[REVIEWS](#)[THE ARTS](#)[CONTACT US](#)

## THE UNIVERSAL WAY OF AVALOKITESVAR BODHISATTVA

SEPTEMBER 4, 2020 in ARTICLES, FEATURES.



*kapoorgalleries*

## AVALOKITESVAR SHRINE

### RECENT POSTS

[Autumn Editorial](#)[The Practical  
Buddhist: Coming  
Home](#)[More Than One Life](#)[Summer Days on  
the Allotment](#)[Wasp on the Prayer  
Flag](#)[Editorial](#)[No Lockdown on  
the River Garry](#)

### CHOOSE BY CATEGORY

**Subscribe here** to  
receive our Editorial  
Newsletter.

We use cookies on our website to give you the most relevant experience by remembering your preferences and repeat visits. By clicking "Accept", you consent to the use of ALL the cookies.



# The Universal Way of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva- A Public Domain Translation of Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra

## Preface

**The Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Chapter of the Lotus Sutra is perhaps one of the most efficacious Dharma Doors ever spoken by the Buddha. Regular recitation of this Sutra can dispel all disasters and help the cultivator build a strong foundational affinity with Avalokitesvara, a Bodhisattva able to uproot all types of suffering, no matter how severe or how strange, be it physical, spiritual and or**

as your articles,  
reviews and creative  
outputs to  
[manyroads@bodhicharyajya.org](mailto:manyroads@bodhicharyajya.org)

### TAGS

*Akong Rinpoche*

*Albert Harris*

*Angus Ogilvy*

*Ani Rinchen  
Khandro*

*Annie Dibble*

*Brian Chung*

*Buddhism*

*Casa da Torre*

*Choje Akong Tulku  
Rinpoche*

*Conscious Action Network*

*Elizabeth Mattis  
Namgyel*

*Ernie Buck*

*Gavin Haines Haiku*

*HH Karmapa*

*Holy Island*

*House Clearing by  
Moonlight*

*Ianthe Pickles*

*Indra Mahapurja*

*Indra Majupuria Ivory*

*Jaiya John*

*Kagyu Samye  
Ling*

*Kate Roddick*

*Kathmandu*

*Levekunst art of life*

**psychological. Anyone who is able to build a foundation with Avalokitesvara (by reciting his Name or this Sutra) shall be forever remembered by the Bodhisattva, who will respond by granting all wishes (be they spoken or secret) and eliminating all of the cultivator's misfortunes, flaws, problems and obstacles— either covertly or openly.**

**Thus, the purpose of this translation is to serve as a easily recited and understood edition of the Avalokitesvara Chapter for all to use in their daily practice. A public domain text to be freely printed and shared without any restriction.**

*Brian Chung,*

*March 2020*

## **The Universal Way of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva**

**The Bodhisattva of Boundless Will arose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, turned towards the Buddha with joined palms and asked: “World**

*Lights in the  
Constellation of the  
Crab*

*Living and Dying  
in Peace*

*Maeve  
O'Sullivan*

*Maggie's Cancer  
Caring Centres*

*Many Roads*

*Monica  
Wilde*

*Nepal*

*New Writing Scotland*

*Ngondro*

*Ringu  
Tulku  
Rinpoche*

*Ron Hirsch*

*Samye Ling*

*Shermatang Sitar Rose*

*Soul Water Rising*

*The Joys of Nepalese  
Cooking*

*Thomas Zachmeier*

*Vocal Chords*

*Yeshe Dorje*



**Bodhicharya**

*Privacy Policy*

**Honored One, we yearn to know why the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, He Who Hears and Heeds the Sounds of the World, is titled thus?”**

**The Buddha replied to Boundless Will:**

**“Virtuous Son! If a multitude of distressed sentient beings, ensnared in myriad sorrows, cry out with one heart the name of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva will heed their cries and release them from suffering. If those who uphold Avalokitesvara’s name were thrown into a raging inferno, they would, by the astonishing power of the Bodhisattva, be immune from the flames. And if swept away by turbulent tides, they would reach the shallows. Likewise, whenever the many who cross the oceans in search of a fortune in gold, silver, red coral, pearls and precious stones find baneful winds forcing them into perilous or haunted waters, then the whole vessel may be steered to safety if just one among them chants the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. For these reasons, he is honored as He Who Hears and Heeds the Sounds of the World.”**

**“Furthermore, if soon to be victims of violence cry for Avalokitesvara, the attacking blades shall break and leave them uninjured. Should a mighty host of Yakshas and Rakshasas —vast enough to cover the**

universe— march forth to torment others, then these fearsome ghosts, upon encountering someone who holds the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, would be unable to even gaze at them with evil eyes, let alone do any harm. And all who are chained and fettered, whether guilty or not, will be freed and their restraints shattered upon invoking the name of Avalokitesvara. Moreover, say a merchant caravan laden with wealth and goods is about to pass through a perilous path surrounded by hoards of marauders—men with hearts hardened by hatred and grievances. If at that time one of the merchants addressed his peers: ‘My good fellows, be not afraid, for let us all chant with one heart the name of Avalokitesvara, the one who bestows fearlessness, and be thus freed from these marauders,’ then the merchants, upon chanting ‘Homage to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva,’ will be released from all danger and be able to see their goods to safety.”

“Boundless Will, the divine powers of Avalokitesvara Mahabodhisattva are ever so glorious. If beings stricken with lust or malice or ignorance often recall the Bodhisattva and cherish his name, they will see their vices recede. Boundless Will, Avalokitesvara possesses such bountiful and penetrating spiritual powers, thus, all beings must keep his name close to their hearts. If a

woman wishing for a son prays and makes offerings to Avalokitesvara, she will have a son replete with fortune and wisdom. If she prays for a daughter, she will be blessed with a virtuous daughter of graceful countenance, honored by all. Boundless Will!

Avalokitesvara has such awe inspiring powers, sentient beings who reverently pray to him will have endless good fortune. This is why all must receive and keep the name of Avalokitesvara.”

“Boundless Will, say someone faithfully upholds the names of Bodhisattvas as numerous as sand grains in sixty two hundred million Ganges Rivers, and offered bed linens, robes, alms food and medicines to each and every one of them for a lifetime, would not the merit of such a virtuous man or woman be great?”

“Certainly, World Honored One,” was the reply from Boundless Will.

The Buddha continued: “On the other hand, if someone else who holds only the name of Avalokitesvara bows and makes offerings but once to him, the merit and blessings attained will be equal to that of the previous person, and shall last for all time. Boundless Will! The blessings reaped from keeping the name of Avalokitesvara are unlimited and unending.”



**The Bodhisattva of Boundless Will then asked the Buddha: “World Honored One, how does Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva tour the Saha world and minister to the masses? What is his way of preaching?”**

**The Buddha replied: “Virtuous Son, if the inhabitants of a land must meet a Buddha to be liberated, Avalokitesvara will appear in the form of a Buddha and minister to them. He will manifest as a Paccekabuddha to those who have such affinities, and as an Arhat to those who seek one. If people are to be liberated by the Great Brahma King, he will appear as one and preach the Dharma, and if an audience requires the form of the Heavenly Father, he will appear as the Heavenly Father. If beings need to be ministered to by a deva from the Heaven of the Unburdened, he will appear as one, and likewise manifest as a deva from the Greater Heaven of the Unburdened when required. If the need to appear as a Celestial Marshal arises, he will do so and preach in that form. If the form of the Celestial King Kubera is sought for, he will oblige. The same is true for the forms of princes, elders, householders, magistrates, brahmins, monks, nuns, lay devotees, consorts, matrons, youthful sons or pure maidens. He will furthermore appear as any god, dragon, yaksha, gandharva, asura, garuda, kinnara,**



**mahoraga, human or nonhuman. And for those destined to be liberated by a Vajra God, he will manifest accordingly and preach the Dharma to them as a Vajra God.”**

**“Boundless Will! These are the meritorious deeds of Avalokitesvara, he graces all the lands in myriad different bodies and liberates all. So fail not to single-mindedly make offerings to Avalokitesvara, for it is this Mahabodhisattva who bestows fearlessness in moments of peril. He is known across the Saha world as the one who dispels all dangers and disasters.”**

**The Bodhisattva of Boundless Will declared: “World Honored One, I shall now make an offering to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.” As he removed his bejeweled Livery Collar—a treasure equal to a thousand gold staters—and presented it before Avalokitesvara, he said, “O Humane One, please receive this pious offering of pearls and jewels.” Being ever humble, the Bodhisattva declined the gift. In response, the Bodhisattva of Boundless Will beseeched again, “Humane One, please accept this offering out of pity for me!”**

**At that moment, the Buddha said to Avalokitesvara: “You must accept this pious offering out of compassion for Boundless Will, the four assemblies, and for the gods,**

dragons, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans and nonhumans.” Thus, out of compassion for them all, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva accepted the gift, halved it, and offered a portion each to the Buddha and the Myriad Jeweled Stupa. “Boundless Will! Such is the supreme spiritual power of Avalokitesvara, he who is ever present across the entire Saha World.”

The Bodhisattva of Boundless Will then asked in verse:

“O World Honored One of wondrous countenance, I now seek once more the origins of this Heir of Buddha, The One Who Hears And Heeds the Sounds of the World!”

And so, The Eminent One of Excellent Features replied

To Boundless Will in mellifluous

verse: “Hear the Ways of Avalokitesvara, he who manifests in myriad places, Has resolve deeper than oceans, he who has waited upon Countless Buddhas over endless eons, and kept the

Great Vows of Purity. I shall now tell of the miracles Granted to those who hear his name, see his person, Those who hold his name close to their hearts, For their many sorrows shall all wither into dust! Say the murderous plot to push you into a fiery pit, Abide in Avalokitesvara and the fiery pit will

**turn into**

**A delightful pond. Or if you are cast adrift in  
a mighty Sea, surrounded by hydras, sea-**

**nymphs and devil whales, Abide in**

**Avalokitesvara and the shallows shall  
appear. If you are pushed off Mount Meru,**

**abide in Avalokitesvara**

**And you will float in the void like the Sun.**

**Suppose you are Pursued by hounds to the**

**edge of the Vajra Cliff, abide in**

**Avalokitesvara and see not one hair harmed.  
Or if you Are trapped by extortionists, armed**

**and ready to do harm, Abide in**

**Avalokitesvara and see forgiveness and**

**mercy Swell in their hearts. Or if you are  
ensnared in the laws of Magistrates and sent**

**to the guillotine, abide in Avalokitesvara And**

**the blade shall break into pieces; if chained**

**and fettered, Then the restraints shall be**

**shattered and liberty regained. If you are**

**victim of the dark arts, of curses and vexes,**

**Abide in Avalokitesvara and the malice shall**

**backfire Onto the culprit. And should you**

**meet fearsome Rakshasas, venomous**

**basilisks and other ghosts, abide in**

**Avalokitesvara and none would dare haunt**

**you. Or if You are circled by ferocious beasts,**

**teeth and claws Long and sharp, abide in**

**Avalokitesvara and see them scatter Away in**

**every direction. Cobras and scorpions, toxic**

**vapors And thick smoke, all dissipate when**

**the name Of Avalokitesvara resounds in the**

**air. And so too Ominous clouds, striking**

**lightning, hail and rainstorms—Fading before  
the powers of Avalokitesvara. The multitude  
Of sentient beings, ensnared in myriad  
sorrows, shall find**

**Release in the wondrous wisdom of  
Avalokitesvara, which Alleviates all worldly  
pains and anxieties. Replete with Divine  
powers, and forever perfecting his wisdom  
and ease, He manifests in all the lands across  
the ten quarters. The manifold states of woe,  
the hells, ghost realms and Beastly domains,  
the suffering of birth, old age, illness, and  
Death shall all recede. Heeding purity and  
truth, heeding the Vast body of wisdom,  
heeding benevolence and compassion, May  
all forever admire him with resolve and  
praise. Radiance pure and unblemished, like  
sagacious solar rays Dispelling the darkness,  
able to tame all disasters from wind to Fire,  
and illumine without bounds the whole  
universe. He is The body of benevolence,  
with thundering virtue, pouring forth The  
ambrosia of truth to extinguish the embers of  
anguish. If you are mired in prosecutions or  
caught in the throes of Battle, abide in  
Avalokitesvara and all enmity shall vanish.  
The wondrous sounds of Avalokitesvara, so  
pure like Serene waves, peerless in this  
world, who could afford  
Not to keep his name? Cherishing each chant  
with true faith, The pure and sagely  
Avalokitesvara is your rock in times of Pain**

**and peril. Replete with merit and eyes of benevolence, Blessings boundless like the ocean, worthy of reverence!”**

**In the end, the Bodhisattva Who Shouldered the Earth rose and proclaimed before the Buddha: “O World Honored One, anyone able to hear this sermon on the boundless deeds of Avalokitesvara and his universal works of mercy surely has an abundance of merit.” And as the Buddha spoke this Sutra, the myriad beings in the congregation before Him vowed for Unsurpassed Bodhi.**

**Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!  
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!**

**Homage to the Greatly Compassionate,  
Greatly Benevolent, Avalokitesvara  
Mahabodhisattva!**

**Foundations of Practice: Code of  
Conduct All Buddhists Must Anchor  
Themselves to Daily**

**The foundations of the Buddha-Dharma are the Ten**

**Virtues. They are divided as follows:**

### **The Three Virtues of the Body**

- 1. No killing**
- 2. No lustful misconduct**
- 3. No stealing or taking what is not yours  
and not given**

### **The Four Virtues of Speech**

- 1. No lying, slander and libel**
- 2. No rude and harsh speech**
- 3. No idle gossip**
- 4. No back-stabbing/ spreading divisive  
rumors**

### **The Three Virtues of the Mind**

- 1. No avarice**
- 2. No wrath**
- 3. No ignorance of the law of karma**

**These moral principles form the cornerstone of Buddhist practice ; they are the foundations of our daily conduct, and our respect for them will decide our future.**

**According to the Venerable Master Chin**

**Kung, those who humbly perfect these Ten Virtues to a high degree will be reborn in the celestial realm. Those who perfect the Ten Virtues to a high degree, but are afflicted with extreme ambition and arrogance will be reborn as Asuras. Those whose diligence in observing the Ten Virtues are of an average level are reborn as humans, and those whose display of the Ten Virtues fall short of 50% effectiveness are reborn in the evil realms.**

**Thus, I personally consider it important to live by these principles everyday. None of us are perfect, but if we constantly reflect on these Ten Virtues, and anchor our conduct to these Virtues, we will soon reach an advanced state of practice, become unshakable in our peace of mind, and secure in our good fortune.**

***All Rights Released Into Public Domain. Please Feel Free to Share, Copy, Print and Distribute at Will.***



# Buddhist Principles on How to Improve Destiny and Overcome an Unfortunate Life

By Brian Bye Sheng Chung



Nuns of the [Nanlin Monastery](http://www.nanlin.org) (<http://www.nanlin.org>) — making offerings to Sanghas with strict precepts will yield immediate fruit, altering destiny quickly.

## What is fate or destiny?

When each of us were born, a projection of the exact course of our entire life was set in motion, with both our weal and woe scheduled in advance. This projection is the fruit of our karmic balance at birth, and is accurate down to the cent, to each morsel of food we may eat and each gulp of water we may drink. The length of our lifespan, our health, career, who we marry, how much money we can make, our losses and disasters have already been charted into the projection. Thus, our woe and weal has nothing to do with other people or external circumstances, everything is purely the result of past karma. This projection is what we refer to as destiny or fate.

However, we must remember that a projection is only a projection, and is thus ever changing. Our subsequent good and evil from the time of birth onwards alters the projection constantly. However, as most people simply cruise through life, blindly seeking things from the outside, doing negligible good and evil, they remain bound by their original projection, and do not know how to make things work in their favor.



## Can fate/destiny be changed in the current life?

It can. In fact, half the purpose of Buddhism is to teach people how to gain happiness by properly managing fate/destiny, and the other half is to teach people how to transcend it altogether by achieving Bodhi, thus gaining true freedom.

According to Zen Master Yun Gu in **Liao Fan's Four Lessons** ( one of the most famous recorded cases of a man successfully changing his destiny), fate and destiny cannot bind those who do great good and great evil. This is the key principle behind changing destiny.

Basically, a person destined for poverty and suffering can, through the diligent cultivation of good deeds, turn poverty into prosperity, suffering into happiness and short life into long life. Anything that is sought for — wealth, official positions, honors, children, health and long life — can be attained. On the other hand, those who commit great evil (severe violations of the five precepts and ten good deeds) can cancel out their past life blessings, and turn a projected good life into one of suffering and punishment.

## What constitutes great good or great evil?

In general, there are three factors:

- Acts done with persistence, deeds habitually accrued
- Act(s) done with intense mental volition and sincerity
- Act(s) done to a potent merit field (i.e. recipient)

If one (or more) of these factors are in play, then the karma thus created will manifest in the current life, and be powerful enough to change any original fate, for better or for worse.

An example of the **first factor** changing destiny would be the life of Yuan Liao Fan (Ming Dynasty era scholar official during the reign of the Wanli Emperor — author of Liao Fan's Four Lessons). After living the first 35 years of his life exactly as a Taoist priest (Mr. Kong) had predicted using

a method based on the I Ching (originating from the Song Dynasty), he managed to change his fate after vowing to do 3000 good deeds.

Through the persistent routine of discarding bad habits and doing good deeds everyday, he slowly but surely changed his destiny. After a year, he attained the rank of Juren ( a honor signifying gentry status he was not originally fated to have). Eventually, over the course of the next decade and half of cultivation, he got everything he wanted — a son, higher honors, long life and finally a high magistracy.

Liao Fan is an example of someone who changed destiny through habitual cultivation of goodness and virtue. This is the slowest of the three factors.

An example of the ***second factor*** changing destiny would be the case of Scholar Yu Jin Yi (a contemporary of Liao Fan). His name, which he changed after turning to goodness, essentially means “correcting intentions and maintaining mental purity”.

Scholar Yu Jin Yi was impoverished by age 47. Though initially destined for success when he passed the first level of imperial examinations at a young age, his life stagnated and declined ever since, becoming beset by various misfortunes such as death of children, son going missing, wife going blind, poverty etc. Eventually, the Hearth Spirit manifested and told him that the reason he did not prosper was because of his **insincerity and hypocrisy**. Though he did some good (as a Confucian scholar, he was essentially the Eastern equivalent of a local vicar in the West), he only did the bare minimum needed for show, was hypocritical/argumentative, and his intentions (being filled with hateful and lustful thoughts) did not live up to how he presented himself.

Thus, he vowed to change, and for the next three years, he walked the path of virtue in body, speech and mind. Bowing before Avalokitesvara with intense sincerity, and doing good deeds without hypocrisy and with true sincerity. Neglecting not even the smallest good deed and tolerating the criticism and misunderstandings of others.

Three years later, he received a response, and was recommended to become the private tutor in the household of the Ming Grand Secretary, Zhang Ju Zheng (1525–1582). This massively elevated his social position. Moreover, he was also reunited with his only surviving son (who had gone missing years before) and his wife's blindness was cured on its own. He lived until his mid eighties.

In the famous Treatise of Response and Retribution (Kan Ying Pien), it is stated that if a person sees only good, does only good and speaks only good for three years, Heaven will bestow fortune. If they do the opposite, Heaven will bestow punishment. Yu Jin Yi, because of his sincerity in walking on the path of virtue in both body and mind, received a response after three years. Moreover, the counterpart scripture to the Kan Yin Pien, the Yin Chih Wen (Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way), stresses that good deeds should be done without seeking reputation. Yu Jin Yi also accorded with this virtue by correcting his previous insincerity and hypocrisy. This is of particular importance since he was a founding member of the Wen Chang Society, and had previously failed to live up to its rules and teachings.

He is an example of someone changing destiny through intense mental volition and sincerity. This is second quickest way to change destiny.

An example of the **third factor** changing destiny would be the case of King Suprabuddha, who maliciously obstructed an alms round by blocking the Buddha's path. His evil karma ripened in seven days and he was swallowed by the ground and fell into Avici Hell (his original good fortune being immediately washed away by this new powerful negative karma). This is because he had committed an evil act against a potent merit field (i.e. The Buddha and Sangha).

In general, a field is potent if it belongs to the following three categories:

- The Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Sutras, Arhats, Sangha of strict precepts etc.
- One's parents and benefactors
- Persons and animals suffering intensely — such as wayfarers, the starving, torture victims, those freezing, lepers, animals about to be

slaughtered, patients with severe or painful illnesses, beings on the verge of great suffering etc.

Any act good or bad, even if small or casual, done to these fields will yield a massive fruit, in the present life, often immediately, that will be overwhelmingly disproportionate.

For instance, there is the famous case of a novice monk who was sent home because his Master knew (through samadhi) that his lifespan was to end in a week. However, the novice monk survived. His Master entered samadhi again and found out that on his way home, the novice monk had encountered an ant nest on the verge of being flooded, and quickly made an earth dam to redirect the water. This act of kindness to beings on the verge of disaster immediately extended his lifespan by a dozen years. There is also the recorded account (in the *Abhidharma-kosa*) of a Eunuch who was made whole again after buying and saving bulls from being castrated.

Another more recent example would be the case mentioned by a well known Buddhist, Upasaka Huang (known as Officer Huang as he is a retired police sergeant). What happened was that two sisters, in order to help their mother (who was unconscious from severe stroke), released life and gave a sincere offering, five times their monthly salaries, to two Sangha Monasteries (one for monks and another for nuns) that according to Upasaka Huang were the best in keeping the precepts in Taiwan, and dedicated the merit to their mother. **On the morning of the day after the offering had been made, their mother regained full consciousness.**

The third factor is the quickest and most powerful way to change destiny.

**What is the absolute quickest way to change fate/destiny?**

The above mentioned *third factor* is the quickest.

According to Chapter 4, verse 55–56 of the *Abhidharma-kosa*, a good deed or bad deed done to a “field of excellence” yields not only a great

fruit, but the reward or punishment will come imminently within the current life. Quickly overpowering any original fate.

In general, a “field of excellence” refers to recipients or causes made excellent by their spiritual attainments (i.e. the Buddha and Sangha — monks, nuns and cultivators of strict precepts and samadhi), or their severe and acute suffering (e.g. someone in desperate need).

Harm done to them will yield immediate retribution, but good done to them (i.e. charity and gifts) will yield immediate life changing rewards.

**Thus, if we know a Sangha that is harmonious, true and strong in the precepts, we must immediately render support, offerings and respect. Moreover, if we know of beings or people in desperate need, on the verge of great suffering, we should likewise do our best to save them). The merits will speedily manifest, making a bad life good, and a good life even better.**

*Note: This article has no copyright and may be freely copied and shared.*

**Brian Chung** ✓

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Mar 29

## Buddhist Essay: The Answer to the Great Question of Life and Death



What is the Great Question of Life and Death? Is it to live in each moment like some suggest? Or is it to relentlessly strive for all the hallmarks of fulfillment and success, as defined by popular ideal? Everyday, as we hope and worry, as we spin in this hamster-wheel of a life and chase after shadows, such questions have surely arose in our minds at some point.

According to the Venerable Buddhist Master Chin Kung, realizing the answer to the Great Question of Life and Death is the foremost matter, and all other temporal desires— such as academic honors, wealth and the starting of a family—are secondary in importance. The Ancient Sages often reminded in their myriad moral tractates that human life is transient by nature, no longer than a guest's stay, and that all are later reborn in accordance with their karma. Thus, preparing for the life to come is the true purpose of human life, and the answer to the Great Question. The Buddha once illustrated the rarity of human rebirth within the Samsara (Wheel of Life) by likening it to a clump of soil in his palms next to all the earth of the world entire. Therefore, all of us must refrain from shortsightedly embracing life's distractions. Instead, we ought to take full advantage of the rare opportunity we now hold and diligently cultivate the merits needed to either reach a pleasant state of future existence, or to transcend the Samsara for good.

However, this is not to say we must resign ourselves to a bleak life of total sacrifice. The Ven. Master Chin Kung has also clarified that when we concentrate on the accumulation of merits and good karma, our temporal situation automatically improves as well. This is in accordance with the principles of karma ; a good deed often bears fruit in three stages:

1. *The Bloom of Requit*—immediate good fortune manifesting in this very life.
2. *The Fruit of Requit*—a long existence in a higher plane of existence.
3. *The Legacy Reward*—a subsequent human rebirth (one with wealth, beauty and power).

Furthermore, Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra also reminds us that: **"The virtuous rise from light to greater light while the wicked sink further and further into the mire."**

Thus, what must we do to shape our future for the better?

To answer this question, we must first understand our inclinations and goals. If our goal is merely to have a prosperous rebirth, then the accumulation of good deeds is sufficient. If, however, we should seek to transcend the unending pain of death and rebirth forever, then the cultivation of proper samadhi is needed.

First, we will explore the basic ways to accumulate good karma (and by extension good rebirths), which is by planting good deeds in the Four Fields of Merit.

#### **The Four Fields of Merit :**

##### **1)The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (also known as the Triple Jewel)**

- Donating to Buddhist Temples or Pure Land Associations.
- Donating alms to Buddhist Monks and Nuns who hold the precepts.
- Contributing to the restoration of dilapidated Temples or Stupas.
- Bowling before and making offerings (e.g. flowers and lamps) to statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- Freely circulating Buddhist Sutras such as [Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra](#) <sup>↗</sup>.
- Free Distribution of Statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- Recitation of Buddhist Sutras, Mantras and the Names of Bodhisattvas. Popular and efficacious Sutras and Names to recite would be the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and the [Universal Way of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva](#) <sup>↗</sup> (Chp. 25 of the Lotus Sutra).
- Cultivating the Five Precepts and Ten Virtues.

##### **2) The Field of Gratitude—Filial Piety and Gratitude for Benefactors.**

- Taking care of and respecting our aged parents.
- Safeguarding the legacy of our parents and ancestors.
- Practicing the precepts found in the Di Zi Gui (The Standards of Being a Good and Child), a Confucian tractate on Filial Piety endorsed by the [Ven. Master Chin](#) <sup>↗</sup> [Kung](#) <sup>↗</sup> and many other eminent Buddhists.
- Helping our parents achieve Pure Land rebirth through [supportive chanting](#) <sup>↗</sup>.

##### **3)The Field of Charity—Generosity Towards the Poor and Needy.**

- Donating to the hungry or old age homes for destitute elders.
- Contributing to basic public infrastructure—such as water wells and sanitation—in economically challenged places.
- Offering professional services (such as Architecture Design) pro bono to Non-Profit projects.

##### **4) The Field of Mercy—Generosity Towards Animals & Nature.**

- Buying and liberating animals from the clutches of the abattoir. According to the eminent [Upasaka Zhou An Shi's Discourse on the 48 Inquiries of Non-Violence](#) <sup>↗</sup>, releasing livestock and fish from imminent slaughter is immensely meritorious, and the good karma from such deeds manifest the quickest, often helping to extricate the donor from all kinds of pressing dangers or looming disasters.
- Contributing to sustainability and natural conservation.
- Donating to animal shelters.
- Giving stray animals a good home.

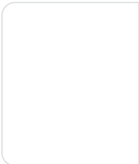
By cultivating good deeds in accordance with the examples above, good karma can be accumulated in vast quantities. For example, there is a famous saying in Buddhism that goes: "One coin donated to the Buddha-Dharma yields rewards ten thousand fold." Moreover, in the Earth Store Sutra, it is stated that those who give with humility and kindness to the poor and needy will reap the same merit as those who make offerings to the Buddha. The 13th Patriarch of the Pure Land School, Master Yin Guang, has also confirmed that those who liberate life and release animals will be reborn as devas in the Heaven of the Four Great Kings.

Nevertheless, reward in the pleasant planes of rebirth, as long and luxurious as they are, remains constrained by the problem of limited life. Therefore, while the Buddha assures in many Sutras the sureness of material advancement in this life and the life to come as a result of virtuous living and doing good, the ultimate purpose of Buddhism remains to transcend the Samsara, to end the wearisome cycle of birth and death for good.

According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, the easiest way to transcend the Samsara is via the *other power* of Amitabha Buddha and his Pure Land.

The term *other power* in Buddhism is used to describe some of the most efficacious Dharma-doors. These schools rely on the compassionate great vows of a Buddha or Bodhisattva to shoulder the karmic debts of the cultivator, and elevate him or her beyond the Samsara in response to the cultivator's single-minded and unwavering faith in that Buddha or Bodhisattva, thus empowering them to be reborn in the Sage's Pure Land where full enlightenment can be swiftly reached. The Dharma Door of Amitabha's Pure Land is the epitome of the *other power* schools. Because we are now in the Dharma-ending age where sentient beings' own scant stocks of merit inhibit their spiritual progress through the *own power* schools, the Dharma-door of Amitabha Pure Land, supported by Amitabha's 48 great Vows, is the most suitable way for us to attain Unsurpassed Bodhi.

To understand more about the Pure Land School, please watch the biographic documentary of the Ven. Master Hai Xian, who attained Pure Land rebirth in 2013 after a lifetime of cultivation:



**The Amazing Life and Legacy of The Venerable Master Hai Xian (1900-2013)**

The above portrait photo is the only formal photograph of him (taken right...

<https://avalokitesvara.medium.com/the-amazing-life-and-legacy-of-the-vene...>

245 views · View shares



#### Comments

#### About the Author



#### Brian Chung

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts



Author



B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012



410.8K content views 22.5K this month



Active in 7 Spaces



Joined March 2020

[View more in Midnight Cafe](#) >



# POETIC COMMENTARIES

By Brian Chung

2016


In this book is a collection of 36 long and short original poems of diverse forms and themes. From poetic commentaries of the works of Edward Hopper and Atkinson Grimshaw to prose poetry and Buddhist inspired works, there is surely something for everyone. As the author, I would like to make clear that all the poems herein have been released into the Public Domain.

## What others have said:



[Maurice Rigoler](#)

Date: 10/8/2016 11:35:00 AM

*You are a man of perception and insight, a rare type these days. Thank you for reading my work, Best to you in your writing endeavors. / M* 



[alicyana](#)

OCTOBER 13, 2016  
AT 3:27 PM

Wooooow beautiful words with beautiful paintings, it's same as matching couple ❤️

Och. . How I wish I could simply breathe poetry 😊


★ Liked by [1 person](#)

[Reply](#)



[Probir Gupta](#)

Date: 9/24/2016 5:56:00 AM

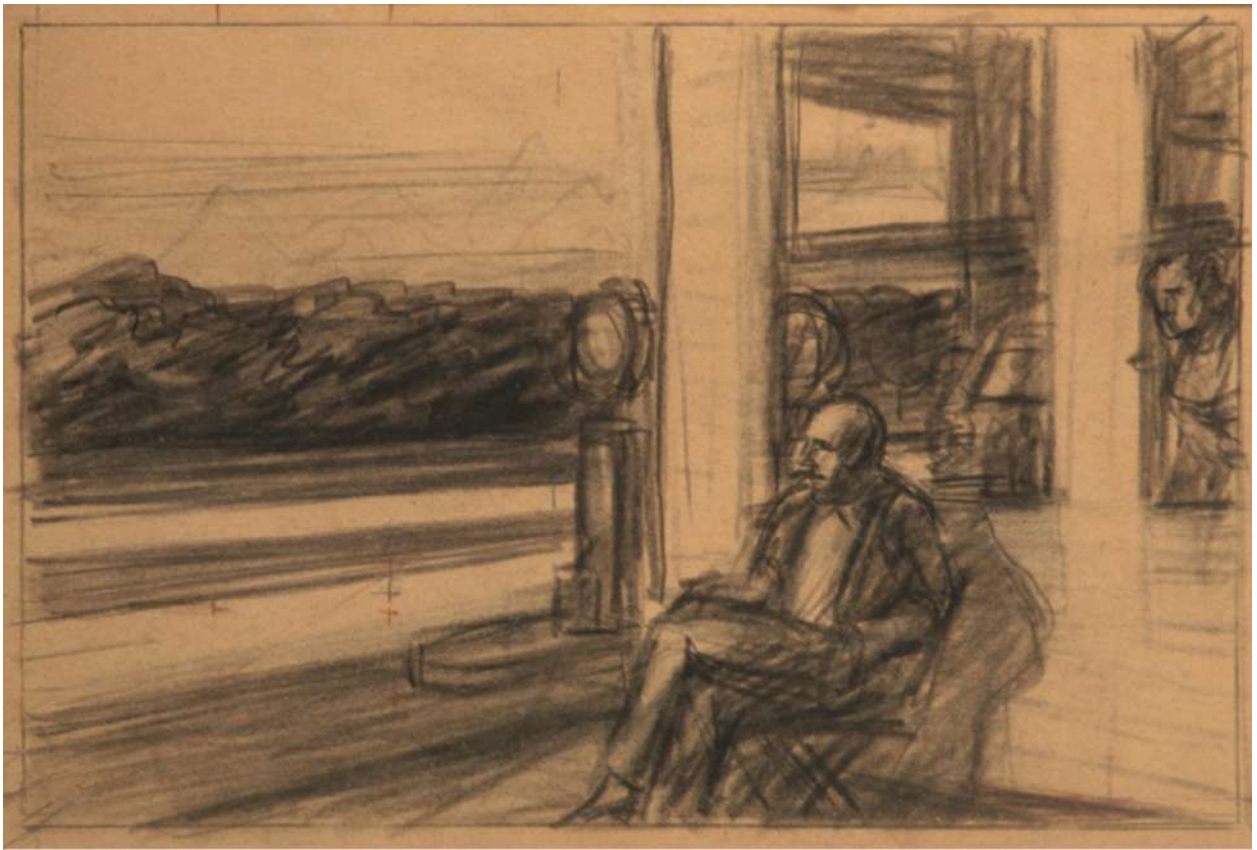
*Well written indeed ...* 



[Silent One](#)

Date: 9/26/2016 2:23:00 PM

*True words.. Well written Brian..* 



## Our Appian Way

Rolling beyond the oblivion  
Reaching over the horizon  
Mile upon mile of paved way  
Sees me drive off and away

The wheels spin tirelessly around  
Allowing me to glide over the open lands  
Across fields and prairies without bounds  
On a highway of four wide and mighty lanes

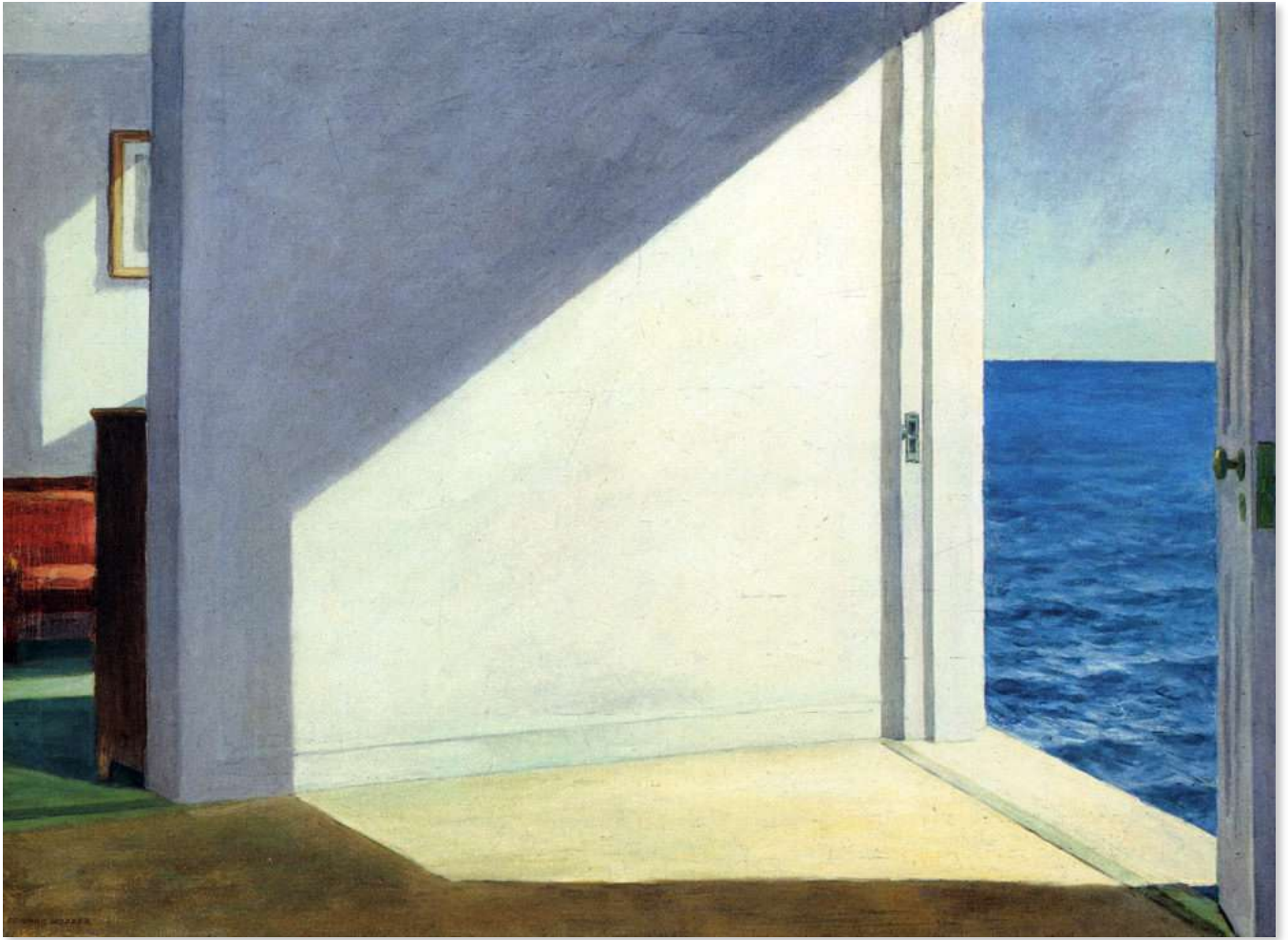
And as the cool breeze parted at my face  
As I sped forward in both night and day  
In rain, storm, fog, shine or seasonal grace  
I felt forever grateful for this Appian Way!



## A Bitter Delight

Midnight Coffee  
Sweet and creamy  
A bitter delight  
Amidst the night





## **Will You Slumber On?**

When the moon retires its gleam,  
And sunlight shines upon the dew,  
Do you rise from bed anew?  
Or slumber on in a waking dream....



## Stoic Eyes

Her fair form adrift in reverie  
A wealful delight for my eyes  
Though my gazes are as deep as  
Her musings and daydreams  
I hide them along with all my stoic yearnings  
In the shades of the gleaming light





## Morning Warmth

When the sunlight basks my little hearth  
It fills my weary soul  
With a shimmer of hope  
And as rays illumine my room with warmth  
I arise anew ; reborn once more





## Night Shift

Evening falls but my  
Day has just begun, for  
I have the night shift, and  
Whilst the world lumbers to  
Slumber, dream and sleep  
I work in blissful peace  
To the tune of chirping  
Crickets and cool breezes  
Softly ruffling the leaves...



## Dawn

Twilight before sunlight  
The early morning  
Cosy and eerie  
Rises to greet  
A world silent and still





## Gazing at the Fading Sun

As afternoon fades and gives way to night  
We sit on our doorstep and gaze away  
At the golden sun falling from the sky  
And as the last beams shine on our faces  
Our minds mirror in unison the fair  
Splendrous sun retiring from up high



## A Stranger's Warmth

I gaze out my window and see the same  
Handsome house of someone I could not name.

A fair home adorned by a mellow lamp  
That comes to life when day fades away and  
Turns to cold autumn night. Though so simple,  
The light which glows from his window sill and  
Flows out to illumine the louring night mist,  
Moves me in ways words fail to illustrate.

We are strangers who know each other not,  
But by mere chance, his light has warmed my heart.





## A Nest to Ponder In

Night's shadow lours upon the world  
And the streets are silent like the  
Netherworld without a single  
Morning soul to be seen or heard.  
But amidst the dimness is a lone  
Lit nest serving toffee flavored coffee,  
And when the jukebox sings "Do I Worry",  
Wistful nighthawks gather to ponder  
From midnight to twilight, minding  
Only their lonely aloof thoughts,  
And to be adrift in surreal reverie,  
During this moonlit lull when the  
Sun shines bright but in dreamworld.

Note: "Do I Worry" is an Ink Spots song.



## The Merchant Republic

This ancient windswept land, this venerable city, forged in sea trade and tempered by age. A teeming bosom of art, and mother of merchant pioneers, poets and painters. A shadowy shimmering pearl adorning the edge of the silver sea. Within its dreamy docks and stately streets, emanates an unseen warmth in the bleak coldness, a cosy brightness beneath the glooming louring clouds. Home to a quiet people with stoic features and keen minds, old lineages and cultured brilliance, blissfully adrift in the weal and bounty of Poseidon. Thus, whenever thy ship sails by, be sure to set foot upon its piers and prosperous promenade, saunter in its glass covered groves, taste the delicacies of the salty sea, waltz within the annual masked ball, and delight in a harpsichord's tune at the marbled conservatory hall.



## The Buddha's Lamp

Flicker, flicker  
Little lamp  
Shining bright  
Offering light  
Golden glow  
Guiding souls  
From woe to weal  
And foe to friend  
From dark to light  
And low to high !

## Now and Then in Fair Fallhill

Slowly, my ferryboat drifted closer to my dear old home. Before me, the stony peaks of familiar mountains arose from the blue hue, and just as cool salty breezes blew across my face, the childhood memories rushed back into my heart – moving me to shed several wistful teardrops.

But, as I approached the docks of Fallhill harbor, it dawned upon me that age had punished the city as it has my body. The neat cobblestones had cracked and sprouted weeds. The piers were rotting and the paint flaking and peeling. I ascended the worn stone steps and onto the grand promenade, where in my youth, young elegant couples strolled with all their finery – gaiting as they admired the many fine boutiques – spending afternoons of leisure under the canopies of the open cafes. Alas! Those days are gone.

The charming stone facades were tainted by watermarks, and the grand Hanseatic townhouses were decayed and dilapidated. The bay windows were broken and boarded ; the fashionable shops and restaurants had closed, though some clung to life and flogged their fading majesty to the odd passerby.

I then made my way to the Gallery of Fine Arts. In its day, it was much renowned and eager artists from far and wide begged to have but a fleeting moment within its gilded halls.



But when I walked into its spacious atrium, the vaulted cast iron and glass roof was shattered and dripping with rust. Bronze statues lay broken upon the floor, and the many oak panels and oil paintings were worn and crooked. Not a soul could be seen, except the old curator, who sat idly by and stared forlornly into the dimly lit halls.

I sighed and left to visit the Thrice Tiered Gardens. Built upon a sloping hill on the banks of the azure Vesbyrn river, it was a marvel that had no rival. I still reminisce the long summers I spent amongst its many fragrant blossoms and blooming arbors. How I sat there, amidst a world of my own, gazing at the magnificent view of the faraway sea, admiring the sun as it rose and the moon as it glowed.

But now, it is overgrown, with broken marble vases strewn across the uneven paths. Colorful weeds and vines of every kind now smother the withered orchards and the crumbling pavilions. Only the timeless view remained.

Evening falls and I sit in my favorite corner cafe. Though the years have taken its toll, it is still open. I drink my plum wine and sigh and say to myself, "Love and glory cannot be kept forever, and must be parted with!"

## One Man's Paradise is Often Another's Perdition

One man's paradise is often another's perdition,  
And from prejudice arise people's positions.  
All seek selfish weal, to shift every woe  
Upon those they deem as detestable foes.  
Duty and Sacrifice     so often prated by  
Those beyond the burdens of their lies.  
If both men and women could but empathize  
And see another's pain as their own torment,  
They would rein in their entitlements  
And make allowances for the needs of others.  
For when all place first the comfort of another,  
Who could possibly be left wanting or enraged  
In a world remade in kindly heavenly image?

# The Mid Autumn Festival

Night falls and the mirror moon illumines the  
heavenly starry skies with gleaming ivory beams.  
Shiny and mellow, a splendrous silver orb,  
the delight of the night sky!

It is the evening of the 15th, and the cool air is fair,  
filled with chirping crickets and reason for revelry.  
Kinfolk gather to rejoice within the warmth of their hearth,  
toasting with mulled wine ; munching moon cakes!  
But today is also sacred and solemn, and offerings  
must be made to Heaven and Earth. Thus, scented  
sandalwood incense are lit ; apricots and pomelos are placed  
upon lacquer plates before the plaques of divine gods,  
and dear ancestors.

Away from laughter and lanterns, besides a quiet lake,  
and under a lofty peak, sits a sagacious couple. She smiles  
and plays the zither, sending with each skillful stroke,  
soft and serene sounds that grace the ethereal night's air.  
As for him, he stands pleased under the pavilion, inhaling  
the sweet scents of blooming peach blossoms, admiring  
the moon as it rose and the beauty of his wife before the  
bright shimmer of moonlight.

Content, he recites a poem:

“The moon is luminous,  
Heaven is harmonious,  
Autumn has come,  
And Summer is gone,  
I toast my cassia wine,  
To a harvest most fine!”

# Within the House of Lake Walensee

Mist glides above the pristine waters,  
Divine clouds rest gently upon the peaks,  
Of fair and turquoise Walensee.

Night falls and moon-glow illumines,  
The everblooming and serene hills,  
Of clear and lofty Walenstadt.

Hidden within the lush green flora,  
Leaning against the majestic forest,  
Is the little house by Lake Walen.

An elegant cottage with cosy lamp light,  
Flowing outwards into the air of night,  
That wreathes the pearl of St.Gallen.

Within, a gramophone brings forth  
The mellow sound of a slow lyric waltz,  
And the graceful couple of Walen house,

A flaxen lady and her gentle, stoic man,  
Delight as they gait softly in warm embrace  
To the still and beauty of fair Walensee!

# Beyond the Yonder

What lies beyond,  
Far over yonder?  
What? You wonder,  
And you ponder.

Is it lush like dreams?  
A land esteemed?  
Or arid and bleak,  
Lacking even a creek?

Provisions you gather,  
Prepare to wander,  
Onwards you saunter,  
Go forth and discover!

# **The Secret Place of the Most High**

The sun illumines a land in precarious peace,  
There was a time when heroes walked with ease,  
But now, complacency reigns shamelessly,  
And the distracted people take weal for granted.

The decaying dynasty finally crumbles and tumbles,  
The peaks and gorges are once again scorched,  
By the scourge of purges and the roar of warlords,  
Stately cities are reduced to ashes as they clash.

For the fortunes of men forever wax and wane,  
Burning ambition paves the way to perdition,  
With towering arrogance, they brandish lances,  
Charging with fury, seeking eternal glory!

The hooves of their bolting steeds tread rudely,  
Upon the hopes and dreams of common rubes,  
Lauding themselves as the rising ascendancy,  
They conquer and scheme without empathy.

Amidst such strife, men and women cry and sigh,  
They brood as they are driven into servitude,  
Streaming away from the ruins of their hearth,  
They weep over fading memories of bygone mirth.

As for me, I am well aware of the follies of men,  
I sought not pomp, power or to lord over and reign,  
Thus, God rewarded me with an oasis in the chaos,  
A quiet utopia of everblooming peach blossoms.

Of clear skies, lush gardens and teal colored lakes,  
Day and night, I gait gently to the tune of a flute,  
And compose poems while gazing at silky moonglow,  
Everyday, I delight in this wondrous Eden of my own!

The faith and virtues I so steadfastly accrued,  
Have freed me from the bane of men's feuds,  
For I now dwell in the secret place of the Most High,  
And abide in the shadow of the Almighty!



# The Great Learning

Stilling avarice with abstinence,  
He recovers profound innate wisdom,  
Gaining sincerity most genuine,  
And a righteous heart of prudence,

As proper mind exudes propriety,  
He harmonizes hearth and household,  
And steers his state away from woe,  
Proving himself fit for purple dignity.

# **This is the Sea-Daunting and Promising**

Shimmering sea, glimmering waves  
Glistening waters, mirroring moon-glow  
Beyond the beaches, coral lagoons  
Mellow boroughs, dotting the shore

Rising sun, peaking through the sky  
Day has arrived, ousting dark night  
Merchant adventurers, sail forth to venture  
The deep blue hue, revealed to the crew

Vast is its reach, and cool the salty breeze  
Violent are its storms, and mighty its depths  
Haunted by sirens, whose tunes take wing  
Amid broken dreams, and forlorn hope

Morbid castaways, adrift or ashore  
Gaze upon the horizon, dazed and confused  
Perhaps they seek, an island of nymphs,  
Just like Odysseus, or so they think...

This is the sea, daunting and promising  
Poseidon's wonders, for all to see!

# Laments of the Forever Unborn

I am a child of no years,  
Of no form, only tears.  
I was once to be born,  
But from womb I was torn.

Not a person, or so they say,  
But I have a soul, and hopes too.  
Alas! The wings of my dreams,  
Have been clipped by cruel whim.

And now, silent I linger,  
In a cold, dark corner,  
Pondering upon the life  
That could have been.

Mother! All I wanted was to be filial,  
To make your years convivial,  
To be your sun when life's winter sets,  
Did I really....deserve not to be?

## **My Dream, My Yearning**

My dream, my undying yearning,  
Is to dwell in a dreamworld of my own,  
In a misty city amid teal lakes and white peaks,  
Filled with clear waters, lush groves and majestic pines,  
With marvelous minimalist halls of mid-century design.

I seek to read in lofty libraries and muse in art galleries,  
To be adrift in abstract beauty and a Baroque adagio,  
To lounge in cafes filled with creative reverie, and  
Elegant silent patrons lost in their daydreams.

I yearn to spend each sublime evening admiring starry skies  
From under a domed skylight, to enjoy creamy coffee upon a  
Lakeside veranda, amid dew drops and cool blissful breezes,  
Gazing at the sun as it rises beyond the skyline.

## **Life is But a Slide Show**

Craving for an illusion  
Chasing after phantoms  
Life is like moving pictures  
One slide after another  
Played in rapid succession  
Making us but a series of stills

King Yama is the director  
Our karma is the script  
And the spirits who record  
Our every virtue and vice  
Are the writers of our role  
Of our every weal or woe!

Thus, what is worth clinging to ?  
A still, an image, an illusion?  
Ponder deeply and look within:  
Which single slide is truly you?

## **A Modest Man**

He grew his own food,  
And sewed his own clothes,  
He owed no one,  
But shared with everyone.

He rejected larceny,  
Refrained from intrigue,  
Spurned lust, lies and malice,  
Spoke only kindness  
And practiced but prudence.

He was a modest man... are we?

## **May the Forlorn Find Home**

May the forlorn find warm hearth,  
A place of their own upon this Earth,  
A cosy delight beneath the skies,  
A nest in the night with mellow lamp light.

## **May the Deaf Hear**

Let deaf ears resound  
Upon splendorous sound,  
With tunes so melodic  
And a song of lyrics,  
May they hear graceful notes  
Dancing in their ears,  
Bringing forth joyous tears!

## **Tell Me Truly, For I Yearn to Hear**

To you I humbly inquire:  
What is your heart's desire?  
Your greatest delight?  
The crowning achievement  
Of your entire Life?  
What moves you to tears?  
Brings out your smile?  
Pleases your ears?  
And sprinkles upon you  
the sweetest dreams?  
Tell me truly, For I yearn to hear!

## **The Bane of Able Men is a Blind and Crippled World**

The bane of able men, is a blind, deaf and crippled world,  
Lacking in discernment, decorum and sincerity,  
Wanting genuine gratitude, profound wisdom and propriety,  
Choking on complacency, and adrift in a sea of avarice,  
Void of foresight, and ignorant of looming calamity,  
Full of men greedy for mere gain like a mantis stalking a  
Careless cicada, oblivious of the oriole behind!

Sighing, the sagacious seclude themselves and bide their time,  
Waiting for better times.....



## **Inspired by Zen**

May all my hopes and fears dissolve into timeless truth,  
May they melt away and trouble be no more,  
Let my inner mind gleam, and beam wisely and bright,  
And my heart abide neither here nor there but  
Arise from anywhere and nowhere!

-Poem inspired by the Shurangama and the Diamond Sutras (of the Zen School)

## **Mother Earth Forever Warm Hearth**

Mother Earth forever warm hearth,  
The soil that gives birth to all mirth,  
Long-lasting, all embracing and boundless,  
Everblooming and always borderless,  
A wealful delight ; a virtuous birthright.

# The Resolve of Amitabha:

*A liberal translation of the poem found in Upsaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra*

I will rise far beyond the yonder  
And cruise upon the unsurpassed  
If my vows won't come to pass  
Then from Bodhi I will wander

I seek to be the greatest patron  
And give alms to the forsaken  
To let all beneath the skies  
Have peace in their long nights

Arising from virtuous roots  
Accomplishing the Bodhi-fruit  
If I achieve wisdom most high  
I shall be known as Infinite Life

Beings who heed my name  
And arrive in my Buddha-domain  
Will have Sagely golden brilliance  
And all the features of excellence

With the Greatest Compassion  
I uproot the many passions

Of every order of beings  
Endowing virtue most purifying

I shall shine my Wisdom Light  
Across the ten quarters bright  
Quelling the three dark taints  
And pardoning those attainted

I offer salvation to those in perdition  
I subdue all turbid emotions  
I help open the Wisdom-eye  
And grant bodies of shining light

I wall off every woeful path  
And pave the way to wealful mirth  
I mine the Dharma-treasure  
And distribute merits with pleasure

I seek to be wise like the Buddha  
To be kind like the Tathagata  
To be the teacher of all devas,  
To shoulder the universe like Atlas

To preach the Dharma like Simha  
To save those mired in karma  
To perfect each and every vow  
And give Buddha-hood to all

If my vision is proved true  
The whole universe will be moved  
Heavenly deities shall fete  
And scatter flowers like confetti !

# **The Wheel of Fortune Spins Away But Rarely Your Way**

For every man that walks the Earth,  
There are umpteen scores of envious souls,  
Jealous of the privilege they now hold,  
For nothing is rarer than human rebirth!

“If the soil clutched in the palm of my hand  
Are the men and women who walk this land,  
Then even all the dirt of the world entire  
Are dwarfed by the souls seeking such a chance!”

Shakyamuni Buddha.

Therefore, a life of virtue and good deeds  
Is a message all of humanity must heed,  
For this human life is short and scarce,  
And if wasted, another come from whence?

Thus the sutras state:  
Good or evil in this realm of men  
Will yield eon spanning bliss or bane,  
And as the Wheel of Fortune spins away,  
Millions of souls hoping for rebirth as men,  
Despair when it does not turn their way!



*Amitabha's aurulent stature and splendorous appearance,  
Shines forth augustly ; marvelous without peer.  
His fair brows wreath five Sumeru peaks,  
Purple eyes as bright and clear as the Four Great Seas.*

*From his luminous halo arise Buddhas countless,  
And a host of Bodhisattvas vast and boundless.  
His 48 Great Vows redeem beings of any rank,  
Ferrying them in ennead orders to the other bank.*

## **Largesse for the Loyalist: The Dangers of a World Adrift in Avarice**

**Here is the Secret Monologue of Many who are Greedy:**

"I am loyal, a servant most true!  
That is until...I am not paid in full,  
Then I turn to tattle, and to trash  
Your trust with treason, high and foul!  
As dreaded foes tread freely upon you,  
I will make merry in your misery!"

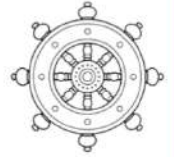
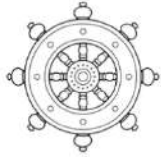
"You may hate me, but faith is not free,  
Loyalty demands largesse, and a fee!  
For the times are adrift in seas of greed,  
Full of subtle hints, hidden in sly smiles:  
You there! Heed and hear: Pay me well  
Or prepare to be quelled!"

**Poem inspired by Mencius' important exhortation on the dangers of profit culture:**

Mencius had an audience with King Hui of Liang. The king said,  
"....You must have some ideas about how to benefit my state."  
Mencius replied, "Why must Your Majesty use the word 'benefit' All  
I am concerned with are the benevolent and the right. If Your  
Majesty says, 'How can I benefit my state?' your officials will say,  
'How can I benefit my family,' and officers and common people will  
say, 'How can I benefit myself.' Once superiors and inferiors are  
competing for benefit, the state will be in danger. When the head of a

state of ten thousand chariots is murdered, the assassin is invariably a noble with a fief of a thousand chariots, When the head of a fief of a thousand chariots is murdered, the assassin is invariably head of a sub-fief of a hundred chariots. Those with a thousand out of ten thousand, or a hundred out of a thousand, had quite a bit. But when benefit is put before what is right, they are not satisfied without snatching it all. By contrast there has never been a benevolent person who neglected his parents or a righteous person who put his lord last. Your Majesty perhaps will now also say, 'All I am concerned with are the benevolent and the right. Why mention 'benefit?' ''





## **The Light of Amita**

**Upon the earth and within men's hearth  
All wander to labor when Helios beams  
And slumber and dream to the gleam of Selene**

**Above Meru's height are devas lofty and bright  
Their wealful delight are theirs by virtuous right  
They glide beyond the skies in their very own light**

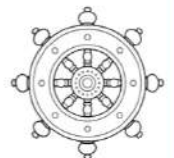
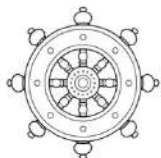
**But there is a brilliance more harmonious  
Much fairer and many times more luminous  
Than all the resplendence of heaven combined:**

**The Light of Amita hath warmth and enlightens  
It heals the afflicted and comforts the frightened  
It eases the mind and sees the heart to brighten**

**Boundless, everlasting and all-embracing  
It shines forth augustly and upon those passing  
Freeing them from falsity and Yama's lashing**

**His golden stature, peerless and splendid  
Behold his Pure Land! Wondrous and marvelous  
Adorned with gems and devoid of the heinous**

**Thus, chant his name and have faith in his Land  
Vow to arise in the Buddha-land most grand  
To be amongst the beings redeemed by his hand**





## Turning and Tumbling: The Gloomng Samsara

Turning and burning and tumbling  
The Wheel of Death and Rebirth  
Ceases not and rumbles onwards  
As deluded souls forever cycle and circle  
Dear friends become foul foes  
Precious love turns into towering hate  
And former rivals become kinfolk

Driven by greed by lust and by hatred  
The karma for Hell and Ghost and Beastly  
Rebirth are thus wrought and brought about  
Stumbling and weeping and sighing  
Evil souls roam in penury and misery  
For eon after eon and life after life  
Crushed by sins with no end in sight

Then, before them, a breach, a ray of light!  
Human rebirth is begotten once more

A chance, they say, is as rare as  
A palmful of soil placed next to all  
The earth and the dirt of the world entire  
Yet few are Sages while scores of souls  
Drown amidst their own avarice

For every act there will be an echo  
For every debt there is a date  
And as the Samsara turns and tumbles  
All and everyone shall have their due  
For karmic deeds and debts and credits  
Dating back to b'fore time immemorial  
And so, as the Samsara wheels and whirls

Some become sheep and cattle of karmic foes  
To repay deeds now rued with flesh and labor  
Others are reborn as frivolous heirs  
To spend riches stolen from them in lives prior  
The Ancients say that to be man and wife  
For but a day, is the fruit of a century  
Of causes and conditions and karma

Lord Yama's lash is fierce and frightful  
Karmic reckoning is rarely trifling  
Yet men tread and trample upon the precepts  
Murdering and masquerading as they plunder  
Pining for profit during the day  
Quaffing wine and vying for vice at night  
They are sly even in their slumber

Alas! Such ingrates are thicker than granite  
Fickle and foolish, they gloat over gluttony  
Blind to karma and its comeuppance  
They are rapacious rabble who crave for weal  
While ignorant of the fact that only merit  
Can enable their dreams to take wing  
And that all woes are withered by patience

Heaping up sins higher than mountains  
They squander their short human years  
On desire and vanity and vainglory  
And then they turn and tumble and slip  
Back into the evil abyss of abject chastisement  
Swapping their human bodies for  
Gaunt ghostly forms and bestial hooves

As burning ambition paves the way to perdition  
Stocks of merit are so often frittered away  
By pompous pride and angry arrogance  
By a lack of mercy and filial piety  
By lies and insults and scathing sarcasm  
And by lascivious pursuits that sully purity  
Thus, the fortunes of men forever wax and wane

The wise bear slights with a serene smile  
And forever hold onto the five precepts  
Even in the face of envy, tempers and temptations  
They are well aware of the follies of men

And seek not pomp, power or to lord over and reign  
They ask only for peaceful lives of purpose  
Of chastity and charity and piety

For they eschew vice and embrace virtue  
Their burgeoning stocks of merit bring forth  
Ascension to delightful new heights  
Far above this dreary and weary world  
To be gods and goddesses who glide beyond  
The lush heavenly groves atop Meru Peak  
And play ever pleasing tunes on divine lutes!

Once they are reborn as men and women  
They are bright and beautiful and healthy  
Wanting neither wealth nor influence  
They prostrate and pray to the proper Dharma  
And stroll in blooming blossoming orchards  
Enjoying prose and poetry most moving  
Amid sweet sounding harps and harpsichords

But, those climbing back to the realm of men  
From the plunging depths of punishment  
Are servile and must suffer scores of burdens  
They toil and moil amid squalor and scarcity  
Their previous miserliness manifest as poverty  
Their slow wit the fruit of their slanders  
And their short lifespans halved by their wrath!

Thus, the Samsara is dismal glooming darkness

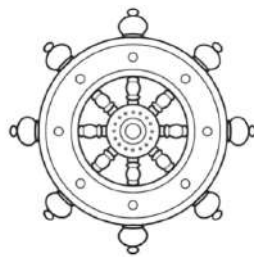


Ruled by delusion and defined by pain  
A place where souls stumble and tumble  
As they stubbornly quest for the phantoms of  
Fleeting love and glory, pomp and luxury  
And suffer the karmic pains of their sins  
Which they garner and gather as they hanker!

Therefore, why linger to burn and turn?  
Why not seize the chance to urgently seek  
Unsurpassed Bodhi through Amitabha's grace?  
Forfeit attachments to the impermanent  
Bring forth faith in his Forty Eight Vows  
Resolve for rebirth in the Western Buddha-land  
By being ever mindful of his noble name!

The Pure Land is resplendent without peer  
Aptly lauded as the Land of Ultimate Bliss  
From its aurulent soil arises bejeweled trees of  
beryl berries, Cameo glass branches, and amber leaves  
Surrounded by teal hued rivulets and pristine rivers  
Adorned by Pavilions and Palaces most fair  
And devoid of even the faintest hint of the fiendish

Thus, chant Amita's Buddha-name with  
Faith and Resolve and Fortitude most resolute  
Arise in the Lotus Lagoon as brilliant Bodhisattvas  
Endowed with the 32 features of eminence  
With infinite life and transcendental powers  
Forever free from the sufferings of the Samsara!



**Amita Buddha**

**The Light of the Western Land**

**Of Ultimate Bliss**

# Pure Land Buddhist Liturgy and Prayer Book



Based on the The Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity,  
Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra

By Brian Chung

April 2017 Edition



## Table of Contents:

Introduction.....	3
The 48 Vows of Amitabha Prayer.....	5
Ode to Ven. Master Hai Xian.....	12
Pure Land Lyrical Hymn.....	13
Way to Pure Land Poem.....	14
Ode to the Sages of Pure Land.....	15
Requiem Hymn.....	16
Bodhi Resolve Prayer.....	17
Twilight in Paradise: Lament of the Wicked.....	18
The Gloomng Samsara Poem.....	20

## Merit Dedication

As the author of this text, I hereby dedicate all the merits from this book to my mother, father, teachers, benefactors and elders, to repay their kindness. I wish for them long, happy and healthy lives.

## No Rights Reserved:

All rights pertaining to this entire text are released into the Public Domain.



### Introduction

The practice of Pure Land Buddhism centers on the Three Tenets of Faith, Vows and Action. Faith is cultivated by studying the sutras, Vows are our resolve for rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, and Action is our mindfulness of Amitabha. To reach Bodhi, we must be resolute and maintain our Faith and Vows with constant cultivation. Therefore, this short book contains the liturgical version of the 48 Vows of Amitabha (specially crafted in a style more suited for oratory and prayer) and various poems, hymns and odes based on passages from The Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra, the central text of the Pure Land School. Thus, the purpose of this book is to serve as a simple and lyrical practice to daily nurture the Faith and Vows of all Buddhist cultivators. Whether alone or with others, whether silently or aloud, this liturgy book will prove well suited for all forms of practice.

It is recommended that readers recite the 48 Vows in their morning cultivation session and the rest in the evening session. If there are time constraints or special occasions, readers may freely create their own combinations and schedules.

By nurturing one's Faith and Vows, one accumulates merit and good karma. More importantly, one's good roots are given the chance to grow like a lotus bud rising from the mud, and when it blooms, the glory of Bodhi is achieved.

Namo Amitabha!

Namo Amitabha!

Namo Amitabha!

## The 48 Vows of Amitabha Liturgy and Prayer

O Amitabha, you hear and you see our trials and ordeals. Heeding our pleas for refuge and relief, you have raised the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss: A paradise adorned by virtue so gloriously infinite that its majesty mounts up beyond Meru peak. You bless all who rise to your land with Sage-hood, even those from the realms of perdition. We see that your land is untainted by the states of woe—untainted by pests, pestilences, phantoms and beasts!

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the disease and decay that lust and desire begets. Thus, you bless all who rise to your land with august and ethereal forms as regal as purple and gold. None are hideous and all are fair—as pure and fair as the Buddha’s thirty two features of eminence.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the want of discernment in our deluded minds. Thus, you bless all who rise to your land with memory of the vices and virtues of countless lives past ; eyes and ears that fail not to heed even the faintest sight and slightest sound of the furthestmost quarter—now, before and to come.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the unique will and varied passions of every living being. Thus, you endow all who rise to your land with the omniscient heart that knows the thoughts of every being in existence.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the burdens and constraints of our flesh bodies. Thus, you bless all who rise to your land with the ease of divine powers, so that they may reach every Buddha-land within the ten quarters in the space of a single thought.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the filth of desire and duality. Thus, you bless all who rise to your land with purity free from bias—making them resolute in reaching Utmost Bodhi.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the eternal darkness that covers the Samsara. Thus, we see that you have cast your Light across the ten quarters—more radiant than Sun, Moon and Mani Jewel—so we may be touched by its luminous rays and feel bliss as our pains fade away, as we rise to your land.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see our pain of death. Thus, you bless the untold Sages and Shravakas who dwell in your land with infinite life—immortality so great that even the wisdom of countless Paccekabuddhas combined cannot perceive it no matter how many countless eons they spend to do so.

### **For Infinite Life, we Vow for your Land**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the confusion that grips us. Thus, you have stood forth as the sole beacon of light praised by all the Buddhas of the ten quarters. Peerless is your name and land!

### **For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see our wavering will. Thus, we cherish the mercy of your promise that all who seek your land with true resolve, and give their all for that vow, shall ascend to your land within ten chants of your name.

### **For Pure Land Rebirth, we Chant Amitabha!**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the faith of the sincere, those who joyously hear your name, vow for Bodhi, amass merits and abide by the Six Paramitas, those who dedicate their all to your land and chant your name with one heart through night and day without cease. We see that you grace such faith by appearing before them during their last breath—surrounded by a host of Sages—and lifting their souls into your land as Mahabodhisattvas.

### **For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the fear of the penitent. Thus, you extend your grace to both the brilliant and base. We see that the wicked who repent, and turn to abide in the Buddha and Dharma—now seekers of your land—are pardoned and enter your land when their lives end.

**For this Mercy of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the burdens placed upon women and the weak. Thus, we see that you have wisely ensured that women who rise to your land shall be freed from the burdens of their gender, and assume the august and ethereal form of the Sages. We see that you bless all in boundless lotus buds that glide upon the Seven Jeweled Lagoon.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see our need for fortune and provision. Thus, you bless all who abide in you with the respect of both men and devas. We see that any being who hears your name but once will be blessed with health, beauty and patrician rebirth, and the chance to abide in the highest Dharma.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the inequality that we suffer. Thus, you endow all who rise to your land with the same virtuous heart, and the Samadhi bliss of a monk free from outflows. Freeing them from the pains that attachment to the body brings.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see our lack of wisdom and endurance. Thus, you bless all who rise to your land with virtue as incorruptible as the Vajra Buddha. You bestow on them radiant halos of wisdom so they may go forth and preach the Dharma like clockwork.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the need to increase the ranks of Sages. Thus, all who rise to your land attain Utmost Bodhi within one life, and for those who have made Mahayana vows to defer Bodhi until all beings have been saved, you help them save and convert countless souls with the wisdom, powers and eloquence of Samantabhadra.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the want that torments us. Thus, you bless all who rise to your land with abundance, with food, clothes and goods of ever kind on demand. We are grateful that by the power of your merit, anyone in your land who seeks to make offerings to the Buddhas of the ten quarters will see rich requisites appear before them as a response to that thought.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the poverty of our world. Thus, the myriad of wondrous adornments of your land, from the golden ground to blue skies above—the flora, rivers, lakes, villas and halls—are of indescribable beauty. We hear that even the depiction given by clairvoyant Sages cannot do it justice.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**



Amitabha, you hear and you see our want of a spacious Way-place. Thus, we feel joy when we see that you have raised rows of tall and bejeweled Bodhi Trees to adorn your Way-places. Trees of gleaming mirrors from which all who dwell in your land may see any world they wish by mere gaze.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the crowdedness of our world. We yearn for the bliss of your bright and unblemished Pure Land, which you have made gleaming and boundless. It illumines the ten quarters and blesses the hearts of all who perceive its light.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see the way our world reeks. Thus, we are overjoyed that all in your land—from the palaces to the pavilions ; from the ground to the skies above—are made from scented woods and fragrant treasures of every kind. Your land perfumes the ten quarters and blesses the Bodhi resolve of all who inhale its sweet scents.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Amitabha, you hear and you see our need for enduring Samadhi. Thus, you use the merit of your name to bestow upon the Sages and faithful the Samadhi of purity, release and equality. We see that they firmly abide in the highest Samadhi, honor countless Buddhas and attain Utmost Bodhi. We know that upon hearing your name, they become Great Sages and dwell forever without bias in all that which is perfect, pure and wise.

**For this Glory of Bodhi, we Vow for your Land.**

Namo Amitabha

Namo Amitabha

Namo Amitabha

## Ode to Ven. Master Hai Xian

My riches are here: Old robes and alms bowl,  
With these I free myself from worldly toil,  
With these I sow and plough the Dharma field,  
And shatter all that wicked Maras yield,

My will is here: In wisdom genuine,  
With resolve to soar beyond the three realms,  
And sail across the cruel seas of greed  
To halcyon shores of blissful Bodhi,

My heart is here: Amongst Tathagatas,  
Firm in the lotus pond of Amita,  
Day and night, it is wise within the Way,  
Never in dust nor adrift and away.

## Pure Land Lyrical Hymn

O boundless the land  
Built by Amida's hand,  
O splendrous the sky  
Of his fair paradise,  
A beauty to behold,  
A wonder to enjoy,  
An august afterlife  
For the faithfully wise,

Gleaming with purple  
And paved with gold,  
Groves of lush trees  
Of lapis lazuli leaves,  
Sweet beryl berries,  
And scented petals  
Of agate and crystal,

A gleaming dominion  
Of glowing pavilions,  
Of lofty resplendence  
And fragrant brilliance,  
Pulling poor souls  
Away from worldly woes  
With a breeze of Bodhi  
And blissful Samadhi!

## The Way to Pure Land

The Way to Pure Land  
Is well paved and straight,  
Upon it gilded tiles are laid,  
Adorned by halcyon lakes  
And ponds of golden sand,  
Shaded by ornate branches  
Of silver, jade and crystal,  
Whose sweet scented petals  
Glide in the breeze and drift  
Upon the waters—swirling  
In graceful whirls and ripples,  
Immersed in singing songbirds  
Perched on amber arbors,  
humming hymns of harmony  
And the most soothing melody.



## Ode to the Sages of Pure Land

Wisdom as vast as the boundless sea,  
 Bodhi as high and wide as Meru peak,  
 Their halos bright beyond sunbeam,  
 Surpassing the moon's luminous gleam.  
 Their hearts white and serene like snowy hills,  
 Patience as enduring as the fields,  
 Their calm minds like pristine waters  
 That wash away the defiling dusts,  
 Their profound insight as keen as fire,  
 Burning away all worry and fraught,  
 Non abiding and breezing o'er any mire,  
 Sounds of Dharma: Striking lightning,  
 Warning the deluded to wisdom ripen,  
 Pouring forth truth like soothing sweet dew,  
 Their grace like canopies of Bodhi trees,  
 Cool shades of respite for you and for me.

## Requiem Hymn

By the Grace of Amitabha,  
 You shall transcend the Samsara,  
 This mantra is your Sila,  
 Your Samadhi, and your Prajna,  
 The shield that demons fear,  
 The call that all yearn to hear,  
 The sword that slices Gordian knot  
 Of lustful desire and crushing fraught.  
 Thus, with one heart in Him seek,  
 Seek rebirth in Ultimate Bliss,  
 And save yourself from the abyss  
 Of the dismal infernal Naraka  
 By resolving for with resolute faith  
 The profound Dharma of Amitabha,  
 His Forty Eight Vows and Grace!  
 Dither not and seek in haste,  
 Leap high above cruel Dukkha,  
 Beyond evil karma and King Yama,  
 To become a Bodhisattva  
 Standing atop the lofty Lotus Dais  
 Beside Amita Tathagata,  
 Beside merciful Avalokitesvara,  
 And by the wise Mahathamaprata,  
 And at that time your mind will know  
 That you have always been Amitabha,  
 And your birthright is to enjoy,  
 Now and forever, the eternal delight  
 Of the Land of Sole and Lasting Light.

**Namo Amitabha** (Recite at least ten times)

## Bodhi Resolve Prayer

I Yearn for Bodhi for life's a dream,  
A dark fleeting phantom, and a  
Shadowy hollow illusion,  
Filled with nightmares of greed and fear,  
Of Love and Loss and scorching  
Fires of burning ire and desire,  
Of hard times that haunt and linger.  
I know that all dharmas are but dew and mist,  
Ready to fade when the Sun of  
Inner Wisdom shines and pours forth,  
Revealing the blooming lotus  
And the Seven Jeweled Lagoon  
Of the Land of Ultimate Bliss.





### Twilight in Paradise: Lament of the Wicked:

“It is twilight in paradise  
 And the end of my idle life  
 Of lavish pleasure is nigh.  
 My dreams benighted,  
 Crumbling before my eyes,  
 I sorely regret frittering away  
 Those calm prosperous days  
 Of youth, wealth and peace  
 On plunder and wicked deeds,  
 Wrathful violence and conspiracies,  
 On fraud, libel and charlatanry,  
 And slender courtesans who steal  
 Lascivious glances and feelings.  
 Now I stand before the abyss,  
 Old, withered and ready to slip  
 From my blissful mortal coil  
 And into the infernal boiling oil.

Alas! I now rue my failure to do  
Even a single upright deed!”

A reminder for repentance:

We are mired in a dark quagmire  
Of cruel and murky quicksand,  
We dance no more to Kama’s lyre,

And vow for the Western Pure Land,  
The Eternal Dawn of blissful Bodhi!  
Arising by Amida’s hand,

A place of serene Samadhi,  
Mani Jewels and Way Places,  
And the most soothing purity,

Golden roads and glowing palaces,  
Purple robes and rows of jade trees,  
All wrought by His Great Promises!

Cool lotus ponds of true respite for you and me,  
And for all who from sin and iniquity leave!





## Turning and Tumbling: The Gloomng Samsara

Turning and burning and tumbling  
 The Wheel of Death and Rebirth  
 Ceases not and rumbles onwards  
 As deluded souls forever cycle and circle  
 Dear friends become foul foes  
 Precious love turns into towering hate  
 And former rivals become kinfolk

Driven by greed by lust and by wrath  
 The karma for Hell and Ghost and Beastly  
 Rebirth are thus wrought and brought about  
 Stumbling and weeping and sighing  
 Evil souls roam in penury and misery  
 For eon after eon and life after life  
 Crushed by sins with no end in sight

Then, before them, a breach, a ray of light!  
 Human rebirth is begotten once more  
 A chance, they say, is as rare as  
 A palmful of soil placed next to all  
 The earth and the dirt of the world entire  
 Yet few are Sages while scores of souls  
 Drown amidst their own avarice

For every act there will be an echo  
 For every debt there is a date  
 And as the Samsara turns and tumbles  
 All and everyone shall have their due  
 For karmic deeds and debts and credits  
 Dating back to b'fore time immemorial  
 And so, as the Samsara wheels and whirls

Some become sheep and cattle of karmic foes  
 To repay deeds now rued with flesh and labor  
 Others are reborn as frivolous heirs  
 To spend riches stolen from them in lives prior  
 The Ancients say that to be man and wife  
 For but a day, is the fruit of a century  
 Of causes and conditions and karma

Lord Yama's lash is fierce and frightful  
 Karmic reckoning is rarely trifling  
 Yet men tread and trample upon the precepts  
 Murdering and masquerading as they plunder  
 Pining for profit during the day

Quaffing wine and vying for vice at night  
They are sly even in their slumber

Alas! Such ingrates are thicker than granite  
Fickle and foolish, they gloat over gluttony  
Blind to karma and its comeuppance  
They are rapacious rabble who crave for weal  
While ignorant of the fact that only merit  
Can enable their dreams to take wing  
And that all woes are withered by patience

Heaping up sins higher than mountains  
They squander their short human years  
On desire and vanity and vainglory  
And then they turn and tumble and slip  
Back into the evil abyss of abject chastisement  
Swapping their human bodies for  
Gaunt ghostly forms and bestial hooves

As burning ambition paves the way to perdition  
Stocks of merit are so often frittered away  
By pompous pride and angry arrogance  
By a lack of mercy and filial piety  
By lies and insults and scathing sarcasm  
And by lascivious pursuits that sully purity  
Thus, the fortunes of men forever wax and wane

The wise bear slights with a serene smile  
And forever hold onto the five precepts  
Even in the face of envy, tempers and temptations

They are well aware of the follies of men  
 And seek not pomp, power or to lord over and reign  
 They ask only for peaceful lives of purpose  
 Of chastity and charity and piety

For they eschew vice and embrace virtue  
 Their burgeoning stocks of merit bring forth  
 Ascension to delightful new heights  
 Far above this dreary and weary world  
 To be gods and goddesses who glide beyond  
 The lush heavenly groves atop Meru Peak  
 And play ever pleasing tunes on divine lutes!

Once they are reborn as men and women  
 They are bright and beautiful and healthy  
 Wanting neither wealth nor influence  
 They prostrate and pray to the proper Dharma  
 And stroll in blooming blossoming orchards  
 Enjoying prose and poetry most moving  
 Amid sweet sounding harps and harpsichords

But, those climbing back to the realm of men  
 From the plunging depths of punishment  
 Are servile and must suffer scores of burdens  
 They toil and moil amid squalor and scarcity  
 Their previous miserliness manifest as poverty  
 Their slow wit the fruit of their slanders  
 And their short lifespans halved by their wrath!

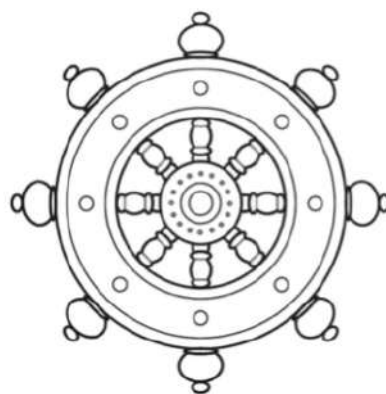
Thus, the Samsara is dismal glooming darkness

Ruled by delusion and defined by pain  
 A place where souls stumble and tumble  
 As they stubbornly quest for the phantoms of  
 Fleeting love and glory, pomp and luxury  
 And suffer the karmic pains of their sins  
 Which they garner and gather as they hanker!

Therefore, why linger to burn and turn?  
 Why not seize the chance to urgently seek  
 Unsurpassed Bodhi through Amitabha's grace?  
 Forfeit attachments to the impermanent  
 Bring forth faith in his Forty Eight Vows  
 Resolve for rebirth in the Western Buddha-land  
 By being ever mindful of his noble name!

The Pure Land is resplendent without peer  
 Aptly lauded as the Land of Ultimate Bliss  
 From its aurulent soil arises bejeweled trees of  
 Beryl berries, cameo glass branches, and amber leaves  
 Surrounded by teal hued rivulets and pristine rivers  
 Adorned by Pavilions and Palaces most fair  
 And devoid of even the faintest hint of the fiendish

Thus, chant Amita's Buddha-name with  
 Faith and Resolve and Fortitude most resolute  
 Arise in the Lotus Lagoon as brilliant Bodhisattvas  
 Endowed with the 32 features of eminence  
 With infinite life and transcendental powers  
 Forever free from the sufferings of the Samsara!



**Amita Buddha**  
**The Light of the Western Land Of Ultimate**  
**Bliss**



**Brian Chung** ✓

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Oct 3

## A Simple Definition of Right and Wrong



Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist Preacher Wang Feng Yi (1864–1937)

### Translation:

- What is good? What is evil? The answer is that those who accord with natural law are good, and those who contradict natural law are evil. Those who are sincere in their work are good ; those who are negligent are evil. Those who truly intend only public benefit are good ; those who harbor desire for personal and private gain are evil.
- **The greatest villains of this world can be divided into three types, and thugs and robbers are not among them. The first are hypocrites who do not do what they preach, and those who know their own faults but refuse to change. The second are those who delight in fleecing others but become furious when they suffer a little loss. The third are those who covet what they have no right to with every thought, and break the law willingly and in secret. Moreover, those who love flattery and hate criticism are also wicked.**
- A person who delights in gaining at another's expense and becomes infuriated by losses is not a good person. For instance, someone who studied the Dao with me, and he was strictly speaking not a bad person, had stored up a lot of grain. During droughts when the price went up, he was ecstatic, but when it rained and the price fell, he became unhappy. With such an attitude, how could he claim to have any goodness and compassion?
- **It is very easy to be a good person. Simply look at what someone is doing, and if your conscience does not approve, then by refraining from similar actions, you have done right.**
- If we personally cultivate goodness and virtue, the world becomes wonderful. Because if we ourselves are good, everywhere we go naturally becomes wonderful.
- Every person is like a world of their own. If we become good, we have perfected a world as well. By attaining Bodhi, the Western Pure Land is created. Followers of Christ create the Heavenly Kingdom. Today, many say that they will become virtuous once the world situation improves. However, when the world really

becomes a great place, their kindness and good deeds become redundant!

[Source \(original language\)](#) .

[Portrait source.](#) .

40 views · [View upvotes](#) · [View shares](#)

 1 |   5 



### Comments

### About the Author



**Brian Chung**

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts



Author



B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012



410.7K content views 22.5K this month



Active in 7 Spaces



Joined March 2020

[View more in PURELAND BUDDHISM](#) >

**Brian Chung**

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Wed

### Exhortation Against Cooking and Boiling Crabs and Shellfish (From the Foremost Among Myriad Virtues by Upasaka Zhou An Shi)



*Caption: Upasaka Zhou An Shi (1656–1739)*

#### Excerpt Translation:

The people of this world consider the suffering of the Hells to be vague and distant, they do not know that whenever they cook and boil crabs and lobsters, they are creating the Hell of Boiling Water. Their bad habits, protected by routine, blinds them to this fact.

Once the flame rises, and the bottom of the iron pot heats up, the live crabs are filled with terror and panic—their entire bodies seized by smothering anxiety. As the heat increases, they frantically circle the cauldron, each seeking escape. Then, as the water is about to boil, they scramble over each other and lose consciousness. Those floating on the top, sunk at the bottom and tossed around all feel unbearable and torturous pain.

Soon, boiling water bubbles all around them. It brands their eyes like red hot iron needles, and to their backs, it feels as if molten iron were being poured over it. Their suffering is boundless, and when their lives finally ends amid such injustice, their bodies turn red. Alas! People willingly create such boundless evil karma over momentary pleasure.

If the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas witness this scene with their divine -eye, they immediately know that the crabs and persons have over the course of endless eons been fathers, brothers, siblings, kin and relatives. However, as they've been reborn into different forms, none recognizes the other. Thus, they multiply their evil karma and massacre each other, thereby creating endless and ever escalating karmic feuds.


Therefore, I beseech all to make the vow of benevolence and compassion. By walking the path of honesty and forgiveness, being always considerate to others, selfish greed shall be transformed into kindness and mercy.

[Source \(original language\)](#) 

#### Translator's Notes:

In Buddhist teachings, karmic seeds are mental impressions in the alaya consciousness. By boiling crabs or lobsters, one deposits these images into one's mind. Eventually, the karma will ripen, and thus manifest as rebirth in the Hells of Boiling Water. Likewise, when we do good deeds, the images of kindness will be deposited into our minds, manifesting as good fortune and the heavenly realms. Thus, our destiny, and paths of rebirths, are indeed created by ourselves, programmed by our actions.


#### Recommended:



PURELAND BUDDHISM · August 23

**Master Yin Guang's Letter Revealing the Profound and Esoteric Meaning Behind Life Release.**

Caption: Nanxun Town This post is the translation of Letter Encouraging Support...


 <https://qr.ae/pGVK9G>

21 views · View shares




#### Comments


#### About the Author





**Brian Chung**


Voracious reader of Buddhist texts

 Author

 B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012

 410.8K content views 22.5K this month

 Active in 7 Spaces

 Joined March 2020

[View more in PURELAND BUDDHISM](#) >

**Brian Chung** ✓

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Sep 15

## From the Recorded Accounts of Efficacious Karmic Responses of The Treatise of Response and Retribution — Heaven Rewards Man Who Helped Someone in Desperate Need



### Translation:

**“Neither deny the needy nor ignore those mired in peril”**

—Canto III, *The Way of Virtue, The Treatise of the Illustrious Sage on Response and Retribution* [↗](#)

In the Chu region, there was a flower seller surnamed Wang. At that time it was the end of the year, and flowers were in high demand due to the festivities. The flowers Wang sold were of high quality, and he thus enjoyed high prices and even higher demand. As the day drew to a close, he stopped by an old temple and counted his daily profits while seated on the entrance steps. Suddenly, he heard sad moaning from the eastern corner of the main hall, and promptly went to investigate. Inside, he saw a ragged young man preparing to hang himself, and Wang immediately ran over and stopped him. Afterwards, he inquired for the reason of the man's attempted suicide, and the man replied: "I am unfortunate that my family has collapsed into poverty, and I have no money and no food this New Years eve. Moreover, my wife is about to give birth. I came out to borrow a third to half a tael of silver to meet my wife's immediate needs, but no one was willing to help. I had no face to return home, and I thought I might as well just end my life here!"

Wang said to him, " If you die, then your wife and unborn child, being alone in labor and

without food, will surely die as well. This is to condemn three people to death. Today, I have earned 1.6 taels of silver selling flowers. I will gift you my total profits—0.8 taels—and keep only my costs.” The poor man was much moved and after expressing his gratitude, quickly returned to his family.

Wang returned home after selling his remaining flowers. By then it was already dark, and his wife was outside the front door waiting for him. She asked, “Why did you come home so late? I was so worried.” Wang then told her of his generous act, and she wisely rejoiced in his merit. Moreover, she told him that just a moment before, there appeared a supernatural light in their courtyard, and she was afraid to go inside.

Wang rushed inside and exclaimed, “This is surely the luminous resplendence of treasure, there must be gold and silver buried under.” After digging, he indeed uncovered three jars of silver ingots. The topmost silver sycee had the following engraved onto it: “Having saved three lives, Heaven now bestows prosperity onto your household.” Afterwards, Wang carefully used this newfound wealth to expand his business, and subsequently became immensely prosperous. He later passed on the engraved silver ingot to his descendants as an heirloom. His family remains prominent to this day, and everyone nicknamed him the Flower King.

—From page 313 of **Persons who Changed Destiny**, printed by the Buddha Educational Foundation. Internal Book Code: CH662–13

#### The Treatise of the Illustrious Sage on Response and Retribution:

##### The Treatise Of The Illustrious Sage On Response And Retribution : Brian Chung : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive

Public Domain English Liturgy Version of the Kan Ying Pien

<https://archive.org/details/treatiseoftheillustriousage/page/n3/mode/2up>

#### Translator's Notes:

This karmic account illustrates the karmic rewards that naturally find its way to those who observe the laws of karma, as explained in detail in the Treatise. The Great Master Yin Guang (1861–1940) spent his whole life propagating the importance of doing good deeds and abstaining from evil, that the workings of karma were inconceivable, and doing good can indeed change destiny:

 PURELAND BUDDHISM · June 25

##### Liao Fan's Four Lessons Mega Post: Resources For Changing Destiny

Below are the English language translation, film adaptation and Master Chin...

<https://purelandbuddhism.quora.com/Liao-Fan-s-Four-Lessons-Mega-Post-R...>

30 views · View shares



#### Comments

#### About the Author



##### Brian Chung

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts



Author



B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012



410.7K content views 22.5K this month



Active in 7 Spaces



Joined March 2020

[View more in PURELAND BUDDHISM](#) >



**Brian Chung** ·

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Mon



**Midnight Cafe**

Posted by Brian Chung · Mon

### Excerpts from the Law of Sustaining Wealth by Industrialist and Upasaka Nie Yun Tai (1880–1953)



*Caption: Hardoon Garden in Shanghai. Built by Silas Aaron Hardoon (1851–1931), property magnate and then richest man in Asia, with a net worth of 800 Million Silver Yuan, or around 150 Million Dollars (equivalent to tens of billions of today's dollars). He was criticized by contemporary newspapers and the author for not having done more to help the refugee situation in Shanghai at the time, which was so serious that tens of thousands starved to death on the streets every year, even though it would only have costed 1/3rd of the 2% interest Hardoon's fortune could earn to save them all. The author points out that none of his wealth followed him after death, with the rest squandered in inheritance battles by his various relatives and adopted children.*

The Law of Sustaining wealth was written by Industrialist and Buddhist Upasaka Nie Yun Tai (1880–1953) to warn people against being greedy and uncharitable. In it, the author shares his observations (validating the laws of karma) of how many wealthy Late Qing gentry families (magistrates and generals) and Early Republican-era Shanghai magnates squandered their entire fortunes within a few years to decades due to their graft, greed, decadence and lack of charity. On the other hand, families whose patriarchs practiced generosity and abstained from graft or greed were able to maintain prominence for generation after generation, producing many scholars, scientists, statesmen and philosophers.

Moreover, he also succinctly elaborates Buddhist and Taoist principles that warn against hoarding excess wealth, and the karmic retributions avarice and arrogance invites.

#### Translation of Selected Excerpts:

The way of heaven (natural law) is very simple: The excessive will be reigned in, and those deprived will be compensated. The great Eastern sages and philosophers, the Confucians, Buddhists and Taoists, have all reiterated this principle often. The I Ching states: "Heaven diminishes the greedy and arrogant but benefits the humble, the Earth inflicts impermanence on the arrogant but replenishes the modest, and the ghosts and spirits punish arrogance and bless humility."

Moreover, according to the Book of Documents: "Natural law inflicts losses on the pompous and bestows gain on the humble." Most importantly, it also states: "Heaven



blesses virtue and punishes excess. [This does not merely refer to lust or decadence, but also to anything that is willfully done to such an arrogant extent that it becomes like a flood, embodying unrestrained greed, contempt, capriciousness and burning desire].

The opposite of excess is virtue, and this word is also broad in meaning. However, it must be noted that all virtues are united by the principle of humility and temperance. As the I Ching is a book that explains the workings of natural law, the first two hexagrams reveal what constitutes the way of heaven and natural law. The first hexagram states: "To benefit all under Heaven without mentioning it to others." This is the epitome of humility. The second hexagram further explains humility by warning against showing off one's talents, hoarding honors and boasting of achievements. According to the Diamond Sutra: "Having liberated the multitudes, one still feels that one has saved nobody ; having donated to all, one feels that one has given nothing." This represents the highest state of goodness, and is also embodied within the virtue of humility.

....The ancients say: "Humility arises from frugality." The opposite of this implies that luxury naturally incubates corruption, thereby bringing chaos upon society. According to the Great Learning, "The law of generating wealth is thus: Producers must be many and consumers few. The stewards of wealth must be prudent and the spenders frugal. Only under such conditions will there be sustainably sufficient wealth."

[Source \(original language\)](#) 

20 views · 5 shares

17 views



## Comments

## About the Author



**Brian Chung**

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts



Author



B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012



410.8K content views 22.5K this month



Active in 7 Spaces



Joined March 2020

[View more in PURELAND BUDDHISM](#) >



**Brian Chung** ✓

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Updated 17h

### **Saving Those Suffering From Disaster and Meeting Immediate Needs (From the Commentary on the Yin Chih Wen by Upasaka Zhou An Shi)**



*Caption: Upasaka Zhou An Shi (1656–1739)*

Below is my translation of Upasaka Zhou An Shi's famous commentary on the two most important virtues in the Yin Chih Wen (famous Buddhist and Taoist karmic text). In general, those who save those in danger and meet other's immediate needs reap speedy and generous karmic rewards.

#### **Excerpt Translation:**

「**Save those suffering from disaster**」

Though disasters and calamities come in many forms, in general, they fall into seven categories:

1. Floods
2. Fires
3. Miscarriages of justice, malicious prosecution, lawsuits and persecution

4. War
5. Robbers and looters
6. Famine
7. Plague

For those trapped by fires and floods, we must evacuate them to safety. For those suffering from prosecution and persecution, we must prove their innocence and rehabilitate them. For those in danger of violence and robbery, we must extricate them from danger. For those suffering from famine, we must provide them with money and material aid. And for those suffering from plague and disease, we must provide them with healers and herbs.

Whenever we save others, we must do so with honesty and sincerity. We must see another's disaster as our own disaster, and exhaust both our wits and wealth to save them—not resting until we have succeeded.

However, if we only dispense aid when disaster has already struck, then our success will be limited and superficial. Even Confucius once said: "My ability to judge legal cases is no better than others." **The best way to forever prevent disasters from appearing is to prevent the karmic seeds from being sown.** The merit from doing so is many times more potent, and is what Confucius meant when he said: "We must educate the masses until people no longer feel the need to sue, prosecute and dispute." This is because all disasters and calamities are caused by evil karma. **If we do not plant the causes of calamity today, we will not have to suffer disasters in the future. If we could encourage people to refrain from killing, stealing, lust and lies, we have saved them from myriad disasters. Thus, by preventing people from creating evil karma, our efforts become boundlessly efficacious.**

To save victims of disasters that have already struck is the virtue of common people. To save people by preventing them from sowing evil karmic seeds is the practice of Bodhisattvas. By doing both, we thoroughly uproot the suffering of others.

#### [ Meet immediate needs ]

Immediate needs are not the same as disasters and calamities. Disasters strike without warning, but immediate needs are usually a matter of money. The people of this world consider wealth to be as precious as their lives, and so in their daily lives, their most pressing need is access to food, shelter and clothes. If they are sick, their most pressing need is medical care, if they are parents, their most pressing need is to ensure that their sons and daughters are married, and if they are about to die, then their most pressing need is their funeral.

We must, to the best of our power and ability, meet such needs as quickly as possible. Only then have we accomplished this virtue. Confucius said: **"When the great Way prevails, all under Heaven becomes a commonwealth. People will love each other, and not just their relatives and sons. They will loathe to waste anything, and generously offer their resources for the benefit of others. They would hate to remain idle, and thus eagerly volunteer to benefit others."** By understanding this principle, we will no longer dare to dismiss another's immediate need as someone else's problem, but will see it as our own pressing need. And if we could see others immediate needs as our own, then we shall, for life after life, be free from desperation or lack.

Chen Ji-ting (Ming era scholar) once said: "The wealthy are referred to as masters of wealth, for they can dictate how it is spent." Though we must be good stewards of our family wealth, we must not neglect charity and helping others. The rich of today are controlled by their wealth. Only people who can both steward wealth and donate to those in need are masters of their wealth. Those who merely retain it are slaves to their wealth.

According to the Sutra of the Upasaka's Precepts: **"The gift of clothes yields beauty, the gift of food yields peerless strength, the gift of light yields beautiful eyes, the gift of vehicles yields bodily ease, and the gift of residences yields the reward of having all needs met."** Furthermore, it also states: "If one joyfully gives clothes and food to one's servants and their families out of compassion, then one will enjoy boundless blessings. If one sees rodents in one's fields and granaries, and joyfully allow them this sustenance out of pity, then one will likewise enjoy boundless blessings."

[Source \(original language\)](#) ↗:

<http://ftp.budaedu.org/publish/C7/CH73/CH730-41-01-001.PDF> ↗

**More translated excerpts from the same text:**



Brian Chung · 17h

#### **Why is it so hard for people to forgive?**

Forgiveness is hard because it is precious and rare. And like all precious and rare...



Brian Chung

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Thu

## Selections from Records of Pure Land Rebirth (Includes People From all Walks of Life) by Upasaka Zhou An Shi ( From his Book— The Way Back West)



*Caption: Upasaka Zhou An Shi (1656–1739)*

### Excerpt Translations:

#### Bodhisattvas

In the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra spoke ten great vows to benefit sentient beings, bringing all to the Pure Land. He also resolved, in verse form, the following: "I vow that when I come to the end of my life, all obstacles may be swept away, and I shall be able to face Amita Buddha, and ascend into his Pure Land."

#### Dharma Masters

Dharma Master Qi Hui Guang of Luoyang was the author of many commentaries, including ones on the Avatamsaka Sutra, Nirvana Sutra and Ten Stages Sutra. One day, he fell ill and saw before him a host of celestial devas. Hui Guang declared: "The only place I've vowed to go is the Pure Land!" And so, he recited the name of Amitabha with concentration. A short while later, he saw a manifestation of Amitabha appear in the sky to welcome him. Hui Guang then prostrated with his head touching the ground and said: "I am willing to go!" As soon as he finished his prayer, he ascended into the Pure Land.

#### Nuns

During the Tang Dynasty, a nun named Wu Xing lived on Mt. Lu. She recited the name of Amitabha everyday, and sincerely vowed for Pure Land rebirth. One day, as divine music suddenly resounded in the sky, she told those beside her that: "I have achieved Pure Land rebirth of the middle grade, I've also seen the lotuses of those who share my aspirations, waiting for their arrival, and I hope you'll all redouble your efforts in reciting the name of Amitabha!" As soon as she finished, she was reborn in the Pure Land.

#### Magistrates

When Zhong Li Jin (Song Dynasty) was Provincial Justiciar of West Zhejiang, he met Dharma Master Ci Yun, and thereafter became a true believer in Pure Land Buddhism. Later, when he was promoted to Prefect of Kaifeng, he still remembered to recite Amitabha's name no matter how heavy his workload was. One night, he roused his entire family from slumber, bathed, put on new clothes, and attained Pure Land rebirth while sitting in the lotus position. His whole family witnessed him ascend towards the West upon a green lotus, with celestial music resounding in the air.

#### Matrons

During the Song Dynasty, a daughter of the Shen family, a lifelong vegetarian who had recited Amitabha's name since childhood, married into the Zhang family. She often gave alms to the cold and hungry. Later, after a small illness, she redoubled her efforts in reciting Amitabha's name. Eventually, she saw a host of Bodhisattvas and Sages appear before her, and she serenely attained Pure Land rebirth that day.

Householders

Upasaka Hua Muo (Ming Dynasty), a native of Jiang-gan, was a frugal and honest man. He knew only to seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land. When he was middle aged, he turned over the family business to his son, and secluded himself in a room, letting go of all temporal matters. From dawn to dusk, he focused only on reciting Amitabha's name. When his last moment arrived, he already foreknew the exact time, and after putting on new clothes, said farewell to those beside him, and attained Pure Land rebirth.

Youth

During the Yuan Dynasty, a youth named He Tan Ji, aged 18, observed the Bodhisattva precepts and recited the name of Amitabha all day. One day, he woke up during the fourth drum beat (approx. 2 AM), and when told that it was too early to wake, he replied: "In the sky is Amitabha, in resplendent golden form, surrounded by fluttering banners and lotuses, here to welcome me." He then sat down and attained Pure Land rebirth.

Evil People

Zhang Shan He (Tang Dynasty) butchered cows and sold beef for a living. When he was about to die, he saw a herd of cows coming for revenge, and was filled with fear. He said to his wife: "Quick, invite some monks to repent on my behalf." When the monk arrived, he reassured him by saying: "In the Contemplation Sutra, it is stated that if those on the verge of death who see evil karma ripening could sincerely recite the name of Amitabha, they may achieve Pure Land rebirth." The monk further said: "The hells are fast approaching, there is no time to get you an incense burner." Zhang then grabbed a flame with his right hand to light the incense stick in his left hand, faced the West, and recited the name of Amitabha with focus and resolve. Before his tenth recitation, he said, "Amitabha has arrived to welcome me," and ascended into the Pure Land.


When evil people seek Pure Land rebirth, they must recite with determination a hundred times greater in order to achieve a response within ten recitations. Otherwise, just one slip and they tumble into the three states of woe.

Animals

During the Sui Dynasty, a man in Tan Province kept a starling as a pet. The bird often imitated his recitation of Amitabha's name. When the bird died, the owner buried it in a small coffin. Surprisingly, a lotus then arose, and had sprung from its mouth.

Source (original language) [↗](#)

Recommended:



PURELAND BUDDHISM · September 24

**The Treasury of Dharma Gems—Translations of Key Excerpts and Essays From the Works of The Great Upasakas and Dharma Masters of the 20th Century**

From the Preface: In March 2021, I started reading the Priceless Treasure That is...

<https://purelandbuddhism.quora.com/The-Treasury-of-Dharma-Gems-Transla..>

41 views · View upvotes · View shares

 1



 3





Comments

About the Author



**Brian Chung**

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts



Author



B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012



410.8K content views 22.5K this month



Active in 7 Spaces



Joined March 2020

**Brian Chung** ✓

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Jul 20

## Translation of Selected Excerpts (From The Booklet: The Long Road After the Sun of Life Sets) on The Inconceivable Benefits of Reciting Amitabha's Name



*Translated excerpts are from the 2014 Dharma Booklet: Long Road After the Sun of Life Sets (by the Ven. Zhi Liao and printed by the Buddha Educational Foundation)*

As long as we are mindful of Amitabha's name in our hearts, everything will improve and turn better. If we recite in a small house, the small house will become resplendent, fragrant and august, transformed into a fine residence. Recite Amitabha's name while doing chores, and doing them becomes peaceful, leisurely and joyful. Thus, as long as we recite the name of Amitabha with one heart, not thinking of other things, all the various annoyances and sufferings of human life will be cast off. Not only will our daily sufferings be cast off, even the great pain of death and rebirth can be cast off. At the moment of death, Amitabha will appear to welcome us into the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, isn't that wonderful? Thus, if you are able to truly let go and single-mindedly recite Amitabha's name, then you would not need to wait until Pure Land rebirth to find happiness, your every living moment now will become leisurely and blissful.

Furthermore, in our old age, we often face chronic illnesses, dementia, and strokes. By reciting the name of Amitabha with one heart and one mind, such sufferings can be prevented. By praying to Amitabha, and fully entrusting ourselves to his blessings, our lives will be smooth in our old age. As Amitabha's Great Compassion can allow us to be clear minded even during our final moment, he can certainly guarantee us clarity, comfort and ease in both body and mind while we are still living. All that is required of us is that we sincerely do as instructed.

The name of Amitabha is an unimaginably great wish fulfilling jewel. It can bestow upon us all the benefits of both this world and the afterlife. It can dispel dangers and disasters, neutralize poisons, heal illnesses, and overcome the suffering of death and rebirth, thereby lifting people away from the Samsara to become Sages. **As long as we have true faith, all problems and worries can be solved by this Buddha-name.**

The name of Amitabha is inconceivable, and his name represents the state of the fruit of Buddha-hood. Thus, we should all give rise to great faith in Amitabha's name, and recite it with joy and sincerity. If our faith is perfect, then the blessings we receive will likewise be both perfect and incredible in greatness.

People of this world know that money can buy them houses and cars, can give them the good life. Thus, they have absolute faith in money, and are willing to risk their lives to obtain wealth. We, however, should not believe in money. We should instead have faith in the inconceivable power of the name of Amitabha, and possessing true faith, fully commit

to abide with Amitabha, and recite his name with all our strength. If we do so, we will certainly receive truly wondrous benefits. According to the [Ven. Master Hai Xian](#), "Anything can be easily done as long as the heart is focused."

**Recommend Resource: Path to Pure Land Daily Practice**

**Path To Pure Land淨修捷要英文版 : Brian Chung : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive**

This is the first translation of the final teaching of the Eminent Upasaka Xia Lian...

<https://archive.org/details/pathtopureland/page/n17/mode/2up>

36 views · View shares

4

**Comments**

**About the Author**

**Brian Chung**  
Voracious reader of Buddhist texts

- Author
- B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012
- 410.7K content views 22.5K this month
- Active in 7 Spaces
- Joined March 2020

[View more in PURELAND BUDDHISM >](#)



**Brian Chung**

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Thu

## Upasaka Zhou An Shi's Policy Proposals to Reverse the Culture of Lust and Promiscuity, and Create a Virtuous and Family Friendly Society, as well as the Karmic Rewards of Doing so



Caption: Upasaka Zhou An Shi (1656–1739), famous Qing era Buddhist Upasaka.

### Translation of Excerpts (From Upasaka Zhou An Shi's Book—Escape From the Sea of Lust):

*....A single lustful thought cannot be tolerated by even the all embracing Earth, and provokes the wrath of the gods and spirits. Offenders who have committed such evil karma will have their blessings cancelled or reduced, and their honors forfeited.....*

Exhortation to Officials and Scholars,

1. Create books documenting successful marriages, encouraging the virtuous (chaste and faithful) to write down their stories and values.
2. Honor (with awards) faithful married couples who have refrained from lust or adultery. However, the ceremony must not come with banquets or partying.
3. Publish and distribute books that promote virtue and good deeds.

4. Rigorously enforce the prohibition against marriages during filial mourning period.
5. Rigorously enforce the ban against human trafficking and prostitution.
6. Prevent erotica from being created or published.
7. Prevent romance novels from being sold.
8. Ban pornography.
9. Ban the creation of seductive or suggestive statues, forms and images.
10. Ban gambling.
11. Ban the sale of aphrodisiacs and adult toys.
12. Prevent parades or carnivals.
13. Protect the privacy of nunneries by restricting guests to only those with cause.
14. Tax the sale of alcohol.
15. Promote austerity in dress by discouraging decadence, limiting jewelry, fashions and cosmetics.

The above proposals are rooted in the principles of propriety, can inhibit the culture of lust, and encourage the virtues of decorum and frugality.

Moreover, officials should be slow to authorize divorces, and abstain from causing couples to be separated. They should be cautious with accusations that implicate nuns, and or legal cases that involve children. This is to be compassionate and righteous, respecting etiquette and decorum.

**Karmic account: Promotion of the teachings against lust yields high office in that very life.**

During the Ming Dynasty, a scholar from Jiangsu by the name of Mao Qi Zhong took the imperial examinations of 1619, and did not pass. Later, as he was writing a commentary on the Treatise of Response and Retribution, he paid particular attention to the Precept Against Lustful Thoughts, and spent much effort on explaining that precept. At the time, he was assisted by his tutor, Luo Xian Yue, who later returned to Nanchang. During the first month of 1628, Luo had a dream where he saw an Elderly Taoist Immortal, accompanied by two liveried servants. The Sage held in his hands a book, and asked the servant on the left to recite from it. As Luo listened, he realized that the excerpt being read was Mao Qi Zhong's commentary (listing many accounts of karmic retributions for lust) on the Precept Against Lustful Thoughts. Afterwards, the Sage said: "The author deserves to pass." The servant on the right then spoke the following poem:

"Plucking the cassia branch from the Lunar Palace

Knowing that all the beauty in the universe is empty

Seeing through the seductive illusions of this world

And when the honorable Pang Hua arrives


The streets shall be draped in celebratory banners"

*Note: "Pang Hua refers to successful exam candidates with rare surnames."*

After Luo had awakened, he knew that his student would soon pass the examinations. When the results were released, Mao Qi Zhong indeed passed. Qi Zhong then enjoyed a successful official career, rising to the high post of Vice Minister of the Censorate.

[Source \(original language\)](#) 

**Recommended:**



PURELAND BUDDHISM · September 18

**Master Yin Guang: If the Lustful Heart Cannot be Uprooted, One Cannot Escape the Dust**

Caption: Master Yin Guang (1861–1940) Translation: Love, lust and desire afflicts...

<https://purelandbuddhism.quora.com/Master-Yin-Guang-If-the-Lustful-Heart...>

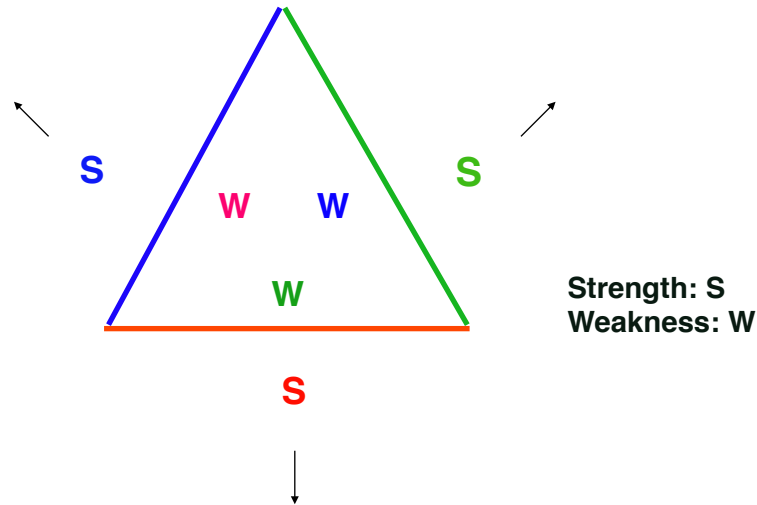
33 views · View shares



**Comments**



## Statecraft Treatise: Shepherding Strength and Redeeming Weakness —The Benefit of Dynamic Specialization Over Standardization.



*In the above diagram, each person (represented by colored line) 's unique strength protects against another's weakness. Green's weakness is blues strength, red's weakness is green's strength and blue's strength is green's weakness. As they cooperate back to back, they do not need to fret or spend time and resources trying to patch up their fears and weaknesses, but can instead progress in different directions with their respective talents and strengths.*

No person is an island ; no one is self sufficient ; all have their strengths, fears and weaknesses. Standardization and conformity foolishly demands strength in weakness and bravery in cowardice. Instead of planting doubly on fertile soil, it demands that deserts be irrigated so that they can grow their "fair share". Society is reciprocity, and the community finds stability in diverse function under clear and united direction.

Every person has their own peculiar fears, particular talents and inherent weaknesses. Given such a situation, the correct way is to refrain from insisting that they overcome their fears or improve their weaknesses, but instead to identify their strengths and talents and hone those strengths exclusively.

However, current methods of standardized notions and public schooling simply wastes resources by enforcing conformity, which means that inherent strengths receive less attention while weaknesses are superficially patched up at great expense of time, money and peace of mind. Likewise, cutting people loose to find their own way in the world upon maturity is the same as letting fertile fields sit idle and grow weeds.

Doing so is inefficient and ineffective. Therefore, on the contrary, society should hone individualism under the web of collectivism. The latter shields the flanks of the former, allowing the former to advance unencumbered. Now you may say that doing so is self contradictory, but so is fire and water, and it is fire and water that makes the steam which creates electric power. People need to work together towards prosperity or else there would be discontent and factional strife. Competition solves nothing since it just allows resentments and enmity to simmer until it grows into quarrels and conflicts.

Thus, a country becomes strong when it allows different people's particular strengths to shine, when it lets one person's strength to cover for another's fear and weakness so that each can focus only on honing their strength to greatness. In this case, nobody's back is exposed and progress may advance on multiple fronts.

Moreover, according to Mencius:

**20. Mencius replied, "They are only men of education (i.e. Sages who meditate), who, without a certain livelihood, are able to maintain a fixed heart. As to the people, if they have not a certain livelihood, it follows that they will not have a fixed heart. And if they have not a fixed heart, there is nothing which they will not do, in the way of self-abandonment, of moral deflection, of depravity, and of wild license. When they thus have been involved in crime, to follow them up and punish them;-- this is to entrap the people. How can such a thing as entrapping the people be done under the rule of a benevolent man?"**

**21. "Therefore an intelligent ruler will regulate the livelihood of the people, so as to make sure that, for those above them, they shall have sufficient wherewith to serve their parents, and, for those below them,**

sufficient wherewith to support their wives and children; that in good years they shall always be abundantly satisfied, and that in bad years they shall escape the danger of perishing. After this he may urge them, and they will proceed to what is good, for in this case the people will follow after it with ease.

22. ‘.....Notwithstanding good years, their lives are continually embittered, and, in bad years, they do not escape perishing. In such circumstances they only try to save themselves from death, and are afraid they will not succeed. What leisure have they to cultivate propriety and righteousness?’

Thus, the greatest problem today is that our education system is wasteful and often alienates while the economy is not structured in a way that easily gives suitable opportunities to suitably inclined people. Thus, no one can have a tranquil and still heart as they are not promised a livelihood they could be secure and happy in. We are doing the equivalent of leaving fertile land idle while embracing scavenging.

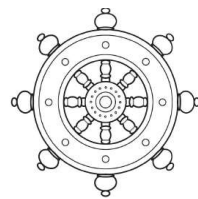
As mentioned at the beginning, society is reciprocity. Each person needs to cooperate with others in order to survive and thrive. **The brave fight so the scholarly can study, the scholarly thinks so the decisive can act wisely; the sturdy labor so the lofty can create, the lofty creates so the whole world may derive value and bliss from beauty.** If each can shine in their posts and receive due dignity/gratitude and provision, then the society or country would be doubly strong, as each person can focus on their strengths knowing that others will cover for their weakness and fears.

**To each his own,  
Be it skill or comfort zone,  
Be it weakness  
Or greatness,  
So cover peculiar fears  
By shepherding diverse strengths.**

---

**THE ANANDA REQUESTS THE BUDDHA'S INSIGHT INTO THE WOE AND WEAL  
OF THE FAITHFUL SUTRA**

# 阿難問事佛吉凶經



---

**THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT**

---

## **MERIT DEDICATION**

**As the translator of this sutra, I hereby dedicate all of the blessings and merits accrued from translating this sutra to my Mother and Father. May they have long life, prosperity, leisure and health.**

*- Brian Chung (Translator), June 11th 2016*

---

## TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

This sutra is of unique importance in our current era, and all who wish to cultivate the Dharma must study it as their first text. For this sutra clearly outlines important and fundamental principles that all cultivators must heed in order to not fall astray. With the right mind and understanding, practice of the Way can be straightforward and swiftly rewarding. However, the greatest danger is to think that one is walking on the correct path but actually veering further and further away from all that which is proper. If one then slanders the Dharma as retributions inevitably arise, evil karma and the attendant woes would only accumulate to ever more disturbing levels.

Unfortunately, such pitiful occurrences are particularly common in the age we currently live in, which is the Dharma-ending age. Therefore, the Buddha spoke this sutra specifically to benefit cultivators in our current era of obstacles, turbidity and temptations.

I would also like to express my great gratitude to the Venerable Master Chin Kung. If it were not for his excellent Dharma lectures and his detailed commentary on the Classical Chinese version of this sutra, this translation would not have been possible.

Lastly, I wish to make clear once more that this translation has been released into the Public Domain. Thus, anyone may use it for any purpose. As it is meritorious to spread the Dharma, I beseech all who read this to share it with their friends and family.

---



---

## **CONTENTS**

THE ANANDA REQUESTS THE BUDDHA'S INSIGHT INTO THE WOE AND WEAL OF THE FAITHFUL SUTRA .....	6
PARABLE OF THE GUEST'S STAY.....	23
THE IMPORTANCE OF STATUES AND IMAGES OF BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS.....	25
BUDDHISM IS NEITHER RELIGION NOR PHILOSOPHY, IT IS AN EDUCATION.....	28
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES: VEN. HAI XIAN PURELAND REBIRTH BIOGRAPHY.....	33

---



Ananda asked the Buddha: “Some who practice the Dharma become prosperous, noble and achieve their dreams, however, others who do the same descend into poverty, disgrace and ruin. Why the difference? I humbly request He Who Surpasses Even The Heavens to reveal insight regarding this matter to the masses!”

The Buddha replied: “Some who practice the Way receive the Dharma and precepts from Sages. They faithfully and attentively observe everything they have been taught without fail. They cultivate diligently and are loath to lose their virtue.”

“They honor Buddha images and emulate the virtues exemplified by them. With reverence, they rectify their conduct ; with respect, they offer light offerings. Moreover, they shed their defilements by practicing generosity without attachment. Thus, they reap true peace in return. Their hearts and minds are untainted by anything that contradicts virtue, righteousness and the Dharma. Furthermore, their purity and temperance are unhindered by slothfulness. Blissful are their hearts! As they are protected by auspicious devas, their endeavors meet no resistance and progress with unrivaled swiftness. The gods, celestial dragons and the masses all respect them.”

“Eventually, they will attain the Way. Only men and women of such virtue are fit to be called the Buddha’s true disciples.”

“There are also some who think they are practicing the Dharma but do not follow virtuous teachers. They neglect to study the true meaning of the sutras and they receive the precepts in name only. They are obstinate and of little faith. Thus, their actions contradict

the precepts. Their faith in the principles of the Dharma are always compromised, and so, they capriciously choose to accept some and reject the other. Moreover, they show no respect towards the sutras and Buddha images. As they fail even to light incense, offer lights and show reverence, evil habits and doubts inevitably become entrenched within their hearts.”

“Furthermore, they unleash scathing words upon others and are jealous of the virtuous and their good deeds. They also do not observe the eight precepts on the six designated days of each lunar month. With their hands, they take life and shed blood. As they do not respect the sutras, they irreverently place them in dirty closets, hang them from walls or toss them onto their marriage beds. They fail to treat the sutras like honored guests and make light of them by handling them the same way they would a common book or rag.”

“Whenever such people are stricken with illness, they do not seek recovery through virtue and the proper Dharma. Instead, their doubts prompt them to seek the counsel of occultists or quacks. As they sacrifice to evil spirits and ghosts, auspicious celestial devas are forced to abandon them, leaving them bereft of divine protection. Naturally, demons move closer to them with each passing day and evil ghosts quarter at their gates. Thus, decline and decay becomes their reality, and their endeavors meet stiff resistance.”

“Such people have only just been reborn here after lifetimes in the evil realms. As they commit evil in this life, they are not fit to be counted among the Buddha’s disciples.

“Upon death, they cannot avoid descending into the hells where they will be judged and punished. Thus, the evil are troubled by waning prospects while they live and are punished in the evil realms after death. Such indescribable suffering is caused by the accumulation of evil and the rejection of kindness and virtue.”

“The deluded who lack discernment tumble amid their own blindness. They never ponder deeply their past lives and the cause of their retributions. Yet, they blasphemy that cultivating the Dharma yields undesirable results. They are ignorant to the fact that they have accomplished no merit or good deeds in their prior lives. Foolishly, they become hostile to both Heaven and Earth. Moreover, they criticize the Sages and level accusations against the Heavens above. Such people of this world are sorely confused and lack wisdom.”

“The hearts of the confused are far from serene and very irresolute. Thus, their every move fails to accord with sense and reason. Moreover, they disregard the unsurpassed kindness shown to them by the Buddha and stubbornly refuse to repent. They are mired in the very three poisons which create the infernal realms.”

“Therefore, it is paramount for everyone be aware of the consequences of their own good and evil conduct, and of situations that may provoke their past evil tendencies. For every act there is an echo. Thus, prudence is absolutely necessary!”

“The Ten Evils are your nemesis while the Ten Virtues are your dearest allies. The key to achieving an easeful heart and realizing the Way is to practice virtue and good deeds.

Virtue is a cuirass that fears no enemy ; virtue is a mighty ark that can sail across the stormy seas. If you can be resolute in virtue, good fortune and harmony will naturally dawn upon you. From virtuous deeds to blissful blessings, it is all entirely of your own doing, and not that of the gods. Thus, if you refuse to be faithful and do good from now on, your retributions are bound to worsen.”

The Buddha continued: “Ananda, the results of good and evil pursue people like a shadow following the form. Therefore, neither reward nor retribution can be evaded. The matter of virtue and vice is thus. Do not be doubtful and end up falling into the evil realms. Virtue and vice are clearly distinguishable, thence, always exercise proper faith and careful discernment. All who do so will surely find lasting peace. The Buddha’s words are ever sincere and never false.”

The Buddha reiterated: “The essence of the Tathagata’s message has always been thus. To be able to witness a Buddha’s appearance in this world is the rarest privilege. Moreover, opportunities to study the sutras or hear the Dharma are always extraordinarily limited. Only those who have amassed merit in lives past may have the honor of waiting upon the Buddha today.”

“Thus, always be grateful and take nothing for granted. Show your gratitude by spreading the Dharma at every opportunity. Become a model of virtue and point the way towards fields of merit. He who faithfully plants good deeds will certainly reap prosperity and leisure in the lives to come.”

Ananda reverently accepted the Buddha's teachings and proceeded to cultivate it in accordance with the spirit of Samantabhadra.

Ananda then asked the Buddha: "If a man does not personally kill with his own hands, is he blameless?"

The Buddha replied: "To teach or order another to take life is a greater offense than doing it yourself. The reason is that some people kill because they are forced to do so by magistrates and those who wield authority. Moreover, persons of low and servile status are often lacking in discernment and must follow orders. Thus, their culpability is lower. However, those who abet the taking of life or conjure murderous schemes and commands have malice in their heart. They are dark hearted, bent on harming others and have no compassion. Their actions make light of the Triple Jewel and betray their own conscience. Thus, they eagerly commit atrocities or strike fear in the hearts of men. Grave are their guilt and culpability."

"From murder rises blood feuds and cycles of vengeance that span across endless lifetimes. Never enjoying peace and safety for as long as they live, the murderous must suffer an onslaught of threats and misfortunes. Afterwards, they will fall into the hells. Losing their human form, they are reborn as animals to be slaughtered. Floundering amidst the three sufferings and eight difficulties, they are repeatedly served on men's dinner tables for hundreds of millions of eons, without an end in sight. Their lot is to bear hardships ; to graze and drink from creeks."

“In the past, when the present generation of beasts and animals were still men, they were violent and rebellious. They engaged in intrigue and held no faith in the Dharma. Ever full of resentment in every lifetime, they are trapped in a cycle of mutual enmity. Though the deluded are the same in spirit, they assume different forms as they cycle around the Samsara, thus driven by their heavy evil karma.”

Ananda then asked: “When people and disciples disdain and make light of their teachers or virtuous cultivators, what is the offense they incur?”

The Buddha replied: “All must know that it is their duty to delight in the good deeds of others. They must never be jealous. To harbor evil intent against cultivators of the Way and sagely teachers is the same as to blasphemy against the Buddha. Such behavior is as foolish as shooting oneself with a heavy ballista.”

The Buddha turned to Ananda and asked: “Wouldn’t that be painful?”

Ananda replied: “Very painful, very painful indeed!”

The Buddha then said: “He who harbors malice against cultivators of the Way and sagely teachers will suffer such terrible and acute retribution that even the pain of being shot by a heavy ballista pales in comparison.”

“Those who are disciples must never make light of their teachers or treat virtuous cultivators with contempt. They must respect them as they would the Buddha himself.

Moreover, thoughts of jealousy or irreverence must not be entertained. When they witness good deeds being done, they must delight with joy and offer praise and assistance. He who truly and diligently cultivates virtue commands the admiring respect of the Heavens, celestial dragons and spirit deities. The karmic retributions of those who jealously subvert the endeavors of the virtuous are so frightening that even an inferno or the pain of slow slicing are mild in comparison. Offenses of such gravity must be vigilantly avoided.”

Ananda further inquired: “If a teacher were to punish arbitrarily, or if he were to punish a light mistake severely, would he be in the wrong?”

The Buddha replied: “Such abuse is strictly forbidden. There must be righteousness between master and disciple, and only such honor will generate true and mutual trust. They must warmly interact like kinfolk. Moreover, the master must look upon the disciple as his own offspring and the disciple should likewise see him as a father or elder brother.”

“When discipline is warranted, it must be meted out in accordance with reason, and teachings must reflect propriety and the Way. Do not dole out what you loathe to receive. By propagating and displaying propriety, moderation and virtue, grievances will naturally subside. The same is true for the disciple. Both sides must sincerely do their duty and know their responsibilities. They must never slander each other. Furthermore, neither should disciples harbor toxic resentments nor teachers exaggerate minor flaws as major offenses. They are one unit and must mutually cooperate.”

“If you are fortunate enough to study under a great master, you must be filial. Never even dare display arrogance or contempt. To make light of a good teacher is to make light of the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and your parents. Such ingrates are rejected by even the all-embracing Heaven and Earth!”

“I will tell you now that in the future Dharma-ending age, the ranks of men will be swamped by the wicked. They will be treacherous, unfilial, cruel, unrighteous and inhumane. In this era of delusion, demons and scoundrels will infiltrate the Sangha. Whether monk or novice, many of them will be willfully blind to their own ever mounting evil but eagle-eyed to the real or perceived offenses of others. They will envy the Sages and be jealous of the virtuous. Moreover, they will proceed to subvert the good works of others. They themselves will disdain to do any good, be brutishly obstinate and envious of the Sages. Not only do they neglect to uphold the Dharma, they shamelessly sabotage the efforts of the faithful who do so. Thus, they effectively block the Way path to salvation and lead many astray. As they are decadent and hanker after profit, they hoard wealth and pile up money. Ignorant they are to the fact that such conduct is both harmful and corrupting. Naturally, when their lives end, they will fall into the evil paths and become hell-beings, emaciated ghouls and animals.”

“It shouldn’t be like this. Thence, what is the proper way to act in this world? It is simple: Cultivate perseveringly in order to repay the Buddha’s kindness, uphold the sutras and the precepts, and be a guiding light to the masses. The Way must be studied, the sutras must be read and recited, and good deeds must be done. Cultivate kindness and become a worthy model of virtue. Lift your consciousness away from suffering and forever out of the



clutches of birth and death. Neither make light of the Sages nor slander the virtuous. Moreover, do not misrepresent small mistakes as major crimes. Great is the offense of acting contrary to the Dharma and its tenets. As reward and retribution are clearly delineated, who can afford not to be cautious?”

Finally, Ananda asked: “To You Who Surpasses Even The Heavens, how should the faithful of the Dharma-ending age, having arisen due to causes and conditions, support their households and manage temporal matters?”

The Buddha said: “Ananda, they must abide by the precepts and cultivate with faith and sincerity. They shall be filial and prudent. Moreover, they are to respect and take refuge in the Triple Jewel, support their parents and be loyal to their community. They must be virtuous to the core and refrain from hypocrisy. Although they are allowed to manage temporal affairs, they may never be guided by a worldly heart.”

Ananda then said: “He Who Surpasses Even The Heavens, please explain the difference between temporal affairs and the worldly heart.”

The Buddha further elaborated: “Laypersons may engage in trade, commerce and business. However, they must do so with honesty, honor and in accordance with their conscience. Moreover, time honored traditions such as marriages, funerals, ceremonies, traveling and soirees are all considered to be temporal affairs. However, a worldly heart is given to ignorance. Thus, cultivators are forbidden from fortune telling, Feng Shui, consorting with shamans, practicing occult mantras, inflicting curses, sacrificing to evil

ghosts, ritually petitioning to deities and spirits, and from selecting auspicious dates and hours.”

“Those who have truly received the Buddha’s precepts are blessed and meritorious. If they happen to meet a dilemma, they should consult the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, for their vast wisdom is deeply profound and their foresight unsurpassed. The virtuous and temperate enjoy divine protection on account of their cultivation of the Way. They are revered by the Heavens, celestial dragons and deities. Furthermore, strict virtue begets the highest honor and blesses all endeavors. Thus, when protected by virtue, what is there to fear?”

“As the Way is boundless and encompasses both Heaven and Earth, only those who fail to understand are anxious and impeded. The matter of virtue and vice lies squarely in the hearts of men, and woe and weal will follow each like a shadow, an unavoidable echo of their own doing. Unwavering virtue and strict adherence to the precepts will naturally draw in blessings and responses. Protected by the Heavens, the will of the virtuous are always realized. Their kindness moves the entirety of the ten quarters to tears and they conform with natural law. Moreover, the augustness of their merit is indescribable and praised by the multitude of Sages! The wise can easily see the true nature of the Samsara, and so, they ardently guard against committing any evil. Lastly, anyone who can cultivate the Dharma with artful skill and adaptability may transcend this world.”

Ananda, having heard the Buddha’s teachings, immediately straightened his robes and prostrated with his head touching the ground.

He then declared: “I have faithfully received your teachings for the benefit of the masses. The assembly present today, being of abundant merit, has enjoyed the rare honor of meeting the Tathagata, who is impartially kind, of boundless compassion, and establishes fields of merit for all beings so they may be liberated. The Buddha’s words are true but believers are few, for this world is full of evil and lacking in good. People curse and slander each other, creating a truly pitiable sight! If there are those who take heed of these teachings, they number but one or two. How did the world come to such a sorry state? After the Buddha’s parinirvana, the sutras will still remain but will find no believers, and will gradually fade away as a result. Alas! Such a shame! Oh World-Honored One, I beseech you to forever remain in this world so that the multitudes who depend on you will not be left orphaned in glooming darkness!”

Ananda then spoke the following hymn:

“The Buddha is the savior of the three realms; he is of vast kindness and universal compassion. For the sake of the unsaved, he cannot retire from this world. Those who can heed the Dharma are few and far between. Eyes and minds are now increasingly closed to the truth. What a pity! But those sunk in offenses are unfortunately so.”

“Those of past merit who heed the Dharma today,  
 Number as few as one or two,  
 As the Dharma teeters and falls away,  
 Precious little remains for others to look up to!”

“The Buddha’s kindness is certainly not small,  
And your karma is authored by you alone,  
The Dharma-drum can shake the universe and all,  
Thus, how could it not be widely known?”

“This turbid world reeks of the depraved,  
For its people are willingly tumultuous,  
They exploit the Dharma while slandering Sages,  
And destroy the righteous with the false and heinous.”

“They refuse to believe in the Thus Come One,  
And blasphemy that the Dharma is not Great,  
Thus, they are unworthy of humanity and are done,  
For they accumulate crimes of great weight.”

“Life ending they descend into the Relentless Hell,  
Where swords and cutlasses quarter and carve,  
Pursued by the cruel and hideous wardens as well,  
They are then tossed into cauldrons filled with boiling tar.”

“The lustful must embrace searing bronze columns,  
While engulfed in flames and fires,  
And those who have defamed the pure and solemn,  
Will have their tongues torn out by pliers.”

“The drunk are crude and sunk in impropriety,  
So confused they ignore duty and lose their dignity,  
Naturally, they will tumble into the hells,  
Where they are forced to drink from molten wells.”

“The evil always suffer and groan,  
For their pain is simply indescribable,  
And when they are finally reborn as men,  
They will be poor, base and undesirable.”

“All those who steadfastly refuse to take life,  
Will naturally enjoy health, strength and long lives,  
And he who abstains from larcenous stealth,  
Shall be rewarded with great and overflowing wealth.”

“The chaste become pure, tranquil and fragrant,  
Their bodies will be scented and serene,  
And as they are ever so august and resplendent,  
They will surely attain the dignity of a Great King.”

“The sincere, honest and truly genuine,  
Are whom all men will surely venerate,  
And the Way and bright inner wisdom,  
Are forever the birthright of the temperate.”

“The five kinds of wealful virtue soars above mundane concerns,  
For they are equal to the merit of those who dwell in Heaven,  
Virtuous seeds generate unsurpassed and manifold returns,  
And the law of good and evil is clearly distinguished and even.”

“In the Dharma-ending age when the wicked thrive,  
Many will lack faith and be seeped in doubt,  
As the foolish are discernment deprived,  
Upon them glooming offenses always lour!”

“They smother the Sages and hinder the Bodhi-path,  
And so they fall into the Tartarus of Jagged Steel when they pass,  
As their souls are fated to be mired in hell’s ire,  
They will be mockingly crowned with iron and fire.”

“Though they yearn for the relief of death,  
They will find not even an ounce of rest,  
For their retribution is overwhelming and loath to relent,  
And so they must spend life after life in torment.”

“Alas, all this is the fruit of the worldly heart,  
Of misplaced faith in ghosts and wicked spirits,  
Of fortune telling and black art,  
For sacrifices are cruel and beget demerits.”

“Upon death they descend into the Eighteenth Hell,  
Where they will be punished by bladed rope,  
The eight types of hinderances are entrenched very well,  
And human rebirth is so elusive it is nearly a forlorn hope.”

“Finally they cycle back to the realm of men,  
But obstinate and dull they still remain,  
Fated to be deformed, deaf, mute, blind and crippled,  
They are ignorant of the Dharma, wicked and fickle.”

“ As they are confused and ever so fallible,  
In vile ideas and evil they quickly dabble,  
And so Yama sentences them to become cattle,  
Soon to be slaughtered by their foes and sold as chattel.”

“ It is only natural for the nefarious to reap evil realm rebirth,  
Where escape and pardon are supremely rare,  
To gain the hard to get human form is cause for great mirth,  
And the chance to meet the Dharma is scarce no matter where.”

“The World Honored One blesses everyone and you,  
The entire Trailokya has benefited from his benevolence,  
His widespread teachings are just like divine sweet dew,  
For they guide the multitudes to cultivate with ease and excellence.”

“The exalted faithful who have already found their inner erudition,  
Pities all who are still mired in cause and condition,  
Thus, they eagerly pave for them a way to salvation,  
Allowing the virtuous and heedful to escape from perdition.”

“ Fortunate are we to be human and heedful of true guidance,  
Such privilege must be complemented by purpose and pathfinding light,  
Profound insight leads to true understanding of Non-abidance,  
So take refuge and plant in the great merit field the seeds of everlasting life.”



“The Buddha’s kindness is second to none,  
He remains in this world to turn the Dharma-wheel,  
Sincerely vowing that all and everyone,  
Will taste the sweet dew of Dharma that truly heals.”

“So board the ship of wisdom to the shores of liberty,  
Sound the Dharma-gong to alert the three thousand realms,  
We are all one for there is certainly no duality,  
Thus, delay not in vowing for the unsurpassed truth!”

At the very moment Ananda finished his exhortation, the entire congregation opened their eyes and became resolute in their faith. They all vowed for the true and unsurpassed Way. Donning the armor of diligence, they eagerly advanced to retrieve the elixir that is Bodhi. Just as incense pervades across the three thousand realms, the newly Enlightened will preach to the unsaved and become a bridge leading to salvation.

And so, the entire assembly consisting of kings, officials, subjects, celestial dragons, gods and spirits all became jubilant after receiving the Buddha’s teachings and Ananda’s exhortation! They also felt a solemn pity for the yet to be saved and became fearful of ever falling astray again. Afterwards, they expressed their gratitude for the teachings they have received from the Buddha and Ananda, and proceeded to return home to cultivate.

Namo Amitabha!

## **THE PARABLE OF THE GUEST'S STAY**

In a poem promoting abstinence from meat by Sung dynasty poet and statesman Su Tongpo, it is written that: “Human life is truly as short as a guest’s stay”.

He could not have been more correct. In this sutra, the Buddha has already mentioned that karmic retributions for our misconduct in this one life can last for hundreds of millions of eons. Thus, compared to such an unimaginable length of time, even the often sought for but rarely attained lifespan of a hundred years is much dwarfed in comparison.

Therefore, the temptations that we meet in life are indeed highly impermanent and illusory. In a way, our life in this world is like a trusted employee’s short business trip to a foreign country. No doubt, the employee will have a company provided credit card and hotel room reservation. These are like the home and income we have in our life. Moreover, the employee will also have fellow guests in the rooms next to his. These transient guests who will soon scatter to destinations all over the world are like the various people we meet throughout our life.

The employee’s purpose is to do his best to further the company’s interests during his short stay. If he does so, he will have a prosperous future when he returns. Likewise, our duty is to amass merits by being charitable, benefiting others and promoting proper teachings.

If the employee were to neglect to meet with prospective clients and instead become foolishly attached to the hotel (as if it were his own home) and hanker after room upgrades, abuse his company issued credit card on luxuries and feud with the other transient guests, then he would have utterly failed at his duty. Eventually, he will have to check out and return home to unemployment, embezzlement charges and civil lawsuits. Compared to his short one or two week trip, his woe will last for as long as he lives.

However, if he had focused dutifully on furthering the company's interests, charged only reasonable or business related expenses to his credit card and remained unattached to the hotel, outside luxuries or other guests, then he would be able to return home to bonuses, promotions and a dream home. In this case, his weal will last for a lifetime.

Thus, the temptations, attachments and people we meet in this life are as impermanent and unimportant as hotel guests and hotel rooms. Moreover, wider sociopolitical matters are also as unworthy of deep emotional attachment as the local matters of a particular country are to the short term foreign visitors transiting through. Therefore, there really is nothing we can keep in this world. What matters are the lives to come. The good and evil we do in our short time here will make or break us for eons to come.

We must also keep in mind that even a seemingly small good deed will have massive rewards. For instance, according to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, a poor servant once offered leftovers to the Buddha as that was the only food he had. The Buddha declared that his act of generosity will result in many eons of Heavenly rebirth. **Thus, I encourage all who read this to henceforth do all good and refrain from all evil!**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF STATUES AND IMAGES OF BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS**

**“Moreover, Earth Store, in the future, good men or women, upon encountering images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, or Wheel-Turning Kings, may give gifts or make offerings to them. Such persons will obtain limitless blessings and will always enjoy supremely wonderful bliss among people and gods. If they can dedicate that merit to the Dharma Realm, their blessings and benefits will be beyond compare.”**

### **-Chapter 10, Earth Store Sutra**

According to the above passage from the important Earth Store Sutra, it is clear that those who revere and make offerings to Buddha images will receive enormous merit. For example, it is recorded in the sutras that those who offer flowers or fruits will be rewarded with beauty, wealth, upright appearances and so forth.

However, such good fortune is not the result of quid pro quo with the Buddha. They are the karmic results of education, virtue and wisdom. For instance, according to the Ven. Master Chin Kung,

**“Buddha and Bodhisattva statues do not represent polytheism, the worship of more than one god. Each statue serves to inspire wisdom and awakening in each of us. They also represent certain aspects of Buddhism, which remind practitioners of the particular topic of teaching. For example, Guan Yin Bodhisattva, the most popular**

**Bodhisattva in China, represents Infinite Compassion. When we see this statue, it reminds us to apply compassion when dealing with the world, its people and surroundings. However, people nowadays worship Guan Yin Bodhisattva as a god and pray for the relief of suffering and to eliminate obstacles. This is a superstitious view and misconception because people forget the fact that the statues are expressions of concepts in Buddhism.”**

Therefore, as mentioned by the Buddha in the Woe and Weal Sutra, the virtuous revere Buddha images and strive to emulate the wisdom and virtues the images represent. Each Buddha image has both obvious and hidden meanings that represent a principle of Dharma. For instance, Maitreya Bodhisattva’s large belly represents generosity and Manjusri Bodhisattva’s sword represents using diligent cultivation to cut through the gordian knot of delusions.

Thus, the practice of giving offerings is an expression of the virtues of courtesy, etiquette and propriety, and of gratitude for the teachings received. Moreover, the passage from the Earth Store Sutra begins by mentioning, “Good men or women”. In Buddhism, a good man or woman is someone who cultivates morality and virtue (e.g. the five precepts and eight precepts). Thus, Buddha images are about respectful learning and cultivation ; they are not meant to be regarded as idols who bestow favors in exchange for sacrifices or homage. Only those who are sincere in rectifying their conduct can truly benefit from the Dharma.

According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, how much a student can learn depends on the level of sincerity and propriety he shows. Therefore, the respectful and reverent naturally progress the most.

Therefore this is why cultivators must revere images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and make offerings of light, incense, flowers, valuables and fruits whenever they can. As long as they do so, they will gain both merits and seeds of wisdom.

Moreover, the merit from creating Buddha images are also profound and vast. For instance, according to the Sutra on the Production of Buddha Images, those who produce images of the Buddha will never again be reborn in the three evil paths. Moreover, they will have handsome features, good rebirths, virtuous families and great wealth.

Thus, no one should let this precious opportunity slip away. An altar where offerings can be placed must be sincerely set up ; images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas should be printed and distributed.

## **BUDDHISM IS NEITHER RELIGION NOR PHILOSOPHY, IT IS AN EDUCATION**



**Ven. Master Chin Kung**

In the following excerpts from Ven. Master Chin Kung's excellent speech titled "Buddhism as an Education", the Dharma Master clearly outlines the true purpose of the Buddha's teachings. People nowadays are confused about the true nature of Buddhism and increasingly regard it with the ignorance of the worldly heart. However, the truth could not be more different:

## **“The Cause of Our Chaotic World**

Today's societies in Taiwan and elsewhere in the world are rather abnormal, a phenomenon that has not been witnessed before either in the West or the East. Some Westerners have predicted that the end of the world will occur in 1999 and that Christ will return to earth for Judgement Day. Easterners have also predicted impending disasters that are similar to those predictions in the West, the only difference being the time frame, which is some twenty years later. Some of these are ancient prophecies, which we should not place too much importance on. However, if we view our environment objectively, we will realize that this world is really in danger. Environmental pollution has become a serious problem and now humankind has finally begun to understand the need for protecting our environment. However, the problem of mental or spiritual pollution is many times more serious than that of the environment. This is the source of worldly ills that not many people realize. The Chinese have a saying, "Education is most essential to establish a nation, train its leaders and its people." For centuries, the Chinese have always believed in the primacy of education, which is considered the foundation for a peaceful and prosperous society. It provides the solution to a myriad of social ills and leads the way to changing one's suffering into happiness. Education has a strong impact on the nation and its people. Moreover, elementary school is the foundation, the basic building block in an educational system."

## **“Buddhism as an Education**

Buddhism officially came to China in 67 AD. The Emperor had sent special envoys to India to invite Buddhist monks to come to China to teach Buddhism, which in that period, was regarded as an educational system, and not as a religion. Regretfully, about two hundred years ago, the practice of Buddhism had taken on a more religious facade. Therefore, the purpose of this talk is to correct this misunderstanding, by leading us back to the original form of Buddhism as taught by Buddha Shakyamuni."

## **“The Goal of the Buddha's Teaching**

Buddhism is Buddha Shakyamuni's educational system, which is similar to that of Confucius for both presented similar viewpoints and methods. The goal of Buddhist education is to attain wisdom. In Sanskrit, the language of



ancient India, the Buddhist wisdom was called "Anuttara-samyak-sambhodi" meaning the perfect ultimate wisdom. The Buddha taught us that the main objective of our practice or cultivation was to achieve this ultimate wisdom. He further taught us that everyone has the potential to realize this state of ultimate wisdom, as it is an intrinsic part of our nature, not something one obtains externally. However, most of us have become confused through general misconceptions and therefore, are not able to realize this potential. Therefore, if we break through this confusion, we will realize this intrinsic part of our nature. Thus, Buddhism is an educational system aimed at regaining our own intrinsic nature. It also teaches absolute equality which stemmed from Buddha's recognition that all sentient beings possess this innate wisdom and nature. Therefore, there is no inherent difference among beings. Everyone is different now because we have lost our true nature and have become confused. The degree of wisdom exhibited by individuals depends on the degree of delusion and has nothing to do with the true nature of the individual. The Buddha's teaching helps us to realize that innate, perfect, ultimate wisdom. With wisdom, we can then solve all our problems and turn suffering into happiness. Due to our lack of wisdom, we perceive, view and behave foolishly, and thus suffer the consequences evoked by our incorrect actions. If we have wisdom, our thoughts, viewpoints and behavior will be correct; how then can we suffer when there are no ill consequences to suffer from? Of course, we will be happy. From here, we can see that suffering is caused by delusion and the source of happiness is our own realization of wisdom."

### **“The Core of the Buddha's Teaching**

The Buddha's teaching contains three major points: discipline, meditation and wisdom. Wisdom is the goal and deep meditation or concentration is the crucial process toward achieving wisdom. Discipline through observing the precepts, is the method that helps one to achieve deep meditation; wisdom will then be realized naturally. Buddha's entire teachings as conveyed in the sutras never really depart from these three points. Buddhism encompasses the entire collection of works by Buddha Shakyamuni and is called the Tripitaka. This can be classified into three categories: sutra, vinaya (precepts or rules), and sastra (commentaries) which emphasize meditation, discipline, and wisdom respectively."

## **“The Buddhist Educational Organization in China**

Buddhist education is based on filial piety, as is the Chinese culture. Prior to the introduction of Buddhism to China, filial piety was the pillar of society and was supported by the wise men of ancient China. When Buddhist monks from India came to China and started to discuss Buddhism with government officials, it was immediately apparent to everyone that Buddhism shared numerous similarities with the indigenous Confucian traditions. Consequently, the government embraced them and requested that the monks stay in China permanently. The first two monks, who came to China, Moton and Chufarlan, were received by the "Hong-Lu-Si" which is equivalent to our present Foreign Ministry or State Department. "Si" was designated as a ministry of the government. The Chief of Hong-Lu-Si is equivalent to a foreign minister or Secretary of State. However, Hong-Lu-Si could only receive foreign guests temporarily. In order to allow them to stay permanently, the Emperor added another ministry, "Bai-Ma-Si," to take charge of Buddhist education. Originally, the "Si" had nothing to do with a temple, but merely denoted a ministry of the imperial court, now it denotes a temple in contemporary Chinese. So, there were two ministries in charge of education. The "Li-Bu," managed by the Prime Minister, was in charge of the traditional Confucian educational system. This organization served the same function until the early 1900's. As the Emperor had given enormous support to the "Bai-Ma-Si," Buddhist education rapidly spread throughout China. In many instances, it had even far exceeded the efforts to educate people than the traditional education system of "Li-Bu." Consequently, there may not have been a Confucian school in every village, but there was a "Si" everywhere. Again, the Buddhist "Si", or temple, used to be an educational institution and did not perform religious ceremonies at all, unlike what often takes place in contemporary temples nowadays.”

“Another important mission for the original "Si" was sutra translation. The scale of the translation effort is hard to imagine today. During the seventh century, the famous monk Xuan-Tsuang had supervised six hundred scholars in sutra translation. Prior to this, a monk named Kumaraja had a translation team of about four hundred scholars. Therefore, the "Si" was a large governmental organization. Unfortunately, it was completely transformed into a place to deal with superstition and spirits around two hundred years ago. Its educational characteristics totally disappeared, which was truly regretful.”

### **“The Four Current Types of Buddhism**

Today, there are four types of Buddhism being practiced. First, there is the religious Buddhism, which can be witnessed in temples throughout Taiwan. However, this does not represent the real Buddhism. Second, there is the academic Buddhism being taught in many universities today, where we see Buddhism being treated purely as philosophy, an academic pursuit, especially in Japan. This is not exactly Buddha's education either. Third, and the most unfortunate of all, is the total degeneration of Buddhism into a cult. This third type of Buddhism is much more damaging to the public than the first two types. Finally, there is the traditional Buddhism, the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni in its true essence, which is very rare in our day and age.”

**Link to full speech (highly recommended):**

**<http://www.buddhanet.net/budasedu.htm>**

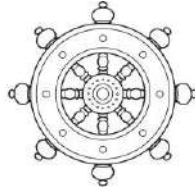
## **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

**Venerable Master Hai Xian (1901-2013) Pure Land Rebirth Documentary (English subtitles):**



**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoritpHKxm4>**

**Public Domain English biography booklet available here: <https://www.scribd.com/user/269920848/bc1993>**



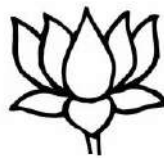
# THE EIGHT DISCERNMENTS OF EMINENT MEN SUTRA

A NEW TRANSLATION WITH COMMENTARY

佛說八大人覺經新中英文版

BRIAN CHUNG

JANUARY 22 2015



---

---

THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT

---

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sutra Text.....	4
Commentary.....	7
The Importance of Right View.....	16
The Dharma-door of Amita Buddha.....	18
Recommended Resources.....	19

### Dedication

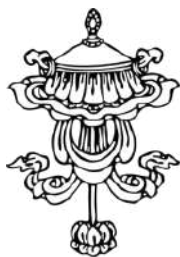
**May the merits and virtues accrued from this work  
 adorn the Buddha's Pure Land,  
 repay the Four Kinds of Kindness above,  
 and relieve the sufferings of those  
 in the Three Paths below.  
 May those who see and hear of this,  
 bring forth the heart  
 of understanding and compassion and,  
 at the end of this life,  
 be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss**



### No Rights Reserved

**As the author of this text, it is my express intent that the entirety of this text be  
 released into the Public Domain. I reserve no rights to this work. If the laws of a  
 particular jurisdiction should make it impossible to reserve no rights, then I  
 hereby grant permission to anyone who seeks to use and reproduce this work  
 for any purpose.**

*Brian Chung*

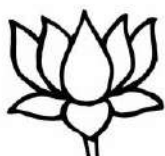


NAMO AMITA BUDDHA

南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



## EIGHT DISCERNMENTS OF EMINENT MEN SUTRA

為佛弟子。常於晝夜。至心誦念。八大人覺。

With deep mindfulness and concentration, disciples of the Buddha contemplate the Eight Discernments of Eminent Men through day and night without cease.

第一覺悟。世間無常。國土危脆。四大苦空。五陰無我。生滅變異。

虛偽無主。心是惡源。形為罪藪。如是觀察。漸離生死。

The First Discernment is this: All that which is temporal cannot be kept and will be short lived. Nation-states can crumble and collapse. The manifestations of the four elements are empty and the five skandhas are not the self. They arise and cease, thus betraying their falseness and lack of substance. The creation of false thoughts gives rise to attachments for the body. This leads to numerous offenses. Contemplate thus and you will gradually transcend the Samsara.

第二覺知。多欲為苦。生死疲勞。從貪欲起。少欲無為。身心自在。

The Second Discernment is this: Extravagance leads to suffering. Birth and death are both wearisome. Such pains are caused by craving and attachment. Those with few desires are neither anxious nor fearful. Their hearts and minds are serene and unburdened.

第三覺知。心無厭足。唯得多求。增長罪惡。菩薩不爾。常念知足。

安貧守道。唯慧是業。

The Third Discernment is this: Insatiability leads to measureless hankering. Thus, an unquenchable heart causes evil habits and offenses to accumulate. For this reason, Bodhisattvas are always mindful of the benefits of temperance. They are content with simple self sufficiency and devote their attentions to the Way and the propagation of the Dharma.



第四覺知。懈怠墜落。常行精進。破煩惱惡。摧伏四魔。出陰界獄。

**The Fourth Discernment is this: Slothfulness leads to decadence and failure. On the other hand, unceasing diligence can deracinate afflictions and neutralize the four classes of demons. Allowing you to transcend the Samsara.**

第五覺悟。愚癡生死。菩薩常念。廣學多聞。增長智慧。成就辯才。

教化一切。悉以大樂。

**The Fifth Discernment is this: Ignorance drives the cycle of birth and death. Bodhisattvas understand this. Therefore, in order to explain the Dharma to all, they diligently perfect their wisdom and eloquence through single-minded cultivation. Their efforts allow sentient beings to realize the bliss of liberation.**

第六覺知。貧苦多怨。橫結惡緣。菩薩布施。等念冤親。不念舊惡。

不憎惡人。

**The Sixth Discernment is this: Poverty and deprivation leads to countless grievances and unrest. When Bodhisattvas practice almsgiving, they consider foes to be equal to their dearest kinsmen. They neither harbor grudges nor ostracize criminals.**

第七覺悟。五欲過患。雖為俗人。不染世樂。常念三衣，瓦鉢法器。

志願出家。守道清白。梵行高遠。慈悲一切。

**The Seventh Discernment is this: The five desires are like chronic diseases. Even when living amongst the laity, remain untainted by worldly affairs and temptations. Always think of the three robes, the clay alms bowl and the four requisites. Voluntarily leave the home life, observe the Way, remain pure and cultivate the Vinaya. Be impartial and treat everyone with compassion.**

第八覺知。生死熾然。苦惱無量。發大乘心。普濟一切。願代眾生。

受無量苦。令諸眾生。畢竟大樂。

**The Eighth Discernment is this: The Samsara is a raging inferno plagued by endless afflictions. Hence, resolve upon the Mahayana aspiration to liberate all beings. Vow to bear the unbearable for the sake of helping sentient beings achieve ultimate bliss.**

如此八事。乃是諸佛菩薩大人之所覺悟。精進行道慈悲修慧。乘法身船至涅槃岸。復還生死度脫眾生。以前八事。開導一切。令諸眾生覺生死苦。捨離五欲修心聖道。若佛弟子。誦此八事。於念念中。滅無量罪。進趣菩提。速登正覺。永斷生死。常住快樂。

**The aforementioned Eight Discernments are fully understood by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Hence, they diligently cultivate the Way and compassionately seek to perfect their own wisdom. Having been ferried to the shores of nirvana by the Dharmakaya vessel, they return to convert and liberate sentient beings. Using these Eight Discernments, they open the doors of wisdom and allow everyone to understand the pains of birth and death. Inspiring them to forfeit the five desires and cultivate the Way.**

**Those who cultivate the Buddha-dharma should recite and contemplate these Eight Discernments. if they do so, all their evil karmas and offenses can be eradicated with each thought. Furthermore, Bodhi draws nearer to them and proper wisdom can be swiftly obtained. They will forever leave the Samsara and abide in true bliss.**

佛說八大人覺經

**The Buddha Speaks the Eight Discernments of Eminent Men Sutra.**

## COMMENTARY

為佛弟子。常於晝夜。至心誦念。八大人覺。

**With deep mindfulness and concentration, disciples of the Buddha contemplate the Eight Discernments of Eminent Men through day and night without cease.**

### COMMENTARY:

The term "deep mindfulness and concentration" is the translation of the Chinese term "至心". This term is elaborated in the Sutra for the Discernment of the Consequences of Wholesome and Unwholesome Karma. According to the Sutra, there are three levels of "至心". The first level is the level of single-mindedness. At this stage, the only thoughts that occupy a cultivator's mind are these Eight Discernments and nothing else. Such focus and concentration represents a kind of samadhi. The highest level is achieved by the cultivator when he thoroughly realizes these principles to the core. This means that he has rediscovered his Buddha-nature and achieved Bodhi.

If we wish to attain single-mindedness, we must first hold right views and intentions. These Eight Discernments are right views as they represent the key reasons for seeking Bodhi. When we are cultivating samadhi, we must carefully avoid being entrapped by demonic states such as those outlined in the Shurangama Sutra. For instance, we should not entertain thoughts of arrogance or superiority. This is because the Diamond Sutra clearly states that: "The ego is false and all Dharmas are attained by forbearance". If we allow thoughts of ego and pride to creep in, our samadhi will become deviant. Those who do not check their pride will eventually fall into the Relentless Hells.

Hence, humility and patience will prove important in ensuring that our practice does not go astray.

第一覺悟。世間無常。國土危脆。四大苦空。五陰無我。生滅變異。

虛偽無主。心是惡源。形為罪藪。如是觀察。漸離生死。

**The First Discernment is this: All that which is temporal cannot be kept and will be short lived. Nation-states can crumble and collapse. The manifestations of the four elements are empty and the five skandhas are not the self. They arise and cease, thus betraying their falseness and lack of substance. The creation of false thoughts gives rise to attachments for the body. This leads to numerous offenses. Contemplate thus and you will gradually transcend the Samsara.**

#### COMMENTARY:

Anything that is created or destroyed is not real. What is real neither arises nor ceases to be (i.e. the Buddha-nature). Hence, our bodies and all things pertaining to this world are impermanent and fake. Therefore, we should not be attached to these volatile and illusory forms, sounds, delusions and sights. People commit karmic offenses because they falsely consider their bodies (composed of the 4 elements and 5 skandhas) to be the self. By contemplating this, we can gradually transcend the Samsara.

The one attachment that is hardest to give up is the love felt towards parents, spouses and children. However, the truth is that people are reborn together as family due to past karmic debts and credits. For example, if you owe someone a favor for kindness shown in past lives, you will likely be reborn as a loving spouse or parent to the person you owe kindness to. If someone owes you money in past lives, you will most likely be reborn as that person's offspring and heir. Once the debt or favor has been repaid, the relationship naturally ends and any remaining affection usually disappears as new karmic relationships manifest. Thus, there really is nothing to be attached to.

This is not to say that we should disregard our obligations towards our family, it simply means that we should not be emotional. As all of us have been turning in the Samsara since time immemorial, all the innumerable sentient beings in existence have at some point been our family members. Hence, we should cultivate the true compassion harbored by Bodhisattvas while shedding the false emotional partialities rooted in the three poisons. For instance, if you achieve Bodhi, countless generations of your family (including those of prior rebirths) will share your merits and become devas or Sages.

第二覺知。多欲為苦。生死疲勞。從貪欲起。少欲無為。身心自在。

**The Second Discernment is this: Extravagance leads to suffering. Birth and death are both wearisome. Such pains are caused by craving and attachment. Those with few desires are neither anxious nor fearful. Their hearts and minds are serene and unburdened.**

#### COMMENTARY:

According to the Infinite Life Sutra, "People of this world all hanker after matters of little importance". Nowadays, material possessions and social standing are highly sought after while important tasks such as amassing merits and cultivating the Way are neglected. We need to understand that luxury and extravagance are a waste of time and create artificial stress. Hankering after things will not yield what we want but will only make us poorer. Beauty, wealth, power, true love and health are the results of doing good. Rewards naturally follow the virtuous while retributions never fail to pursue the wicked. Hence, we should live within our means and consider doing good to be our top priority in life. Why ache for things that will come naturally and automatically?

For instance, if we give up eating meat and hunting, we will no longer be troubled by the wars and violent karmic feuds created by acts of killing and the greed for flavors of meat. The merits thus created will give us peace, long life, health and prosperity.

第三覺知。心無厭足。唯得多求。增長罪惡。菩薩不爾。常念知足。

安貧守道。唯慧是業。

**The Third Discernment is this: Insatiability leads to measureless hankering. Thus, an unquenchable heart causes evil habits and offenses to accumulate. For this reason, Bodhisattvas are always mindful of the benefits of temperance. They are content with simple self sufficiency and devote their attentions to the Way and the propagation of the Dharma.**

## COMMENTARY:

Each and every one of the innumerable paths to Bodhi are based on the cultivation of Sila Samadhi and Prajna. Strong virtue produces the foundation for right concentration which in turn leads to wisdom and liberation. This is why both the Earth Store Sutra and Amitabha Sutra point out that only "good men or women" (i.e. those who cultivate the 5 precepts and 10 virtues) can truly understand and benefit from the teachings contained.

Virtue and precepts are about moderation and simplicity. Those who desire more and more will inevitably commit karmic offenses such as stinginess, fraud and adultery during the course of their pursuit for pomp and power. The virtuous and content are often reborn in the Heaven of Tushita (Contentment) where they enjoy supremely wonderful bliss and live for 4000 celestial years (1 day there is equal to 400 human years). On the other hand, the greedy and miserly sink into deprivation and are reborn as ghosts or paupers as a result of their sins.

Furthermore, simple living also facilitates the observation of stricter codes of morality such as the 8 precepts. According to Buddhist teachings, if a person were to keep the 8 precepts for one day and one night, he will not be poor for six hundred thousand successive rebirths. How much more will that be the case if he regularly observes those precepts for his entire life?

**第四覺知。懈怠墜落。常行精進。破煩惱惡。摧伏四魔。出陰界獄。**

**The Fourth Discernment is this: Slothfulness leads to decadence and failure. On the other hand, unceasing diligence can deracinate afflictions and neutralize the four classes of demons. Allowing you to escape the shackles of the Samsara.**

## COMMENTARY:

The four classes of demons are as follows:

- 1) The five skandhas.
- 2) Afflictions of the mind and unwholesome mental states.
- 3) Untimely death. This refers to dying before achieving liberation.

4) Heavenly demons. This refers to outside influences such as the temptations and provocations of the six kinds of dust.

Diligence is the main virtue that will counter these demonic obstacles. There is a old saying that if you neglect to recite the sacred texts for three days you will be overwhelmed by evil habits. It is also stated in the Infinite Life Sutra that because this world we inhabit in is so full of evil, the merits derived from doing good for 10 days here are equal to the merits derived from doing good in another world for a whole millennium. Hence, we must always be diligent and cautious.

第五覺悟。愚癡生死。菩薩常念。廣學多聞。增長智慧。成就辯才。  
教化一切。悉以大樂。

**The Fifth Discernment is this: Ignorance drives the cycle of birth and death. Bodhisattvas understand this. Therefore, in order to explain the Dharma to all, they diligently perfect their wisdom and eloquence through single-minded cultivation. Their efforts allow sentient beings to realize the bliss of liberation.**

#### COMMENTARY:

"Single-minded cultivation" is the translation of the Chinese characters "廣學多聞". Nominally, those characters can be translated as: "Simultaneously studying a diverse and broad range of disciplines". However, when taken at face value, the true meaning will escape us. What this phrase actually means is that the Buddha-nature possessed by each of us is self sufficient and capable of generating infinite wisdom and knowledge. Thus, Sages single-mindedly cultivate one Dharma-door until the unlimited wisdom of the Buddha-nature is recovered, at which point there is nothing they do not know.

The Ven. Master Chin Kung often stresses that a student who adheres to the modern academic curriculum will become a jack of all trades but master of none. This is because too many subjects are being studied concurrently. Therefore, he exhorts us to read one sacred text at least a thousand times in order to truly understand the limitless hidden meanings. The key to success is to cultivate one Dharma-door unceasingly. For example, the impressively dense branches of a grand oak tree are supported by one single strong tree trunk.

If we sincerely read and contemplate this Sutra everyday for three years, we would likely be able to reach the state of single-mindedness at the end of that period. Therefore, it is very probable that we may achieve sudden Bodhi as a result of our newfound purity.

第六覺知。貧苦多怨。橫結惡緣。菩薩布施。等念冤親。不念舊惡。  
不憎惡人。

**The Sixth Discernment is this: Poverty and deprivation leads to countless grievances and unrest. When Bodhisattvas practice almsgiving, they consider foes to be equal to their dearest kinsmen. They neither harbor grudges nor ostracize criminals.**

#### COMMENTARY:

The wisdom contained here is particularly important in our day and age. Today, there are plenty of biased views among people and vindictiveness in the judicial system. Such duality runs counter to the wisdom of the Buddhas. Sages harbor no hatred and certainly do not stigmatize and discriminate. This is because they see only the Buddha-nature of everyone and not the various layers of false evil habits that we see. In fact, what a person chooses to see in another actually reveals the person's own character. For instance, Bodhisattvas perceive everyone else as a Bodhisattva while those who look down on others due to their past actually belong to the lowly category themselves.

Furthermore, poverty is the cause of contention, criminal behavior and social unrest. Hence, those with wealth and power should voluntarily and diligently use their wealth and influence to alleviate the pains of those who are deprived. Furthermore, according to the Earth Store Sutra, the merits derived from sincerely helping the poor, sick and needy are equal to the merits gained from making offerings to countless Buddhas.

Thus, we should keep this in mind whenever we feel influenced by hate, bigotry or narrow-mindedness.



第七覺悟。五欲過患。雖為俗人。不染世樂。常念三衣，瓦鉢法器。

志願出家。守道清白。梵行高遠。慈悲一切。

**The Seventh Discernment is this: The five desires are like chronic diseases. Even when living amongst the laity, remain untainted by worldly affairs and temptations. Always think of the three robes, the clay alms bowl and the four requisites. Voluntarily leave the home life, observe the Way, remain pure and cultivate the Vinaya. Be impartial and treat everyone with compassion.**

#### COMMENTARY:

The five desires are: Wealth and resources, fame and prestige, love and lust, oversleeping and overeating. Anyone who is not an Arhat or above will (to varying degrees) be afflicted by these desires and have been since time immemorial. As the text states, they are like chronic illnesses.

According to the Venerable Master Chin Kung, sentient beings still trapped in the Samsara are often unable to control their accumulated emotions and passions. Thus, it is not wrong that they may be influenced by them and they do not incur a offense for acting out. However, if their actions become outrageous and unrestrained, then that is a transgression.

Nevertheless, monks and upasakas who aspire for liberation must have no desires even though they live in a environment overflowing with it. They must exercise right mindfulness and constantly reinforce their Bodhi resolve. In short, they must not allow their six sense organs to connect with the six kinds of dust.

第八覺知。生死熾然。苦惱無量。發大乘心。普濟一切。願代眾生。

受無量苦。令諸眾生。畢竟大樂。

**The Eighth Discernment is this: The Samsara is a raging inferno plagued by endless afflictions. Hence, resolve upon the Mahayana aspiration to liberate all beings. Vow to bear the unbearable for the sake of helping sentient beings achieve ultimate bliss.**

## COMMENTARY:

This realization is the highest of the eight and represents the great vows of Amita Buddha, Earth Store Bodhisattva, Guanyin Bodhisattva and Medicine Master Buddha. All of these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have made profound vows to liberate and save all sentient beings. For instance, Earth Store Bodhisattva has vowed to not attain Buddhahood until the hells and evil paths are all permanently empty.

The term "Mahayana aspiration" refers to the Bodhisattva path. The Buddha taught two paths to liberation. The first path is now known as Theravada Buddhism. Those who practice it understand impermanence and therefore seek personal emancipation by obtaining Arhatship or Paccekabuddhahood. However, those who cultivate the Bodhisattva path aim to become Bodhisattvas in order to liberate all sentient beings across the ten quarters.

While "bear the unbearable" may sound like a daunting task, it is actually effortless for the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas doing so. This is because they have already transcended ignorance, attachments and aversions (the causes of all pain). If we can recite this Sutra to single-mindedness or recite names such as Namo Amitabha (the Buddha name that leads to Pure Land rebirth) to the same level, we can achieve the same benefits and bliss experienced by Arhats and Bodhisattvas.

如此八事。乃是諸佛菩薩大人之所覺悟。精進行道慈悲修慧。乘法身船至涅槃岸。復還生死度脫眾生。以前八事。開導一切。令諸眾生覺生死苦。捨離五欲修心聖道。若佛弟子。誦此八事。於念念中。滅無量罪。進趣菩提。速登正覺。永斷生死。常住快樂。

**The aforementioned Eight Discernments are fully understood by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Hence, they diligently cultivate the Way and compassionately seek to perfect their own wisdom. Having been ferried to the shores of nirvana by the Dharmakaya vessel, they return to convert and liberate sentient beings. Using these Eight Discernments, they open the doors of wisdom and allow everyone to understand the pains of birth and death. Inspiring them to forfeit the five desires and cultivate the Way.**

**Those who cultivate the Buddha-dharma should recite and contemplate these Eight Discernments. if they do so, all their evil karmas and offenses can be eradicated with each thought. Furthermore, Bodhi draws nearer to them and proper wisdom can be swiftly obtained. They will forever leave the Samsara and abide in true bliss.**

#### **COMMENTARY:**

This part serves as the conclusion. The reason this Sutra is titled the Eight Discernments of Eminent Men Sutra is because those who sincerely seek Bodhi are considered eminent by Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, devas, ghost kings, demigods, virtuous men and women and celestial dragons. Such men (and women) are therefore protected and assisted by them.

Moreover, by simply reciting this Sutra, we can eradicate all of our evil karmas and offenses while also amassing merits and supreme causes pertaining to Bodhi. Hence, we should regularly recite this Sutra as doing so will rectify our karmas and reinforce our Bodhi resolve.

**佛說八大人覺經**

**The Buddha Speaks the Eight Discernments of Eminent Men Sutra.**

## THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT VIEW

This Sutra is among the most important Buddhist texts because it succinctly outlines the correct intentions and views that must be held in order to successfully seek Bodhi and cultivate the Way. It is very important to have right views. If wrong views are held or entertained, no amount of good deeds or skill in jhana can lead to liberation.

For instance, according to the following abridged excerpts from the Shurangama Sutra:

*"Furthermore, Ananda, there are people who do not rely on Proper Enlightenment to cultivate Samadhi, but cultivate in some special way that is based on their false thinking. Holding to the idea of perpetuating their physical bodies, they roam in the mountains and forests in places people do not go and become Ten Kinds of Immortals."*

*"Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through transformations. When they have perfected their awakening, they are known as immortals of the ultimate level."*

*"Ananda, these are all people who smelt their minds but do not cultivate Proper Enlightenment. They obtain some special principle of life and can live for thousands or tens of thousands of years. They retire deep into the mountains or onto islands in the sea and cut themselves off from the human realm. However, they are still part of the turning wheel, because they flow and turn according to their false thinking and do not cultivate Samadhi. When their reward is finished, they must still return and enter the various destinies."*

Immortals are cultivators of deviant forms of meditation. They accumulate good deeds and use various methods to cultivate false types of deep concentration. As they are still attached to their bodies and the five skandhas, they do not intend to transcend the Samsara. Although they have stilled their desires, they still connect with the six kinds of dust. Hence, after the merits from their good deeds and meditation are exhausted, they will die and be reborn in a lower realm.

Fundamentally, wrong views are caused by the kleshas of greed, hatred, delusion, pride and doubt. For instance, many cultivators of superior skill have been ruined because they entertained thoughts of arrogance and conceit. Such persons adhere to

the precepts and or are able to recite sutras flawlessly for several days. However, because they harbored thoughts of pride (attachments to ego), their arrogance increases in tandem with their skill in cultivation. Demons can sense this and manifest to tempt them. As their six sense organs are still attached to the six kinds of dust due to their pride, they are entrapped and commit outrageous acts. They may slander honest cultivators or rudely chastise people who could not keep the precepts. As Bodhisattvas do not ostracize and discriminate, those afflicted by pride will eventually fall into the Relentless Hells due to their narrow-mindedness and contempt.

Unfortunately, the path to Bodhi is difficult and fraught with all kinds of confusing traps. Countless cultivators have been ambushed by all kinds of false views, demon states and confusing manifestations. Many have honestly and diligently climbed to a high state of jhana only to mistakenly believe that they have obtained Buddhahood. The impermanent bliss and peace of the jhanas can be quite misleading.

However, luckily for us, the Buddha has spoken the Dharma-door of Amita Buddha's Pure Land to help us navigate around these potential pitfalls with effortless ease. The truth is that obtaining Bodhi is only difficult when we rely only on our own abilities. For instance, if we rely on our ourselves, we would have to navigate through each of the 50 classes of skandha demons described in Chapter 9 of the Shurangama Sutra. Even if we managed to do so, we would still have to avoid being misled by the numerous wrong views that successively arise afterwards due to the advanced progress being made (i.e. falsely believing to have attained Buddhahood).

Hence, we should instead turn our attentions towards cultivating the Dharma-door of Pure Land. This Dharma-door can guarantee us rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss within one life. Once we are reborn there, we share the infinite merits of Amita Buddha and become Bodhisattvas at once. Thereafter, we will never retrogress and will achieve full Buddhahood swiftly. Even great Bodhisattvas such as Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva Mahasattva achieved Bodhi via this method.

In fact, all the great sutras such as the Shurangama Sutra, Diamond Sutra and Lotus Sutra are simply expansions of the name of Amita Buddha. They were spoken by the Buddha to serve as indirect ways to help those who doubt the unparalleled advantages of reciting Amita Buddha's name to gradually be converted to this Dharma-door. The best way to achieve liberation is to stand on the shoulders of giants.

## THE DHARMA-DOOR OF AMITA BUDDHA

The Dharma-door of Amita Buddha is very easy to cultivate. The cultivator simply has to be willing to let go of this world and faithfully seek rebirth in Pure Land by single-mindedly reciting the name of Amita Buddha. Once single-mindedness is achieved, Amita Buddha will appear before the cultivator who will either instantly manifest as a Bodhisattva in Pure Land or do so at a later arranged date.

Even if we cannot achieve single-mindedness during our lifetime, we can still achieve rebirth in Pure Land by letting go and becoming mindful of Amita Buddha during our last moment of life. In order to avoid squandering our last moment or becoming distracted by various ghosts and manifestations of karma that usually appear at that critical juncture, we should diligently keep the precepts and do good deeds such as burning incense, printing sutras and creating Buddha images for free distribution. We should also release life, practice veganism, give to the poor and frequently and regularly recite the name of Amita Buddha. By dedicating the merits of these good deeds towards Pure Land rebirth, we can be safe and clear minded during our moment of death. Allowing us to become mindful of Amita Buddha and achieve Pure Land rebirth without hindrance.

We can also help others attain such a rebirth by reciting Namó Amita Buddha into their ears while they are on their death bed. Even if they have already been pronounced dead, it is likely that their consciousness has not yet left the body (it usually leaves 8-12 hours later). Hence, we should not disturb the body during that period as they can still feel and hear even though they have lost control.

The practice of Pure Land Buddhism is summed up in the sutras as "reciting Namó Amitabha's name single-mindedly **with a heart that yearns for Bodhi**".

The part highlighted in bold is of cardinal importance. In Chapter 41 of Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra, it is stated that three types of people fail to obtain Pure Land rebirth. The three types are composed of those who are still attached to the skandhas, those who hold wrong views and those who are sentimental and attached to forms. All of these attachments and wrong views run counter to the wisdom found in the Eight Discernments of Eminent Men Sutra. Hence, we should recite this Sutra every day to constantly straighten our views and reinforce our Bodhi resolve.

## RECOMMEND RESOURCES



VEN MASTER HAI XIAN PURE LAND REBIRTH DOCUMENTARY  
( VERSION WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES ) :

LINK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoritpHKxm4>

### DESCRIPTION:

The biographic documentary of Ven. Master Hai Xian (1901-2013) is a must see for anyone who wishes to cultivate Buddhism. Furthermore, the Venerable Master Chin Kung often stresses that Ven. Master Hai Xian's life of cultivation is a model example of the Infinite Life Sutra. Hence, we must strive to emulate his conduct and wisdom in order to perfect our own practice.

Moreover, Ven. Master Hai Xian's motivations for becoming a monk when he was 20 wholly mirrors the wisdom found in the Eight Discernments of Eminent Men Sutra. Thus, he is what we call a Sage or Eminent Man. In fact, he has even been nominated by Master Chin Kung to succeed the Great Master Yin Guang as the 14th Patriarch of the Pure Land school.

By viewing this documentary, we can study each of the Eight Discernments being flawlessly practiced and displayed in real life, and in conjunction with the successful cultivation of the Dharma-door of Amita Buddha.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS"

This new translation and commentary would not have been possible if not for the Dharma lectures of the Ven. Master Chin Kung, the Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh and the Ven. Wu Dao. I praise them all for the measureless contributions to Buddhism and interfaith harmony they have made over the past several decades. If I have written anything good in my translation or commentary, it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants.



**Ven. Master Chin Kung (Right) with Hungarian UNESCO Ambassador Katalin Bogyay, FRSA.**



**Ven. Master Chin Kung (Center) in UNESCO group photo**



## THE HEART OF PRAJNA PARAMITA SUTRA

The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara,  
Whilst in profound Prajna Paramita,  
Saw illume the void of the five skandhas  
And prevailed over all pain and peril.

Sariputta, image and void differ not,  
Image is void and void is image,  
So too sense and thought,  
Conduct and Consciousness.

Sariputta, the manifold dharmas  
Are void and neither arise nor cease,  
Are neither defiled nor pure and neither  
Swell nor dwindle.

Thus, voidness has no image ; no sense,  
Thought, conduct and consciousness.  
Without eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body or mind ;  
Without sight and sound, or scent, taste,  
Feelings of touch, and dharma.  
With no realm of vision or realm of awareness,  
Neither dullness nor the end of dullness,  
Neither decline and demise  
Nor the end of decline and demise.  
Devoid of pain, its causes, and need to cease it,  
Without wisdom or gain  
And with nothing to attain.

Bodhisattvas with Prajna Paramita  
Have easeful hearts free from fear.  
Forfeiting minds of mirage like dreams,  
They achieve ultimate Nibbana.

The Buddhas that were, are now, and yet to come  
Shall all through Prajna Paramita achieve  
Anuttara- samyak- sambodhi.

Hence, know that Prajna Paramita  
Is the greatly divine mantra,  
The most luminous mantra,  
The unsurpassed mantra,  
And the peerless mantra.  
Able to banish all misery;  
Forever true and never false!

Thus, proclaim the Prajna Paramita Mantra,  
And chant it so:

Jiē dì jiē dì

bō luó jiē dì

bō luó sēng jiē dì

pú tí sà pó hē



普  
化  
眾  
生

# The Odyssey of Dharmakara

*(for large orchestra and chorus)*

*Jordan Grigg*

*Story by Brian Chung*

## I

In a time before time began,  
 In a distant faraway land,  
 There reigned a wise sovereign  
 Most mighty and valiant,  
 Honored by many as the  
 World's Bounty and Mercy.  
 Upon hearing the Dharma  
 Of Lokeshvararaja Buddha,  
 He melted into joyful repose  
 And cast aside desire's shadow,  
 The fetters of the world's cares,  
 And vowed to become the heir  
 Of the True and Utmost Way!  
 Thus, he abandoned his crown,  
 Robed himself a humble monk,  
 And marched forth upon the Way,  
 Cultivating through night and day  
 Until he became the renowned  
 Bodhisattva Dharmakara.  
 With profound wisdom peerless,  
 Faith and patience matchless,  
 He swiftly mastered the Dharma,  
 Rose far beyond the Samsara  
 And high above the snares of Mara.

## II

In triumph, he sought the Buddha  
 And piously vowed and bowed before  
 Him, revering his great grandeur:  
 "The Buddha's august demeanor  
 Is wondrous without compare,  
 His halo the ten quarters illumine,  
 Bright beyond the luminous moon  
 And the lucent beams of high noon,  
 The World Honored One's voice  
 Enlightens all beings to rejoice  
 Within the Dharma in native speech,  
 And he appears to all and each  
 In the body of their honored liege.  
 I yearn to emulate you and preach  
 Sermons of Dharma to everyone,  
 Without bounds like the shining sun,  
 To teach Sila, Samadhi and Viriya,  
 The profound and potent Dharma.  
 Wisdom as vast and deep as the sea,  
 Heart neither stained nor weary,  
 Gliding o'er oceans of sin and woe,  
 To the halcyon shores of Bodhi,  
 Untainted by gloomy wrath,  
 Unfettered by lustful avarice,  
 And blessed with serene Samadhi.  
 I shall follow the footsteps of the  
 Infinite Buddhas who precede me  
 And act as a great guiding light  
 For the masses, to be their sight,

## III

Uprooting the temporal bequeath  
 Of birth, old age, illness and death,  
 Always generous and ever virtuous,  
 With diligence and eternal patience,  
 Forever within Samadhi and Prajna,  
 Faithfully abiding by the Six Paramitas,  
 Bestowing Bodhi upon the dull and lost,  
 And lifting Sages into the Buddha host!  
 As he who rains alms upon the Sangha  
 Is less than he who becomes a Buddha  
 Through single-minded faith,  
 I vow to in diligent Samadhi stay,  
 And glow brightly with everlasting light,  
 I shall build a splendrous paradise  
 Unrivaled across the universe entire,  
 To serve as a refuge of lasting respite  
 For those benighted in the Samsara!  
 With kindness I will shatter every klesha  
 Of every poor soul tortured by dukkha.  
 I shall not waver for I am determined  
 To shoulder every pain and burden,  
 So let the Buddha be my witness!"  
 After hearing Dharmakara's great  
 And dauntless resolve and praise,  
 The Buddha arose from his Dais,  
 Gleaming with utmost admiration  
 For the one before him who is salvation  
 To the endless many lost in perdition.  
 He then declared:

## IV

“Your vows are not made in vain,  
 For even the oceans can be emptied  
 By but one who bails unceasingly,  
 And all its hidden pearls revealed,  
 What is there the sincere cannot attain?  
 I will show you the path and Way  
 To your glorious and imperious day!”  
 And so the Buddha parted the sky and  
 Revealed to Dharmakara every plane  
 Of rebirth, each and every Buddha Land,  
 All the galaxies, worlds and Sagely domains,  
 Revealing their cities, peaks, gorges and seas,  
 Their prairies, hills and fertile valleys,  
 The villas of devas dancing in divine weal,  
 The nature and condition of their peoples,  
 Unveiling their barren ghostly ruins, animal  
 Kingdoms and bleak narakas most infernal.  
 Uncovering all of their vices and virtues,  
 So that Dharmakara may with ease build  
 A pure and gilded land of wondrous bliss,  
 Free from evil and woe, a supreme harbor  
 Of every good found across the ten quarters.  
 The Buddha then said: “Pronounce your vows!”  
 “For the relief of all sentient beings,  
 Including those mired in the suffering  
 Of hellish, ghostly and beastly rebirth,  
 I have built a Pure Land of true mirth,

## V

Open to all who are willing to share my  
 Merits and forfeit darkness for light!  
 I have paved for you fine gilded roads  
 Of precious stones, purple and gold,  
 For you I have filled rivers and lakes  
 With cool azure waters of soft ripples,  
 Swirling with fragrant flowers most graceful,  
 With beds of aurulent sand, and laid  
 Before you villas, pavilions and canopies,  
 Groves of beryl, emerald and agate trees  
 That ruffle and sway in the blissful breeze,  
 Adorned by jade leaves and scented petals,  
 Berries of Mani-jewels and crystal.  
 I give you clear skies and peerless paradise,  
 A glorious afterlife of endless delight,  
 With singing songbirds perched on amber arbors,  
 Humming hymns with lyrical harmony  
 And the most soothing of melodies!  
 I bless all who arrive in my land with  
 August, aurulent and ethereal bodies  
 Untainted by the greed, fear and foul odors  
 That flesh, desire and delusion harbors,  
 I bless thee with all the powers of Bodhi,  
 Its wisdom, eminence, bliss and glory,  
 Its serene Samadhi and tranquil purity!  
 Divine provision shall appear on demand  
 And so too the finery and robes of my land.  
 Any being who chants my Buddha-name,  
 Wholeheartedly abandons evil and repents  
 With faithful resolve, shall enter my domain

## VI

And rise to Sagehood upon the Lotus Lagoon.  
 I am Amitabha and my vows have come to pass!”  
 Upon hearing Amitabha’s august vows,  
 The entire assembly before him bowed,  
 Moved to joyous tears by his great resolve!  
 They beheld his unsurpassed compassion,  
 His merciful uprooting of all evil passions,  
 Granting each the chance to taste the Samadhi  
 Of the highest, most true and utmost Bodhi!  
 On this glorious and regal Dharma day,  
 The Earth shook in the six auspicious ways,  
 Gleaming gods and goddesses were seen  
 Gliding over the stars stroking harp-strings,  
 The ethereal heavens soon resounded with  
 Gilded notes of splendid divine bliss,  
 And the courts of the heavenly lords feted,  
 Raining down golden lilies like confetti!

The Odyssey of Dharmakara  
(for large orchestra and chorus)

Story by Brian Chung-All rights released to the Public Domain

Jordan Grigg  
(Jan. 2018)

**Adagio Moderato** ♩=50

1

Piccolo *ff*

Flute 2.3. *ff*

Oboe 1.2. *ff*

English Horn *ff*

Clarinet 1.2. in A *ff*

Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$

Bassoon 1.2. *ff*

Contrabassoon *ff*

Horn 1.2. in F *ff*

Horn 3.4. in F *ff*

Trumpet 1.2. in B $\flat$  *ff*

Trumpet 3. in B $\flat$  *ff*

Trombone 1.2. *ff*

Trombone 3. *ff*

Tuba *ff*

4 Timpani *ff*

Bass Drum *ff*

Crash Cymbals *ff*

Suspended Cymbal *ff*

Gong *ff*

Glockenspiel *ff*

Xylophone *ff*

Piano *ff*

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

**Adagio Moderato** ♩=50

Violin I *ff*

Violin II *ff*

Viola *ff*

Violoncello *ff*

Double Bass *ff*



The image displays a page from a musical score, likely for a symphony, featuring a variety of instruments. The score is written in a standard musical notation with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 4/4. The tempo markings are "rit." (ritardando), "A tempo", and "Adagio Moderato" with a tempo indication of 50 beats per minute. The instruments listed on the left include Picc., Fl., Ob., Eng. Hn., Cl., B. Cl., Bsn., Cbsn., Hn., Tpt., Tbn., Tba., Timp., B. D., C. Cym., S. Cym., Gong, Glock., Xyl., Pno., S., A., T., B., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Db. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *p* (piano), and *f* (forte). The notation includes notes, rests, and other musical symbols. The page number 26 is visible in the top left corner.

The image displays a complex musical score for a symphony, organized into two systems. The first system covers measures 1 through 37, and the second system begins at measure 38, marked with a '38' in a box. The score is written for a large ensemble, including woodwinds (Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, English Horn, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, Contrabassoon), brass (Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, Timpani, Bells, Cymbals, Gong, Glockenspiel, Xylophone), and strings (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass). The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 'Allegro' with a metronome marking of 116. The score includes various dynamic markings such as 'ff' (fortissimo), 'p' (piano), 'mf' (mezzo-forte), and 'f' (forte). The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 38. The first system ends at measure 37, and the second system begins at measure 38, marked with a '38' in a box. The score includes various dynamic markings such as 'ff', 'p', 'mf', and 'f'. The score is written for a large ensemble, including woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 'Allegro' with a metronome marking of 116. The score includes various dynamic markings such as 'ff', 'p', 'mf', and 'f'. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 38, marked with a '38' in a box.



48

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Eng. Hn.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Cbsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Tbn.

Tba.

Timp.

B. D.

C. Cym.

S. Cym.

Gong

Glock.

Xyl.

Pno.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

a2

f

mf

f

a2

f

mf

f

p

p

p

pizz

pizz

p

57

rit. . . . .

9

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Eng. Hn.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Cbsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Tbn.

Tba.

Timp.

B. D.

C. Cym.

S. Cym.

Gong

Glock.

Xyl.

Pno.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

arco

arco

66 Andante ♩=60

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Eng. Hn.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Cbsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Tbn.

Tba.

Timp.

B. D.

C. Cym.

S. Cym.

Gong

Glock.

Xyl.

Pno.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

76

Picc. *p*

Fl. *p*

Ob. *p*

Eng. Hn. *p*

Cl. *p*

B. Cl.

Bsn. *p*

Cbsn.

Hn. *a2*

Tpt. *p*

Tpt.

Tbn. *p*

Tbn.

Tba. *p*

Timp. *pp*

B. D. *pp*

C. Cym. *pp*

S. Cym. *pp*

Gong *pp*

Glock.

Xyl.

Pno. *p*

S. *pp* ah

A. *pp* ah

T. *pp* ah

B. *pp* ah

Vln. I *p* *rit.* *A tempo*

Vln. II *p* *rit.* *A tempo*

Vla. *p* *rit.* *A tempo*

Vc. *p* *rit.* *A tempo*

Db. *p* *rit.* *A tempo*

83

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Eng. Hn.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Cbsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Tbn.

Tba.

Timp.

B. D.

C. Cym.

S. Cym.

Gong.

Glock.

Xyl.

Pno.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

90

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Eng. Hn.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Cbsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Tbn.

Tba.

Timp.

B. D.

C. Cym.

S. Cym.

Gong

Glock.

Xyl.

Pno.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

97

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Eng. Hn.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Cbsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Tbn.

Tba.

Timp.

B. D.

C. Cym.

S. Cym.

Gong.

Glock.

Xyl.

Pno.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I.

Vln. II.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

104

Picc. *ff* *pp*

Fl. *ff* *pp*

Ob. *ff* *p* *pp*

Eng. Hn. *ff* *p* *pp*

Cl. *ff* *p* *a2* *pp*

B. Cl. *ff*

Bsn. *ff* *p* *a2* *pp*

Cbsn. *ff*

Hn. *ff*

Hn. *ff*

Tpt. *ff* *p*

Tpt. *ff* *p*

Tbn. *ff* *p*

Tbn. *ff* *p*

Tba. *ff*

Timp. *ff* *f*

B. D. *ff* *p*

C. Cym. *ff*

S. Cym. *ff*

Gong *ff*

Glock. *ff* *p*

Xyl. *p*

Pno. *ff* *p*

S. *ff* *pp*

A. *ff* *pp*

T. *ff* *pp*

B. *ff* *pp*

Vln. I *ff* *pp*

Vln. II *ff* *pp*

Vla. *ff* *pp*

Vc. *ff* *pp*

Db. *ff* *pp*



[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]



[illegible]



# The Odyssey of Dharmakara

## The Origins of Amitabha and His Pure land

This poem was inspired by the opening chapters of the Infinite Life Sutra, which outline Dharmakara's (Amitabha) creation of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

In a time before time began,  
In a distant faraway land,  
There reigned a wise sovereign  
Most mighty and valiant,  
Honored by many as the  
World's Bounty and Mercy.  
Upon hearing the Dharma  
Of Lokeshvararaja Buddha,  
He melted into joyful repose  
And cast aside desire's shadow,  
The fetters of the world's cares,  
And vowed to become the heir  
Of the True and Utmost Way!  
Thus, he abandoned his crown,  
Robed himself a humble monk,  
And marched forth upon the Way,  
Cultivating through night and day  
Until he became the renowned  
Bodhisattva Dharmakara.  
With profound wisdom peerless,  
Faith and patience matchless,  
He swiftly mastered the Dharma,  
Rose far beyond the Samsara  
And high above the snares of Mara.

In triumph, he sought the Buddha  
And piously vowed and bowed before  
Him, revering his great grandeur:

“The Buddha’s august demeanor  
Is wondrous without compare,  
His halo the ten quarters illumine,  
Bright beyond the luminous moon  
And the lucent beams of high noon,  
The World Honored One’s voice  
Enlightens all beings to rejoice  
Within the Dharma in native speech,  
And he appears to all and each  
In the body of their honored liege.  
I yearn to emulate you and preach  
Sermons of Dharma to everyone,  
Without bounds like the shining sun,  
To teach Sila, Samadhi and Viriya,  
The profound and potent Dharma.  
Wisdom as vast and deep as the sea,  
Heart neither stained nor weary,  
Gliding o’er oceans of sin and woe,  
To the halcyon shores of Bodhi,  
Untainted by gloomy wrath,  
Unfettered by lustful avarice,  
And blessed with serene Samadhi.  
I shall follow the footsteps of the  
Infinite Buddhas who precede me  
And act as a great guiding light  
For the masses, to be their sight,



Uprooting the temporal bequeath  
Of birth, old age, illness and death,  
Always generous and ever virtuous,  
With diligence and eternal patience,  
Forever within Samadhi and Prajna,  
Faithfully abiding by the Six Paramitas,  
Bestowing Bodhi upon the dull and lost,  
And lifting Sages into the Buddha host!  
As he who rains alms upon the Sangha  
Is less than he who becomes a Buddha  
Through single-minded faith,  
I vow to in diligent Samadhi stay,  
And glow brightly with everlasting light,  
I shall build a splendrous paradise  
Unrivaled across the universe entire,  
To serve as a refuge of lasting respite  
For those benighted in the Samsara!  
With kindness I will shatter every klesha  
Of every poor soul tortured by dukkha.  
I shall not waver for I am determined  
To shoulder every pain and burden,  
So let the Buddha be my witness!”

After hearing Dharmakara’s great  
And dauntless resolve and praise,  
The Buddha arose from his Dais,  
Gleaming with utmost admiration  
For the one before him who is salvation  
To the endless many lost in perdition.  
He then declared:

“Your vows are not made in vain,  
For even the oceans can be emptied  
By but one who bails unceasingly,  
And all its hidden pearls revealed,  
What is there the sincere cannot attain?  
I will show you the path and Way  
To your glorious and imperious day!”

And so the Buddha parted the sky and  
Revealed to Dharmakara every plane  
Of rebirth, each and every Buddha Land,  
All the galaxies, worlds and Sagely domains,  
Revealing their cities, peaks, gorges and seas,  
Their prairies, hills and fertile valleys,  
The villas of devas dancing in divine weal,  
The nature and condition of their peoples,  
Unveiling their barren ghostly ruins, animal  
Kingdoms and bleak narakas most infernal.  
Uncovering all of their vices and virtues,  
So that Dharmakara may with ease build  
A pure and gilded land of wondrous bliss,  
Free from evil and woe, a supreme harbor  
Of every good found across the ten quarters.  
The Buddha then said: “Pronounce your vows!”

“For the relief of all sentient beings,  
Including those mired in the suffering  
Of hellish, ghostly and beastly rebirth,  
I have built a Pure Land of true mirth,

Open to all who are willing to share my  
Merits and forfeit darkness for light!  
I have paved for you fine gilded roads  
Of precious stones, purple and gold,  
For you I have filled rivers and lakes  
With cool azure waters of soft ripples,  
Swirling with fragrant flowers most graceful,  
With beds of aurulent sand, and laid  
Before you villas, pavilions and canopies,  
Groves of beryl, emerald and agate trees  
That ruffle and sway in the blissful breeze,  
Adorned by jade leaves and scented petals,  
Berries of Mani-jewels and crystal.  
I give you clear skies and peerless paradise,  
A glorious afterlife of endless delight,  
With singing songbirds perched on amber arbors,  
Humming hymns with lyrical harmony  
And the most soothing of melodies!  
I bless all who arrive in my land with  
August, aurulent and ethereal bodies  
Untainted by the greed, fear and foul odors  
That flesh, desire and delusion harbors,  
I bless thee with all the powers of Bodhi,  
Its wisdom, eminence, bliss and glory,  
Its serene Samadhi and tranquil purity!  
Divine provision shall appear on demand  
And so too the finery and robes of my land.  
Any being who chants my Buddha-name,  
Wholeheartedly abandons evil and repents  
With faithful resolve, shall enter my domain

And rise to Sagehood upon the Lotus Lagoon.  
I am Amitabha and my vows have come to pass!”

Upon hearing Amitabha’s august vows,  
The entire assembly before him bowed,  
Moved to joyous tears by his great resolve!  
They beheld his unsurpassed compassion,  
His merciful uprooting of all evil passions,  
Granting each the chance to taste the Samadhi  
Of the highest, most true and utmost Bodhi!  
On this glorious and regal Dharma day,  
The Earth shook in the six auspicious ways,  
Gleaming gods and goddesses were seen  
Gliding over the stars stroking harp-strings,  
The ethereal heavens soon resounded with  
Gilded notes of splendid divine bliss,  
And the courts of the heavenly lords feted,  
Raining down golden lilies like confetti!

## **The Purpose of Monotheism and its Future**

Polytheism, the worship of various spirits and deities, has existed in many forms all across the world since time immemorial. However, these religions have since been more or less eclipsed by monotheistic Abrahamic religions in the Americas, Africa, Europe and Near East. The exceptions are in Asia and India, where Buddhism took root.

Thus, why were the native faiths of Asia and India able to coexist harmoniously with Buddhism while the historical religions of Europe, America and Africa could not do the same with the Abrahamic religions?

The answer is that the native deities and philosophies of Ancient China and India were much more well behaved, profound and reasonable than those of the rest of the world.

For instance, Taoist, Confucian and Vedic texts all contain numerous and strict moral principles that cover body, speech and mind. The Taoist Treatise on Response and Retribution alone lists hundreds of moral precepts covering fields such as commerce, law, governance and family. Moreover, Taoist scriptures attach much importance towards the systematic accumulation of pious virtues and good deeds, including but not limited to: Charitable giving, mercy, filial piety, public works, helping orphans and widows, releasing captured animals, respect for nature, building roads, making boats available for all who need to cross, social propriety, reversing miscarriages of justice, making offerings and so forth. Furthermore, abolitionism has been a regular occurrence throughout Chinese history and Vedic India had unusually humane laws of war.

However, the moral track record of the Polytheistic religions of the West, Americas and Africa leaves a lot to be desired. From cruel child sacrifices (Levant and Carthage) to sacred prostitution and Aztec atrocities, from ever-scheming, over-passionate, lustful, wrathful and capricious gods (Greek and Roman pantheon) to the widespread practice and approval of prostitution, chattel slavery, suicide, pederasty, scapegoating, black art, looting, militarism and war crimes, it is clear that consistent and high grade morality was not provided by the original native religions in an effective manner.

Such spirits and deities were always classified as evil in Ancient China. For instance, according to Chapter VI of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's Commentary on the Earth Store Sutra:

“....and **evil spirits** who are deviant spirits because they do not observe the rules criticize good men and good women. Some deviant spirits also go to temples such as temples where offerings are made to Lord Guan. Lord Guan is not always there; on the occasions when Lord Guan is absent, he goes to the temple, pretending to be Lord Guan to enjoy bloody flesh. People may offer him swine, lamb, or cow, all of which are food with blood that he enjoys. There are big evil ghosts such as kumbhanda ghosts that look like a winter melon. These ghosts are also called ghosts that press on people while these people are sleeping. These big evil ghosts make such sleeping individuals mute and immobile. There are also small evil ghosts who may possess plants to display their spiritual powers so that people will believe them. For example, Nanhua Monastery had a camphor tree go and receive the precepts. Before it even received the precepts, it wielded its spiritual powers. For instance, anyone who goes there to light incense will receive a response such as recovery from some illness. Or someone recovers his lost items after lighting

incense before this tree. There was a variety of others. That person thinks that this is true miracles from a Bodhisattva, so he may go and show his appreciation with offerings of sacrificial chickens, pigs, or other animals. With these items, he has food to eat. These are small evil ghosts. There are innumerable things in this world, so if you do not understand the Buddhadharma, you may very easily think that this type of evil spirits and evil ghosts are truly efficacious Bodhisattvas. People who study the Buddhadharma ought not to think that the Buddhadharma is something to do with miracles. No. Understand the principles in the Buddhadharma to avoid such deceptions.”

Therefore, the various idols, spirits and deities the pre-Christian Europeans etc. worshipped were mostly evil ghosts who were taking advantage of them by exploiting people’s fears and cravings to get sacrifices, hence the general lack of morality. They placed passions above profound and long lasting karmic consequences.

Moreover, according to Master Hsuan Hua’s commentary on an important passage of the Shurangama Sutra:

“....This refers to the Christian God. They want to be the "leader of heavenly beings." They want to rule the heavens. "I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish. I will manifest as Shakra for that kind of living being." Shakra is the Heavenly Lord - God. Did you know that the Holy Mother of Catholicism is Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva? Catholics believe in the Holy Mother, because they want to be born in the heavens. So Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests as a goddess to teach and transform them, enabling them to be born in the heavens. Of course, they will have to come

back again from the heavens, but gradually they will make progress. Why does Gwan Yin manifest and speak a dharma to help people get born in the heavens? His ultimate aim is to get them to believe in the Buddha. But since at present their wish is to be born in the heavens, he teaches them how to get reborn there. When they return from there, they will eventually come to believe in the Buddha. Ordinary people feel that the time involved in this process is quite long, but actually in the Buddhas' eyes, it is a mere moment, a blink of an eye. This method can be likened to that of parents who want their child to master an excellent profession, but whose child does not wish to study that profession. The parents comply and allow the child to study what he wishes, but after several false starts, he eventually winds up studying that excellent profession his parents suggested. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva's method for teaching and transforming living beings is to fulfill whatever wishes they might have. But the ultimate aim is always to bring living beings to the accomplishment of Buddhahood.”

Thus, the supremely compassionate Buddhas and Bodhisattvas appear in various forms to help heavily deluded beings make upward progress as they circle and cycle in the glooming Samsara. They appear in the closest form to Buddhism that those without sufficient merit to accept Buddhism in its pure form can accept. So in this case, it is Christianity. The purpose is always the same: To teach them to eschew vice and embrace virtue with discipline and unwavering faith, and to stay way from evil ideas and evil ghosts.

Thus, the reason Christianity displaced the original polytheistic faiths of Europe and the Americas is that it was necessary to prevent the evil karma created by people's foolish adherence to the influence of evil ghosts from accumulating further. Christianity



is akin to a friend holding a person down to prevent him from leaping off a cliff into the abyss of karmic retribution. It is an ingenious stopgap faith deployed by the Buddhas.

However, the more reasonable, merciful and moral native faiths of China and India did not need to be replaced as they helped pave the way for greater endeavors. Since all Buddhist teachings are based on the Threefold Training of “Sila, Samadhi and Prajna” (Virtue, Meditation and Wisdom), the native faiths of China and India (i.e. Confucianism, Taoism and Vedic teachings) easily blended with and supported Buddhism. The consistent and superior virtue and propriety that these teachings promoted had created communities receptive towards profound truth and virtue. As virtue begets tranquil stillness of heart, the deep Samadhi taught by the Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism became manifest to such peoples.

For the morality they were already accustomed to already reflected the five precepts, they were able to easily understand and cultivate the profound Samadhi and Wisdom of the Buddha. Thus, unlike in the West and elsewhere, the native faiths of China and India were peacefully co-opted by Buddhism, and are now, as they have been for thousands of years, mutually complementing. For instance, the Four Heavenly Kings were originally Vedic Ghost Kings who converted and became Buddhist Dharma-protectors.

Nevertheless, as the old saying goes: Order arises in the height of chaos, and chaos rears its ugly head at the pinnacle of order. Thus, even though Christianity and monotheism are not as profound or accurate as Buddhism, and are now often in conflict with the modern changes in life, technology and society, it has actually laid the psychological foundation for a spiritual renaissance of great reach and unmatched success. For if one

looks closely enough, it becomes clear that they have laid the groundwork for a soon to come golden era of Pure Land Buddhism in the West and Americas.

It is no secret that religions like Christianity are intolerant of other faiths, however, there is actually a deeper meaning behind this exclusiveness. Even though Buddhism has 84,000 Dharma-doors that all lead to Bodhi, only Amitabha Pure Land Buddhism can allow for assured and widespread success in seeking Bodhi in the current Dharma-ending age (which will last for nearly another ten thousand years from now). It is not that the other Dharma-doors are not valid, it is simply that sentient beings of today and the foreseeable future are so sunk in past karmic burdens that success via practicing Zen or other forms of esoteric meditation is simply out of the question. This reality echoes the concept of original sin.

Thus, there is no other way but the grace of Amitabha. However, the sutras make it very clear that those who wish to be reborn in Amitabha's Pure Land must single-mindedly take refuge in Him, resolutely call His name and abide by Him. No thoughts may stray to any other deity, Sage or Dharma-door. Absolute focus and faith is paramount. Moreover, Christianity's strong prohibition against lust mirrors the Buddhist principle that lust is the greatest impediment standing in the way of mindfulness.

Those who achieve salvation through unwavering faith in Amitabha have their evil karma shouldered by Amitabha's supremely wondrous 48 Vows, thereby allowing them to swiftly cruise to Buddha-hood while under the protection of the merit and blessings of His Land of Ultimate Bliss.

In fact, according to the Contemplation Sutra and the Infinite Life Sutra, if those who have long committed all kinds of evil and

blasphemy were to repent at their time of death and single-mindedly vow to be reborn in His Pure Land, even if they had only heard about the Pure Land teachings but a moment before, and hold his name for one to ten times, they will be able to do so.

Thus, a virtuous heart, unwavering faith and acceptance of grace are important causes for rebirth in the Pure Land.

**From this, we can infer that Christianity's tenets are made to psychologically acclimate people's minds towards single-minded faith in Amitabha.** The simplicity, straightforwardness and generous grace of Amitabha has made Pure Land Buddhism the "hardest Dharma-door" in Chinese Buddhism. This is because it is so easy that those accustomed to more varied and esoteric Dharma-doors find it hard to believe. It is a kindness that offers everything for nothing but the willingness to receive. Thus, Christianity's rejection of diverse deities is actually a psychological device to acclimate people into accepting (in a future time) unwavering single-minded faith in Amitabha's name and grace. When the time is right, they will naturally have affinity for Pure Land principles and be able to easily shift their focused faith from God to Amitabha. This is just like how the loyal subjects of a long time and centralized monarchy will smoothly acknowledge the authority of the new king once the previous one passes. However, the transition from a fractured state to a centralized monarchy would be much more difficult.

In conclusion, monotheistic religions such as Christianity were devised by the Buddhas to serve as an intermediate solution to subdue rampant superstitions, create a consistent and merciful moral foundation that embraces virtue and eschews vice, and pave the way for the future growth of Pure Land Buddhism—which will give Buddha-hood to multitudes of people across the West, Americas and Africa.

**In other words, it is the fertile topsoil spread by the Buddhas upon barren grounds in order to sprout the fruits of Bodhi.**

Thus, there are no grounds for religious discrimination and strife. Those who are Christians should do their best to cultivate virtue, faith and charity, and those who can accept Buddhism should cultivate in accordance with the Pure Land teachings. To each his own, for both roads lead to true home!

## **The Secret of Confucius' Great Learning**

Author: Upasaka Fo Hai (佛海居士)

Translator : Brian Chung

The term “格物致知” (gé wù zhì zhī) is a keystone Confucian principle found within the Great Learning section of the Book of Rites. According to Confucius, there are eight progressive stages leading to success in great endeavors, they are as follows: Abstinence, Innate Wisdom and Foresight, Genuine Sincerity, Right Intention, Cultivation of Conduct, Managing the Household, Governing the Nation, and finally the Upholding of Worldwide Peace and Prosperity.

As Abstinence is the first of the eight stages, it is clearly the root principle and of paramount importance. Only when it is practiced can true wisdom and genius arise, and only then can sincerity and proper intentions be truly harbored. When the foundations of the heart and mind are thus secured, propriety and good conduct could be cultivated, and once that is done, we become fit to manage our households, govern a state and bring peace and weal to the world.

In terms of statecraft and philosophy, these eight steps undoubtedly represent the interlinked chain of causes leading to success in life. It is a sagely trail with an auspicious start and delightful outcome.

Unfortunately, both modern and past interpretations of the terms “Abstinence” and “Innate Wisdom and Foresight” have proven to be both confusing and misleading. Thus, the misled masses have long been deprived of the means to actualize these sagely teachings and reap the attendant advantages.

Currently, the prevailing interpretation of the terms originate with Southern Song scholar Zhu Xi, who believed it simply meant that knowledge is derived from the “investigation of things”. For instance, the recent fifth edition of the *Modern Hanyu Dictionary* defined it as: “Deductive reasoning and conclusions drawn from such a process”.

If everyone were to follow their understanding of the term, then very few would be able to do anything at all. This is because of the oft-prohibitive barriers to entry associated with conventional research methods. Moreover, the knowledge derived is neither innate nor extensive wisdom, therefore, it has nothing to do with the following seven stages.

Furthermore, the various issues, subjects, events, occurrences, objects and disciplines of this world are extremely diverse and number beyond tens of millions. Thus, which one are we supposed to investigate? Which would allow our hearts to harbor true sincerity and intentions? Is it not simply absurd that the management our own family relations depend upon academic

research? Why would omniscient Sages speak such vague instructions? If Zhu Xi's understanding is correct, then the Sages have spoken clumsy and unhelpful advice.

Thus, what does “Abstinence” actually refer to? The true answer is provided by the Venerable Master Yin Guang: “格” (gé) means “to deracinate” and “物” (wù) refers to “selfish desires and cravings”. Thus, “格物致知” teaches us that we rediscover our innate, diverse, extensive and profound wisdom and foresight by abstaining from avarice, lust, hatred and gluttony. This is something everyone can aspire to do – tangible rewards within reach of the willing.

Selfish desires are like demons whose feet many people fall at. Such desires smother our innate erudition and wisdom causing our minds and souls to wander in delusion for thousands upon thousands of eons.

Only when these defiling desires are stilled by steadfast restraint can our inner wisdom shine forth, and our hearts harbor true sincerity and righteous intentions. With the solid foundations of the mind firmly laid, practice of decorum and honorable conduct naturally occurs. Afterwards, the duty of harmonizing the household becomes as easy as sauntering in a park. With both heart and hearth in accordance with Heaven's will, the

responsibilities of effectively and fairly governing a state can be readily shouldered.

Therefore, with Master Yin Guang's explanation, the Great Learning becomes a practical and straightforward formula for success. All and anyone can cultivate in accordance with it and reap the rewards. It is simply a matter of cause and effect.

As we are common people, our selfish attachments and ambitions cannot be so easily deracinated. However, we must be vigilant, we must not allow our desires to overwhelm our hearts and cloud our judgement. We must understand that only those who adhere to the precepts and abstain from selfish cravings can exude innate profound wisdom, and only such wisdom can beget true sincerity, which is the cause of proper intentions, in turn the factor that allows honorable and virtuous conduct to arise. Such persons can then harmonize their households, and it is only when they have proven themselves able in that regard can they be entrusted with national affairs and global leadership.

All who heed the wise words of the Sages will certainly find success in life!



### **Translator's Commentary:**

This article by Upasaka Fo Hai is one of utmost relevance and importance. The reason nations are in chaos and the world teetering on the edge of ruin is that the original intent of the Great Learning has not been implemented and is ignored.

The innate self-nature of all beings contain inexhaustible and limitless wisdom and foresight. However, this omniscience cannot manifest as long as our hearts are adrift in avarice. Only this innate wisdom can beget the mindset and strength of character needed to properly manage a household, govern a country and bring world peace and prosperity. Any person whose heart harbors personal ambition or desires will be sly and morally inconsistent. They will be unable to ensure harmony and propriety in their own household, and are thus unfit to govern. Their biases and prejudices will create tensions and their lack of true wisdom and foresight causes them to gamble or make bad decisions that backfire.

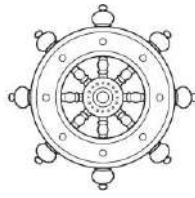
Therefore, the problem today is that people grasp at the external and ignore the internal – making the same mistake as Zhu Xi. Knowledge gained by research is dead, isolated and incomplete knowledge that will quickly be twisted by bias and ulterior motives. It is like a single fruit that soon rots. On the other hand, our extensive innate wisdom is like the fertile earth. Myriads of berries and blossoms can forever spring forth from it.

Thus, before we wish to do great things, we must first cultivate morality. When our discipline allows us to be unwavering in virtue even in the face of tempers and temptations, we can indeed eventually change the world!

### The Great Learning

Stilling avarice with abstinence,  
He recovers profound innate wisdom,  
Gaining sincerity most genuine,  
And a righteous heart of prudence,

As proper mind exudes propriety,  
He harmonizes hearth and household,  
And steers his state away from woe,  
Proving himself fit for purple dignity.



*The Secret of the Shurangama Sutra: Mahasthamaprapta's Treatise  
on Perfect Enlightenment through Mindfulness of Amitayus*

*As the Dharma Lord Mahasthamaprapta arose from his seat, the 52 Bodhisattvas who formed his august retinue immediately followed suit ; they all proceeded to reverently prostrate before the Buddha. His lordship then spoke the following:*

*'In a time before time immemorial, a Buddha titled Infinite Light appeared in this world. He was the first of twelve Buddhas who emerged in the that kalpa. The last one was a Buddha whose glorious light outshined the majestic brightness of both the Sun and the Moon. Thus, he was known as the Brightness Upon the Sun and the Moon Buddha.'*

*"That Buddha personally taught me the Mindfulness of Amitayus Samadhi. If a father who adores his son should have a son who does not requite, then the son's back will always be turned on his father. However, if both father and son were to yearn for each other, and if they were to unceasingly cherish thoughts of each other, then even death could not separate them. They will be together for life after life like a shadow following the form. The Buddhas of the ten quarters are like the father. They unceasingly show tender concern towards sentient beings who rarely requite. If those sentient beings could instead single-mindedly hold the Buddha's name, they can surely meet the Buddha. The Buddha's hands are always extended, but it is up to you to grasp it."*

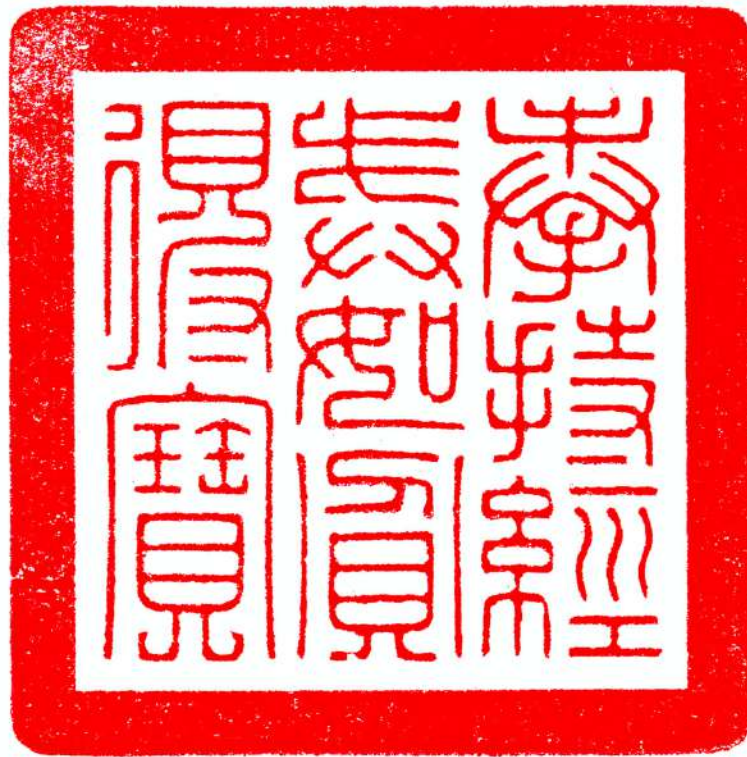
*"If a man were to habitually burn scented incense, his person will naturally exude fragrant aromas. Likewise, a man who is mindful of the Buddha's name will be adorned with the Buddha's infinite light and merit. Hence, it was through such mindfulness that I gained insight into the fact that all dharmas neither arise nor cease. Today in this world, I tirelessly exhort all to faithfully practice the Dharma-door of Pure Land. There is no better way to attain perfect Enlightenment and the state of no outflows than by pure and unceasing mindfulness of Amitayus. Such Samadhi is the foremost."*



# The Treatise of The Illustrious Sage on Response and Retribution

English Liturgy Version

太上感應篇英文讀誦本



April 2017 Edition

By Brian Chung

## **Foreword**

The Treatise of the Illustrious Sage on Response and Retribution is both efficacious and of key importance in this morally turbid era we now live in. The Great Master Yin Guang (1862-1940), with his keen foresight, knew that with the downward spiral of the standards of virtue worsening with each passing day, profound and succinct scriptures like this Treatise will be needed more than ever before. For without virtue and repentance, neither Samadhi nor Wisdom could manifest. Thus, he printed millions of copies of this Taoist Treatise, more than all the Buddhist Sutras he printed combined. Careful cultivation and daily recitation of this Treatise will generate efficacious responses, eliminate evil karma and calamities, create limitless blessings for our ancestors, and prosperity for ourselves and our posterity! More importantly, the foundation of virtue needed for further cultivation of Samadhi would be secured.

## **Merit Dedication**

As the author of this text, I hereby dedicate all the merits from this book to my mother, father, teachers, benefactors and elders, to repay their kindness. I wish for them long, happy and healthy lives.

## **No Rights Reserved:**

All rights pertaining to this entire text are released into the Public Domain.

## **Canto I: The Words of Laozi**

The Divinely Illustrious Sage  
Prays for every soul to heed:  
That neither woe nor weal  
Heaven has foreordained,  
But wrought by men alone,  
The fruits of virtue and vice  
Pursue the begetter like  
A shadow following the form!

## **Canto II: The Celestial Justiciars**

Between Heaven and Earth  
Dwell the Demigods of Justice,  
They weigh the deeds of men  
And shorten their lifespans,  
Inflicting upon the wicked  
The cruel fruits of iniquity:  
Distress, decay, disgrace  
Poverty and proscription.  
Fortuna holds her head aloof  
As they drown in misfortune  
Until death claims their souls.  
The Triumvirs of the North  
Glide atop every man—recording  
Each of their wicked misdeeds—  
Shaving away their allotted years!  
The Three Spirits of the Flesh,

Aboding in men's bodies,  
Mount up to Heavenly Tribunal  
In seasons of sixty days each  
To report their wayward deeds,  
And so too the Hearth Deity  
Upon the end of each lunar month.  
Those guilty of high crimes  
Lose a dozen years of life  
And every misdemeanor  
Warrants a fine of one season,  
There are hundreds of vices that  
All who yearn for long life must  
Know and discern between!

### **Canto III: The Way of Virtue**

Seek virtue and eschew vice,  
Be righteous without hypocrisy,  
Delight in charity and mercy,  
In loyalty and filial piety,  
Cultivate good character then  
Convert others to goodness,  
Succor the orphaned and pity  
The widowed, esteem the elderly  
And cherish the young, fail not  
To protect the flora and fauna.  
Be a well of kindly sympathy,  
A harbor of vicarious joy,  
Neither deny the needy nor

Ignore those mired in peril,  
Abstain from schadenfreude  
And exalt not your own glory,  
Never prate the scandals of others  
But skillfully discourage vice  
And encourage virtuous deeds!  
Take little but grant much,  
Be patient in humiliation,  
Modest in acclamation,  
And generous without desire  
For recognition and recompense,  
Refrain from revoking what  
Has been bestowed upon others.  
All who abide by such virtues  
Are revered by men, blessed by  
Heaven and graced with fortune,  
Impervious to evil and guarded  
By a host of celestial gods,  
Their every move is successful  
And Immortality is their right—  
With 300 good deeds, they become  
Demigods ; with 1300 good deeds,  
They attain Heavenly Immortality!



## **Canto IV: Vices to Eschew**

Think not vicious thoughts, and  
Forsake not mercy and prudence,  
Neither gloat over brutality nor  
Labor with a hardened heart,  
Never scheme to hurt the virtuous  
Or be treacherous and unfilial,  
Treat not one's teacher with  
Haughty disdain and guard  
Against dereliction of duty.  
Do not deceive the ignorant  
Or slander one's colleagues,  
Entrap no one and level not  
Accusations against family and kinfolk,  
Neither be cruel and inhumane nor  
Iron willed in foolish recklessness,  
Fail not to be discerning and  
Refrain from befriending scoundrels,  
Never derive honor by oppressing  
Inferiors and cajoling superiors,  
Be neither ungrateful nor resentful  
And treat not the people with arrogance.  
Abstain from subversive misdeeds,  
Neither reward evil nor punish  
The innocent, be not murderous brigand,  
Scheming official or war criminal,  
Purge not Sages nor reject their Words,  
Do not grind the faces of orphans and

Widows, nor pervert law by bribery,  
Never say that virtue is vice and vice  
Is virtue, and punish not misdemeanors  
Like high crimes. Mock not those  
Punished by law and be not willfully  
Unrepentant nor slothful in charity.  
Neither shirk responsibility by framing  
Others nor keep medicine hidden,  
Never ridicule the Sagely nor  
Violate the virtuous and ordained,  
Do not hunt or disturb the hibernating,  
Destroy not nests, burrows and eggs,  
Hurt not gravid animals and insects,  
And neither hope for others to fail nor  
Obstruct the welfare of the public,  
Do not neglect public safety nor  
Profit at the expense of others,  
Never seek to trade the worthless  
For the valuable nor sacrifice  
Public benefit for private profit,  
Refrain from stealing credit and  
Obscuring other's achievements,  
Publish not scandal nor prate faults,  
Never divide families and fail not to be  
A diligent steward. Neither seize  
That which is held dear nor abet outrage,  
Be not imperious and insolent. Hinder not  
The planting and harvest of crops, and  
Abstain from shattering marriages,

Never gloat over plunder nor shirk  
From repentance after pardon,  
Neither take credit for kindness not  
Shown nor scapegoat others, and  
Indulge not in false honors and malice.  
Do not hinder another's talents and  
Conceal one's own shortcomings,  
Neither coerce nor tolerate wantonness,  
Waste not fabric nor slaughter animals  
Without cause of piety. Waste not grain,  
Impose neither corvee nor conscription,  
And seek not wealth by burglary.  
Never cause flooding and arson,  
Make not discord, and sabotage not  
Another's tools of trade. Do not envy  
The rich and honorable and wish them  
Poverty or disgrace. Harbor neither  
Lustful nor adulterous desire,  
And show no wrath to one's creditors or  
To those who refuse with reason,  
Do not be aloof to the pain of  
Others nor dismiss their suffering as  
Just punishment for past sin, and  
Ridicule not the disfigured or deformed,  
Do not disparage the commendable,  
Never poison trees and plants,  
And refrain always from black magic.  
Neither show an irritable face when  
Tutored nor fail to be filial and pious,

Abstain from avaricious encroachment,  
Seek not unjust wealth nor advance by  
Intrigue. Do not reproach or reward  
Without fairness. Shun decadence  
And refrain from cursing Heaven.  
Treat not servants with haughtiness  
Nor instill fear through coercion,  
Be not litigious nor fan the flames  
Of sectarian strife. Lend no ear to  
Immoral pleas from one's wife but  
Do not allow the teachings of one's  
Parents to fall upon deaf ears,  
Neither forget old friends nor  
Speak what the heart does not believe,  
Be not a deceiving servant nor one  
Greedy for bribe. Never spread rumors,  
Libel or ruin the innocent, do not  
Self-righteously accuse or blasphemy.  
Neither forsake virtue nor  
Embrace strangers and shun kinsmen,  
Never demand Heaven bear witness to  
Feigned innocence. Do not rue charity  
Or borrow without will to restore,  
Harbor neither burning ambition nor  
Lustful passions, refrain from imposing  
Crushing burdens, mask not malice  
Behind a gentle facade and serve not  
Food unfit for consumption. Never  
Seek to lead the world astray with

Evil or occult ideas. Neither adulterate  
Nor use false scales and weights,  
Do not force lowliness upon the noble  
And abstain from deceiving simpletons,  
Fail not to stay avarice and refrain from  
Invoking curses against foes,  
Be not drunkard nor instigator  
Of quarrels within one's household.  
As a man, be not treacherous and cruel;  
As a woman, be not vulgar and mean.  
Wives must respect their parent's in law  
And fail not to treat their husbands with  
Courtesy, parents must refrain from  
Abortion and fail not to show kindness  
To their children. Be not pompous  
Narcissistic and envious without cease,  
Fail not to revere one's forefathers nor  
Disobey lawful orders. Be neither idle  
Nor frivolous. Never betray family  
And community for intruders,  
Do not seek mutual destruction  
Nor harbor bias, favoritism and bigotry.  
Neither leap over wells and stoves nor step  
Over another man or his food. Perform  
No abortions and abstain from covert sins,  
Clamor and revel not during Holy Days.  
It is profane to urinate towards  
The Northern skies, weep and revel in front  
Of the stove, burn incense with stove fire

And to cook with unclean fuel. It is lewd to  
Be nude at night and impious to  
Metre out punishment during the sacred  
Solstices and equinoxes, or gawk at the stars,  
Comets, rainbows, Sun and Moon.  
Neither curse facing the Northern Skies  
Nor set the hills and valleys ablaze.  
Do not slaughter snakes and turtles  
Without urgent and just cause.

### **Canto V: The Punishment for Iniquity**

In accordance with the severity,  
The crimes proclaimed above  
Will cause the Magister of Destiny  
To shave off allotted years until  
Death results. If at death, the  
Balance of justice has not been  
Restored, the difference will be  
Paid by the offender's descendants.  
Those who have amassed riches  
Through plunder and deceit  
Will be punished by the death of  
Their wives and children, if not,  
Then fire, water, proscription  
Disease, disgrace, robbery and  
The like will see the filthy lucre repaid.  
Those who have murdered will  
Be caught in massacres. To partake

In bribe and plunder is akin to  
Consuming putrid meat and poisoned wine  
To satiate thirst and hunger, whatever the  
Fleeting relief, the end is death.  
Virtuous thoughts attract blessings  
While wicked ideas pull in calamities,  
The deed need not yet be done  
For woe or weal to take form!

## **Canto VI: The Fruits of Repentance**

Offenders who repent and thereafter  
Embrace virtue and eschew vice  
Shall be blessed with great fortune  
After a while, this is to turn woe to weal!  
As the virtuous man speaks kindly, sees  
Only good and does works of mercy,  
He accrues three good deeds a day.  
After three years, Heaven will bestow  
Upon him reason for revelry.  
The evil man slanders, leers, gawks  
And indulges in iniquity, accruing three  
Wicked deeds a day. Thus, Heaven will  
Smite him with misfortune after three years!  
Thus, who could afford not to heed this treatise?

## Historical Accounts of Efficacious Responses:

Translated by Frederic Henry Balfour (1884)

Fang Shih-k'ō, a native of Hsing-an, had been very sickly from a child. Afterwards he began to enquire into the mysteries of Taoism, with a view of procuring the secret of immortality. Arrived one day at the Cloud-capped Mountain, he met a person of strange appearance, who said, "With such a face as yours, how can you expect to get the blessings that you seek? It is impossible—unless you first plant a root of goodness." Then Shih-k'ō went home; and although he was a poor man he found means to print off an edition of the Book of Recompenses and distribute copies among his friends. By the time he had printed ten pages, his sickness was half-cured; when the work was completed, he found himself entirely recovered; and from that time forward he became robust in body, and quite different from what he had been before in appearance.

Wang Chu, a native of Hsien-chü Hsien, had a son named Wang Tsing, who fell sick and died when only four years old, to his father's deep-felt grief. Whereupon Wang Chu formed a resolution to print a number of copies of this book, which he distributed among the people with the object of causing his lost son to enter once more into his mother's womb. Some time afterwards, his wife found herself *enceinte*; and one night she dreamt she went to the Ting-kuang Temple at Huang-yen Hsien, whence she returned carrying her little boy home in her arms. When she awoke she experienced a movement in her womb, and soon gave birth to a son, vastly resembling the one that she had lost. In fact, the same body was born twice over; the bones and flesh had actually been brought together a second time!



**“Eschew Vice and Embrace Virtue,  
Let faults discerned at dawn  
Be repented of by dusk,  
To uphold the sutras and precepts  
Is akin to a pauper entering paradise!”**

**-The Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment,  
Purity, Impartiality and Enlightenment Sutra**

**Brian Chung**

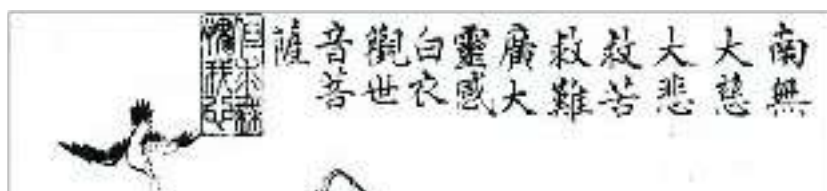
Voracious reader of Buddhist texts · Apr 26

### Selection of Qing Dynasty Era Woodcut Printings from 1833

#### Spiritual Book: Light in the Darkness



*Caption:* The Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha. *Translation:* "He who does kind deeds is like the grass in spring, even if the growth is not obvious, it happens daily. He who does wickedness is like a sharpening stone, and even if the wearing away is not apparent, it is whittled down constantly."

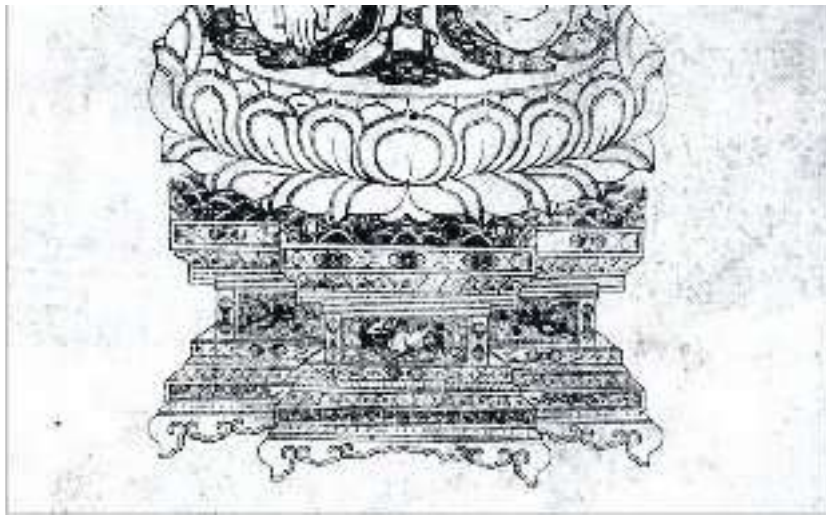




*Caption Translation: "Homage to The Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Benevolent, Savior from Pain and Peril, Universally Efficacious, White Robed Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva."*







Caption: Buddha with the ending verse from [Diamond Sutra](#) ☞:

"All conditioned phenomena  
Are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows,  
Like dew drops and a lightning flash:  
Contemplate them thus"



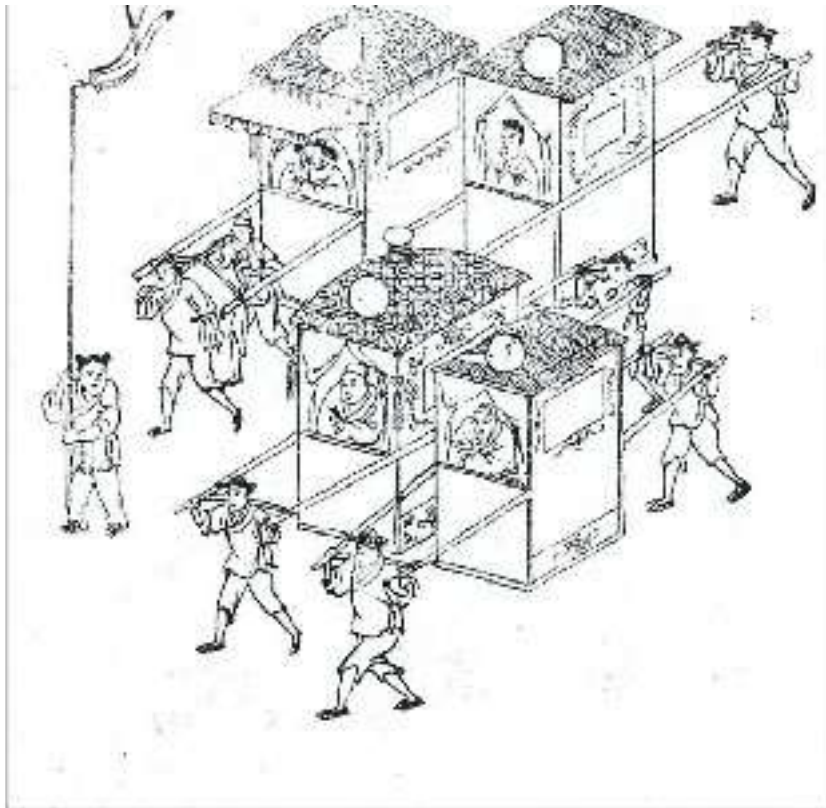
*Caption:* Spirits of Hell who arrest the souls of the wicked and bring them before King Yama. *Translation:* "Men have myriad schemes and calculations, but Heaven tabulates only one balance (i.e. each person's record of good and evil)."



*Caption:* Spirits keeping track of good deeds to be rewarded, in this case, the good deed is the distribution of rice/grain to the poor and needy.

是道則進非道則退不履邪徑不  
欺暗室積德累功慈心於物忠孝友  
悌正己化人矜孤恤寡敬老懷幼  
昆蟲草木猶不可傷宜問人之  
凶樂人之善濟人之急救人之危見  
人之得如己之得見人之失如己之  
失不彰人短不銜己長遇惡揚  
善推多取少受辱不怨受寵若驚  
施恩不求報與人不忘悔所謂善  
人皆敬之天資佑之福祿隨之  
眾邪遠之神靈衛之所作必成  
神仙可冀欲求天仙者當立  
一千三百善欲求地仙者當立  
三百善  
三善  
三善





*Caption:* People who have accumulated enough good deeds (300 deeds to be an earth bound deity and 1300 deeds to be a heavenly immortal), and abstained from evil are carried in sedan chairs by spirits to the heavenly or immortal realms. The main body of text is from Canto III of the [Treatise of the Illustrious Sage on Response and Retribution](#) ☑ (full English translation of the Taoist Text).





*Caption:* Sentient beings being reborn, some as prosperous and powerful people, others as animals. *Translation of bottom inscription:* "To be human is easy but to be a good person is hard, and to be a human again is even harder (i.e. most people accumulate so many negative habits and deeds that they cannot attain human rebirth again)."



*Caption:* Ending calligraphy. *Translation:* "The I Ching states: Households that accumulate good deeds will have a surplus of happiness ; households that accumulate wickedness will be dogged by misfortune."

*Illustrations* [Source](#)

234 views · [View shares](#)

12



## Comments

### About the Author



**Brian Chung**

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts



Author



B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012



410.7K content views 22.5K this month



Active in 7 Spaces



Joined March 2020

[View more in The Color of Art](#) >





Excerpts

# Queries On Abstention From Killing (& Meat-Eating)

3 Aug 2016 • Add Comment • by random reader





(Upasaka Zhou Anshi was an eminent Qing dynasty Buddhist and author of Anshi Quanshu (安士全書). His masterpiece fully captures the spirit of Chinese Buddhism and the vision of the Buddha and sages. The 13th Pure Land Patriarch Great Master Yinguang thus printed over three million copies of it.)

### Foreword

Whenever slaughter and death comes calling, it is always a pitiful scene. A human being may not meet violence or conflict for tens of years or even hundreds of years. However, the horror of slaughter happens daily to animals. Everyday, as soon as sunrise, knife wielding butchers loom over livestock while hunters prowl the land. Even though animals cry out for help, their efforts are always in vain. These rakshasas masked as humans repeatedly disembowel and boil, inflicting great pain and suffering on animals of all kinds. It takes only a short span of time for hundreds of millions of animals to lose their lives.

As animals have no recourse against the never-ending slaughter, they must silently swallow their grievances. This leads to a dismal atmosphere of mounting evil karma. Eventually, as the evil karma of killing accumulates to the limit, demon kings will descend into the human realm as a response.

The Chan Master Cishou once said: “As a result of the sin [misgiving] of animal slaughter, violence and wars will break out. Those who have taken life will in turn lose their lives. Those who have maliciously refused to repay their debts will lose their homes in the chaos. Furthermore, those who have destroyed burrows and nests will have their family members scattered. Each sin will result in the appropriate retribution. Thus, do not fail to heed the Buddha’s words.”

Therefore, violence and wars are caused by the evil karma of killing. If we are faced with impending violence or conflict, the only recourse is to abstain from killing. The merits from such abstinence is the most potent and materializes speedily. Other good deeds cannot match it.

Thus, I have composed this scroll of questions and answers regarding non-violence. I wish to answer people’s doubts regarding this matter and convince everyone to abstain from killing animals. Furthermore, I hope everyone will recite Namo Amitufo and dedicate the resulting merits to the consciousnesses of the animals we have killed in the past. We should never again kill. Moreover, we should give rise to the heart of Great Compassion and vow to exercise great forbearance. Henceforth, we should not dare to kill even the smallest creature. I vow that if you do as instructed but are unable to avoid conflict and violence, the Celestial Dragons and Vajra Dharma Protectors may have my head!

– Upasaka Zhou An Shi (周安士居士)

### [Selections From] Forty-Eight Queries On Abstention From Killing (戒杀四十八问)

**[1] Question:** The ancients have said that Heaven and Earth [or ‘Mother’ Nature] are the mother of all living beings, and mankind is the paragon of all beings. Therefore, animals are certainly created by Heaven for the benefit of mankind. Thus, why not kill?

**Answer:** As Heaven and Earth are the mother of all living beings, all animals are the beloved offspring of Heaven and Earth. No mother can be happy if among her children, the strong bully the weak and the successful exploit the poor. If you eat meat and feel that it is your right to do so, then by this logic, as tigers can eat humans and mosquitoes suck our blood, are humans not created by Heaven to nourish beasts and pests?

**[2] Question:** If animal slaughter is an offense, **why does Heaven not inflict punishment to deter such conduct?**

**Answer:** Heaven is definitely against animal slaughter. Thus, the karmic retributions for hunting and slaughtering are actually numerous and fully visible. However, **the foolish fail to heed these warnings** and the intelligent willfully refuse to change their behavior. Thus, there is really nothing more Heaven can do.

[For instance, in 1851, a native of Quanjiao County dreamed of a celestial deity who warned him that: "An army is fast approaching your residence! **If you do not cease slaughtering animals, you cannot hope to escape death!**" After he awoke, he and his entire household burned incense and vowed that they would never slaughter or hunt again. No one breached their vows... except for one dissenting matron. She said to him: "You simply had a dream, we cannot be sure if it is true or not." A few days later, the violence of the Taiping rebellion spilled into their hometown. Everyone managed to escape except for the matron, who had delayed leaving the family compound and was killed.]

**[3] Question:** There are so many animals in the world. **If no one hunts or slaughters, wouldn't their populations grow out of control?**

**Answer:** There are plenty of insects and animals that humans do not eat or kill; their numbers are numerous without issue. Furthermore, the reason **there are so many beasts and animals is due to the karma of killing. Animal rebirth is caused by the cycle of retribution and revenge.** People who kill animals are reborn as animals to even up the debt. If everyone abstains from taking animal life, the karma that supports the realm of animals will gradually dissipate while the ranks of devas and men will increase. For instance, if people do not trap frogs, the population of frogs will decrease. Likewise, if people do not fish for crabs, the population of crabs will gradually decrease. Thus, the laws of karma are quite clear.

**[4] Question:** If Heaven wishes for mankind to refrain from eating meat, then **why isn't the meat of animals disgusting and foul** as a deterrence?

**Answer:** The truth is that Heaven already considers meat to be foul and disgusting. However, **people believe the taste of meat to be delicious — like how**

maggots revel in putrid feces. As this is a matter of deep-rooted habits, it is difficult to change perceptions. For instance, if a man was a cat in his past life, he would have craved for rodents during that life. Likewise, if a man was a crane in his past life, he would've craved for snakes. However, as they are now men, they no longer yearn for rats and snakes. Thus, each body has its own habits. Variations in preferences and habits are due to karma, causes and conditions. Differences in karma, causes and conditions are in turn caused by differing intentions. If people's hearts and intentions can accord with Heaven's will, they will naturally understand that meat is indeed foul and disgusting.

**[5] Question:** There are many who eke out a living by fishing or working in the meat packing industry. *If we exhort them to change professions, we would be causing them financial ruin?* Isn't it unreasonable to favor animals over humans?

**Answer:** Those who support themselves in such a manner are like a man who eats poisoned meat to satiate his hunger. Even though they may be able to live comfortably off the earnings for a while, they will soon have to undergo many kalpas of excruciating karmic retribution. The reason we *urge hunters, fishermen, ranchers, butchers and so forth to change professions is because we are concerned* about them. Thus, how can we be considered unreasonable? Aren't there plenty of people who support themselves very well without having to kill animals?

**[6] Question:** Cows help plow the fields and dogs loyally guard our homes. Thus, they have utility and should not be killed. However, pigs and lambs have no other uses. *If we do not eat them, what should we do with them?*

**Answer:** One *abstains from meat and liberates life in order to cultivate compassion*. It has nothing to do with whether the animal is useful to humans or not. If one abstains from eating a type of meat simply because the animal has utility, then such thoughts are selfish. Such selfishness exists because evil habits and defilements still cover up our Buddha-nature.

**[7] Question:** It is true that when animals such as chicken, sheep and cattle are about to be slaughtered, they will cry out and show fear. Thus, killing them would be cruel. However, *no such distress is shown by small fish?* Therefore, why should we abstain from them?

**Answer:** Even though animals and fish come in different sizes, their Buddha-nature is all the same. For instance, both the killing of old men and babies are considered murder. If you insist on thinking that certain animals feel no pain because they do not shed tears or scream, then imagine the reaction of a mute person being attacked. Would you hear screams?

**[8] Question:** It is indeed cruel to personally slaughter animals. However, if we only eat the meat that others have slaughtered, wouldn't that make us blameless?

**Answer:** Such logic is nothing more than self deception. If you think that you can escape blame by delegating the task of slaughtering to others, then shouldn't a wrongfully executed man blame only the executioner and not the magistrate? Plausible deniability can fool some, but you cannot fool your conscience.

**[9] Question:** Liberating life is virtuous, but what should we do if the liberated animals are captured again?

**Answer:** Let hunters and fishermen do as they please. No one should cease doing good just because others do evil. For instance, a dedicated doctor cannot guarantee that the patient he heals today will live to see tomorrow. Likewise, those bringing relief in a famine cannot be sure if they can successfully avert starvation. The world is full of uncertainty, why do people only have doubts regarding life liberation? Moreover, how could you be sure that all the animals that are liberated will be recaptured? Lastly, the truth is that if we simply attempt to do good, our merits are already complete.

**[10] Question:** Virtue is simply a good heart. Thus, isn't it enough that we are good people? why must we also abstain from meat?

**Answer:** Such a statement makes no sense whatsoever. How can you be virtuous if you inflict unspeakable pain on other living beings? There is no malice greater than the heart that tolerates slaughter. Mencius said: "Humanity is based on mercy and compassion." Thus, a virtuous man will not kill or slaughter. People who inflict torturous pain on animals cannot be truly benevolent. There is not one virtuous man or noble gentleman under Heaven that is partial to slaughter.

**[11] Question:** I am indifferent to this matter. I neither intentionally slaughter nor deliberately avoid doing so. I simply go with the flow... is that wrong?

**Answer:** If you slaughter when it is convenient to do so and refrain at other times simply out of caprice or absent-minded indifference, you will not receive any merits. However, you will still incur karmic retribution for the living beings you do kill. For instance, if a bandit misfires a crossbow bolt while plundering someone's household, and if the stray bolt then hits you, will you consider him guiltless?

**[12] Question:** Animals are killed or boiled because of their past evil karma. Even if we refrain from slaughtering them, someone else surely will? Thus, what harm could possibly result from slaughtering?

**Answer:** Even though animals must undergo their own karmic retributions, we are in a different position — we can choose. If you slaughter and hunt because you feel that they deserve it, then you will sink to their level. You will be reborn as an animal to be slaughtered. Thus, as we currently possess human rebirth, we have the ability to change our karmic situation for the better through the way we act. Hence, why delay in adopting virtue and humaneness?

**[13] Question:** Animals are often killed because of the karmic debts they owe. Thus, why is it wrong for us to collect our due?

**Answer:** It is true that animals are killed as repayment for past karmic debts. However, there is a difference between simple karmic retribution and the retribution of maturing debt. The former is when an animal's past evil karmic seeds ripen in the form of random slaughter. The latter situation refers to when an animal is slaughtered by someone who had been killed by it in past lives. In a typical banquet, the number of animals killed is countless. For instance, caviar contains numerous consciousnesses. As people are so indiscriminate in their eating habits, how can anyone be certain that every piece of meat they eat is their rightful due? Most likely, only a few out of the multitudes of animals you eat actually owe you. The rest are now your karmic creditors!

**[14] Question:** If we kill animals who actually do owe us their lives, doesn't that cancel out the debt? Surely, there can be no further retribution?

**Answer:** Have you never seen a feud? [How many rivals instantly become best friends after bouts of savage fighting?](#) Bodhisattvas can clearly see how today's causes and conditions will play out in the future. Thus, Bodhisattvas never engage in vengeance.

**[15] Question:** The [Buddha has said that anything that has life had once been our parents](#) or relatives in previous rebirths. How is this true?

**Answer:** Sentient beings have been turning in the Samsara since time immemorial. Even if we take only one kalpa, the number of beings we would have been associated with during that time period would be countless. In fact, [some of the animals currently in your household may be someone you knew in this life!](#)

For instance, I have [personally witnessed the following](#) case: When Liu Dao Yuan (the former magistrate of Pengxi County) was on his way home after retiring, he lodged at the home of the Qin family. That night, a tearful matron appeared in his dreams. She told him that she was the recently deceased wife of his host. Moreover, she revealed that King Yama had sentenced her to be reborn as a sheep for the offense of having beaten a servant girl to death. She also revealed that she was currently in the Qin family livestock pen and would be slaughtered the next day.

Liu Dao Yuan immediately rushed to inform his host of what he had just witnessed. However, it was already too late. The whole Qin family was grief stricken! Such situations happen often in this world, however, [common people without spiritual attainments remain oblivious to such workings of karma.](#)

[Furthermore, in 1853, a native of Zhejiang named Li was known to have committed all kinds of evil. His evil karma eventually ripened and he turned into a pig while alive. His family members then rehomed him at a Buddhist temple. Magistrate (Sima) Xu Ying Ting personally witnessed this.]

**[16] Question:** [What should we do if we find ourselves powerless to stop acts of fishing, trapping and slaughtering?](#)

**Answer:** Anyone who finds themselves in such a situation should sincerely recite whatever mantra they are familiar with, or [sincerely recite Namó Amituófo](#). They



should repent the animals' sins on their behalf and dedicate the merits of the recitation to them. This way, the animals will naturally receive karmic benefits. If you see someone fishing or trapping, then focus your attentions on that person. Do not entertain other thoughts. Wholeheartedly recite Namu Duo Bao Rulai (南無多寶如來) for a few dozen times. If you do so, the fish and animals will all be able to evade capture. This Buddha's name is very potent, so do not fail to do as instructed.

**[17] Question:** When we ask the gods to bless us with children, wealth, offices and long life, **how can we not offer sacrifices as a show of respect?**

**Answer:** Every deity adores life and abhors slaughter. Furthermore, how can we expect long life and good fortune if we take away the lives of animals? How can we expect healthy children if we kill the offspring of animals? Not only does killing offend Heaven, it also betrays our conscience. We must remember that we are also made of flesh. **There is no benefit in offering meat. In fact, doing so will bring only great harm.**

**[18] Question:** There is no question that those who are vegan should make vegan offerings to deities and their ancestors. However, **if those who normally eat meat were to make vegan offerings, wouldn't that be cheap and disrespectful?**

**Answer:** The I Ching states: "A family that sacrifices a cow to honor their ancestors derive inferior merit compared to the family that regularly makes modest offerings." Moreover, the Zuo Zhuan states: "Even the wild plants next to the mountain streams or the algae can be offered to gods and spirits." Thus, **do you think the gods and spirits who dwell in the skies will quibble over a few pieces of meat?**

**[19] Question:** **Will gods and deities who accept meat offerings be reborn in the evil realms?**

**Answer:** Sentient beings are reborn as gods and deities because they have cultivated virtue in their past life. Even though they are all virtuous, some are more merciful than others. The more merciful gods will reject offerings of meat. However, the gods that still have habits of anger will accept meat offerings. The merciful gods have more wisdom than blessings; the angry gods have more

blessings than wisdom. Therefore, once the heavenly blessings of the merciful gods end, they will not be reborn in the evil realms. However, the [gods that are given to anger will most likely be reborn in the lower realms](#). Everyone must understand that Heaven cherishes all living beings, not just human life.

**[20] Question:** It is wrong to slaughter animals for the purpose of making meat offerings to gods and deities. However, [is it also wrong to slaughter animals to feed one's parents?](#)

**Answer:** It is even worse! The Book of Rites clearly states that: "Filial sons and daughters offer all that which is good to their parents and retain only the inferior for themselves." Therefore, [if we slaughter animals for the sake of offering meat to our parents, we would be saddling them with undesirable karmic offenses](#). How could we do something so unfilial? If we must provide our parents with meat, we should offer only thrice clean meat [i.e. meat that did not come from an animal suspected, seen or heard killed for one – which is hard to find today due to supply-demand]. Meat from an animal that died naturally is permitted as well. These are the only two exceptions.

**[21] Question:** For the sake of repaying our parent's kindness, we must make rich offerings to them after they pass away. However, [if someone's deceased parents ate meat, and they offer vegan food, wouldn't that be against their parents' preferences?](#)

**Answer:** If the spirits of our parents and ancestors actually depended on these offerings to live, they would all be starving. The official memorial days number only a few days out of a year. These rites are simply a sign of respect. However, if we insist on slaughtering animals on these occasions, we would [only be adding to the negative karmic burdens of our beloved parents](#) and ancestors. How could we do such a thing?

**[22] Question:** Surely the [spirits of someone's ancestors will enjoy and receive the offerings made by their descendants?](#) Why would they not?

**Answer:** The Medium Agama Sutra states: "[If one's ancestors have been reborn as ghosts, they can eat offerings](#) that are sincerely offered. If they are in the heavenly realms, they live in bliss and will not bother to come and eat it. If they are in the three evil realms, their acute suffering prevents them from eating it. If

they have been reborn as humans, then they have new families and will certainly not show up.”

Thus, the duty of a descendant is to [sincerely make vegan offerings and refrain from transferring new karmic burdens](#) by slaughtering animals. As long as they are vegan before the memorial ceremony and sincere during the ceremony, they have done their filial duty. People should not worry about whether the offerings will be actually consumed by their intended recipients or not.

**[23] Question:** Emperor Wu of Liang used vegan food made to resemble animals for sacrificial offerings. Scholars have [interpreted his refusal to sacrifice animals as the cause of the declining fortunes of the Liang dynasty](#). Thus, isn't this a clear sign that vegan offerings are a breach of etiquette?

**Answer:** The reason men have faults is because of their biases and partialities. If you could recognize your own biases and mistakes, you will be able to separate kindness from cruelty. Emperor Wu of Liang's killing of the Liu Gui (six noblemen) and his scheme to flood Shouyang City were his faults. However, his use of [vegan offerings prevented the spirits from incurring evil karma](#) and allowed animals to live in peace. Therefore, such a policy should certainly be counted among his merits. The decline of the Liang dynasty has nothing to do with vegan offerings. If the decline was caused by vegan offerings, then why did the Chen dynasty and Sui dynasty (whose leaders offered animal sacrifices) end so quickly?

Moreover, Master Lianchi said: “Confucius has said that even those who use mannequins as funeral sacrifices are still incurring an offense of cruelty that will cause their families to become extinct.” Thus, is it not enough that the vegan food is made to resemble animals? [Must you so cruelly demand real animals be slaughtered?](#)

Furthermore, after Emperor Wu of Liang ascended the throne, he abstained from meat and alcohol. He took care of the people and kept wars to a minimum. Yearly harvests were also good. From the Jin dynasty to the Sui dynasty, [no one could match Emperor Wu of Liang's era in prosperity](#). His virtues allowed him to rule for 49 years and live for 86 years. Moreover, eight of his descendants served as Prime Minister during the Tang dynasty. Thus, these scholars who compose libel against him do so because they discriminate against his faith in

the Buddhadharma. They are covering up his merits out of malice.

**[24] Question:** When we host banquets in honor of our kinsmen or offer hospitality to dear friends, only meat dishes can convey our sincerity and please our guests. **Isn't it unreasonable to sacrifice sincere hospitality to save animals?**

**Answer:** If your guests are virtuous, they will rejoice in your compassion and will certainly not feel disrespected. If your guests express displeasure over the lack of meat, then such guests are nothing more than petty gluttons. **Why should anyone incur the heavy karma of killing simply to please petty gluttons?**

Furthermore, when Song dynasty statesman Su Dongpo was feasting with his guests, he wrote a poem to Chen Jichang:

"I pity the clams in the basket, who desperately yearn for moisture. I pity the fish in the pot, who are on the verge of asphyxiation. When fish are gutted, they suffer immensely. How could I do such a thing? Thus, this is why I offered you exhortations on non-violence in the place of warm greetings when we first met! Chancellor Luhuai detested banquets — in the pot was a steamed duck, and when the lid was lifted, everyone held back as they noticed the cruelty. However, whenever Minister Wang Wuzi ate, the cutting boards were drenched with blood. He even served piglets on cameo glass platters. Virtuous Lu lived modestly and where his cap did not cover, white hair flowed. The **gods wept as Wuzi dined sumptuously on meat and fish**. The gods pleaded: why do you not abstain from tainting your excellent virtues with these acts of gluttony and slaughter?... Human life is truly as short as a guest's stay! Please do not forget what I am saying, archive it into the Chronicle of Poems."

Thus, if **even eminent statesmen like Su Dongpo did not offer meat** at his banquets, why should you feel that vegan foods are not good enough for hospitality?

**[25] Question:** The Sovereign Fuxi taught people to weave nets, he **also taught people to farm and fish, are you implying that Fuxi was wrong?**

**Answer:** This is a misconception. In the prehistoric era, birds and other animals often interfered with human settlements. Thus, Fuxi **taught people to make nets so they could trap animals and release them away** from their homes. He never told people to fish or hunt. To claim that the Sages would teach people to kill is

as egregious as slandering the virtuous and passing off sinners as saints!

**[26] Question:** When Confucius practiced mercy, he only **refrained from fishing with nets and shooting sleeping animals**. He did not say we could not use fishhooks or shoot at animals that are awake. Thus, as you completely prohibit both hunting and fishing, are you saying the teachings of Confucius are no good?

**Answer:** You are missing the point. Confucius clearly wished for everyone to completely refrain from taking animal life. When he prohibited the use of nets, he meant to shame us for our avarice. When he prohibited the shooting of sleeping and resting animals, he was pointing out our cruelty. Humans often kill without restraint and give peace to no creature. As Sages teach by example, Confucius' diet consisted only of spring water and fresh vegetables. He never fished or shot at any animal during his life. In fact, he offered only vegetable offerings to his ancestors. **If you think Sages would cruelly hook fish and shoot birds, you are too shallow** to understand their profound teachings.

**[27] Question:** An eminent man must first love his family and then the people; finally, he must show kindness to animals. Thus, **kindness must be shown first to kinsmen and last to animals**. Therefore, liberating life and practicing veganism are obviously the least important virtues. Are they not?

**Answer:** When Mencius spoke of hierarchy and precedence, he was referring to courtesy and etiquette within the family structure. Mencius **did not ever intend to limit our compassion**. Furthermore, by your logic, an orphan with no family could never show kindness to the people or animals without breaking the rules of precedence. It is not possible that compassionate Mencius would make such restrictive and frivolous rules.

**[28] Question:** You are correct, we should all **observe vegan attha-sila (fasting)**. However, did Confucius observe such precepts?

**Answer:** The sutras state: "When fasting, you must eat only one meal of pure food at the proper time." They also say: "When observing such precepts, you must exercise the utmost care and prudence." The Book of Rites states: "When fasting and holding the precepts of abstinence, your heart should be pure ; **when the fasting ends, do not discard your purity**." The standards of these

teachings are high. Thus, even though today's people are inferior in every way when compared to Confucius, they foolishly feel that emulating Confucius involves slaughtering animals and eating meat.

**[29] Question:** Observing the strict precepts of vegan attha-sila is indeed virtuous. However, **wouldn't fasting make us weak and thin?**

**Answer:** **Our spirituality is more important than the impure body** of blood, feces and skin that we temporarily inhabit. When Heaven bestows karmic rewards or punishments, do you think they care more about your external appearance or the virtuousness of your heart?

**[30] Question:** As the five pungent plants (**onions, garlic, shallots, leeks, chives, asafoetida**) **all grow from the soil, why do Buddhist sutras prohibit them?**

**Answer:** The Surangama Sutra gives five reasons for the prohibition: 1) These five plants are pungent and noxious. 2) These five plants will prevent cultivators from gaining Bodhi. 3) Auspicious gods and devas despise the smell of these plants. 4) **When the five pungent plants are eaten cooked, they stir up one's lust. When they are eaten raw, they stir up one's wrath.** 5.) Demons and ghosts will hover around and lick the lips of those who eat the five pungent plants.

**[31] Question:** Some people say that even though they are not vegan and do not observe the fast, they are still better than those who have fasted but later broke the precepts. However, **those who have fasted but could not hold the precepts say that the fact they have fasted makes them superior** to those who have never observed the fast. Which one is correct?

**Answer:** Let's use the example of holding office: **Does a man who has never held office hold more advantages than the magistrate who was dismissed** from office?

**[32] Question:** I wish to become vegan, but I **cannot resist the temptation of meat**. What should I do?

**Answer:** Once those with excellent roots of virtue make the vows of Great Compassion, they will never be able to tolerate eating the flesh of living beings. However, if you are not this advanced, you **should meditate on the five**

**impurities:** 1) The bodies of animals are dirty, hairy, impure and have odors. 2) Animals and livestock are often fed putrid food waste. 3) The places that livestock and animals live in are filthy. 4) The intestines and bladders of animals are full of fluids, feces and urine. 5.) The flesh of animals decay as soon as they die. If you contemplate thus everyday, you will soon be able to become vegan.

**[33] Question:** The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas swiftly respond to the suffering of sentient beings. **Emperor Wu of Liang was a devout Buddhist, yet he starved to death. Why wasn't he saved?**

**Answer:** Emperor Wu of Liang did not starve to death. According to historical records, even when Hou Jing took the palace, he was overawed by the regal countenance of Emperor Liang and thus deferred to him... The 86 year old emperor then died of old age a few moments later... Therefore, **faithlessness in the Buddha is the reason that so many learned scholars gloss over important details** and spread their own false conclusions. Their habits of doubt and partiality towards slaughter clouds their judgment.

– Upasaka Zhou An Shi (周安士居士)

Translated By Brian Chung

---

#### Related



The Buddha's Real Views on Meat-Eating  
In "Letters"



How Right Is Your Livelihood?  
In "Features"



How Should Buddhists Respond To Pandemics? 佛教徒该如何应对疫情?  
In "Features"

#killing #Vegetarianism & Veganism

---

# **The Treatise on Response and Retribution (Kan Yin Pien)**

*A Modern English Translation*

2014 Edition (Revised)

太上感應篇新中英文版

Translation & Commentary by Brian Chung

作者：鍾佰晟

---

THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT.

---



---

## **FOREWORD**

**The Treatise on Response and Retribution (太上感應篇) holds great relevance in our current era of moral collapse and turbid confusion. The Venerable Master Chin Kung (淨空法師) often states that there can be no Buddhism without adherence to the precepts of virtue and morality. This is because the Buddha has explicitly stated in the Threefold Training that precepts and virtue form the fertile soil in which wisdom springs from (i.e. Sila Samadhi Prajna).**

**Spoken by Lao Tzu, the treatise's list of 170 evil deeds encompasses in detail all karmic transgressions that could be committed by a unenlightened person. Furthermore, the treatise also offers practical advice on how to cultivate virtue. Hence, it comes at no surprise that the 13th Patriarch of the Pureland School, the great Master Yin Kuang (印光大師) spared no effort to print, teach and distribute this treatise.**

**The Master also stated that those who wish to be reborn in Amita Buddha's Pureland must first cultivate themselves in accordance with the precepts listed within the treatise.**

**Hence, the importance of this treatise cannot be understated and all cultivators of Buddhism should heed it's teachings and hold it in high regard.**

**Namo Amita Buddha**

*As the author of this text, I hereby dedicate the merit from this work towards Pureland  
Rebirth.*

---

## **Section One: Cause & Effect**

太上曰：「禍福無門，惟人自召；善惡之報，如影隨形。」

*The Exalted One (Lao Tzu) states: Fortune and misery are neither predestined nor random ; they are instead caused by the karmic actions of each individual. The rewards and retributions for virtue and vice follows each person like a shadow.*

### **Commentary:**

Here, The Sage Lao Tzu (whose wisdom flows from Samadhi) clearly concurs with the Buddhist concepts of karma. If a man experiences misfortune, it has nothing to do with who or what he perceives to be the cause of it. Any misery or pain anyone experiences are instead brought onto themselves by the evil deeds they has committed either in this life or the previous life.

---

是以天地有司過之神，依人所犯輕重，以奪人算。算減則貧耗，多逢憂患；人皆惡之，刑禍隨之，吉慶避之，惡星災之；算盡則死。

又有三台北斗神君，在人頭上，錄人罪惡，奪其紀算。又有三尸神，在人身中，每到庚申日，輒上詣天曹，言人罪過。月晦之日，灶神亦然。凡人有過，大則奪紀，小則奪算。其過大小，有數百事，欲求長生者，先須避之。

*Depending on the severity of a person's individual offenses, the spirits of justice shortens his or her original lifespan in proportion to the level of wickedness involved. Furthermore, not only do offenders have their life shortened; various punishments such as misery, poverty, ill repute, misfortunes, illness, legal penalties and the like will be inflicted and last until death results.*

*Also, there are various demigods and spirits such as the Hearth Spirit and Gods of the North who shadow each individual and record (impartially and without mistake) each their offenses. If a person has committed a great evil, 12 years are shaved off his lifespan while small offenses warrant only a reduction of 100 days. There are over a hundred offenses, both severe and light, that those who wish to live a long life must know.*

### **Commentary:**

This part of the treatise describes the effects of evil karma. The Buddha also confirms in the Larger Infinite Life Sutra that there are indeed demigods and spirits who observe and record the offenses of each person. They are the agents of karma and they carry out the duty of inflicting punishments and bestowing rewards without partiality or error.

When each person is born, their lifespan and fortunes have already been decided based on their prior karma. If the person then decides to diligently cultivate virtue, their fortunes can be changed for the better. Likewise, if a man does evil, he will not only create karma that will result in misery but will also reduce the blessings he had accumulated in prior lives and are set to enjoy in this life. So if a murderer was originally destined to live a long and happy life, he will see his lifespan reduced and fortunes diminished or tainted as a result of his evil. Finally, death will result and he (if he did not accumulate any blessings to save himself) will most likely fall into the evil realms for his next rebirth.

This section finishes by stating that those who wish to live a long life (i.e. preserve or increase one's lifespan) must avoid all evil conduct listed in the treatise.

---

### **Section Two : The Virtuous Man**

是道則進，非道則退。不履邪徑，不欺暗室；積德累功，慈心於物；忠孝友悌，正己化人；矜孤恤寡，敬老懷幼；昆蟲草木，猶不可傷。宜憫人之凶，樂人之善；濟人之急，救人之危。見人之得，如己之得；見人之失，如己之失。不彰人短，不炫己長；遏惡揚善，推多取少。受辱不怨，受寵若驚；施恩不求報，與人不追悔。

所謂善人，人皆敬之，天道佑之，福祿隨之，眾邪遠之，神靈衛之；所作必成，神仙可冀。欲求天仙者，當立一千三百善；欲求地仙者，當立三百善。

*He walks the path of virtue and avoids the path of vice and evil. He does not stray from what is proper and avoids committing offenses in secret, thinking that no one will know.*

*He amasses merit and treats everything and everyone with gentleness and compassion. He is loyal to his countrymen, filial to his parents and kind to his brothers and sisters. He cultivates himself and reforms others. He shows concern for the welfare of the lonely, widowed and orphaned.*

*He respects the elderly and cares for the young. He does not hurt or damage even the little insects, animals, grasses and flowers. He rejoices in the virtue of others and pities the evil. He saves those in danger and helps those in need. He harbors no thoughts of jealousy or envy and delights at another's prosperity. He empathizes with the loss of other people.*

*He does not publish the faults and scandals of others (be they true or not) and acts with modesty in regards to his own merits. He prevents evil and encourages virtue. He reserves for himself little but gives much and reacts with equanimity to slights and slander. He does not abuse favor bestowed and nor does he give with strings attached. Lastly, he does not regret what he has given others.*

*By such conduct, a individual becomes virtuous. Those who are virtuous command the respect of men and earn the blessings of the heavens. Furthermore, demigods protect them ; fortune and success follow them and disasters avoid them. Moreover, heavenly rebirth is open to them. Those who wish to be reborn as a demigod should accumulate 300 virtuous deeds while those who wish to attain heavenly rebirth should amass 1300 good deeds.*

### **Commentary:**

This section describes the conduct of the virtuous and also illustrates the karmic rewards of virtue. If you can successfully implement all of these requirements to a high degree, you are considered a man or women of exemplary character. "Path of virtue" means that one avoids the crimes and

offenses listed in the treatise while at the same time doing whatever possible to amass good deeds. The virtuous will not only enjoy having their dreams come true in this life but can also hope to achieve heavenly rebirth in the next. Demigod rebirth requires 300 good deeds to attain and they enjoy long pleasurable lives and immunity from pain and deprivation. Celestial Devas cost 1300 good deeds to achieve and the pleasures and powers they enjoy is considerably superior.

However, not all deeds are equal. For instance, merely introducing a copy of this treatise to someone who will publish it will result in tens of thousands of virtuous deeds and the rewards of planting good roots in the Buddha Dharma (e.g. printing the Shurangama Sutra or Infinite Life Sutra) are limitless and beyond comparison. Furthermore, even small acts of kindness done out of true selfless compassion can be worth tens of thousands of virtuous deeds.

Finally, one should not seek to amass virtue just to be reborn in the heavens. Instead, the Buddha kindly advises us in the Larger Infinite Life Sutra to whole heartedly dedicate all of our good deeds for the attainment of Amita Buddha's Pureland, which will grant us liberation from the endless rounds of death and rebirth.

---

### **Section Three: Crimes and Offenses.**

#### **1.) 苟或非義而動，背理而行**

*To harbor vicious thoughts and disregard one's conscience; acting contrary to what is fair, humane and reasonable.*

#### **2.) 以惡為能，忍作殘害**

*To boast of one's evil as a strength and to inflict cruelties with a cold heart.*

#### **3.) 陰賊良善，暗侮君親**

*Secretly plotting to hurt the good and kind; being dishonest to one's superiors and parents behind their back.*

**4.) 慢其先生，叛其所事**

*To treat one's teachers and mentors with arrogance. To betray or disregard one's duties. To be negligent and incompetent in carrying out one's duties.*

**4.) 誑諸無識，謗諸同學**

*To lie to and mislead those without expertise or knowledge while holding a advantage in know-how and information. To slander one's colleagues and fellow students.*

**5.) 虛誣詐偽，攻訐宗親**

*Employing lies, fraud, espionage, plots, sting operations and entrapment against another. To maliciously slander and criticize one's extended and immediate family members.*

**6.) 剛強不仁，狠戾自用**

*To be cruel, inhumane and without compassion; to proceed capriciously and be obstinate to good advice.*

**7.) 是非不當，向背乖宜**

*To confuse good and evil; to foolishly align oneself with evil people and avoid good people.*

**8.) 虐下取功，諂上希旨**

*To (while holding power and office) sacrifice the lives, interests and welfare of the people or individuals for the attainment of personal popularity and career success. For instance, a judge increasing penalties or a prosecutor over charging to appear tough on crime.*

*To cajole favor from one's superiors by schemes and flattery or by abetting their misconduct.*

**9.) 受恩不感，念怨不休**

*To show no gratitude for kindness and favors received ; to harbor grievances without cease.*

**10.) 輕蔑天民，擾亂國政**

*To treat the common people with disdain and haughty arrogance ; to destabilize the country or pass whimsical and or burdensome regulations, taxes and laws.*

**11.) 賞及非義，刑及無辜**

*To reward injustice; to punish, arrest or prosecute the innocent.*

**12.) 殺人取財，傾人取位**

*Killing in order to obtain wealth. Using plots and schemes to seize another's position and public office.*

**13.) 誅降戮服，貶正排賢**

*To kill or abuse surrendering troops and prisoners of war. To purge and remove Sages and reject their wise teachings.*

**14.) 凌孤逼寡，棄法受賂**

*To abuse and exploit widows and orphans. Accepting (as a judge, law enforcer or prosecutor) bribes for the purpose of perverting the course of justice or the misuse and misapplication of the law.*

**15.) 以直為曲，以曲為直**

*To bend what is lawful into a crime or to criminalize actions that are moral, neutral or trivial. To distort and pervert the standards of right and wrong.*

**16.) 入輕為重，見殺加怒**

*To punish excessively, to inflict criminal punishment on light offenses or to issue disproportionate judgments. To be liberal in making arrests or ordering searches and detentions. To be overzealous in enforcing the law.*

*To express anger and condemnation towards those sentenced to capital and corporal punishment.*

**17.) 知過不改，知善不為**

*Failing to make reasonable efforts to correct one's faults; to know good deeds but refuse to do them.*

**18.) 自罪引他，壅塞方術**

*To blame one's own misconduct and crimes on others. To keep potent medical cures and healthcare techniques secret from the public.*

**19.) 訕謗聖賢，侵凌道德**

*To ridicule and slander Buddhist and Sagely teachings; to hurt and abuse persons of morality and cultivation.*

**20.) 射飛逐走，發蟄驚棲**

*To engage in hunting and bird shooting ; to disturb hibernating animals and insects.*

**21.) 填穴覆巢，傷胎破卵**

*To damage or destroy burrows, natural habitats and bird nests; to hurt pregnant animals/insects and or to break their eggs.*

**22.) 願人有失，毀人成功**

*Desiring others to fail or be at fault ; preventing or discouraging others from*



*carrying out good deeds or projects for the public benefit.*

**23.) 危人自安，減人自益**

*To cause dangerous conditions and or to neglect other's personal safety despite having a duty to ensure it. To reduce another's benefits or fair share in order to bolster one's own wealth and profit.*

**24.) 以惡易好，以私廢公**

*To fraudulently exchange what is worthless for what is valuable. To sacrifice public benefit and forsake public duty in order to reap personal profit or to forward private agendas.*

**25.) 竊人之能，蔽人之善**

*To steal credit for another's work or to steal another's copyrights, patents and or trade secrets to claim as your own. To conceal or cover up the virtues of other persons.*

**26.) 形人之醜，訐人之私**

*To spread news of another's faults or to invade privacy and publish scandal. To spread salacious gossip or to work in tabloid journalism.*

**27.) 耗人貨財，離人骨肉**

*To waste and recklessly spend money and resources belonging to others (e.g. abusing expense accounts or wasting tax revenue). To cause infighting and disharmony among another's family members.*

**28.) 侵人所愛，助人為非**

*To seize, violate or confiscate what is dear to others ; to aid and abet the outrageous conduct of other people.*

**29.) 逞志作威，辱人求勝**

*To use one's power, authority and wealth in an abusive manner ; to insult and bully others.*

**30.) 敗人苗稼，破人婚姻**

*To cause another's crops and orchards to fail ; failure to reasonably aid agricultural production when able. Note: Farming is the source of everyone's food, there will be famine if nothing grows. Thus, one must never do anything to hurt or squeeze agricultural production but should instead support it when possible, such as lending to farmers at low interests and on mild terms.*

*To cause the destruction or breakup of another's marriage or engagement.*

**31.) 苟富而驕，苟免無恥**

*To gain money that one has no right to but instead of changing to become modest and charitable, becomes arrogant and decadent instead. To avoid just prosecution and punishment by luck or mercy but yet refuse to change one's shameless or criminal ways.*

**32.) 認恩推過，嫁禍賣惡**

*To take credit for kindness shown by others while shirking responsibility for one's own misconduct ; to scapegoat another or have others bear one's deserved punishment.*

**33.) 沽買虛譽，包貯險心**

*To buy or sell false titles and honors or to attain fame and win praise by fraud. To secretly harbor and entertain sadistic thoughts*

**34.) 挫人所長，護己所短**

*To belittle another's talents or prevent them from realizing their full potential ; to cover up one's faults and refuse to admit wrongdoing.*

**35.) 乘威迫脅，縱暴殺傷**

*To use authority and strength to coerce another into submission. To (as a superior or commanding officer) tolerate war crimes, violence and wanton behavior among one's subordinates.*

**36.) 無故剪裁，非禮烹宰**

*To waste clothes and fabric. To slaughter animals for the purpose of obtaining meat, oils, fur and leather.*

**37.) 散棄五穀，勞擾眾生**

*To waste and destroy rice, barley, grain and staple foods ; to conscript or impose involuntary, unfree or corvée labor.*

**38.) 破人之家，取其財寶**

*To ruin another's family in order to seize their wealth ; to (as a judge or official) be quick in detaining persons and freezing or confiscating assets.*

**39.) 決水放火，以害民居**

*To cause floods and commit arson ; to endanger the safety of people's life and property.*

**40.) 紊亂規模，以敗人功**

*To sabotage institutions and overturn existing standards, customs and procedures, thereby causing uncertainty, inconvenience and disorder.*

**41.) 損人器物，以窮人用**

*To damage or render unusable the tools of trade and means of production of other people.*

**42.) 見他榮貴，願他流貶；見他富有，願他破散**

*To envy the rich and honorable ; wishing for them poverty and disgrace.*

**43.) 見他色美，起心私之**

*To entertain adulterous and lustful thoughts in one's heart.* Note: Lust is considered by the Sages to be the foremost offense. Furthermore, it is clearly stated in the Shurangama Sutra that eliminating lust is very important for spiritual and meditative progress. Hence, Lao Tzu's true intention here is to exhort everyone to diligently reduce one's sexual desire as much as possible.

**44.) 負他貨財，願他身死**

*To wish your creditors dead in order to not pay them back.*

**45.) 干求不遂，便生咒恨**

*To hate, vilify and curse anyone who does not acquiesce to one's unreasonable and shameless demands.*

**46.) 見他失便，便說他過**

*To see another's misfortune or suffering yet dismiss it without sympathy as the deserved result of their sins. To engage in Schadenfreude.*

**47.) 見他體相不具而笑之**

*To mock and ridicule the disabled, disfigured and or deformed.*

**48.) 見他材能可稱而抑之**

*To disparage someone's commendable skills ; to withhold praise and recognition towards the able and deserving.*

**49.) 埋蠱厭人，用藥殺樹**

*To secretly employ black magic and occult practices against another. To kill trees and harm plants with poison.*

**50.) 恚怒師傅，抵觸父兄**

*To become irate while being taught by one's teacher ; failure to be filial towards one's parents and elder brothers.*

**51.) 強取強求，好侵好奪**

*To be avaricious and forceful without compassion or reason. To secretly infringe on the rights of others. To seize, rob, violate, extort and loot.*

**52.) 擄掠致富，巧詐求遷**

*To obtain wealth by foul, distasteful and illegal means ; attempting to win promotion via stratagems and fraud.*

**53.) 賞罰不平，逸樂過節**

*To punish and reward unfairly (e.g. selective prosecution). To indulge in excess revelry and luxury.*

**54.) 苛虐其下，恐嚇於他**

*To treat servants and subordinates with abuse and disdain. To instill fear by threats and coercion.*

**55.) 怨天尤人，呵風罵雨**

*Instead of reflecting on one's conduct or amassing merits to earn blessings ; wantonly assigns blame for misfortunes on nature, other people and fate.*

**56.) 鬥合爭訟，妄逐朋黨**

*To cause and facilitate lawsuits and contention in order to obtain gain. To join unlawful gangs and wicked organizations.*

**57.) 用妻妾語，違父母訓**

*To rely on gossip or to consider immoral proposals from one's spouse ; to disregard the teachings and instructions of one's mother and father.*

**58.) 得新忘故，口是心非**

*To favor the new and forget the old (e.g. forsaking old friends and wasting money on needless new items). To deceitfully speak what contradicts one's heart in order to manipulate others.*

**59.) 貪冒於財，欺罔其上**

*To be corrupt and greedy for bribes ; to deceive one's superiors.*

**60.) 造作惡語，讒毀平人**

*To taunt, ridicule and use sarcasm ; to slander, libel and utter abuse. To spread malicious rumors and ruin innocent reputations.*

**61.) 毀人稱直，罵神稱正**

*To ruin other's reputations and claim doing so is righteous ; to commit blasphemy and claim doing so is just. Note: This is a particularly common offense nowadays, for instance, media often recklessly ruin people's reputations but yet claim free speech as a shield.*

**62.) 棄順效逆，背親向疏**

*To abandon the proper teachings (e.g. Buddhism) and declare loyalty to evil ideologies. To turn one's back towards one's own flesh and blood but becomes close to outsiders and people of no relation.*

**63.) 指天地以證鄙懷，引神明而鑒猥事**

*To be guilty of evil but be so impious as to then demand the spirits or God to bear witness to one's innocence.*

**64.) 施與後悔，假借不還**

*To regret after having given to charity ; to borrow without intention to return or repay.*

**65.) 分外營求，力上施設**

*To be agitated in seeking the realization of one's ambitions but fail to cultivate the merits necessary to attain them ; to push one's subordinates to the breaking point.*

**66.) 淫慾過度，心毒貌慈**

*To (even if within marriage) engage in excessive and unrestrained amorous desire ; to hide cruelty and malice under a facade of kindness.*

**67.) 穢食餒人，左道惑眾**

*To serve food unfit for human consumption ; to lead the public astray with evil ideas and occult practices.*

**68.) 短尺狹度，輕秤小升；以偽雜真，採取姦利**

*Dishonesty in commerce and business transactions ; the use of false scales and weights. To defraud by adulterating merchandise.*

**67.) 壓良為賤，謾驀愚人**

*To use power to reduce good persons to servile and or low status. For instance, arresting innocent people or engaging in human trafficking. To trick and deceive simpletons.*

**68.) 貪婪無厭，咒詛求直**

*To be greedy without measure. To recklessly swear oaths and demand the gods and spirits to curse one's opponent and affirm one's arguments.*

**69.) 嗜酒悖亂，骨肉忿爭**

*To act lewdly and disorderly while drunk or under influence ; to quarrel and fight with one's own family members.*

**70.) 男不忠良，女不柔順**

*As a man, being neither loyal nor kind ; as a woman, being neither pliant nor gentle.* Note: This is also one of the main problems of our time. It is the natural order of yin and yang that men should display nobility while women should display kindness and patience. If men should become treacherous and women mean, bold and vulgar; social order will break down and evil karma will accumulate.

**71.) 不和其室，不敬其夫**

*To disrespect, neglect and or abuse one's spouse*

**72.) 每好矜誇，常行妒忌**

*To be pompous and narcissistic ; to harbor thoughts of jealousy and envy without cease.*

**74.) 無行於妻子，失禮於舅姑**

*To treat one's children and spouse without benevolence, care or attention ; to (as a woman) treat one's parents in law without respect or decorum.*

**75.) 輕慢先靈，違逆上命**

*To neglect the memory of one's ancestors or the upkeep of their graves ; to disobey orders from one's superiors without just cause.*

**76.) 作為無益，懷挾外心**

*To spend time on useless things while neglecting to cultivate stock of merit.  
To secretly feel loyalty and affinity towards outsiders at the expense of your own countrymen and family.*

**77.) 自咒咒他，偏憎偏愛**



*To seek to bring others down with you. To cherish unreasonable hatreds and undue partialities ; to be biased and bigoted.*

**78.) 越井越灶，跳食跳人**

*To step over wells and stoves instead of walking round them out of respect for the presiding deities and Spirit of the Hearth; to jump over foodstuff or persons, thereby showing disrespect towards other people's body and consumables.*

**79.) 損子墮胎，行多隱僻**

*To engage in abortion or child abuse. To commit offenses under the cover of darkness and or secrecy.*

**80.) 晦臘歌舞，朔旦號怒**

*To engage in revelry, shouting or anger during days of religious significance.*

**81.) 對北涕唾及溺，對灶吟詠及哭；又以灶火燒香，穢柴作食**

*To urinate, spit and defecate towards the northern skies where the gods reside; to weep and revel in front of the stove, where the Spirit of the Hearth resides. To lazily cut corners while performing religious offerings (e.g. lighting incense using stove fire or candle light instead of using a independent flame). To use unclean fuel to cook food, thereby contaminating the residence of the Spirit of the Hearth (i.e. the stove) with the foul odors.*

**82.) 夜起裸露，八節行刑**

*To practice public nudity at night, thereby offending the ghosts and spirits who roam in the darkness. To give sentences and carry out punishments during auspicious days such as the starting day and mid point of each lunar season, when spirits patrol the mortal world.*

**83.) 唾流星，指虹霓；輒指三光，久視日月；春月燎獵，對北惡罵**

*To gawk, spit or point at rainbows, comets, stars, the sun and the moon, thereby disrespecting the spirits and demigods that reside there. To utter abuse towards the northern skies where the gods and spirits reside. To set fire to mountains and forests or to hunt with fire.*

#### 84.) 無故殺龜打蛇

*To kill and abuse tortoises, snakes and animals without justification of self defense.*

#### **Commentary:**

The 170 crimes outlined in the aforementioned 84 sub - sections represent all conduct that a virtuous man must avoid or discard. According to the Buddha, the root of all evil are the three kleshas of Greed, Hatred and Delusion. So as we can clearly see, all of the offenses listed herein fall under those three types. Hence, in order to properly implement all these precepts, it will be helpful if one starts to think of others as more important than oneself. That way, one will naturally lose the selfishness that drives people to commit karmic offenses.

---

#### **Section Four : The Retributions of Evil:**

如是等罪，司命隨其輕重，奪其紀算。算盡則死；死有餘責，乃殃及子孫。

又諸橫取人財者，乃計其妻子家口以當之，漸至死喪。若不死喪，則有水火盜賊、遺亡器物、疾病口舌諸事，以當妄取之值。

又枉殺人者，是易刀兵而相殺也。取非義之財者，譬如漏脯救饑，鴆酒止渴；非不暫飽，死亦及之。

*For such crimes, depending on the severity of the act, the lifespan of the offender will be shortened accordingly. If when death results the full punishment of the crime has still yet to be accounted for, the punishment for the unaccounted portion will befall on the offender's descendents.*

*Those who seize wealth unjustly will be punished by having their wives and descendants bear surplus punishments after their death. The wives and*

*children will either meet death or if that does not result; illness, poverty, misfortune, injuries, legal troubles, ill repute and the like will shadow them until the balance of justice is restored.*

*Those who take life unjustly will meet retribution in the form of war and massacres. Persons who steal and rob are like those who eat diseased meat and drink poisoned wine to ease thirst and hunger. They may be full for a little while, but death will be the inevitable result.*

### **Commentary:**

In this section, Lao Tzu further illustrates the workings of karma. Hence, not only will the offender himself meet karmic retribution, but his family and descendants will as well. However, we should be clear that no one will bear punishment for the offenses done by someone else even if they are related by blood. What is actually happening is that those who do evil will naturally attract a spouse and or descendants that themselves have committed various offenses in their past lives. For this reason, the offender and his or her family are actually undergoing individual retribution for their personal karmic offenses and bad habits. Since no one in their family has good roots, they are often unable to meet the dharma and find ways to cultivate merits to save themselves.

### **Section 5: Conclusion and Practical Advice:**

夫心起於善，善雖未為，而吉神已隨之；或心起於惡，惡雖未為，而凶神已隨之。其有曾行惡事，後自改悔，諸惡莫作，眾善奉行，久久必獲吉慶；所謂轉禍為福也。故吉人語善、視善、行善，一日有三善，三年天必降之福。凶人語惡、視惡、行惡，一日有三惡，三年天必降之禍。胡不勉而行之？

*When one thinks of doing good, even if the act has not yet been done, fortune is already shadowing him. When one thinks of evil, even if the act has not yet been committed, disasters are already standing by.*

*If a person who has long committed evil decides to change and abstains henceforth from all evil while diligently amassing good deeds. Great fortune is bound to manifest after a while. This is to change calamity to fortune.*

*A virtuous man speaks only good, does only good and sees only good. Hence, he does at least three good deeds everyday. After 3 years (1000 days), karmic rewards are guaranteed to manifest. The evil man does the opposite and amasses evil deeds daily. Therefore, disasters and misfortunes will certainly befall upon him after three years. Thus, what reason is there not to heed this treatise?*

### **Commentary:**

In this section, Lao Tzu offers us practical advice on how to earn blessings and reform. Most importantly, if one wants to cultivate good, one should have honest intentions and harbor no vicious thoughts. By doing so, one's mental volition will be pure and spiritual advancement will naturally become possible. Furthermore, the Sage also highlights the importance of the 1000 day period. Basically, if one diligently amasses good deeds and makes good efforts to control one's evil within a 1000 day period, then the good karma created will be so great that fortune is bound to be bestowed. The opposite happens with evil people.

Now some may protest that some evil persons have sinned for more than three years but have not met any significant retribution. However, in the Buddha's Infinite Life Sutra, it is said that blessings from previous lives may temporarily pad or delay the effects of the offenses of a man's present life. Hence, once those blessings end, the full dose of karmic retribution will manifest in the most severe manner. However, if one has truly worked reasonably hard to amass good deeds during the 1000 days period, then it is without doubt that significant good fortune will manifest very quickly.

Therefore, I recommend that everyone should diligently recite Amita Buddha's name and make offerings of light, water, fruits and incense to Buddha statues every day. Furthermore, we should strive to give donations to the poor or needy on a daily, weekly or monthly basis and donate to help print Mahayana Sutras or create Buddha Statues. Moreover, we ought to do our best to avoid transgressing any of the 170 crimes listed. If we cannot avoid offending, then we should at least do our best to limit the severity of the offense. If we can do all this for the 3 year period, we can expect our karmic obstacles to be eradicated and great fortune to manifest.

Also, one should do good deeds without seeking fame. According to the Sages, "hidden virtue is the greatest virtue while secret crimes are the gravest offense". Hence, we should do good deeds with a low profile and if we should meet fame, act as modest as possible.

---

## **Section Six: Historical Case Studies**

***The following accounts were translated in 1884 by Frederic Henry Balfour:***

*Fang Shih-k'o, a native of Hsing-an, had been very sickly from a child. Afterwards he began to enquire into the mysteries of Taoism, with a view of procuring the secret of immortality. Arrived one day at the Cloud-capped Mountain, he met a person of strange appearance, who said, "With such a face as yours, how can you expect to get the blessings that you seek? It is impossible—unless you first plant a root of goodness." Then Shih-k'o went home; and although he was a poor man he found means to print off an edition of the Book of Recompenses (Kan Yin Pien) and distribute copies among his friends. By the time he had printed ten pages, his sickness was half-cured; when the work was completed, he found himself entirely recovered; and from that time forward he became [p. 115](#) robust in body, and quite different from what he had been before in appearance.*

*Wang Chu, a native of Hsien-chü Hsien, had a son named Wang Tsing, who fell sick and died when only four years old, to his father's deep-felt grief. Whereupon Wang Chu formed a resolution to print a number of copies of this book, which he distributed among the people with the object of causing his lost son to enter once more into his mother's womb. Some time afterwards, his wife found herself enceinte; [p. 112](#) and one night she dreamt she went to the Ting-kuang Temple at Huang-yen Hsien, whence she returned carrying her little boy home in her arms. When she awoke she experienced a movement in her womb, and soon gave birth to a son, vastly resembling the one that she had lost. In fact, the same body was born twice over; the bones and flesh had actually been brought together a second time!*

*When Chou Ju-têng, a gentleman of Tsung-yueh, was young, he was one of the pupils of a certain tutor named Lung Chi. Although he constantly listened to the instructions of his preceptor he derived no benefit whatever; but subsequently he fell in with this book, and from p. 117 that time forward set himself heart and soul to walk according to its doctrines. Besides this, he collected all the best commentaries on the text and verifications of the theories, and published them for the benefit of the world. Many were brought to lead good lives by this means; and the gentleman himself, by virtue of his great merit, found himself one day suddenly endowed with supernatural wisdom, so that he could see, as it were, right through the doctrines of Confucius and Lao Chün. Thus he passed for one of the greatest scholars of the Ming dynasty. At the present day, Confucianists study the Sage, Buddhists study Fo, and Taoists study the Immortals; but to the end of their lives they never arrive at a full comprehension of what they are learning, and some give up when they are only half way. And why is this? It is because their root is inadequate to producing a full measure of fruit, and therefore they do not bring forth any works of merit. Chang Tsze-yang said, "He who does not cultivate himself, and accumulate unostentatious, or hidden, virtue, will be so blinded by evil spirits as to be unable to see clearly into the truth." The Book of Recompenses should be studied by Confucianists, Buddhists, and Taoists alike, for it alone is able to provide a starting-point for journeying to the highest goal.*

**俞淨意遇灶神 THE SPIRIT OF THE HEARTH ( Translated in 1906**

**by Teitaro Suzuki and Dr. Paul Carus)**

*In the days of the Ming dynasty (1368-1628 A. D.) during the years called Kia-Tsing (1522-1567 A. D.) there lived in the province of Kiang-Shih a man named Yu Kong. His posthumous name was Tu, and his honorary title Liang-Chin. He was gifted with unusual capacity and had acquired a scholarship as thorough as it was varied. At the age of sixteen he received the Bachelor's degree, and had always been first in all examinations. But when he had reached the age of thirty, he found himself in such straits that he was obliged to give lessons for a livelihood. He joined several Bachelors who had studied at the same college and commenced with them to offer sacrifices to Wen-Chang Ti Chün, the "Lord Superior of Scripture Glory." He carefully*

*guarded written paper,<sup>[1]</sup> and set at liberty captive birds; he refrained from enjoying the pleasures of sense, from the killing of animals, and from the sins of the tongue. Although he had faithfully observed these rules of conduct for many years, he failed seven times in competitive examination for the second degree. He married and had five sons; the fourth*

*[1. According to Chinese views it is impious to throw away paper on which characters are inscribed, because words, both printed or written, are deemed to partake of the spiritual nature of the Tao; and this notion is not altogether foreign to the Western idea that the Logos or "word" is the incarnation of God. There is a class of Taoist monks who devote themselves to the task of collecting and burning all scraps of inscribed paper to spare their writing the sorry fate of defilement.]*

*fell ill and died a premature death. His third son, a child of rare intelligence and charming features, had two black spots under the sole of his left foot. He was an especial favorite with his parents, but one day when he was eight years old, while playing in the street he lost his way and no one knew what had become of him. Yu Kong had four daughters, but only one lived, and his wife lost her sight from mourning for her children. Although he worked incessantly year after year, his misery only increased from day to day. So he examined himself, and finding he had committed no great sin, became resigned, although not without murmuring, to heaven's chastening hand.*

*When he had passed the age of forty, every year at the end of the twelfth moon he wrote a prayer on yellow paper and burned it before the Spirit of the Hearth, beseeching him to carry his vows to heaven. This practice he continued for several years without having the slightest response.*

*When he was forty-seven, he spent the last evening of the year in the company of his blind wife and only daughter. Gathered together in a room very scantily furnished, the three tried to console one another in their afflictions, when all at once a knock was heard at the door. Yu Kong took the lamp and went to see who it was, and lo, there stood a man whose beard and hair were partly whitened by age. The stranger was clad in black and wore a square cap. He entered with a bow and sat down. "My family name is Chang," he said to Yu Kong, "I have come hither a long distance because I have heard your sighs and complaints, and wish to comfort you in your distress."*

*Yu Kong was filled with wonder and paid him every mark of respectful deference. "All my life," he said to Chang, "I have consecrated to study and the pursuit of virtue, and yet up to this day have never been able to obtain any advancement. Death has robbed me of nearly all my children, my wife has lost her sight, and we can hardly earn enough to keep us from hunger and cold. Moreover," he added, "I have never ceased importuning the Spirit of the Hearth and burning before him written prayers."*

*"For many years," Chang replied, "I have taken an interest in the affairs of your house, and I am sorry that with your evil thoughts you have filled the measure to overflowing. Concerned only to acquire empty renown you sent to heaven unacceptable prayers, filled with murmurings and accusations. I fear that your visitation is not yet at an end."*

*Yu Kong was frightened. "I have heard," he said with emotion, "that in the other world even the smallest virtues are written in a book. I have sworn to do good, and for a long time have carefully followed the rules which are laid down for men. Can you then say that I have worked for mere vainglory?"*

*"My friend," Chang answered, "among those precepts there is one which bids you to respect written characters. Yet your pupils and fellow students often use the leaves of ancient books to redress the walls of their rooms and to make envelopes; some, indeed, even use them to wipe off their tables. Then they excuse themselves by saying that although they soil the paper, they burn it immediately afterwards. This happens daily under your eyes and you say not a word to prevent it. Indeed when you yourself find a scrap of written paper in the street you take it home and throw it in the fire. While you suffer others to trespass, tell me please what good does it do that you act rightly? It is true, too, that every month you set animals at liberty that have been doomed to death; but in this you blindly follow the crowd and act only according to the counsel of others. It would even seem that you remain undecided and irresolute if others do not first set the example. Good feeling and compassion have never been spontaneous in your heart. You have kids and lobsters served on your table, without considering that they, too, are endowed with the breath of life. As to the sins of the tongue, you shine by reason of your readiness of speech and force of argument and never fail to silence all who dispute with you, but you are insentient to the fact that*



*thereby you wound others' feelings and lose their friendship. Often, too, carried away by the heat of discussion, you take advantage of your superiority and taunt your opponents with biting sarcasm. You pierce them with the bitter darts of your tongue and thus draw upon you the anger of the gods. You are unaware of the number of your offences which are recorded in the spiritual world, and yet you picture yourself the most virtuous of men. Who is there who pretends to deceive me? Do you think any one can impose upon heaven?*

*"It is true that you commit no actual crimes; but when you meet a beautiful woman in another's home and cannot banish her from your thoughts, you have committed adultery with her in your heart. Consider a moment! Would you have sufficient control over yourself to imitate the sage Lu Nan-Tze if you were placed in a similar position? When he once found himself obliged to pass the night in a house whose only other occupant was a woman, he lighted a lamp and read aloud until morning to avoid exposing her to unjust suspicions.<sup>[1]</sup> You say that you have kept yourself pure and unspotted throughout your life, and believe that you can without fear present yourself before heaven and earth, before demons and spirits! You are deceiving yourself. If this is the way you have followed the precepts which you have sworn to observe, what need is there to speak of others?*

*"I have presented to heaven the supplications which you have burned before my altar. The Supreme Master has charged a spirit to keep careful account of your good and evil deeds, and for several years he has not found a single virtue worth recording. When you are alone and given over to yourself, I see nothing in your heart but thoughts of avarice, of envy, of selfishness; thoughts of pride, of scorn and of ambition; and thoughts of hate and ingratitude towards your benefactors and your friends. These thoughts grow on you; so plentifully they swarm in the depths of your heart that I could not enumerate them all. The gods have already recorded a vast number of them and the punishment of heaven is increasing daily. Since you have not even time to escape the calamities which threaten you, what use to pray for happiness!"*

*At these words Yu Kong was panic-stricken. He prostrated himself upon the earth and burst into a torrent of tears.*

*"Oh Lord!" he groaned, "I know that thou art a god since thou knowest things which are hidden. Have mercy upon me and save me!"*

*"My friend," Chang replied, "you study the works of the ancients, you are instructed in your duties, and love of truth has always been a delight to you. When you hear a noble word, you are for the moment carried away with zeal and emulation, while if you witness a good action, your heart leaps for very joy. But as soon as these things are out of your sight and hearing, you forget them at once. Faith has not planted her roots deeply in your heart, and therefore your good principles have no solid foundation. Then, too, the good words and actions of your whole life have never been anything but empty show. Have you ever done a single thing that betrayed a noble motive? And yet, when your heart is full of wrong thoughts which surround and bind you on all sides, you dare ask heaven for the rewards which only virtue can claim. You are like a man who would sow only thistles and thorns in his field and expect a rich harvest of good fruit. Would not that be the height of folly?"*

*"From this time forward, arm yourself with courage, and banish all impure and unworthy thoughts that may present themselves to your mind. You must first bring forth a crop of pure and noble thoughts, and after that you may direct your efforts to the accomplishment of good. If an opportunity comes to do a good action which is within the limits of your strength, hasten to do it with a firm and resolute heart, without calculating whether it is large or small, difficult or easy, or whether it will bring you any advantage. If this good act is above your strength, use the same zeal and effort in order to show your sincere intention. Your first duty is patience without limit, your second, tireless perseverance. Above all, keep yourself from indifference and avoid self-deception. When you have followed these rules of conduct for a long time you will reap untold benefits.*

*"Within your home you have served me with a pure and reverential heart and it is for this reason that I have come with the especial purpose of bringing you instructions. If you make haste to carry them out with all your might you may appease heaven and cause it to change its decision."*

*While speaking the stranger entered farther within the house. Yu Kong rose eagerly and followed. But on approaching the hearth, the weird visitor vanished. Then Yu Kong realized that it was the Spirit of the Hearth who*

*presides over the destiny of men. He at once burned incense in his honor and prostrated himself in grateful acknowledgment.*

*The next day which was the first day of the first month of the year, he directed prayers and praise to heaven. He avoided his former errors and began to do well with a sincere heart. He changed his literary name to Tseng-I Tao-Jen which means "the Taoist bent on the purification of his heart," and then wrote out a vow to banish all blameworthy thoughts.*

*The first day he was besieged by a thousand conflicting thoughts; now he fell into doubt, and again into indifference and inaction. He allowed hours and days to pass fruitlessly and it was not long before he returned to the path in which he had before lost his way. At last he prostrated himself before the altar of the great Kwan Yin (Guan Yin Bodhisattva) whom he worshiped in his home, and shed tears of blood.*

*"I vow," he said, "that my only desire is to have none but worthy thoughts, to keep myself pure and unspotted, and to use every effort to advance towards perfection. If I relax a hair's breadth may I fall into the depths of hell."*

*Every day he rose very early and invoked one hundred times in sincerity and faith the holy name of Ta-Tzé Ta-Pei (the Most Benevolent and Most Compassionate One) that he might obtain divine aid. From that moment he controlled his thoughts, words, and actions as if spirits were constantly at his side. He dared not permit himself the slightest wavering.*

*Whenever anything occurred to him that might be of use to a man or beast, he did not consider whether it was a great or a small thing, whether he had time or was too busily engaged, or whether he had or had not sufficient ability and means to perform it. He hastened to undertake it with enthusiasm, and stopped only after its complete accomplishment. He did good as often as he found opportunity and spread benefits in secret far and wide. He performed every duty faithfully and applied himself to study untiringly. He practiced humility, bore insults, and endeavored to influence to well-doing all the men that he met. The days were not long enough for his good works. On the last day of each month he made a list on yellow paper of all his acts and words during the thirty preceding days and burned it*

*before the image of the Spirit of the Hearth.*

*Yu Kong soon ripened in the practice of noble deeds. While he was up, every one of his acts was followed by a thousand good results, and when he rested no blameworthy thought troubled the serenity of his soul. So he continued for three years.*

*When Yu Kong reached the age of fifty, in the second year of the reign of Wan Li (1574 A. D.), Chang Kiang-Lin who held the office of First Minister of State, sought an instructor for his son, and with one voice, every one recommended Yu Kong for the place. The Minister himself went to invite him, and brought him and his family to the capital.*

*Chang, who appreciated Yu Kong's strength of character, induced him to enter the imperial college, and in the year Ping-Tsée (1576 A. D.) he competed for and obtained the degree of Licentiate and the next year was raised to the rank of Tsin-Ssé (Doctor).*

*One day while still sojourning in the capital, he went to visit a eunuch whose name was Yang Kong. Yang introduced his five adopted sons whom he had purchased in different parts of the realm to be a comfort to him in his old age; and there was among them a youth of sixteen years, whose face seemed somehow familiar to Yu Kong. So he asked him where he was born.*

*"I am from the district of Kiang-Shih," the youth replied. "When I was a child I became lost by heedlessly embarking with a cargo of grain. The name of my family and also my native village are very dim in my memory."*

*Yu Kong was surprised and deeply moved. Begging the youth to uncover his left foot he recognized the two black spots and cried out, "You are my son!"*

*Yang Kong rejoiced at the good fortune of this happy meeting and allowed the father to take his son home. The blind mother embraced her son tenderly and shed tears of sorrow and joy. The boy wept too and pressing his mother's face between his hands, gently touched her eyes with his tongue and instantly she recovered her sight.<sup>[1]</sup> Yu Kong's happiness was now complete,*

*and in spite of the tears with which his eyes were still moist, his face beamed with joy. Later, Yu Kong gave up his position and took leave of Chan Kiang-Lin to return to his native village. The Minister, however, affected by the nobility of his tutor's character, would not permit him to leave until he had presented him with many rich gifts.*

*Having reached his native country, Yu Kong continued his good deeds with increased zeal. His son married, and had in his turn, seven sons, all of whom lived to inherit the talents and renown of their grandfather.*

*Yu Kong wrote a book in which he told the history of his life before and after his happy conversion, and gave the book to his grandsons to learn from his experiences. He lived to the age of eighty-eight years, and every one looked upon his long life as the just reward for his noble deeds by which he had changed the decision of heaven in his favor.*

**Commentary:**

These historical accounts clearly prove that the power of amassing merits can significantly change one's fate. While many may claim that such occurrences are impossible, the truth is that both the human body and our world are all created by and reflect our karma. Hence, if we have accumulated powerful blessings in this life (something that few do), then why wouldn't our dreams come true?

The Buddha has said that the gift of dharma (e.g. printing sutras) is the highest of all gifts and will result in the most wonderful blessings. For instance, the Buddha has said that those who print sutras can expect health and long life; a upright and handsome appearance; unrivaled wealth and power and great intelligence. If you can dedicate the merit of such works towards Amita Buddha's Pureland, you can surely attain Buddhahood.

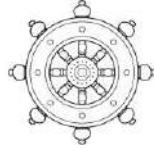
Another way to accumulate boundless merits is to create and distribute images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In the Sutra on the Production of Buddha Statues, it is stated that those who create one Buddha image can eternally avoid being reborn in the 3 evil realms of the hells, hungry ghosts

and animals. Furthermore, they will always be healthy, handsome, possess exquisite features and have unrivaled wealth and power. They will also be reborn in good places where there is peace, morality, prosperity and Buddhism. Hence, we should all strive to create or commission Buddha images and dedicate the merit of such deeds towards attaining Buddhahood in Amita Buddha's Pureland.

Finally, one should not neglect to recite Amita Buddha's name. It is recorded in the sutras that reciting but once the name of Amita Buddha can eradicate 8 billion eons worth of heavy karmic offenses. Furthermore, one must be mindful of Amita Buddha at the moment of death to attain Pureland rebirth. Hence, I exhort everyone to sincerely recite Amita Buddha's name as often as possible. Even If you cannot recite it out loud you should do it silently. The merit from doing so exceeds even the printing of sutras and creation of Buddha images.

So as a parting word, I strongly encourage all who read this to make it's teachings known to others. Print copies of this treatise and cultivate in accordance to it. Your blessings will surely be beyond compare.

**Namo Amita Buddha**



# UPASAKA AN SHI'S DISCOURSE ON THE FORTY EIGHT INQUIRIES OF NON VIOLENCE

戒殺四十八問英文版

TRANSLATOR: BRIAN CHUNG

翻譯者：鍾佰晟

MARCH 2015



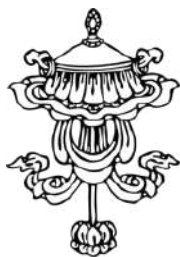
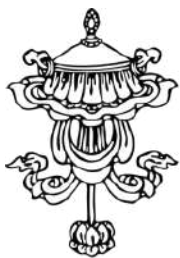
---

---

THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT

---

---



NAMO AMITA BUDDHA

南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛



南  
無  
阿  
彌  
陀  
佛





# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	6
UPASAKA AN SHI'S FOREWORD.....	7
THE DISCOURSE ON THE FORTY-EIGHT INQUIRIES OF NON VIOLENCE.....	9
TRANSLATOR'S COMMENTARY.....	25
MASTER YIN GUANG'S EXHORTATION.....	35
MAHASTHAMAPRAPTA'S TREATISE ON PERFECT ENLIGHTENMENT THROUGH MINDFULNESS OF AMITAYUS....	37
PURELAND REBIRTH STORIES.....	39
MEAT FREE RECIPES.....	44

---

## NO RIGHTS RESERVED

As the author of this text, it is my express intent that the entirety of this text be released into the Public Domain. I reserve no rights to this work. If the laws of a particular jurisdiction should make it impossible to reserve no rights, then I hereby grant permission to anyone who seeks to use and reproduce this work for any purpose.

*Brian Chung*

---

*"Anywhere a Buddha goes—whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet — people will be  
converted and brought towards the Way.  
All the lands beneath the stars will be serene and harmonious.  
The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be clear.  
Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm.  
Plagues, intrigues and calamities will not occur.  
Society will be prosperous and peaceful.  
Soldiers and arms will be of no use.  
Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished.  
All will feel compelled to refine themselves with etiquette and deference.  
Society will be free from thieves and bandits.  
There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice.  
The powerful will not exploit the weak.  
Everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."*

**-Infinite Life Sutra**

### **DEDICATION OF MERIT**

**May the merits and virtues accrued from this work  
repay the kindness of my Mother, Father and Elders  
and relieve them from their sufferings.**



**May my Mother, Father and Elders  
bring forth the heart  
of understanding and compassion and,  
at the end of this life,**



**be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.**



UPASAKA ZHOU AN SHI

### INTRODUCTION

Upasaka Zhou An Shi was an eminent Qing dynasty Buddhist and the author of the An Shi Quan Shu (安士全書). The An Shi Quan Shu—his magnum opus collection of Sagely works—is considered no less important than the Analects of Confucius or the sutras of the Buddha. Upasaka An Shi masterfully combines the true spirit of the important teachings of Mencius, Confucius and Lao Tzu with profound Mahayana Buddhist principles. Thus, his masterpiece fully captures the spirit of Chinese Buddhism and the vision of the Buddha and Sages. Hence, it is no surprise that Patriarch Master Yin Guang printed over three million copies of this work!

Upasaka An Shi wrote this Discourse on the Forty-Eight Inquiries of Non Violence to enlighten people on the harmfulness of slaughtering and eating meat. Thus, this discourse forms an important section of the An Shi Quan Shu. Furthermore, this edition covers the most important 33 out of the total of 48 inquiries. The missing 15 questions have not yet been translated from classical Chinese to modern Chinese. Nevertheless, these 33 represent the most important out of the 48.

## FOREWORD BY UPASAKA AN SHI

Whenever slaughter and death comes calling, it is always a pitiful scene. A human being may not meet violence or conflict for tens of years or even hundreds of years. However, the horror of slaughter happens daily to animals. Everyday, as soon as sunrise, knife wielding butchers loom over livestock while hunters prowl the land. Even though animals cry out for help, their efforts are always in vain. These rakshasas masked as humans repeatedly disembowel and boil, inflicting great pain and suffering on animals of all kinds. It takes only a short span of time for hundreds of millions of animals to lose their lives.

As animals have no recourse against the never-ending slaughter, they must silently swallow their grievances. This leads to a dismal atmosphere of mounting evil karma. Eventually, as the evil karma of killing accumulates to the limit, demon kings will descend into the human realm as a response.

The Zen Master Ci Shou once said: "As a result of the sin of animal slaughter, violence and wars will break out. Those who have taken life will in turn lose their lives. Those who have maliciously refused to repay their debts will lose their homes in the chaos. Furthermore, those who have destroyed burrows and nests will have their family members scattered. Each sin will result in the appropriate retribution. Thus, do not fail to heed the Buddha's words."

Therefore, violence and wars are caused by the evil karma of killing. If we are faced with impending violence or conflict, the only recourse is to abstain from killing. The merits from such abstinence is the most potent and materializes speedily. Other good deeds cannot match it.

Thus, I have composed this scroll of questions and answers regarding non-violence. I wish to answer people's doubts regarding this matter and convince everyone to abstain from killing animals. Furthermore, I hope everyone will recite **Namo Amitabha** and dedicate the resulting merits to the souls of the animals we have killed in the past. We should never again kill. Moreover, we should give rise to the heart of Great Compassion and vow to exercise great forbearance. Henceforth, we should not dare to kill even the smallest creature. I vow that if you do as instructed but are unable to avoid conflict and violence, the Celestial Dragons and Vajra Dharma Protectors may have my head!

-Upasaka Zhou An Shi (周安士居士)

### **Translators Notes:**

The name of Amita Buddha is a mantra of supreme importance. In fact, these two words are the single most important Dharma the Buddha has spoken, it surpasses in importance all other mantras and sutras. By itself, this Buddha's name can be considered the sum of every Dharma the Buddha has taught during his entire life. This is not an exaggeration as eminent Dharma Masters of both past and present—such as Patriarch Yin Guang, Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu, Upasaka Xia Lian Ju and Ven. Master Chin Kung—have all said the same.

According to the Contemplation Sutra, just a single sincere recitation of Amita Buddha can eradicate eight billion eons worth of karmic offenses. Furthermore, according to Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra, Amita Buddha has vowed that:

### **Amita Buddha's Vows 25-27: The Vows of Good Karma and Virtue**

**"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are inspired by my name to sincerely cultivate the Bodhisattva Way shall be respected by both men and devas. Moreover, sentient beings who merely hear my name will be reborn as virtuous aristocrats possessing wealth, knowledge and auctoritas. Their bodies will be healthy and complete. Lastly, they will enjoy cultivating the highest Dharma. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

Therefore, Amita Buddha guarantees that any sentient being who merely perceives his name or recites it will at the very least be reborn as an aristocrat possessing wealth, knowledge and power. Furthermore, they will also have healthy bodies and be able to cultivate the highest Dharma.

However, these generous karmic benefits still only represent the fringe benefits derived from reciting Amita Buddha's name. Those who can recite it single-mindedly can reap the profound benefits that makes the Dharma-door of Amitabha the foremost Dharma-door. In short, those who can recite this name single-mindedly can attain rebirth in Pureland (i.e. enlightenment) as soon as ten recitations have been uttered.

For more information, please read the excellent Pureland resources included at the end of this translation.

## THE DISCOURSE ON THE FORTY EIGHT INQUIRIES OF NON VIOLENCE

**1.) Question:** The ancients have said that Heaven and Earth are the mother of all living beings, and mankind is the paragon of all beings. Therefore, animals are certainly created by Heaven for the benefit of mankind. Thus, why not kill?

**Answer:** As Heaven and Earth are the mother of all living beings, all animals are the beloved offspring of Heaven and Earth. No mother can be happy if among her children, the strong bully the weak and the successful exploit the poor. If you eat meat and feel that it is your right to do so, then by this logic, as tigers can eat humans and mosquitoes suck our blood—are humans not created by Heaven to nourish beasts and pests?

**2.) Question:** If animal slaughter is an offense, why does Heaven not inflict punishment to deter such conduct?

**Answer:** Heaven is definitely against animal slaughter. Thus, the karmic retributions for hunting and slaughtering are actually numerous and fully visible. However, the foolish fail to heed these warnings and the intelligent willfully refuse to change their behavior. Thus, there is really nothing more Heaven can do.

For instance, in 1851, a native of Quanjiao County dreamed of a celestial deity who warned him that: "An army is fast approaching your residence! If you do not cease slaughtering animals, you cannot hope to escape death!" After he awoke, he and his entire household burned incense and vowed that they would never slaughter or hunt again. No one breached their vows....except for one dissenting matron. She said to him: "You simply had a dream, we cannot be sure if it is true or not." A few days later, the violence of the Taiping rebellion spilled into their hometown. Everyone managed to escape except for the matron, who had delayed leaving the family compound and was killed. The native and his family members personally brought this incident to my attention.

### **Translators Notes:**

According to Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra (the part describing the karmic offense of killing):

**"People of this world are driven to kill by their desires. The strong abuse the weak and the victorious massacre the defeated. They hunt, slaughter and devour. Thus, karmic retributions naturally follow. That is why some are orphaned, poor, lonely, wicked, blind, disfigured, deaf, mute, deranged, weak, deformed or crude. They had rejected virtue in their past lives and refused to be charitable. The fundamental truth is that nobility, wealth, courage, grace, wisdom and eloquence are the result of kindness and filial piety. Only merits and good deeds can yield such wholesome results."**

Thus, most of the ills of this world are caused by acts of killing. The reason people suffer from deformities, mental illnesses, misery and painful medical conditions is because they have killed in the past or in this life. If you look around you, you will see that intelligence, wealth and nobility belong only to a few while deprivation, sickness and suffering are widespread. This is because only a few have abstained from taking life during their past lives while most did not. Therefore, bliss naturally becomes a rarity in a sea of suffering.

However, most people foolishly or willfully ignore these warnings and continue to indulge in meat. Thus, we must open our eyes. We must look around us and take heed of the words of Upasaka An Shi and the Buddha.

**3.) Question: There are so many animals in the world. If no one hunts or slaughters, wouldn't their populations grow out of control?**

**Answer:** There are plenty of insects and animals that humans do not eat or kill ; their numbers are numerous without issue. Furthermore, the reason there are so many beasts and animals is due to the karma of killing. Animal rebirth is caused by the cycle of retribution and revenge. People who kill animals are reborn as animals to even up the debt. If everyone abstains from taking animal life, the karma that supports the realm of animals will gradually dissipate while the ranks of devas and men will increase. For instance, if people do not trap frogs, the population of frogs will decrease. Likewise, if people do not fish for crabs, the population of crabs will gradually decrease. Thus, the laws of karma are quite clear.

**Translator's Notes:**

What Upasaka An Shi mentions in this answer is particularly important. People often think that hunting or culling are justifiable because doing so controls animal



populations. However, killing actually cause the unwanted populations to increase, as those who kill will be reborn as what they used to kill to be killed themselves.

**4.) Question: If Heaven wishes for mankind to refrain from eating meat, then why isn't the meat of animals disgusting and foul as a deterrence?**

**Answer:** The truth is that Heaven already considers meat to be foul and disgusting. However, people believe the taste of meat to be delicious— like how maggots revel in putrid feces. As this is a matter of deep-rooted habits, it is difficult to change perceptions. For instance, if a man was a cat in his past life, he would have craved for rodents during that life. Likewise, if a man was a crane in his past life, he would've craved for snakes. However, as they are now men, they no longer yearn for rats and snakes. Thus, each body has its own habits. Variations in preferences and habits are due to karma, causes and conditions. Differences in karma, causes and conditions are in turn caused by differing intentions. If people's hearts and intentions can accord with Heaven's will, they will naturally understand that meat is indeed foul and disgusting.

**5.) Question: There are many who eke out a living by fishing or working in the meat packing industry. If we exhort them to change professions, we would be causing them financial ruin. Isn't it unreasonable to favor animals over humans?**

**Answer:** Those who support themselves in such a manner are like a man who eats poisoned meat to satiate his hunger. Even though they may be able to live comfortably off the earnings for a while, they will soon have to undergo many kalpas of excruciating karmic retribution. The reason we urge hunters, fishermen, ranchers, butchers and so forth to change professions is because we are concerned about them. Thus, how can we be considered unreasonable? Aren't there plenty of people who support themselves very well without having to kill animals?

**6.) Question: Cows help plow the fields and dogs loyally guard our homes. Thus, they have utility and should not be killed. However, pigs and lambs have no other uses. If we do not eat them, what should we do with them?**

**Answer:** One abstains from meat and liberates life in order to cultivate compassion. It has nothing to do with whether the animal is useful to humans or not. If one abstains from eating a type of meat simply because the animal has utility, then such thoughts are selfish. Such selfishness exists because evil habits and defilements still cover up our Buddha-nature.

**7.) Question: It is true that when animals such as chicken, sheep and cattle are about to be slaughtered, they will cry out and show fear. Thus, killing them would be cruel. However, no such distress is shown by small fish. Therefore, why should we abstain from them?**

**Answer:** Even though animals and fish come in different sizes, their Buddha-nature is all the same. For instance, both the killing of old men and babies are considered murder. If you insist on thinking that certain animals feel no pain because they do not shed tears or scream, then imagine the reaction of a mute person being attacked. Would you hear screams?

**8.) Question: It is indeed cruel to personally slaughter animals. However, if we only eat the meat that others have slaughtered, wouldn't that make us blameless?**

**Answer:** Such logic is nothing more than self deception. If you think that you can escape blame by delegating the task of slaughtering to others, then shouldn't a wrongfully executed man blame only the executioner and not the magistrate? Plausible deniability can fool some, but you cannot fool your conscience.

**9.) Question: Liberating life is virtuous, but what should we do if the liberated animals are captured again?**

**Answer:** Let hunters and fishermen do as they please. No one should cease doing good just because others do evil. For instance, a dedicated doctor cannot guarantee that the patient he heals today will live to see tomorrow. Likewise, those bringing relief in a famine cannot be sure if they can successfully avert starvation. The world is full of uncertainty, why do people only have doubts regarding life liberation? Moreover, how could you be sure that all the animals that are liberated will be recaptured?

Lastly, the truth is that if we simply attempt to do good, our merits are already complete.

**10.) Question: Virtue is simply a good heart. Thus, isn't it enough that we are good people? why must we also abstain from meat?**

**Answer:** Such a statement makes no sense whatsoever. How can you be virtuous if you inflict unspeakable pain on other living beings? There is no malice greater than

the heart that tolerates slaughter. Mencius said: "Humanity is based on mercy and compassion." Thus, a virtuous man will not kill or slaughter. People who inflict torturous pain on animals cannot be truly benevolent. There is not one virtuous man or noble gentleman under Heaven that is partial to slaughter.

**11.) Question: I am indifferent to this matter. I neither intentionally slaughter nor deliberately avoid doing so. I simply go with the flow.... is that wrong?**

**Answer:** If you slaughter when it is convenient to do so and refrain at other times simply out of caprice or absent-minded indifference, you will not receive any merits. However, you will still incur karmic retribution for the living beings you do kill. For instance, if a bandit misfires a crossbow bolt while plundering someone's household, and if the stray bolt then hits you, will you consider him guiltless?

**12.) Question: Animals are killed or boiled because of their past evil karma. Even if we refrain from slaughtering them, someone else surely will. Thus, what harm could possibly result from slaughtering?**

**Answer:** Even though animals must undergo their own karmic retributions, we are in a different position — we can choose. If you slaughter and hunt because you feel that they deserve it, then you will sink to their level. You will be reborn as an animal to be slaughtered. Thus, as we currently possess human rebirth, we have the ability to change our karmic situation for the better through the way we act. Hence, why delay in adopting virtue and humaneness?

**13.) Question: Animals are often killed because of the karmic debts they owe. Thus, why is it wrong for us to collect our due?**

**Answer:** It is true that animals are killed as repayment for past karmic debts. However, there is a difference between simple karmic retribution and the retribution of maturing debt. The former is when an animal's past evil karmic seeds ripen in the form of random slaughter. The latter situation refers to when an animal is slaughtered by someone who had been killed by it in past lives.

In a typical banquet, the number of animals killed is countless. For instance, caviar contains numerous souls. As people are so indiscriminate in their eating habits, how can anyone be certain that every piece of meat they eat is their rightful due? Most likely, only a few out of the multitudes of animals you eat actually owe you. The rest

are now your karmic creditors!

**14.) Question: If we kill animals that actually do owe us their lives, doesn't that cancel out the debt? Surely, there can be no further retribution?**

**Answer:** Have you never seen a feud? How many rivals instantly become best friends after bouts of savage fighting? Bodhisattvas can clearly see how today's causes and conditions will play out in the future. Thus, Bodhisattvas never engage in vengeance.

**Translator's Notes:**

According to the Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra:

**"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of enmity in the lives to come. Thus, we should be cautious. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims and suffer their vengeance."**

Thus, Upasaka An Shi's warning is very important. We should focus on cultivating good relationships with other living beings and exercise forbearance when slighted. This way, our stocks of merit will accrue boundlessly and any evil karma will dissolve.

**15.) Question: The Buddha has said that anything that has life had once been our parents or relatives in previous rebirths. How is this true?**

**Answer:** Sentient beings have been turning in the Samsara since time immemorial. Even if we take only one kalpa, the number of beings we would have been associated with during that time period would be countless. In fact, some of the animals currently in your household may be someone you knew in this life! For instance, I have personally witnessed the following case: When Liu Dao Yuan (the former magistrate of Pengxi County) was on his way home after retiring, he lodged at the home of the Qin family. That night, a tearful matron appeared in his dreams. She told him that she was the recently deceased wife of his host. Moreover, she revealed that King Yama had sentenced her to be reborn as a sheep for the offense of having beaten a servant girl to death. She also revealed that she was currently in the Qin family livestock pen and would be slaughtered the next day.

Liu Dao Yuan immediately rushed to inform his host of what he had just witnessed. However, it was already too late. The whole Qin family was grief stricken! Such situations happen often in this world, however, common people without spiritual attainments remain oblivious to such workings of karma.

Furthermore, in 1853, a native of Zhejiang named Li was known to have committed all kinds of evil. His evil karma eventually ripened and he turned into a pig while alive. His family members then rehomed him at a Buddhist temple. Magistrate (Sima) Xu Ying Ting personally witnessed this.

### **Translator's Notes:**

According to the Buddha, evil karma created in this life can often materialize quickly (i.e. bloom of requital). This applies to Li's case. His evil karma was so strong that it manifested by turning him into a pig while he was still alive. This is not an isolated incident. In several editions of the Jade Record and other Sagely books, there are many recorded cases of evil people being transformed into animals while they were still alive. For instance, the Jade Record mentions a case where an evil man turned into an ox after being bedridden for years.

While most people would view these accounts with doubt, the truth is that both this world and the human body are purely the result of karma ; they are merely a mirror reflection of our karma. In Liao Fan's Four Lessons, a Zen master states that fate cannot bind those who cultivate good. This is because by diligently accumulating good deeds, one's original karma is altered. Once one's karma is altered, the outside must change as well. This is just like how a mirror must reflect whatever is in front of it. The universe, world and the human body are like the mirror. They reflect whatever karmic balance is in front of them.

So if a man does only evil, the mirror will be forced to reflect the surplus of evil in front of it. This usually results in a decline in the sinner's body and fortunes. Being transformed into an animal while alive is one way evil karma can manifest. This is because the animal realm is one step lower than the human realm. Hence, Li had committed so much evil that the karmic balance which gave him his human rebirth was alerted for the worse. He no longer had enough good karma to retain his status as a human. Therefore, his human body deformed until he became a pig.

**16.) Question: What should we do if we find ourselves powerless to stop acts of fishing, trapping and slaughtering?**

**Answer:** Anyone who finds themselves in such a situation should sincerely recite whatever mantra they are familiar with, or sincerely recite **Namo Amitabha**. They should repent the animals' sins on their behalf and dedicate the merits of the recitation to them. This way, the animals will naturally receive karmic benefits.

If you see someone fishing or trapping, then focus your attentions on that person. Do not entertain other thoughts. Single-mindedly recite **Namo Duo Bao Tathagata** (南無多寶如來) for a few dozen times. If you do so, the fish and animals will all be able to evade capture. This Buddha's name is very potent, so do not fail to do as instructed.

**Translator's Notes:**

In this answer, Upasaka An Shi reveals to us a little known but important mantra. Just like reciting Guanyin Bodhisattva will extricate us from imminent danger, sincerely reciting **Namo Duo Bao Tathagata** while focusing on a fisherman or trapper will allow fish and animals to escape capture.

**17. Question: When we ask the gods to bless us with children, wealth, offices and long life, how can we not offer sacrifices as a show of respect?**

**Answer:** Every deity adores life and abhors slaughter. Furthermore, how can we expect long life and good fortune if we take away the lives of animals? How can we expect healthy children if we kill the offspring of animals? Not only does killing offend Heaven, it also betrays our conscience. We must remember that we are also made of flesh. There is no benefit in offering meat. In fact, doing so will bring only great harm.

**Translator's Notes:**

In Lao Tzu's Treatise on Response and Retribution, it is stated that Heaven bestows rewards on the virtuous and punishes the wicked within three years. It also mentions that there are numerous spirits such as the Spirit of the Hearth, Spirits of Justice and the Spirits of the Body that shadow each individual. These spirits report an individual's merits and sins to Heaven on a regular basis. Thus, Heaven is completely impartial and does not partake in quid pro quo. Therefore, if we really wish for

Heaven or God to respond to our prayers, we should diligently do good deeds within our power. If we commit karmic offenses (i.e. animal sacrifice) thinking that it will earn us favor, that would be the same as shooting ourselves in the foot. Heaven is merciful and wishes to bestow us with all good things. However, we often reject their blessings by sinning and treading on Heaven's teachings of virtue. If we rectify our hearts and change our behavior to accord with the will of Heaven, we would receive everything we wish for.

**18.) Question: There is no question that those who are vegan should make vegan offerings to deities and their ancestors. However, if those who normally eat meat were to make vegan offerings, wouldn't that be cheap and disrespectful?**

**Answer:** The I Ching states: "A family that sacrifices a cow to honor their ancestors derive inferior merit compared to the family that regularly makes modest offerings." Moreover, the Zuo Zhuan states: "Even the wild plants next to the mountain streams or the algae can be offered to gods and spirits." Thus, do you think the gods and spirits who dwell in the skies will quibble over a few pieces of meat?

**19.) Question: Will gods and deities who accept meat offerings be reborn in the evil realms?**

**Answer:** Sentient beings are reborn as gods and deities because they have cultivated virtue in their past life. Even though they are all virtuous, some are more merciful than others. The more merciful gods will reject offerings of meat. However, the gods that still have habits of anger will accept meat offerings. The merciful gods have more wisdom than blessings ; the angry gods have more blessings than wisdom. Therefore, once the heavenly blessings of the merciful gods end, they will not be reborn in the evil realms. However, the gods that are given to anger will most likely be reborn in the lower realms. Everyone must understand that Heaven cherishes all living beings, not just human life.

**20.) Question: It is wrong to slaughter animals for the purpose of making meat offerings to gods and deities. However, is it also wrong to slaughter animals to feed one's parents?**

**Answer:** It is even worse! The Book of Rites clearly states that: "Filial sons and daughters offer all that which is good to their parents and retain only the inferior for themselves." Therefore, if we slaughter animals for the sake of offering meat to our

parents, we would be saddling them with undesirable karmic offenses. How could we do something so unfilial? If we must provide our parents with meat, we should offer only thrice clean meat (i.e. meat that did not come from an animal that one personally ordered slaughtered or heard and or seen slaughtered). Meat from an animal that died naturally is permitted as well. These are the only two exceptions.

**21.) Question: For the sake of repaying our parent's kindness, we must make rich offerings to them after they pass away. However, if someone's deceased parents ate meat, and they offer vegan food, wouldn't that be against their parent's preferences?**

**Answer:** If the spirits of our parents and ancestors actually depended on these offerings to live, they would all be starving. The official memorial days number only a few days out of a year. These rites are simply a sign of respect. However, if we insist on slaughtering animals on these occasions, we would only be adding to the negative karmic burdens of our beloved parents and ancestors. How could we do such a thing?

**22.) Question: Surely the spirits of someone's ancestors will enjoy and receive the offerings made by their descendents? Why would they not?**

**Answer:** The Medium Agama Sutra states: "If one's ancestors have been reborn as ghosts, they can eat offerings that are sincerely offered. If they are in the heavenly realms, they live in bliss and will not bother to come and eat it. If they are in the three evil realms, their acute suffering prevents them from eating it. If they have been reborn as humans, then they have new families and will certainly not show up."

Thus, the duty of a descendent is to sincerely make vegan offerings and refrain from transferring new karmic burdens by slaughtering animals. As long as they are vegan before the memorial ceremony and sincere during the ceremony, they have done their filial duty. People should not worry about whether the offerings will be actually consumed by their intended recipients or not.

### **Translator's Notes:**

The best way to honor the spirits of our ancestors is through merit dedication. As Upasaka An Shi pointed out, direct food offerings may not actually benefit the intended recipients. On the other hand, the merit from good deeds can help anyone anywhere. Thus, we should simultaneously make offerings to a Buddha image (doing



so is just as meritorious as making offerings to a real Buddha) and dedicate the potent resulting merits to our ancestors or the spirits. A simple and sincere verbal or mental declaration of intent will allow the merit to be transferred successfully.

**23.) Question: Emperor Wu of Liang used vegan food made to resemble animals for sacrificial offerings. Scholars have interpreted his refusal to sacrifice animals as the cause of the declining fortunes of the Liang dynasty. Thus, isn't this a clear sign that vegan offerings are a breach of etiquette?**

**Answer:** The reason men have faults is because of their biases and partialities. If you could recognize your own biases and mistakes, you will be able to separate kindness from cruelty. Emperor Wu of Liang's killing of the Liu Gui (six noblemen) and his scheme to flood Shouyang City were his faults. However, his use of vegan offerings prevented the spirits from incurring evil karma and allowed animals to live in peace. Therefore, such a policy should certainly be counted among his merits.

The decline of the Liang dynasty has nothing to do with vegan offerings. If the decline was caused by vegan offerings, then why did the Chen dynasty and Sui dynasty (whose leaders offered animal sacrifices) end so quickly?

Moreover, Master Lian Chi said: "Confucius has said that even those who use mannequins as funeral sacrifices are still incurring an offense of cruelty that will cause their families to become extinct." Thus, is it not enough that the vegan food is made to resemble animals? Must you so cruelly demand real animals be slaughtered?

Furthermore, after Emperor Wu of Liang ascended the throne, he abstained from meat and alcohol. He took care of the people and kept wars to a minimum. Yearly harvests were also good. From the Jin dynasty to the Sui dynasty, no one could match Emperor Wu of Liang's era in prosperity. His virtues allowed him to rule for 49 years and live for 86 years. Moreover, eight of his descendants served as Prime Minister during the Tang dynasty.

Thus, these scholars who compose libel against him do so because they discriminate against his faith in the Buddhадharma. They are covering up his merits out of malice.

**24.) Question:** When we host banquets in honor of our kinsmen or offer hospitality to dear friends, only meat dishes can convey our sincerity and please our guests. Isn't it unreasonable to sacrifice sincere hospitality to save animals?

**Answer:** If your guests are virtuous, they will rejoice in your compassion and will certainly not feel disrespected. If your guests express displeasure over the lack of meat, then such guests are nothing more than petty gluttons. Why should anyone incur the heavy karma of killing simply to please petty gluttons?

Furthermore, when Song dynasty statesman Su Tungpo was feasting with his guests, he wrote a poem to Chen Ji Chang:

*"I pity the clams in the basket, who desperately yearn for moisture. I pity the fish in the pot, who are on the verge of asphyxiation. When fish are gutted, they suffer immensely. How could I do such a thing? Thus, this is why I offered you exhortations on non-violence in the place of warm greetings when we first met! Chancellor Lu Huai detested banquets—in the pot was a steamed duck, and when the lid was lifted, everyone held back as they noticed the cruelty. However, whenever Minister Wang Wuzi ate, the cutting boards were drenched with blood. He even served piglets on cameo glass platters. Virtuous Lu lived modestly and where his cap did not cover, white hair flowed. The gods wept as Wuzi dined sumptuously on meat and fish. The gods pleaded: why do you not abstain from tainting your excellent virtues with these acts of gluttony and slaughter?..... Human life is truly as short as a guest's stay! Please do not forget what I am saying, archive it into the Chronicle of Poems."*

Thus, if even eminent statesmen like Su Tungpo did not offer meat at his banquets, why should you feel that vegan foods are not good enough for hospitality?

**25.) Question:** The Sovereign Fuxi taught people to weave nets, he also taught people to farm and fish, are you implying that Fuxi was wrong?

**Answer:** This is a misconception. In the prehistoric era, birds and other animals often interfered with human settlements. Thus, Fuxi taught people to make nets so they could trap animals and release them away from their homes. He never told people to fish or hunt. To claim that the Sages would teach people to kill is as egregious as slandering the virtuous and passing off sinners as saints!

**26.) Question: When Confucius practiced mercy, he only refrained from fishing with nets and shooting sleeping animals. He did not say we could not use fish hooks or shoot at animals that are awake. Thus, as you completely prohibit both hunting and fishing, are you saying the teachings of Confucius are no good?**

**Answer:** You are missing the point. Confucius clearly wished for everyone to completely refrain from taking animal life. When he prohibited the use of nets, he meant to shame us for our avarice. When he prohibited the shooting of sleeping and resting animals, he was pointing out our cruelty. Humans often kill without restraint and give peace to no creature. As Sages teach by example, Confucius' diet consisted only of spring water and fresh vegetables. He never fished or shot at any animal during his life. In fact, he offered only vegetable offerings to his ancestors. If you think Sages would cruelly hook fish and shoot birds, you are too shallow to understand their profound teachings.

#### **Translator's Notes:**

Sages always teach by example. We should not forget this fact. For instance, if we wanted to know what Jesus' most important teachings were, his forbearance, simplicity, forgiveness and tolerance clearly articulates what he wishes for us to emulate.

**27.) Question: An eminent man must first love his family and then the people ; finally, he must show kindness to animals. Thus, kindness must be shown first to kinsmen and last to animals. Therefore, liberating life and practicing veganism are obviously the least important virtues. Are they not?**

**Answer:** When Mencius spoke of hierarchy and precedence, he was referring to courtesy and etiquette within the family structure. Mencius did not ever intend to limit our compassion. Furthermore, by your logic, an orphan with no family could never show kindness to the people or animals without breaking the rules of precedence. It is not possible that compassionate Mencius would make such restrictive and frivolous rules.

**28.) Question: You are correct, we should all observe vegan attha-sila (fasting). However, did Confucius observe such precepts?**

**Answer:** The sutras state: "When fasting, you must eat only one meal of pure food at

the proper time." They also say: "When observing such precepts, you must exercise the utmost care and prudence." The Book of Rites states: "When fasting and holding the precepts of abstinence, your heart should be pure ; when the fasting ends, do not discard your purity." The standards of these teachings are high. Thus, even though today's people are inferior in everyway when compared to Confucius (who was the epitome of these Sagely teachings), they foolishly feel that emulating Confucius involves slaughtering animals and eating meat.

**29.) Question: Observing the strict precepts of vegan attha-sila is indeed virtuous. However, wouldn't fasting make us weak and thin?**

**Answer:** Our soul is more important than the impure body of blood, feces and skin that we temporarily inhabit. When Heaven bestows karmic rewards or punishments, do you think they care more about your external appearance or the virtuousness of your heart?

**30.) Question: As the five pungent plants (onions, garlic, shallots, leeks and chives) all grow from the soil, why do Buddhist sutras prohibit them?**

**Answer:** The Shurangama Sutra gives five reasons for the prohibition:

- 1.) These five plants are pungent and noxious.
- 2.) These five plants will prevent cultivators from gaining Bodhi.
- 3.) Auspicious gods and devas despise the smell of these plants.
- 4.) When the five pungent plants are eaten cooked, they stir up one's lust. When they are eaten raw, they stir up one's wrath.
- 5.) Demons and ghosts will hover around and lick the lips of those who eat the five pungent plants.

### **Translators Notes**

While it is best that we refrain completely from the five pungent plants, the Venerable Master Chin Kung has said that the use of minute quantities for flavoring purposes is still OK.

**31.) Question:** Some people say that even though they are not vegan and do not observe the fast, they are still better than those who have fasted but later broke the precepts. However, those who have fasted but could not hold the precepts say that the fact they have fasted makes them superior to those who have never observed the fast. Which one is correct?

**Answer:** Let's use the example of holding office: Does a man who has never held office hold more advantages than the magistrate who was dismissed from office?

**Translator's Notes:**

Even if a magistrate is dismissed from office, he still retains all the money he has earned during his time in office and his social connections. Thus, we should all try to observe the fast. Even if our record is checkered, we will still gain substantial merits. For instance, the sutras state that those who merely observe the eight precepts for one day and one night will be wealthy for six hundred thousand rebirths.

**32.) Question:** I wish to become vegan, but I cannot resist the temptation of meat. What should I do?

**Answer:** Once those with excellent roots of virtue make the vows of Great Compassion, they will never be able to tolerate eating the flesh of living beings. However, if you are not this advanced, you should meditate on the five impurities:

- 1) The bodies of animals are dirty, hairy, impure and have odors.
- 2) Animals and livestock are often fed putrid food waste.
- 3) The places that livestock and animals live in are filthy.
- 4) The intestines and bladders of animals are full of fluids, feces and urine.
- 5.) The flesh of animals decay as soon as they die.

If you contemplate thus everyday, you will soon be able to become vegan.

**33.) Question: The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas swiftly respond to the suffering of sentient beings. Emperor Wu of Liang was a devout Buddhist, yet he starved to death. Why wasn't he saved?**

**Answer:** Emperor Wu of Liang did not starve to death. According to historical records, even when Hou Jing took the palace, he was overawed by the regal countenance of Emperor Liang and thus deferred to him. Furthermore, the records also show that Wang Lun later delivered a large supply of chicken feed for the egg-laying hens. Afterwards, Emperor Liang felt a bitter taste in his mouth and asked for honey (which was a luxury sweetener not readily available). The 86 year old emperor then died of old age a few moments later.

Thus, the fact that he only wanted honey to relieve the bitter taste in his mouth showed that he was not starving. Furthermore, the fact that Wang Lun had just delivered supplies indicated that the larders were well stocked with essentials.

Therefore, faithlessness in the Buddha is the reason that so many learned scholars gloss over important details and spread their own false conclusions. Their habits of doubt and partiality towards slaughter clouds their judgment.

### TRANSLATORS COMMENTARY:

Unbeknownst to many, hunting, fishing and animal slaughter cause severe karmic retributions in this world. For instance, Upasaka An Shi explains in his foreword that the wars, violence and chaos that plague this world are all caused by the evil karma created by the taking of animal life.

Hence, the desire to eat meat is the cause of misery. In fact, today, hundreds of billions of animals are slaughtered each year just to satisfy the desires of a few billion humans. No wonder the Buddha said in the Infinite Life Sutra that those who cultivate virtue in this world for ten days can reap the same amount of merits that would take those in other worlds a whole millennium to amass.

Furthermore, Venerable Master Hsuan Hua also concurs with Upasaka An Shi's answer for Question 15 in his commentary on the Shurangama Sutra:

*During the reign of the Emperor Wu of Liang, the Buddhadharma flourished. Whenever there was a wedding reception Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras. On children's birthdays, Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras. In short, no matter what the occasion, Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras and give their blessing. They would give a short speech about the auspiciousness of the event - what a lucky occasion it was. At that time there was a wealthy man who was celebrating the marriage of his son. He invited Ch'an Master Chih Kung to recite Sutras and give the blessing. When Ch'an Master Chih Kung arrived and looked around, he said:*

***How strange! How bizarre!  
The grandson marries the grandmother.  
The daughter eats the mother's flesh.  
The drum the son beats is stretched  
with the father's skin.  
Pigs and sheep are on the seat.  
The six close kin cook in the brazier.  
People gather to celebrate.  
I see all this as a form of suffering.***

*Why was the grandson marrying his grandmother? It was because when the grandson was two years old, his grandmother died. As she was dying, she grabbed her grandson's hand and said, "I'm at the point where I can let go of everyone else, but I can't forget about my grandson. Who will take care of him in the future?" And she died clutching her grandson's hand.*

*After her death she went before King Yama and he said, "Oh, you love your grandson so much? Fine. Go back and be your grandson's wife." So she was reborn as a woman and when she came of age, her grandson chose her as his wife. How did Ch'an Master Chih Kung know this? Because he had the ability to know others' thoughts and the ability to perceive past lives - he had the Buddha Eye.*

*When he looked in front of the house he said, "The daughter eats the mother's flesh," because he saw a little girl chewing on a chunk of pork. Her mother had died and been reborn as a pig. The pig had been slaughtered and cooked, and she was actually eating the flesh of her own mother!*

*When he inspected the musicians in the band by the entrance way, he said, "The drum the son beats is stretched with the father's skin." The drummer was hitting a drum stretched with deer-hide. His father had died and been reborn as a deer. The deer had been slaughtered and its hide tanned and the drummer was actually beating his own father!*

*Then Ch'an Master Chih Kung noticed that "Pigs and sheep are on the seat." He saw pigs and sheep sitting like guests on the k'ang - the high brick beds in the house. They were people now, but in their former lives they had been pigs and sheep. In their former lives they themselves had been eaten, so now they were reborn as people who in turn ate pigs and sheep to even up the debt.*

*When the Ch'an Master took a look at the cooking pots' he exclaimed, "Six close kin cook in the brazier." The six kinds of close kin refer to relatives on the father's side and the mother's*



*side, kin of the brother and sisters, and so forth. They had been close relatives of these people but now had been reborn as pigs and sheep, had been slaughtered, and were being cooked in the brazier.*

*Ch'an Master Chih Kung summarized, "People gather to celebrate." Everyone who came was saying, "Congratulations!" and "Best Wishes!" But the Master notes, "I see all this as a form of suffering." What I see is actually suffering.*

Master Hsuan Hua and Upasaka An Shi both makes it clear that people are reborn together as family members due to interconnected karmic affinities, debts and credits that have accrued since time immemorial. Thus, it is very likely for deceased parents to be reborn as livestock that will be eaten by their still living children. So imagine that! How many people have, like the Qin family, unwittingly killed and eaten their loved ones while still grieving over their losses?

Furthermore, the Buddha has said that those who refrain from taking animal life will be long lived, healthy, safe and fortunate due to the potent positive karma created. The two accounts below are clear verifications of the Buddha's words. These true historical accounts are from an edition of the Jade Record that was written by a Chinese cultivator who met a Buddhist deity during meditation.

### **The Merciful Scholar:**

**During the Song dynasty, there was a young scholar who had tried and failed several times to pass the imperial examinations. Four years after his first failed attempt, he again travelled to the imperial capital to take part in the latest round of examinations.**

**He lodged himself in an inn and proceeded to study through the night in preparation for the upcoming exam. However, he soon became fatigued and dozed off. As he was about to slip into deep sleep.....a vision of a distressed and bloodied white rabbit suddenly appeared! The rabbit pleaded with him to free it along with several other small animals held in the inn cellar.**

**The scholar immediately awakened and was initially doubtful at what he had just seen. Nevertheless, curiosity prompted him to silently sneak into the cellar. Surprisingly—there was indeed several animals locked in a cage. What he saw**

reflected his vision perfectly.

He soon realized that these trapped pheasants and small game were to be later served as main courses. Feeling ashamed over the fact that he too ate game, he hastily helped the animals to flee by opening the cage and cellar window. However, the injured white rabbit that had appealed to him for help remained traumatized and huddled in the corner. Thus, the scholar silently packed his bags in the middle of the night and personally carried the rabbit with him on his way out.

Eventually, the scholar stopped to rest under an arbor. Suddenly—out of the blue— a celestial devi appeared before him. She was fair beyond imagination and possessed a radiant golden complexion. As soon as she stretched her elegant hands towards the scholar, the rabbit quickly jumped into her arms. The devi then revealed that the rabbit he saved belonged to her. It had been violently captured while patrolling the mortal world. As the rabbit reassumed its celestial form, the injuries it had sustained miraculously disappeared. She explained that even though he was not a man of high wisdom, his kind and merciful heart had generated enough merits to gain high office. She reminded him to be kind towards the citizenry and to diligently protect living beings for the rest of his life. Having said that, the devi instantly disappeared. The young scholar was left in awe at the magnificent sight he had just witnessed.

The scholar proceeded to lodge himself at another inn and took the imperial exams the next day. Even though he did not achieve the prestigious academic honors he had sought after, he was still awarded a magistracy. Furthermore, he was quickly and continuously promoted by his superiors. Reflecting on this, he finally understood the power of good deeds and henceforth liberated life everyday. In addition to buying captive animals slated for slaughter and setting them free, he also became vegan and promoted veganism.

Years soon passed and the young scholar was now 54 years old. Furthermore, he had also reached the exalted post of Chancellor of State. Despite his unceasing efforts to liberate life and the fact that he had convinced many to stop eating meat, he still felt that his impact was limited. The courtiers, aristocrats and members of the imperial family all scoffed at his scruples and continued to feast sumptuously on various meats such as lamb, bear paws and beef. They did not feel even a hair's breadth worth of shame at their cruelty and excess.

The scholar felt sorrow over the never ending slaughter and thus tendered his retirement. After returning to his hometown, he spent his remaining years using his substantial pension to adopt stray dogs and suffering animals.

When he turned 76, he saw the white rabbit that he had saved perched gracefully on his window sill. The scholar (who was on his deathbed) understood that his lifespan was up. Regretting that he could not turn the tide against meat eating, he expressed his apologies. However, the white rabbit quickly led him to his front gate where to his amazement, all the souls of the countless animals he had saved over the years were crowded around his residence. The rabbit then said: "As your stocks of merit are full to the point of overflowing, the Heavenly Lord Lao Tzu wishes to bestow upon you a place among the gods. Otherwise, you could have your lifespan extended by 30 years. Your choice." The scholar replied that 30 years was too short and expressed his wish to rise to the side of the Heavenly Lord and assist him in doing good. Hence, he closed his eyes and ascended towards his celestial villa in the company of the white rabbit he had saved so many years before.

#### **Guanyin Bodhisattva's Visit to a Butcher:**

In 1908, there lived in Shanxi province a butcher named Chang. His parents (who were also butchers) had already passed away, leaving him alone in the world with his sickly younger sister. Everyday, he slaughtered a pig and sold the meat for a living.

Ironically, when Chang was young, he had detested the cruelty involved in slaughtering pigs. However, as he was the only heir to the family butchery, his parents forced him to learn the trade. By the time he was 25, he was already known in his village as the guillotine that all pigs fear. In fact, the total number of pigs he had slaughtered was so numerous that if all the skulls of the pigs he had killed were lined up in a straight line, it would span several miles.

One day, a old woman visited the village and approached Chang's butchery. She said to him, " I will show you the way to a future fortune if you could give me two porkers free of charge." Chang thought that the old woman was mentally ill and thus ignored her. However, the old woman responded to this snub by recounting in detail his life, history and family situation. She also warned him

that this was his last chance to extricate himself from his evil karma.

Startled by the fact that this stranger knew everything about him, Chang immediately suspected that she was a deity and proceeded to comply with her request for two porkers. She left right after taking possession of the two porkers, leaving Chang somewhat bewildered. Nevertheless, he was happy to have not offended a potential deity. However, before she disappeared from sight, she turned back towards Chang and shouted —"I'll be back tomorrow!"

The next day, she came back to Chang's butchery and requested that he give her four pigs. Chang immediately became irate and accused her of being a greedy fraud. However, she paid no heed to his anger and simply repeated her request for four pigs. Chang then demanded to know what happened to the two porkers he gave her the day before. She replied that she had released them.

Incensed, Chang immediately launched into an angry tirade. However, the old woman remained completely calm and simply asked, "Do you understand why I asked for those two porkers?"

Chang ignored the question and continued his tirade. Suddenly and without warning, the old lady ascended into the air and transformed into Guanyin Bodhisattva! Faced with such a majestic and august sight—Chang promptly fell to his knees in reverence despite not being a Buddhist.

The Bodhisattva did not wait for Chang to compose himself, but immediately showed him a vision which explained that the two porkers were actually his parents. They had been reborn as pigs to atone for their sins. Hence, he was just a few moments away from committing patricide and matricide had the Bodhisattva not intervened. Feeling immense shock and guilt, Chang begged the Bodhisattva to show him the way forward.

The Bodhisattva said, " Your lifespan has been reduced considerably because of your offenses. Thus, if you wish to save yourself , you must henceforth cease all acts of killing. Furthermore, you must protect the pigs currently in your pigsty for the rest of their natural lives. Afterwards, you must liberate 10,000,000 pigs in order to fully rectify your karmic situation. The first pig to die in your pigsty will show you the way."

As soon as these words were spoken, the Bodhisattva vanished into thin air. It was not difficult for Chang to keep the pigs currently in his pigsty, but he was doubtful that he could ever liberate 10,000,000 pigs. Nevertheless, after thinking of the Bodhisattva's assurances, he diligently proceeded to do as instructed. From that moment on, he treated his pigs like family. Eventually, word spread that he had renounced his career as a butcher. However, he never told anyone about his encounter with Guanyin Bodhisattva. Instead, he simply exhorted people to liberate life and refrain from slaughtering animals.

After a few years had passed, one of the pigs fell ill and was on the verge of death. As he was comforting the dying pig, it suddenly started to repeatedly oink towards a spot on the ground. A curious Chang immediately started to dig.... and to his surprise—crude oil began to seep out! A short while later, surveyors concluded that his pigsty was located above a oil reserve. He promptly sold his property and mineral rights for tens of thousands of silver dragons. He used this capital to start a business that soon generated for him a fortune. Everyday, he sent men into the market to purchase live pigs, thereafter depositing these pigs into Buddhist animal sanctuaries. After doing so for 50 years, he finally managed to save 10,000,000 pigs.

Chang lived to the ripe old age of 78. When he died, he left behind a wealthy family. Also, due to the karma created by his good deeds, he was able to avoid the wars of that period—safely retreating to Taiwan after the Communist takeover.

### **Commentary:**

By simply saving the lives of several small animals, the scholar was able to amass enough merits to gain a lifetime of high offices. Furthermore, his remuneration and pension likely amounted to a fortune of tens of thousands of silver taels. In comparison, a small family could live for a year on just a few taels of silver during that time. He did not originally have such good fortune pending, but that one act of opening the cage yielded these rewards.

Moreover, due to his further efforts to promote veganism and liberate life, he was able to ascend to a blissful heavenly rebirth at the time of death. However, he was also offered a lifespan extension of thirty years. This is because those who liberate life will naturally obtain a long lifespan.

The same goes for the butcher. By simply renouncing his butcher's knife and protecting his remaining sounder of pigs for a few years, he managed to create such a large stock of good fortune that oil manifested below his land. Furthermore, his further efforts to liberate life gave him unparalleled prosperity and health. In fact, his originally meager lifespan was extended by over half a century! All this does not include the additional benefit of having the entirety of his prior evil karma eradicated. Thus, Chang went from a man on the verge of rebirth in the hells to a long lived and wealthy merchant.

Chang's case is an example of the Buddhist maxim: The butcher who drops his knife can become a saintly Bodhisattva on the spot. Moreover, in the latest edition of the Jade Record, illustrated by Jiang Yi Zi (江逸子) through psychography, the hellish rebirth that would have awaited Chang had he not changed is illustrated below:



The deity that guided Jiang's hand when he drew these pictures is actually the demigod Magistrate Cheng Huang. He holds the rank of Praetor in the administration of the Four Heavenly Kings and his duty is to promote the laws of karma. Thus, these pictures provide us with an accurate idea of the karmic retributions that awaits those who slaughter animals.

Furthermore, in a set of short ancient historical accounts verified by Master Yin Guang, two of them reveal the supreme merits that result from not eating beef. While

the killing of any animal for its meat is a severe offense, the gravest is the killing of cows.

According to the first of the two accounts: A member of a travelling theater troupe once met the wandering ghost of his deceased neighbor (who had died abroad). The ghost asked for permission to share the ferry he had hired, so that he (the ghost) may return home to take up abode in his ancestral shrine. The actor agreed. Eventually, the actor asked the ghost, "What does King Yama consider to be the gravest karmic offense?" The ghost replied, "Eating beef is the most serious sin—those who eat beef are devoid of fortune and bereft of divine protection—on the other hand, those who abstain from it will be blessed by the gods and accrue excellent stocks of merit!"

Hearing this, the actor immediately vowed that he would never eat beef again. However, the ghost immediately burst into tears and exclaimed: "I can no longer return home! The auspicious spirits of good karma who now protect you will not allow a sinful being like me to accompany you." Dejected, the ghost climbed overboard and wandered away. Overawed by this revelation, the actor quickly rushed back to his village and convinced everyone to refrain from eating beef.

Unfortunately in this account, the actor did not know that he could dedicate his merits to the ghost. If he had done so, the ghost would have been immediately transformed into a radiant deva possessing a celestial palace (see the *Petavatthu* for more info). Likewise, according to the second account: A minor local official of Suzhou province once circulated letters that encouraged people to abstain from beef. He did so after the spirit of a deceased colleague appealed to him to make merits on his behalf. As a result of this deed, the deceased colleague became a deva and the local official's lifespan was extended by six twelve year periods! Furthermore, his stocks of merit were filled to the brim.

In Lao Tzu's *Treatise on Response and Retribution*, it is stated that grave sins result in one's lifespan being shortened by a period of twelve years and vice versa. Thus, the local official increased his lifespan by a whopping seventy two years by simply encouraging the local community to refrain from eating beef. This increase in lifespan was also accompanied by wealth, happiness, offices and future heavenly rebirth.

Therefore, how much more will be our reward if we abstain from all types of meat and diligently promote veganism?

It should be very clear by now that hunting, fishing, meat eating or engaging in the meat packing business will lead to heavy karmic debts. Thus, If we wish to be long lived and happy—and if we want to avoid atrocities and hellish karmic retributions—then we should diligently liberate life and encourage others to do the same. Furthermore, we should eat a meat free diet and abstain from hunting, fishing or working in the meat packing industry. If we sell food and provide catering services for a living, we should not sell meat products or dishes containing meats. The good karma generated from such abstinence will ensure happiness in this life and heavenly bliss in the next. If we dedicate these merits towards Buddahood in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, we will surely realize our aspiration!

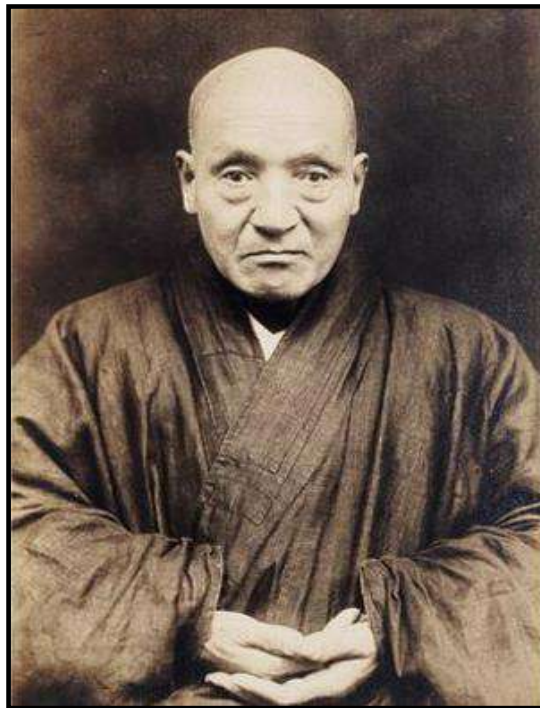
**Recommended Charity: Tainan Avalokitesvara Homeland Buddhist Association**

**Website:** <http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Donation.php>  
**Sanctuary gallery:** [http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Pet1\\_pic.php](http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Pet1_pic.php)  
**Email:** [a0981552011@gmail.com](mailto:a0981552011@gmail.com)  
**Facebook:** <https://zh-tw.facebook.com/avalokitesvara2013>

This charity is registered with the government of Taiwan. Their mission is to save cattle, pigs, rabbits, poultry, goats, fish and the like from slaughter by purchasing them, and moving them to their sprawling animal sanctuary in Tainan county.



## PATRIARCH YIN GUANG'S EXHORTATION



**Patriarch Yin Guang (1861-1940)**

**"Whether we are laymen or among the robed and ordained, we must respect our superiors and show kindness to our subordinates. We must bear what others cannot bear and practice what others are too weak to cultivate. We must shoulder other's burdens and help everyone succeed in their cultivation."**

**"During solitary moments, we must self reflect and repent. However, we should never prattle about the mistakes or scandals of others."**

**"We must be mindful of Amita Buddha from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn. It makes no difference whether we are undertaking great feats or engaged in mundane daily chores, we must unceasingly recite the Buddha's name."**

**"When we are reciting—whether loudly, quietly or silently—we must refrain from entertaining false and wandering thoughts. There should not be a single thought which is not the Buddha's name in our minds. If false and wandering thoughts arise, dispel them immediately."**

**"Always feel remorse and be penitent. Even if we are skilled in cultivation, we must be humble and regard our own abilities as inferior. Never should we indulge in superbia."**

**"Instead of prying into the affairs or feuds of others, we should focus on ordering our own house. Furthermore, we should see only the merits of others, and not their faults or evils."**

**"For humility's sake, we must consider everyone else to be exalted Bodhisattvas—but ourselves as mere mortals."**

**"Those who observe these instructions will definitely achieve rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss."**

**BUDDHISM IS NONE OTHER THAN CULTIVATING VIRTUE,  
DISCARDING VICES AND PURIFYING THE MIND.**

**NAMO AMITABHA!**

**NAMO AMITABHA!**

**NAMO AMITABHA!**

## MAHASTHAMAPRAPTA'S TREATISE ON PERFECT ENLIGHTENMENT THROUGH MINDFULNESS OF AMITAYUS

**As Mahasthamaprapta, a prince of Dharma, arose from his seat, the 52 Bodhisattvas who formed his august retinue immediately followed suit. He and his retinue proceeded to reverently prostrate before the Buddha. His Serene Highness then spoke the following to the assembly:**

**"In a time before time immemorial, a Buddha titled Infinite Light appeared in this world. He was the first of twelve Buddhas who emerged in the that kalpa. The last one was a Buddha whose glorious light outshined the majestic brightness of both the Sun and the Moon. Thus, he was known as the Brightness Upon the Sun and the Moon Buddha."**

**"That Buddha personally taught me the Mindfulness of Amitayus Samadhi. For example, if a father who adores his son should have a son who does not requite, then the son's back will always be turned on his father. However, if both father and son were to yearn for each other, and if they unceasingly cherish thoughts of each other, then not even death could separate them. They will be together for life after life like a shadow following the form. The Buddhas of the ten quarters are like the father. They constantly show tender concern towards sentient beings who rarely requite. If those sentient beings could instead single-mindedly hold the Buddha's name, they will surely meet the Buddha. The Buddha's hands are always extended, but it is up to you to grasp it."**

**"Furthermore, if a man were to habitually burn scented incense, his person will naturally exude fragrant aromas. Likewise, a man who is mindful of the Buddha's name will be adorned with the Buddha's infinite light and merit. Hence, it was through such mindfulness that I gained insight into the fact that all dharmas neither arise nor cease. Today in this world, I tirelessly exhort all to faithfully practice the Dharma-door of Pure Land. There is no better way to attain Perfect Enlightenment and the state of no outflows than by pure and unceasing mindfulness of Amitayus. Such Samadhi is the foremost."**

### **Commentary:**

As we live in the Dharma-ending age, the surest way for us to attain Bodhi is via single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha's name. By doing so, we can attain rebirth and enlightenment in Amita Buddha's Pureland. According to the first of Amita Buddha's 48 Vows:

### **Sutra Vows 1-2 : The Vows of No Evil and Suffering**

**"If I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my Buddha-land will be adorned with infinite and inconceivable merits. There shall be no hell beings, emaciated ghouls, wild beasts, pests and pestilences in my land. Sentient beings arriving to dwell in my land, even from the hells or evil paths, will all share my merits and become Bodhisattvas at once. They shall never again fall back into the states of suffering. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."**

Thus, once we are reborn in Pureland, we become Bodhisattvas immediately.

This treatise, which is the last paragraph of Chapter 5 of the Shurangama Sutra, is one of the five principle texts of Pureland Buddhism. It was added to the original four by Master Yin Guang during the early 20th century. In fact, it was later determined after Master Yin Guang's passing that he was actually Mahasthamaprapta manifesting in human form! Therefore, this treatise represents the Buddha's timely gift of Dharma to us all. It is also the most important part of the Shurangama Sutra.

In this treatise, Mahasthamaprapta concisely explains the mechanics behind single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha's name. The example of the father and the son is a masterful choice of words as it explains the level of devotion required in a way that most people can relate to. If we (i.e. the son) can yearn for the Buddha (i.e. the father) as strongly as a father loves his child, we will certainly achieve single-mindedness. Once single-mindedness is achieved, the terms of the treatise are fulfilled and one immediately becomes a Bodhisattva of Pureland.

## TWO MODERN ACCOUNTS OF PURELAND REBIRTH: THE PIOUS CHILD AND HE WHO CONQUERED HIS KARMIC OBSTACLES

**First account written by Guo Xuan Lee and translated into English by Huali Yuan.**

**Second account taken from the 1986 issue of the Vajra Bodhi Sea.**

My parents lived in Australia, and they did not believe in the Buddhadharma. When I first began to study Buddhadharma, I also exhorted my family to study. My mother and younger sister followed me to become vegetarians and commenced reciting the Buddha's name. However, my father still insisted that we were being superstitious and even obstructed my practice. One day, my parents and sister had an accident in the car they were driving. The accident was serious. The car was almost entirely wrecked, and my father went into a coma and bled profusely. My mother and sister remained safe and sound. After this experience, their faith grew in the Buddhadharma. My father was sick in bed and could not walk, but he firmly believed that he would fully recover and be able to walk again. Therefore, he asked many good doctors to treat him. But all efforts were in vain; his physical health did not improve. He lost his temper most of the time because he wasn't getting better, which tormented my mother, so I went back to Australia to visit them.

I arrived home and explained to my father the truth of the suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death, as well as other aspects of Buddhadharma. I told him, "You have already gone through the suffering of birth and old age. Now you are undergoing the suffering of sickness, and the last will be the suffering of death." I explained the Buddhadharma to him every day, and he gained a bit of faith. He told me that one day when he was lying in bed, he saw his room burst into a huge fire, but strangely enough, some fish were amid the fire. He hurriedly called my mother in but when she came, she saw nothing. My father asked me what it meant, so I told him my personal view: "Our physical body is like the house we are living in. Now your house is on fire, which means that your body is in the process of breaking down. As for the fish, have you ever seen a fish close its eyes? Fish always keep their eyes open, which means that you will wake up soon. So don't be attached and confused any more. You are blessed, for

the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have shown you these things to make you wake up now! Your physical condition is deteriorating quickly. Do not cling to it any longer.” From then on, my father changed to a vegetarian diet and began to recite the Buddha’s name.

Half a year before my father's rebirth, my elder sister visited him once. She is a filial daughter with a kind heart, but being a Catholic, she believes animals are created to be eaten by humans and that all that is important is for a person to have a good heart. When she heard that our father was sick, weak, and on a vegetarian diet, she was worried that he would not get enough nutrition. She explained her concern to Father and asked him if she could cook meat for him. He took her advice at once and was happy that he could eat meat again. So one thing led to another, then he could not stop and later he even desired to eat pig's feet every day. My mother called me and asked me to talk to him. Over the phone I just said a few words to him, “Dad, if you eat other beings’ feet now, in the future other beings will eat your feet.”

One week later, my mother called again and told me that my father had returned to a vegetarian diet.

Two months before his rebirth, he could not fall asleep at night. In his sleep it sounded as if he were talking to someone—being angry and yelling. Thus, I went back to Australia again to visit him. I asked him why he could not sleep. He said that some beings came to bother him every night, and none of them had feet. I realized at once that they were his enemies and beings in whom he was indebted. I told him, “It is because you ate others’ feet in the past. They are all now coming back to you.” Then I asked him, “How did you treat them?”

He said, “I am not afraid of them. I never did a single evil thing or harmed a single person in my life; I do not need be afraid of them. If they come, I will fight with them!” I advised him to not behave like that, because those ghost beings are in great suffering, without blessings, and they have no opportunities of encountering the Buddhadharma. “That is why you should be compassionate toward them. If they come again tonight, you should apologize to them and tell them that because you did not understand principle, you harmed them, and now you are seeking forgiveness from them. Also you can tell them to recite the Buddha’s name, so that they can seek rebirth in the Pure Land and escape the Samsara. You yourself also have to recite the Buddha’s name on their behalf. Recite

‘Amitabha Buddha’.” The next morning, I asked Father whether they came or not and how it was. He said they did come and he addressed them as I taught. Then he recited the Buddha’s name on their behalf, and they did not disturb him any longer. They stood there listening to the Buddha’s name and after that, they left.

A week before my father's rebirth, one day it appeared that he was dying, so my mother and younger sister started to recite the Buddha’s name. After a whole day, my father was still alive. Suddenly, my sister smelled fragrant incense, which lasted for about five minutes. She knew that she needed to offer incense. She asked mother to bring a censer for the incense, while wishing the Buddha would come to welcome Father and his enemies into the Pure Land. They made the incense offering and continued reciting the Buddha’s name. Then my sister heard other voices around them, many melodic voices resounding in the air, reciting the Buddha's name. My sister said that upon hearing these wonderful sounds, she felt very pure and clear in her heart. One week later, my father passed away. His mind was quite clear when he was dying, and he had already put down everything -- his wife, children, and house. His only wish was to follow the Buddha, and he was ready. He passed away peacefully. His face was ruddy and pleasant, and even had a smile on it. His body was also very soft. Some people who came to assist reciting the Buddha’s name smelled fragrant incense.

Forty-nine days after my father's rebirth, one day my son Mingguang was asleep, and he dreamed that someone nudged his elbow. When he opened his eyes, he saw his grandfather. Mingguang said that his grandfather did not look the way he looked before. He now had the appearance of a Bhikshu, with hair already shaven, a very fresh and smooth face without any wrinkles, wearing a bright orange sash, smiling happily. Mingguang asked him, “Grandpa, why are you here?” His grandpa answered, smiling, "I came to tell you that I have followed Amitabha Buddha and have been reborn in the Pure Land. Mingguang, you should vigorously recite Buddha’s name and follow Amitabha Buddha!

In 1923 an exceptionally bright child was born to the Yen family, whom they named Yen Bau Yeh. The father, Yen Syau Nyan, a native of Beijing, was an erudite lawyer, who liked to study the Buddhadharma and to cultivate. The mother, from the Jang family, was well versed in the classics and was also a very good person. When the child was born, he showed many signs of intelligence. When he was only a few months old, he would call out, "father." On occasions when the Mr. Yen had to go away on business trips, the child would be aware of it and ask when his father would return, and say that he would miss him. When he was two years old, his mother began to teach him to read and write Jungwen. After showing him a character only once, he was able to clearly remember it. Soon he could remember several hundred characters. His mother used flash-cards to test him, and he would never make even a single mistake. After being tested he would always put the cards with the characters for "mother" and "father" on top of the stack. His parents asked him why he did that, and he said it was because one must be respectful. One time he was given some cookies to eat that were imprinted with characters. One of the characters happened to be his mother's maiden name, and so he refused to eat it.

His father often told him about reciting the Buddha's name and taught him how to recite and about Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land. The boy bowed to the Buddha and recited the Buddha's name without cease. He would recite the names of the Three Sages of the West, a mantra of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, and also the name of Shakyamuni Buddha. He wasn't sloppy about it at all. He was very sincere and would recite aloud. People often saw him carrying recitation beads while reciting. It was the family custom to go to their Buddhahall and recite the Buddha's name after their meal. If for some reason the family didn't recite, the child would get them all to come to the hall and recite.

His parents taught him not to kill animals. They said that animals like to live just as much as people do. Both parents were strict vegetarians. He learned at an early age to respect other living beings by not harming insects or smaller animals.



When given food, he would ask if killing was involved in obtaining the food. He wouldn't eat until he was sure it was pure vegetarian food. He was very happy whenever he saw his parents give to beggars. He would feel right at home in the temples. When the monks recited a sutra, he would listen with great joy. After hearing it, he would not want to leave.

He had a little brother who died very young, and when people asked him where his brother had gone, he would always say, "To the Land of Ultimate Bliss." Once he said, "I'm going to go to the Western Land." His grandfather scolded him, but the child still said he was going soon. One day he was a little bit sick and vomited. He did not say anything except, "I'm going to go; I'm going to go."

His family surrounded him and recited the Buddha's name. The next day he was a bit weaker. People brought a Buddha image to his bedside, and he was very happy. Then he lay back down and his father asked him, "Are you reciting the Buddha's name?"

He answered, "Yes " and then he died. His body grew cold, but the top of his head remained warm. The room was filled with a rare fragrance.

After witnessing this in his own family, the father's faith in the Buddhisthadharma increased. He took up the cultivation of exclusively reciting the Buddha's name.

蓮花廚房 *The Lotus Kitchen*  
 黑椒素香三明治 *Vegetarian Steak*

■ Bert Tan

Materials 材料			
Bean Curd Pouch	豆腐包片	1 bag	一袋
Cilantro	香菜	a little	少許
Green onion	綠蔥	1 piece	一枝
Hot water	熱水	1 cup	一杯
Cooking oil	沙拉油	1 cup	一杯
Soy sauce	醬油	2 table spoons	二湯匙
Star Anise	茴香	2 little pieces	二小顆
Black Mushroom Extract	素食調味粉	3 tea spoons	三茶匙
Sugar	糖	4 tea spoon	四茶匙
Black pepper	黑胡椒	a little	少許
Toaster bread	吐司麵包	2 pieces	兩片
Strawberry	草莓	2, 3 pieces	兩、三顆



**Preparation:** Rinse four bean curd pieces (1 bag has 8) and dry; chop green onion into small slices.

**Seasoning base:** Mix soy sauce, black mushroom extract, sugar, star anise, and hot water in a saucer.

**Cook:** Heat cooking oil in the frying pan; fry the bean curd pouch pieces until wrinkles develop take it out and drain the oil. Put about 2 table spoons of hot oil in the frying pan, throwing in green onion slices. Pour in the prepared seasoning base when the onion flavor develops in the frying pan; turn the burner immediately down to medium heat. Put in the bean curd pouch pieces, sprinkle black pepper on it, let it simmer for about 3 minutes; flip side and sprinkle black pepper again, continue to simmer it until the liquid is almost dry. Serve in the plate with toaster bread, and strawberry, decorated with cilantro.

香辣豆腐 *Hot & Spicy Tofu*

Materials 材料			
Soft Tofu	嫩豆腐	1 box	一盒
Cilantro	香菜	a little	少許
Green onion	綠蔥	1 piece	一枝
Starch	芡粉	½ tea spoon	½ 茶匙
Hot water	熱水	1/3 cup	三分之一杯
Cooking oil	沙拉油	2 table spoons	二湯匙
Soy sauce	醬油	1 – 1½ table spoons	1 – 1½ 湯匙
Chilly sauce	辣椒醬	1 table spoon	一茶匙
Vegetarian seasoning	素食調味粉	1½ tea spoons	1½ 茶匙
Sugar	糖	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Seasoned black bean	豆豉	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Red pepper seed	花椒粒	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Black pepper	黑胡椒	a little	少許



**Preparation:** Chop the tofu into small cubes (3/4 in) and the green onion into small pieces.

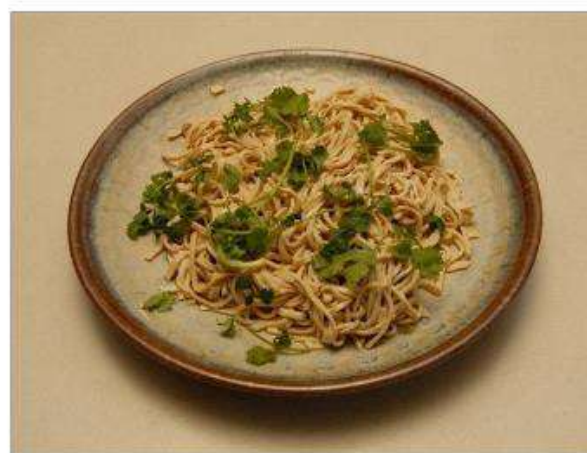
**Seasoning base:** Mix chilly sauce, soy sauce, vegetarian seasoning, and sugar in a saucer.

**Cook:** Heat the cooking oil in frying pan; add in the chopped green onion pieces, followed by the seasoned black beans, and the red pepper seeds; stir it. Add tofu cubes and stir lightly, then add 1/3 cup of water, turn the heat to medium. Add the seasoning base and cover the frying pan; stew it for 5-7 minutes. Apply light starch and turn the burner off. At this time, apply black pepper and cilantro. Place it in a plate and serve hot.



**蓮花廚房 The Lotus Kitchen**  
**香味豆干絲 Delicious Soy Bean Thread**

Materials 材料			
Soy bean thread	豆干絲	2 box	二包
Cilantro	香菜	a little	少許
Green onion	綠蔥	1 piece	一枝
Pepper corn	花椒	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Shallot	紅蔥	2-3 pieces	二、三粒
Cooking oil	沙拉油	2 table spoons	二湯匙
Soy sauce paste	醬油膏	1-2 table spoons	1-2 湯匙
Black mushroom extract	素食調味粉	2 tea spoons	2 茶匙
Sugar	糖	½ tea spoon	½ 茶匙
Sesame Oil	麻油	a little	少許
White pepper	白胡椒	a little	少許
Baking soda	蘇打粉	2 flat tea spoons	2 茶匙



**Preparation:** (1) Rinse soy bean thread clean, boil in hot water pot, and remove pot from stove. Add 2 flat tea spoons of baking soda, stir and soak for about 3 minutes until soft. Rinse clean the softened soy bean thread and let it dry, i.e., no drips. Put in a big plate. (2) Chop and thread green onion into 1.5-inch thin pieces.

**Seasoning oil:** (3) Chop shallot into pieces, fry it with the pepper corn in a small fry pan until the flavor develops. Turn the heat off, remove the fry pan from the stove, and take out the flavored oil only.

**Mixing:** (4) Thoroughly mix soy bean thread with the seasoning oil, soy sauce paste, sugar, sesame oil, and black mushroom extract. Finally, mix in the threaded green onion piece, cilantro, and white pepper powder.

**素香黃金餃 Vegetarian Golden Curry Dumpling**

Materials 材料			
Pepperidge Farm Puff Pastry Sheet		1 box	一盒
Textured vegetable protein bits	素碎肉	1 cup (for fillings)	一杯
Cooking oil	沙拉油	2 table spoons	二湯匙
Water	水	1 ¼ cup	1 ¼ 杯
Curry powder	加哩粉	2 tea spoons	二茶匙
Salt	鹽	½ - ¾ tea spoons	½ - ¾ 茶匙
Vegetarian seasoning	素食調味粉	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Brown sugar syrup	糖漿	¼ cup	¼ 杯
or		or	
Egg yolk	蛋黃	1	一個



**Preparation:** Mix the protein bits with 1 cup of water and soak it for 10 – 15 minutes.

**To prepare the filling:** Heat the cooking oil in fry pan; when hot, add in the soaked protein bits, and stir it well with curry powder, salt and vegetarian seasoning. Add in the remaining ¼ cup of water and stir well. Stew it in low heat for about 3 minutes. Turn off the burner and place the cover on the frying pan; let it sit on the burner for another 2 minutes.

**To make the dumplings:** Cut each pastry sheet into 9 square pieces evenly; these are the skins. Wrap the skins with the filling, and seal it properly. Preheat the oven to 400 F. Brush brown sugar syrup (or egg yolk) on the top skin of each dumpling. Bake the dumplings for 15 minutes. Serve hot.



## 蓮花廚房 The Lotus Kitchen

## 素蚵仔羹 Seaweed Nugget Soup

Materials 材料			
Seaweed nugget	素蚵仔羹	1/2 pack	半包
Black mushroom slices	香菇絲	some	少許
Dried lily	金針菇	some	少許
Cilantro	香菜	a little	少許
Shallot	紅蔥	1 piece	一粒
Starch	芡粉	3 tsps	三茶匙
Water	水	3 cups	三杯
Cooking oil	沙拉油	2 tbsps	二湯匙
Soy sauce	醬油	2 tbsps	二湯匙
Rice vinegar	黑米醋	2 tbsps	二湯匙
Vegetarian seasoning	素食調味粉	2 tsps	二茶匙
Salt, sugar	鹽、糖	2 tsps	一茶匙
White pepper	白胡椒	a little	少許



**Preparation:** Chop the shallot into small pieces; soak the black mushroom slices and the dried lily slices.

**Seasoning base:** Mix soy sauce, vegetarian seasoning, rice vinegar, salt, and sugar in a saucer, and prepare the starch for thickening.

**Cook:** Heat the cooking oil in frying pan; add in the chopped shallot pieces, followed by the seaweed nuggets, black mushroom and lily slices; stir it well and add in 3 cups of water. Cook to boiling and add in the seasoning base. Apply starch to thicken it and turn the burner off. At this time, apply white pepper and cilantro. Serve hot.

## 香菇大蘿蔔湯 Daikon Soup with Shiitake Mushrooms and Bamboo Shoots

材料 Materials		
大蘿蔔	Daikon	一個 1 whole root (c. 2 lbs)
香菇絲	Black (Shiitake) mushroom slices	20 公克 1 oz
天目扁尖筍	Pickled bamboo shoot	40 公克 2 oz
沙拉油	Cooking oil	二湯匙 2 table spoons
鹽	Salt	適量 to taste
素食調味粉	Vegetarian seasoning	適量 to taste
紅蔥	Shallot	少許 A little (1 clove)
白胡椒粉	White pepper powder	少許 A little (dash)
香菜	Cilantro	少許 A little (for garnishing)
水	Water	數杯 Several cups



紅蔥切小粒，天目扁尖筍洗淨泡軟切段，香菇絲泡軟，大蘿蔔切約兩吋方塊。

將燜燒鍋之內鍋加入沙拉油與紅蔥粒於爐上加熱，至油熱冒煙時，倒入適量的水直到不再出油煙為止；先加入切好的蘿蔔、扁尖筍、及香菇絲略炒；繼續加水做湯。此時加入適量的鹽、白胡椒粉、及素食調味粉拌勻。煮至沸騰後，放入燜燒鍋，燜煮兩小時加入香菜即可起鍋。

若不用燜燒鍋，而用一般鍋子，則於湯煮開後，以小火繼續煮一小時即可。

**Preparation:** Coarsely mince shallot; soak shiitake mushroom slices in warm water until soft; rinse and soak the pickled bamboo shoot and slice into ~1.5" pieces; peel daikon and slice into ~2.0" pieces.

**To cook:** Saute shallot with oil in the inner piece of the thermal pot until oil begins to smoke. Pour in a cup of water (to bring out the full flavor of the shallot). Add the daikon, shiitake mushrooms, bamboo shoots, enough water for the number of servings, salt and vegetarian seasoning to taste, and white pepper powder. Bring to a boil. Place the inner pot into the thermal container. Let sit for two hours, garnish with cilantro and serve.

If you are using a regular pot instead of a thermal pot, simmer for one hour after boiling.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I will like to thank the Buddha Educational Foundation (<http://www.budaedu.org/en/>) for providing the excellent modern Chinese version of Upasaka An Shi's Discourse on the Forty Eight Inquiries of Non Violence. This translation would not have been possible without that edition, generously printed and provided for free (as with numerous other titles) by the foundation.

Furthermore, I will also like to thank the Pureland Library & Center of Chicago for providing these wonderful vegetarian recipes to the public. Lastly, if anyone is interested, this center also offers free medical and Chinese Traditional Medicine Consultation: [http://www.amitabhalibrary.org/Annc/MD\\_SVC.pdf](http://www.amitabhalibrary.org/Annc/MD_SVC.pdf)



Seal of the Infinite Life Buddha

*The Way to Pure Land  
Is well paved and straight,  
Upon it gilded tiles are laid,  
Adorned by halcyon lakes  
And ponds of golden sand,  
Shaded by ornate branches  
Of silver, jade and crystal,  
Whose sweet scented petals  
Glide in the breeze and drift  
Upon the waters—swirling  
In graceful whirls and ripples,  
Immersed in singing songbirds  
Perched on amber arbors,  
humming hymns of harmony  
And the most soothing melody.*



**Brian Chung**, Voracious reader of Buddhist texts

Answered Oct 15, 2021 · Author has **1.5K** answers and **174.6K** answer views



*Caption: Ming dynasty era statue of Lord Superior Wen Chang*

In Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian philosophy, good governance (model civil servants and ministers) is represented by the Deity Lord Superior Wen Chang. He was a virtuous district magistrate for many lives before being reborn as a deity due to his accumulated virtues and good deeds. Below is the account of one of his lives (from the Commentary on the Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way by Upasaka Zhou An Shi of the Qing Dynasty):

**Translation:**

**The Good Governance of Qing He District**

The Lord Superior Wen Chang recounts:

...When I was reborn in the state of Zhao, I was the son of Zhang Yu, and named Xun. Upon reaching majority, I was appointed the Magistrate of the District of Qing He. I was merciful, wise, diligent and dutiful—treating my subordinates like friends and seeing the people as my own family. Never daring to mistreat the populace in anyway.

Whenever my subordinates or subjects committed a mistake, I judged the matter clearly. To the lazy, I inspired and encouraged them. To the negligent and reckless, I educated them and offered guidance. To the sly and deceptive, I investigated until the truth was revealed. To those fighting over money, I reconciled them by appealing to honor and reason. To those locking horns over laws and rules, I soothed them by appealing to kindness and fellowship. To robbers, I compelled them to return what they have stolen, or offer compensation. To the violent, I made them contritely seek the forgiveness of their victims.

For first time offenders, especially those deserving pity, I always pardoned them, and I granted leniency whenever I could.

I only punished in accordance with law those who could not be brought to reason, even after I had exhausted both body and mind in trying to do so. I neither punished excessively nor allowed the wicked to run amok. During the five years I was in office, the winds were gentle and rains timely, pestilences did not arise, and the people were satisfied and joyful.

**Original source (page 94):**



<http://ftp.budaedu.org/publish/C7/CH73/CH730-41-01-001.PDF> 

More from the same text:



PURELAND BUDDHISM

**Saving Those Suffering From Disaster and Meeting Immediate Needs (From the Commentary on the Yin Chih Wen by Upasaka Zhou An Shi)**

Caption: Upasaka Zhou An Shi (1656–1739) Below is my translation of Upasaka Zhou An Shi's famous commentary on the two most important virtues in the Yin Chih Wen (famous Buddhist and Taoist karmic text). In general, those who save those in d [\(more\)](#)



32 views · View shares

[View 55 other answers to this question](#) >

About the Author



**Brian Chung**

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts



Author



B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012



410.8K content views 22.5K this month



Active in 7 Spaces



Joined March 2020

More answers from Brian Chung

[View more](#) >

[How does one gain power in life?](#)

1,203 views

[Why do Buddhist monks not eat garlic or onion?](#)

1,850 views

[Can we predict our destiny?](#)

472 views

[What can I do today/tonight to change my life forever?](#)

17 views

[Why is life useless?](#)

295 views





**Brian Chung**, Voracious reader of Buddhist texts

Answered Oct 15, 2021 · Author has 1.5K answers and 174.6K answer views

Forgiveness is hard because it is precious and rare. And like all precious and rare things, it is very valuable and rewarding. If you are willing to follow the example of the wise and sagely by forgiving, by tolerating the faults of others, then your blessings will be immense.

Below is my translation of a relevant excerpt from the famous Commentary on the Lord Superior Wen Chang's Yin Chih Wen (Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist karmic scripture)—written by famed Buddhist Upasaka Zhou An Shi (1656–1739).

*Scripture:*

#### **Tolerate the mistakes and offenses of others**

*Commentary:*

Confucius said: "Uproot your own wickedness, and do not focus on the offenses of others." He further stated: "Judge yourself severely, but judge others leniently." The myriad teachings of the wise and sagely all encourage people to reflect on their own behavior, and once the habit of self reflection and improvement is cultivated, there would be no time to spare for blaming others.

There are two types of offenses, those done unintentionally, and those done intentionally. Offenses done by accident are easy to forgive, but willful wickedness is hard to forgive. However, those who wish to cultivate themselves must start by forgiving all that which is hardest to forgive (i.e. intentional offenses). If even intentional mistakes can be forgiven, then all lesser offenses can be easily forgotten. If the offenses are so grave to the point of being completely intolerable, they must still be tolerated, no matter how hard doing so is.

How could we accomplish this level of forgiveness? The answer is that there are three methods:

1. Recognize that the offender's actions are born out of their ignorance. As common and ignorant people are a dime a dozen in this world, it would be unreasonable to judge them in accordance with the standard of the sages, or expect much from them. Our disappointment is due to our own excessive expectations, so the fault lies with us.
2. Pity the short lifespans of the offenders [evil deeds karmically shorten a person's lifespan]. Their human life passes as fast as a bolting steed, with the days decreasing constantly, like a condemned person being led step by step to the gallows. How could we not pity them?
3. Use them as medicine to heal ourselves. As our own faults are often unknown to us, we can only identify them by observing the wickedness of others, using them as a mirror to self reflect. To see if we also share the same faults. Therefore, as they are like our teachers, how could we not be grateful?

By often thinking in accordance with the aforementioned three methods, patience and forgiveness becomes easy under all circumstances.

Before we learned to forgive and tolerate, our hearts were gripped by frustration and irritation. Once we learn to forgive and tolerate, we become at peace. When our hearts were not at peace, we were afflicted by a field of thorns, and even little ants seemed like mighty obstacles. On the other hand, a heart at peace is as stable as a citadel, even able to share a ferry ride with foes and nemeses.

If we cannot forgive or tolerate, we would be provoked into fights, exacerbating the very faults we were trying to eradicate. However, if we could forgive and tolerate, feeling ashamed of our own mistakes, then whatever is vexing us will reduce on its own. The ancients say: "To see another's offenses is the path to myriad evils ; to see our own offenses is the path to myriad virtues and blessings."

-Source (starts page 88):

<http://ftp.budaedu.org/publish/C7/CH73/CH730-41-01-001.PDF>



懷西居士遺稿



Caption: Upasaka Zhou An Shi (1656–1739)

56 views · View shares

[View 100+ other answers to this question](#) >

#### About the Author



#### Brian Chung

Voracious reader of Buddhist texts



Author



B.A. from State University of New York - Empire State College Graduated 2012



410.7K content views 22.5K this month



Active in 7 Spaces



Joined March 2020

#### More answers from Brian Chung

[View more](#) >

[How does one gain power in life?](#)

1,203 views

[Why do Buddhist monks not eat garlic or onion?](#)

1,850 views

[Can we predict our destiny?](#)

472 views

[What can I do today/tonight to change my life forever?](#)

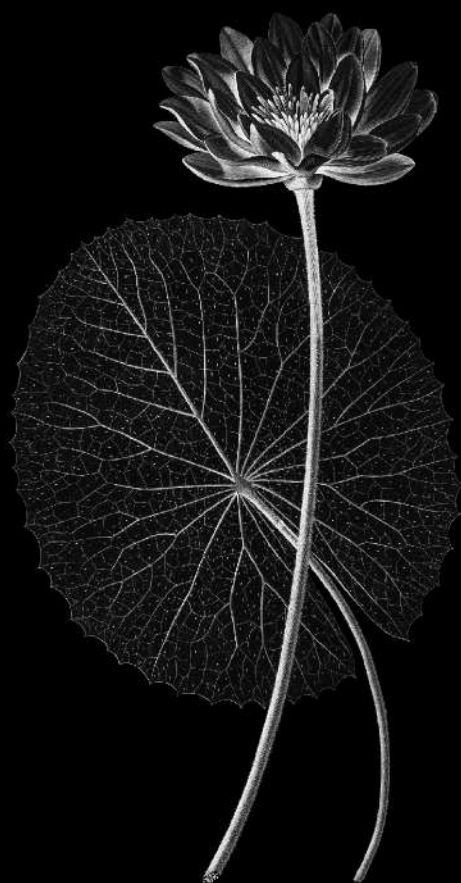
17 views

[Why is life useless?](#)

295 views

# THE INFINITE LIFE SUTRA

THE WAY OF BUDDHA MINDFULNESS



*The*  
*Infinite Life Sutra*

*The Way of Buddha Mindfulness*

**First Edition, 2021**

**ISBN: 9798505178751**

**Translation copyright © John Walker**

**an English translation of**

佛說大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經（會集本）

# Contents

## Foreword

1. The Dharma Assembly of Great Nobles
  2. The Virtues of Samantabhadra
  3. The Origin of the Great Teaching
  4. The Genesis of Dharmakara
  5. Utmost Focus and Determination
  6. Setting Forth the Great Vows
  7. Assured Achievement of Sambodhi
  8. Accumulation of Spiritual Virtues
  9. Complete Perfection
  10. All Vow to Become Buddhas
  11. A World Adorned and Purified
  12. A Light Shining Upon All Things
  13. Infinite Lifespan, Infinite Followers
14. Jewel Trees, Far and Wide Throughout the Land
  15. The Seat of Enlightenment
  16. Lecture Halls, Meditation Chambers  
& Observation Towers
  17. The Blessings of Springs and Pools
  18. World-Surpassing and Extraordinary
  19. Complete Fulfilment
  20. Virtuous Wind, Raining Flowers
  21. Jewel Lotuses and Buddha Light
22. Assured Realisation of the Supreme Fruit
23. Praised by Buddhas in the Ten Directions
24. The Three Classes of Reborn Beings

25. The True Cause of Rebirth
26. Pay Homage, Make Offerings and Hear the Dharma
27. Singing in Praise of the Buddha's Virtues
28. The Divine Light of the Great Ones
29. The Power of the Vow, Immense and Profound
30. The Self-Cultivation of Bodhisattvas
31. True Virtues
32. Limitless Longevity and Happiness
33. Encouraging Words, Spurring Advancement
34. Seeing the Light
35. The Evils and Sufferings of an Impure World
36. Repeated Instruction and Exhortation
37. A Poor Man Given Precious Jewels
38. Homage to the Buddha's Light
39. Maitreya Recounts His Visions
40. The Borderland and the Citadel of Doubt
41. No More Doubts, The Buddha is Seen
42. The Rebirth of Bodhisattvas
43. This is Not the Lesser Vehicle
44. The Prophecy of Sambodhi
45. A Teaching Imparted for a Special Reason
46. Devoted Practice, Firmly Grasped
47. With Merit and Wisdom, the Dharma Can Be Heard
48. Blessings Gained From Hearing the Dharma

## Foreword

In May 2020, I received a most welcome surprise. A talented translator of Classical Chinese texts, Mr John Walker, the author of this translation, contacted me via my blog and asked me to suggest a suitable Chinese Pure Land Buddhist text to translate. I immediately recommended the Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality and Enlightenment Sutra (佛說大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經). This sutra is the flawless compilation of the five main extant versions of the Infinite Life Sutra. It was compiled and masterfully combined into one consolidated edition by the eminent sage, Upasaka Xia Lianju (夏蓮居), during the early to mid decades of the 20th century, without discarding or changing a single character. It is now the main Pure Land Scripture, available everywhere in Asia. Moreover, all Pure Land Associations recite it daily as part of their main practice.

This sutra has been praised by the Venerable Master Chin Kung as the most relevant sutra of our era, and will guide countless sentient beings to attain Pure Land rebirth and release from samsara. As it is the perfect antidote to the karmic weaknesses and dispositions of sentient beings of our world, it is a sutra and dharma gateway all must study.

However, a full translation of this text was impossible to find in the West. It was essentially unknown, until now. Three days ago, Mr Walker emailed me a fully completed English translation of this sutra, the first complete translation in history. No words can describe my happiness when I saw this completed work, and I could not have imagined a year ago that a full translation would become a reality so speedily. Eloquent, poetic, and concise, Mr Walker's work is a most wonderful translation. I consider it the greatest honour of my life to be able to write the foreword for this groundbreaking translation, and I hope that the birth of this translation will mark the beginning of a worldwide renaissance for Chinese Pure Land Buddhism.

Brian B. Chung  
purelandsutras.wordpress.com  
May 12 2021



One

*The Dharma Assembly of  
Great Nobles*



**Thus have I heard,**

**Once, when the Buddha lived upon Vulture Peak  
near the city of Rajagriha  
he held an assembly with many great bhiksus                      monks  
twelve thousand in total**

**All were great nobles  
already in possession of supernatural powers  
among those present  
presiding as elders, were,  
the Venerable Kaundinya  
the Venerable Sariputra  
the Venerable Maudgalyayana  
the Venerable Kasyapa  
and the Venerable Ananda**

**Alongside,  
Bodhisattva Samantabhadra  
Bodhisattva Manjusri  
Bodhisattva Maitreya  
and every other bodhisattva of the era  
they all came together on this day**

# Two

## *The Virtues of Samantabhadra*



Present too, among those presiding as elders  
were the Sixteen Upright Adepts, namely,  
Bodhisattva Worthy Protector  
Bodhisattva Deft Comprehension  
Bodhisattva Eloquent Wisdom  
Bodhisattva Unveiling Impermanence  
Bodhisattva Supernatural Splendour  
Bodhisattva Radiant Nobility  
Bodhisattva Jewelled Banner  
Bodhisattva Supreme Wisdom  
Bodhisattva Serene Root  
Bodhisattva Unshakable Wisdom  
Bodhisattva Devoted Wisdom  
Bodhisattva Fragrant Elephant  
Bodhisattva Treasure Blossom  
Bodhisattva Middle Way Abiding  
Bodhisattva Restrained Conduct  
and Bodhisattva Liberation

All abided by and emulated  
the virtues of the great Samantabhadra  
perfectly observing  
his incomparable vows of conduct      recorded in the Avatamsakasutra  
remaining firmly  
within the dharma of his virtues

They wandered freely in every direction  
using whatever means they could  
they penetrated the Buddha's dharma treasury  
and reached the other shore

They vowed to visit infinite realms  
and achieve perfect sambodhi      complete enlightenment  
they left behind Tusita Heaven      4th heaven of the Desire Realm  
and descended into the royal palace  
they abandoned status and home  
to practise asceticism and study the way  
they did these things for the sake of men

**With the power of concentration and wisdom  
they vanquished Mara                      demon, the maker of death  
they grasped the subtle dharma  
subtle and mysterious  
and achieved supreme, perfect sambodhi**

Beings heavenly and human  
turned to them  
and worshipped them  
and begged them to turn the dharma wheel

**They broadcast unceasingly  
the sound of the dharma  
awakening all worlds  
they tore down the citadel of afflictions  
and drained the moat of desire**

**They wiped clean all filth  
revealing the pure  
they created harmony among beings  
revealing the profound and subtle truth**

<b>They performed good deeds producing fields of merit they used a variety of remedies to cure the three sufferings</b>	<b>the suffering of pain, impermanence &amp; inherent suffering of conditioned existence</b>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**They ascended to the stage of anointed one  
and were given the prophecy of sambodhi  
they served as spiritual masters, instructing bodhisattvas  
training them unceasingly in countless practices  
allowing their countless virtuous roots to flourish**

**Watched over by infinite buddhas  
with the power to appear in any buddha land  
like skilled illusionists  
they could appear in any form  
such forms were indeed illusory**

Moreover they accomplished the following,

**They penetrated the intrinsic nature of all dharmas  
and the origination of conditioned things  
they made offerings to all buddhas  
opening the way for all living things**

**They changed form in a flash like lightning  
they rent asunder Mara's net  
unravelling all entanglements  
they went far beyond sravakas                  disciples  
and pratyekabuddhas                  buddhas enlightened by their own efforts**

**They entered the dharma gates  
of emptiness, formlessness and non-desire  
they devised skilful means  
of demonstrating the three vehicles**

sravaka, pratyekabuddha  
& bodhisattva

They explained nirvana to those  
of low and average ability  
they obtained the many forms  
of neither rising nor ceasing samadhi      concentration  
as well as every method of dharani      formula for memorising texts

They entered flower garland samadhi      perfect samadhi  
as they pleased  
they mastered the technique of holding firm  
the many thousand forms of samadhi  
dwelling firmly in deep meditation  
they encountered infinite buddhas  
in the span of a single thought  
they travelled far and wide  
to every buddha land

They acquired a buddha's eloquence  
they adhered to Samantabhadra's vows  
they used the myriad tongues of beings  
to enlighten them  
revealing the true nature of reality  
they transcended worldly dharmas

and fixed their mind unceasingly upon the path  
that goes behind this world

Yet they were at ease and in control  
of all wordly things  
they extended the hand of friendship  
to the great multitude of beings

They accepted and firmly grasped  
the Tathagata's profound dharma treasury      epithet for the Buddha,  
they preserved the seed of buddhahood      lit. Thus Come One  
endeavouring always to keep it alive

Within them arose great compassion  
they grieved for sentient beings  
they preached to them  
with eloquence and loving-kindness

They gave them the gift of the dharma eye  
they stopped them  
from going down evil paths      non-human rebirth, e.g. animal,  
they laid open the gates of virtue      ghost and hell denizen

They viewed others as no different from themselves  
they carried them on their backs  
and brought them to the other shore  
where they all acquired the Buddha's infinite virtues  
becoming wise and intelligent to an unimaginable degree

Thus were the many great bodhisattvas  
limitless and uncountable, they gathered on this day

Present too were five hundred bhiksunis      nuns  
seven thousand upasakas      lay disciple (male)  
five hundred upasikas      lay disciple (female)  
the divinities of the realm of desire  
the divinities of the realm of subtle form  
and the divinities of the Brahma worlds      the highest three heavens of  
the subtle form realm

# Three

## *The Origin of the Great Teaching*





**On this day,**

**The Blessed One was radiant                      epithet for the Buddha  
and awe-inspiring  
like molten gold  
like a bright mirror  
his inner radiance shone outwards  
in the form of a great ever-transforming light**

**The Venerable Ananda thought to himself,**

**Today the Blessed One's every faculty  
is purified and tranquil  
his countenance  
radiant and majestic  
reveals a land adorned with jewels  
such as never seen before**

**With joy and wonder, Ananda gazed upwards. He rose and bared  
his right shoulder. Kneeling tall with palms together, he addressed  
the Buddha,**

**Today the Blessed One entered a state of great tranquillity  
he dwells within a dharma wondrous and unique  
the state within which all buddhas dwell  
the way of the leader, a path without equal**

**Buddhas past, present and future  
are mindful of one another  
were you thinking of buddhas, past and future  
or present buddhas from other realms?**

**Why so gloriously majestic?  
Why so exquisitely radiant?  
I beg you, please explain**

**Thereupon, the Blessed One proclaimed to Ananda,**

**Wonderful! Wonderful!**

**It is thanks to your compassionate desire  
to aid all sentient beings  
that you are able to ask a question so profound**

**What you asked surpasses  
the offerings made to every arhat      one who has cast aside  
and pratyekabuddha in the world      all afflictions  
and the alms given for successive aeons  
to all beings  
from the heavenly and human  
down to the crawling, flying and wriggling  
by a hundred-thousand-fold  
...why is this so?**

**Because heavenly, human and living beings yet to come  
as a result of your question will attain salvation**

**Ananda,  
the Thus Come One  
has limitless compassion  
and sympathy for all living  
in the three realms      the desire, subtle form  
it is for this reason      & formless realms  
he appeared in our world**

**He illuminated and explained  
the teachings of the way  
the common folk, he strove to save  
bestowing upon them the gift of truth  
like the udumbara flower      blooms once every 3000 years  
rarely emerging, rarely encountered**

**Your question has enriched us  
Ananda, you should know  
the wisdom of the Tathagata's sambodhi  
cannot be measured, it is limitless**

He can dwell within a single thought  
for infinite aeons  
nothing can be added to or subtracted from  
his body and its faculties  
...why is this so?

Because the concentration and wisdom  
of the Thus Come One  
are limitless and all-encompassing  
thus he possesses unsurpassed mastery  
of every dharma

Ananda, listen with care  
and keep what I say in mind  
for your sake I shall explain

# Four

## *The Genesis of Dharmakara*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,**

**An uncountable and inconceivable number of aeons ago  
there emerged a buddha  
named Lokeshvararaja Tathagata  
known as the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened  
the One Perfected in Wisdom and Conduct  
the Well-Gone One, the World-Knowing  
the Unsurpassed, the Subduer of Men  
Master of Heavenly and Human Beings  
Lord of the World**

**For forty-two aeons he preached in the world  
unceasingly he taught the dharma  
and preached the way  
to all heavenly and human beings**

**There was a ruler of a large country  
known as the World Abundance King  
when he heard the Buddha's dharma  
he felt great joy and saw the light**

**He set his mind upon the supreme and genuine way  
he abandoned his kingdom and throne  
he became an ascetic and took the name Dharmakara  
devoting himself to the bodhisattva path**

**His lofty genius and daring insight  
far surpassed the abilities of mortals  
as for faith, comprehension and sharpness of memory  
none were his match**

**Moreover, his conduct and aspirations were unrivalled  
so too was the power of his mindfulness and wisdom  
he was master of his own mind  
firm and unyielding  
he practised with such energy  
that none could surpass him**

**He approached the seat of the Buddha and prostrated. Kneeling  
tall with palms together, he praised the Buddha with these verses  
and set forth his expansive vows,**

**The exquisite appearance of the Thus Come One  
is elegant and dignified  
it finds no equal in any realm  
his infinite light beams in the ten directions  
obscuring the light of suns, moons, flames and pearls**

**With a single sound the Blessed One saves  
each and every type of living thing  
in a wondrous form he appears  
for everyone to see**

**I wish to obtain the pure sound of a buddha  
and broadcast the dharma across limitless realms  
making known the methods  
of discipline, concentration and energy  
and penetrate the profound and subtle dharma**

**With knowledge and wisdom as vast as the ocean  
and an inner mind purified, cleansed of all defilements  
I shall transcend the limitless gateways to evil destinies  
and swiftly reach the distant shore**

**Free from ignorance, greed and enmity  
with the power of samadhi  
afflictions are vanquished  
and all faults disappear**

**Like infinite past buddhas  
I shall serve as a great leader  
for the multitude of beings  
I shall liberate every being of every realm  
from the afflictions of birth, old age, sickness and death  
unceasingly cultivating generosity, discipline, patience  
vigour, concentration and wisdom: the six perfections**

**I shall help the unsaved crossover  
and help the saved become buddhas  
offerings as numerous  
as grains of sand in the Ganges  
are no match  
for steadfast and courageous  
pursuit of sambodhi**

**I vow to abide firmly in samadhi  
eternally shining a light upon all things  
conjuring a vast and purified field  
with adornments, extraordinary and unsurpassed**

**Every kind of being  
on samsara's every path                      the cycle of rebirth  
shall be swiftly reborn in my land  
peaceful and happy**

**I shall uplift the sentient  
with a heart of loving-kindness  
and rescue limitless numbers  
of suffering beings**

**The power of my practice is resolute and unwavering  
only the noble wisdom of buddhas can directly apprehend it  
even if my body suffers pain of every kind  
my mind's resolve shall forever remain unshaken**

# Five

*Utmost Focus and  
Determination*





**After reciting these verses, Dharmakara Bhiksu addressed the Buddha,**

**Now a follower of the bodhisattva path  
I have developed a sambodhi mind        a mind fixed on sambodhi  
and taken up the vow to become a buddha  
and lead all others to become buddhas too**

**I would like the Buddha to teach me the dharma  
I shall reverently uphold it  
and conduct myself according to it  
I shall uproot the cause  
that makes beings toil on samsara's wheel  
quickly shall I attain supreme and perfect sambodhi**

**Were I to become a buddha  
the light of my wisdom  
my land and my name  
would be known to all in the ten directions**

**I hope that all beings  
the heavenly and human  
the creeping, crawling and wriggling  
shall be reborn in my land  
becoming bodhisattvas**

**Can it be that these vows I have set forth  
surpass those that created countless buddha fields?**

**Thereupon Lokeshvararaja expounded the dharma for the sake of Dharmakara,**

**If one were to measure the ocean with a ladle  
it would take many aeons to reach the bottom  
those with minds fixed on pursuit of the way  
and inexhaustible determination  
shall reap its fruit, with no wish unfulfilled**

Consider the means by which you shall accomplish  
the adornment and purification of a buddha field  
this is something you already know  
and by yourself alone must it be done

Dharmakara addressed the Buddha,

You speak with vast profundity  
the meaning of which is far beyond  
my sphere of understanding  
I hope the Tathagata, the Worthy and All-Knowing  
can describe to me in detail  
the wondrous lands of infinite buddhas

If I hear this dharma and comprehend it  
and put what I have learned into practice  
I shall surely fulfil my vows

Lokesvararaja appreciated the lofty insight of this request and so  
was willing to elaborate.

He spoke of twenty-one hundred million buddha fields  
their virtues, their adornments, their purity  
their vastness and total perfection  
it was all that Dharmakara had hoped for

During the revelation of this dharma  
ten billion years had passed  
hearing the Buddha's words  
and seeing all that he revealed  
Dharmakara developed his unique and unparalleled vows

He examined the good and evil  
in beings heavenly and human  
and the positive and negative aspects  
of different kingdoms  
he fixed his mind upon and selected  
the elements he most desired

thus were his great vows formed  
zealously sought after and reverently upheld

For five aeons he meditated upon their virtues  
and was thus was as familiar  
with the virtues and adornments  
of twenty-one hundred million buddha fields  
as intimately as he was one  
in such a manner he conjured a land surpassing all others

As soon as this was done, he returned to the seat of Tathagata  
Lokesvararaja. He prostrated at his feet. Thrice he encircled him,  
and then, standing before him with his palms together, he in-  
formed the Blessed One that his task of purifying and adorning a  
land was complete.

The Buddha proclaimed,

Excellent! Now is the time  
for you to proclaim your vows in full  
and bring joy to all sentient beings  
let the people hear this dharma  
and receive its great blessings  
so that they may be reborn in your land  
where they shall observe and practise  
thus bringing your incomparable vows to fruition

Six

*Setting Forth  
the Great Vows*



**Dharmakara addressed the Buddha,**

**I hope that the Blessed One  
of great benevolence  
may lend his ear**

**Were I to realise supreme bodhi  
and become a buddha  
my buddha field would be replete  
with an immeasurable and unimaginable array  
of virtues and adornments  
there would be no denizens of hell  
no hungry ghosts, no birds, no beasts  
no crawling, flying and wriggling creatures  
all beings, including those  
ensnared in Yama's realm  
within the three evil paths  
would be reborn in my land  
and be transformed by my dharma  
all would achieve perfect sambodhi  
never again descending into evil destinations  
if this vow is fulfilled, I have become a buddha  
if it remains unfulfilled  
I have not attained supreme sambodhi**

**Vows 1-2**

**lord of death**

**Were I to become a Buddha  
all beings in the realms in the ten directions  
reborn in my land  
would possess bodies of pure gold  
and the thirty-two marks of a great man  
a uniform appearance, upright and pure  
so long as there are differences in form and appearance  
and the concepts of beauty and ugliness still exist  
I have not attained sambodhi**

**Vows 3-5**

**i.e. of a buddha**

**Were I to become a buddha  
beings reborn in my land**

**Vows 6-8**

would be aware of the good and evil actions  
committed in their past lives over innumerable aeons  
every being would possess piercing vision  
and penetrating hearing  
knowing the past, present and future affairs  
of all in the ten directions  
if this vow is not fulfilled, I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vow 9  
all beings reborn in my land  
would possess the ability to read the minds of others  
if they cannot read the minds of the sentient beings  
of one trillion buddha lands  
then I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vows 10-11  
all beings reborn in my land  
would have mastery of supernatural powers  
and every perfection see Six Perfections above  
if in the duration of a single thought  
they cannot travel far and wide  
throughout one trillion buddha fields  
making offerings to all buddhas  
then I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vow 12  
beings reborn in my land  
would abandon false distinctions  
and remain serene in every faculty  
if they are not guaranteed  
to achieve complete sambodhi  
and realise great nirvana the nirvana of a buddha  
then I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vows 13-14  
my infinite light would shine  
upon all in the ten directions  
and surpass the light of all buddhas  
a trillionfold times brighter than suns and moons  
if sentient beings were to see my light

and its rays were to touch their bodies  
each without exception  
would experience peace and happiness  
and develop a heart of loving-kindness  
with a desire to do good and be reborn in my land  
if this is not so, I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha  
life would be everlasting  
my land would possess  
a countless number of sravakas  
and beings heavenly and human  
all with infinite lifespans

Vows 15-16

Were the sentient beings of the trichiliocosm a universe of one  
to all become pratyekabuddhas billion world systems  
yet within one hundred thousand aeons  
their number could be measured  
then I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha  
yet infinite buddhas of infinite realms  
in the ten directions  
do not extol my name nor praise the qualities of my land  
then I have not attained sambodhi

Vow 17

Were I to become a buddha  
the sentient beings in the ten directions  
who hear my name  
would develop utmost sincerity and resolute faith  
their virtuous roots would be fixed wholly upon  
and directed toward the desire to be reborn in my land  
if even those who have practised buddha mindfulness  
as few as ten times  
were not reborn  
then I have not attained sambodhi

Vow 18

The 5 Great Misdeeds:

This does not apply to those 1-3. killing mother, father, arhat  
who commit the five great misdeeds 4. spilling a Buddha's blood

or slander the true dharma

5. creating disorder in the samgha\*

\*the Buddhist community

Were I to become a buddha

Vows 19-20

beings in the ten directions who hear my name  
would develop the aspiration to attain bodhi  
they would cultivate spiritual virtues  
and practise the six perfections  
resolute and unwavering  
they would unceasingly direct their virtuous roots  
toward the desire to be reborn in my land  
day and night they would fix their minds upon me  
when they reach the end of their lives I shall appear  
alongside an assembly of bodhisattvas to receive them  
within the span of a split second  
they shall be reborn in my land  
as never-retrogressing bodhisattvas  
if this vow is not fulfilled, I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha

Vow 21

beings in the ten directions who hear my name  
would fasten their minds upon my land  
and develop the aspiration to attain bodhi  
resolute and unwavering  
they would plant virtuous roots  
and fix their minds upon  
and direct themselves toward  
the desire to be reborn in Sukhavati                      the Pure Land  
and all without exception would succeed              lit. Ultimate Bliss

If those who, in past lives, committed evil deeds  
hear my name and immediately repent  
and vow to do good in service of the way  
and uphold the teachings and the precepts  
and desire to be reborn in my land  
then, at the end of their lives  
they shall never again enter the three evil paths  
instead they shall be reborn in my land  
if this is not so, then I have not attained sambodhi



Were I to become a buddha  
there would be no women in my land  
if, after hearing my name  
obtaining purity of faith  
and developing a bodhi mind  
women feel loathing and distress in the female form  
and desire to be reborn in my land  
when their end comes  
they shall be transformed immediately  
into male form and be reborn there

Vows 22-24

Every being in the ten directions  
who comes to my land  
shall be transformed and reborn  
within a lotus flower  
in a pond of seven jewels  
if this is not so  
then I have not attained sambodhi

see Chapter 14

Were I to become a buddha  
beings in the ten directions who hear my name  
would become joyous and resolute in faith  
they would show reverence and bow before me  
with purity of mind they would devote themselves  
to the way of the bodhisattva  
all heavenly and human beings would pay them homage  
after hearing my name and reaching the end of their lives  
they shall be reborn into a respectable household  
and possess flawless physical and mental faculties  
they shall unceasingly devote themselves to  
a distinctly pure form of practice  
if this is not so, then I have not attained sambodhi

Vows 25-27

Were I to become a buddha  
even the concept of non-good  
would not exist in my land  
all beings reborn there would be of one mind  
together united on the straight path  
eternally detached from anguish  
with minds becalmed

Vows 28-31

they would experience joy  
like a bhikṣu cleansed of all defilements i.e. an arhat

If discriminative thought still arises within them  
or attachment to bodily form  
then I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vows 32-34  
those reborn in my land  
would possess infinite roots of virtue  
all would attain bodies as hard as diamond  
and as strong as Narayana a powerful divinity  
moreover, a bright light would shine  
from the top of their crowns

All would achieve perfection  
in every form of wisdom  
and limitless eloquence  
all would be talented at explaining  
the esoteric and essential elements of every dharma  
all would preach the dharma and follow the way  
their words would ring like bells  
if this is not so, I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vows 35-36  
beings reborn in my land  
would ultimately be assured  
of attaining buddhahood in a single lifetime  
except for those  
who take on the Primal Vow unique to Dharmakara  
for the sake of all sentient beings  
and don the armour  
of the Universal Vows shared by all bodhisattvas  
to edify each and every being  
so that they develop faithful hearts  
and cultivate the path to bodhi  
and follow the way of Samantabhadra  
even if they are reborn in other worlds  
they shall remain detached from evil paths  
whether they enjoy preaching the dharma

hearing the dharma or developing psychic powers  
whatever they desire, they may practise at will  
assured of attaining perfection therein  
if this is not so, I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha  
food, clothing and every item of worship  
required by those reborn in my land  
would appear when so desired  
all buddhas in the ten directions  
would receive these offerings  
as soon as they so wished  
if this is not so, I have not attained sambodhi

Vows 37-38

Were I to become a buddha  
all things in my land  
would be purified and adorned  
radiant and beautiful, of singular appearance  
the absolute pinnacle of elegance and refinement  
entirely without equal  
if beings, even though they possess the divine eye  
are still capable of distinguishing and enumerating  
the varieties of beauty and radiance in my land  
and describing in full their qualities  
then I have not attained sambodhi

Vow 39

Were I to become a buddha  
there would be an infinite variety  
of coloured trees in my land  
standing several hundred  
or thousand leagues tall  
and bodhimanda trees  
four million miles in height  
from which all bodhisattvas  
even those with inferior roots of virtue  
would gain perfect understanding

Vows 40-41

"place of enlightenment" trees

Those wishing to see the adornments  
of every purified buddha field  
would see them within the jewelled trees

like looking in a mirror and seeing their own face  
if this is not so, I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vow 42  
my buddha field would be  
vast, adorned and purified  
as bright and lustrous as a mirror  
illuminating the immeasurable, innumerable  
and indescribable buddha worlds in the ten directions  
seeing this, the hearts of beings shall be filled with wonder  
if this is not so, I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vow 43  
from the ground up to the void  
there would be palaces and pavilions  
ponds and streams, flowers and trees  
all things in my land would be infused  
with an immeasurably exquisite fragrance  
permeating all realms in the ten directions  
all beings who experience this fragrance  
shall devote themselves to way of the Buddha  
if this is not so, I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vows 44-45  
the great many bodhisattvas  
of the realms in the ten directions  
upon hearing my name would attain  
the purified and liberating samadhi  
of universal impartiality  
as well as every method of profound dharani  
remaining within samadhi  
until they reach the stage of buddhahood

Within samadhi they shall unceasingly make offerings  
to each and every innumerable buddha  
never losing concentration  
if this is not so, I have not attained sambodhi

Were I to become a buddha Vows 46-48  
the great many bodhisattvas of other realms

upon hearing my name  
would realise the dharma  
of detachment from rebirth  
and acquire dharanis  
they would be purified and joyful  
capable of abiding in equanimity  
they would devote themselves  
to the way of the bodhisattva  
and perfect their roots of virtue  
if, at once they do not attain  
the three forms of acceptance  
or are incapable of realising  
the state of non-retrogression  
then I have not attained sambodhi

see Chapter 15

# Seven

*Assured Achievement  
of Sambodhi*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,**

**When Dharmakara Bhikṣu had finished  
setting forth these vows  
he continued by reciting these verses:**

**I have set forth my world-surpassing vows  
assuring my ascent to the path supreme  
be these vows unfulfilled  
may I not achieve perfect sambodhi**

**As the Great Benefactor  
I shall relieve all deprivation and suffering  
so that all living beings  
may endure the long night without anguish  
giving birth to virtuous roots  
reaping the fruits of bodhi**

**If I achieve sambodhi  
I shall be known as Amitayus                      Infinite Life  
when beings hear my name  
they come to my land  
with golden bodies like the Buddha  
exquisite and perfect in every way**

**They too with hearts of great compassion  
shall bring blessings to every kind of being  
detached from desire, deep in right-mindfulness  
pure in wisdom and devoted to pure practice**

I wish my wisdom were radiant  
 shining upon every realm in the ten directions  
 eradicating the murk  
 of the three impurities desire, hatred, delusion  
 with a light that ends all misery

**For every being  
the suffering of the three paths are left behind**

the darkness cast by its afflictions shall be no more  
the wisdom eye is opened  
a radiant body is acquired

I shall obstruct the evil paths  
and clear the path to the good  
I shall open the dharma treasury for all beings  
and share widely its precious blessings

With unimpeded wisdom like the Buddha  
always practising loving-kindness  
always acting as a teacher for the heavenly and human  
I shall be known as Lord of the Three Realms

I shall preach the dharma with a lion's roar  
and rescue beings far and wide.  
my prior vows shall be fulfilled  
so that all beings become buddhas

If these vows are brought to fruition  
their impact shall be felt by a great-thousandfold  
and every divine being of the void  
shall rain down exquisite and wondrous flowers

The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,

After Dharmakara Bhikṣu recited these verses  
the entire earth shook with six earthquakes  
wondrous flowers rained down from the sky  
and scattered on the ground

Then, from the sky came voices  
singing words of praise  
announcing that he was certain  
to achieve supreme sambodhi



# Eight

## *Accumulation of Spiritual Virtues*



Ananda, Dharmakara stood before Lokeshvararaja  
amid the great assembly of heavenly and human beings  
having set forth his extensive vows  
he dwelt in a state of true wisdom

With fierce courage and energy  
he fixed his mind upon  
the adornment of a wondrous land  
a land of immense vastness  
a transcendently and singularly wondrous land  
a land to be established for all eternity  
neither waning nor declining

For countless aeons he ingrained in himself the habit  
of virtuous practice  
never giving rise to notions  
sensuous, malicious or delusional  
never clinging to the dharmas  
of visible form, sound, odour, taste and physical sensation

Instead he took pleasure in practising  
mindfulness of past buddhas  
recalling how they cultivated their virtuous roots  
tranquil in conduct, detached from unreality  
taking refuge in the ultimate truth  
he planted many virtuous roots  
paying no mind to the many forms of suffering  
he scorned desire and mastered contentment

He fixed his mind on the pursuit of the pure white dharma  
for the benefit of all beings  
and with tireless aspiration and the strength of endurance  
he succeeded

Unceasingly patient toward sentient beings  
he showed them loving-kindness  
with a pleasing countenance and kind words

he persuaded them and urged them forward

He honoured the Three Jewels    1. Buddha 2. dharma 3. samgha  
and served masters and elders  
with a heart free of falseness and flattery  
he adorned all practices, he was a perfect model  
viewing all dharma as ever-changing and impermanent  
he was eternally serene in samadhi

Skilled at safeguarding verbal karma  
never deriding others for their faults  
skilled at safeguarding physical karma  
never falling into dissipation  
skilled at safeguarding mental karma  
pure and free of all defilement

Bound not to town nor village  
loved ones or precious jewels  
unfailingly he practised the six perfections  
generosity, upright conduct, forbearance  
vigour, meditative concentration and wisdom  
to edify beings and establish them  
firmly upon the supreme and genuine way

As a consequence of the virtuous roots he cultivated  
wherever he was reborn there appeared a limitless treasury  
sometimes he became a householder  
family chief or noble of high birth  
sometimes he became a warrior  
emperor or Wheel-Turning King                      ruler of an entire universe  
a ruler of the six realms of desire  
or even a Brahma king                                      see Brahma worlds above

He showed reverence to buddhas  
worshipping them unceasingly, eternally  
mere words cannot do justice to his virtues

His mouth and his body perpetually emanated  
a fragrance of immeasurable exquisiteness  
somewhat like sandalwood

or the fragrance of the utpala flower  
permeating everywhere  
throughout infinite realms

blue lotus

Wherever he was born  
his appearance was elegant and dignified  
replete with the thirty-two marks  
and eighty minor marks  
from his hands emerged inexhaustible treasures  
ornamented items of worship  
everything that one may require  
the very best of things  
bringing aid and joy to sentient beings

of a buddha

This is why he was capable  
of causing countless beings to develop  
minds set upon complete and perfect sambodhi

# Nine

*Complete Perfection*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,**

**Dharmakara Bhiksu devoted himself  
to the way of the bodhisattva  
he accumulated virtues, countless and immeasurable  
he achieved mastery of every dharma  
beyond the scope of word and thought**

**Great vows set forth, accomplished to perfection  
were now established firmly in reality  
in the form a purified buddha land  
perfectly adorned  
of awe-inspiring power and vastness**

**After listening to the Buddha's words, Ananda asked the Blessed One,**

**When the bodhisattva Dharmakara achieved bodhi  
did he become a past buddha, a future buddha  
or a present buddha of an other world?**

**The Blessed One proclaimed,**

**This buddha, thus come, thus gone  
comes to no such place and goes from no such place  
neither born nor dying  
neither of the past, present nor future**

**To fulfil his vow of saving all beings  
Dharmakara emerged in the west  
trillions of buddha fields  
beyond Jambudvipa                      one of the 4 continents that  
in a world named Sukhavati                      surround Mt. Sumeru**

**After becoming a buddha  
he became known as Amitabha                      Infinite Light  
ten aeons have passed from then until now  
and there he remains still preaching the dharma  
surrounded and worshipped  
by countless bodhisattvas and sravakas**

Ten

*All Vow  
to Become Buddhas*



As the Buddha spoke of Amitabha  
of the time when he sought his vows as a bodhisattva  
Prince Aja and five hundred householders listened with joy  
each holding a cluster of golden flowers  
they came together before him and paid him homage

They offered their flowers and sat to one side  
as they listened to his dharma  
they vowed in their hearts  
that if they were to become buddhas  
they wished to be like Amitabha

The Buddha perceived this and proclaimed,

In the future, the prince and his retinue  
shall all become buddhas  
in past lives they remained for countless aeons  
on the bodhisattva path  
making offerings to four billion buddhas  
at the time of Kasyapa Buddha they were my disciples  
and now today they pay me homage  
and we meet again once more

Hearing the Buddha's words, great joy was shared among all  
bhiksus.



# Eleven

*A World Adorned  
and Purified*



**The Buddha told Ananda,**

**Infinite are the virtues  
of the world called Sukhavati  
adorned to perfection  
free of suffering and hardship  
unknown are the evil paths  
and the afflictions of Mara**

**There there are no seasons  
no contrast between coldness and warmth  
no rain, no darkness  
no hills, no oceans                      Cakravada: iron ring of mountains  
large or small                                              that surrounds Sumeru  
no mountains like Cakravada and Sumeru  
no mountains made of earth and stone                      Sumeru: mountain at  
nothing                                                                                      centre of universe  
only the seven kinds of natural jewels  
and a ground of pure gold**

**Vast and uniformly level  
its boundaries are unreachable  
exquisite and extraordinarily beautiful  
its purity and adornments are unmatched  
anywhere in the ten directions**

**After hearing this, Ananda addressed the Blessed One,**

**If this land has no Mount Sumeru  
how could the Heaven of the Four Great Kings  
and the Heaven of the Thirty-Three Divinities exist?  
                                                                                                 the lowest two heavens of desire realm**

**The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,**

**The divinities of Yama, Tusita                      the 4th/3rd highest  
and even those                                              heavens of the desire realm  
of the realms of form and formlessness**

**how could they exist?**

**Ananda replied,**

**Through the inconceivable power of karma**

**The Buddha explained to Ananda,**

**Inconceivable karma  
is this something you can fathom?  
your retribution body  
is inconceivable  
the karmic retribution of beings  
is inconceivable  
the virtuous roots of sentient beings  
are inconceivable  
the noble power of buddhas and buddha fields  
is inconceivable  
the beings of this land  
the beneficent power of their spiritual virtues  
dwells within the stage of action and retribution  
this, in addition to the supernatural power of buddhas  
is therefore likewise inconceivable**

**Ananda replied,**

**Action and retribution  
are inconceivable  
regarding this dharma I have no doubts  
but in order that future sentient beings  
tear asunder the web of doubt  
I have asked this question**

# Twelve

*A Light Shining  
Upon All Things*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,**

**The majestic light of Amitabha  
is revered above all others  
throughout the ten directions  
no buddha's light compares**

**He illuminates all buddha fields in the west  
as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges  
those in the south, the west and the north  
in the four intercardinal directions  
all above and below  
he illuminates them too**

**Some buddhas have atop their crown  
a circular light that shines  
for several leagues  
others have a light that shines  
for hundreds, thousands and millions**

**The light of some buddhas shines upon  
one or two buddha fields  
the light of some buddhas shines upon  
hundreds and thousands of buddha fields  
but only the light of Amitabha can shine universally  
upon infinite, limitless, incalculable buddha fields**

**The distance of a buddha's light  
is determined by their vows  
and virtues acquired in prior lives  
from the time they sought the way  
up until the time they became buddhas**

**This is accomplished as a matter of course  
and cannot be estimated in advance  
the grace of Amitabha Buddha's light  
surpasses by a trillionfold  
the radiance of suns and moons**

his light is revered above all others  
among buddhas he is king

Thus he is known as  
the Buddha of Infinite Life  
the Buddha of Infinite Light  
the Buddha of Limitless Light  
the Buddha of Unimpeded Light  
the Buddha of Incomparable Light  
the Light of Wisdom  
the Eternal Light  
the Light of Purification  
the Light of Joy  
the Light of Emancipation  
the Light of Well-Being  
the Light That Surpasses Suns and Moons  
the Light That Cannot Be Fathomed

Shining upon every realm in the ten directions  
to encounter it is to have impurities cleansed  
and the good arise within  
supple in body and mind

If those afflicted with utmost suffering  
on the three paths  
encounter this light  
they shall attain tranquillity and liberation  
at the end of their lives

If beings hear of this light  
and its glorious blessings  
they shall exalt it night and day  
they shall fix their minds unceasingly upon it  
then, when they so wish, they shall obtain  
rebirth in this land

# Thirteen

*Infinite Lifespan,  
Infinite Followers*



**The Buddha told Ananda,**

**The lifespan of Amitayus is so long it cannot be measured  
surrounded by an assembly of countless sravakas  
he has penetrating supernatural wisdom  
and mastery of awe-inspiring powers  
he can hold every world in his hand**

**Among my followers, none can match  
the supernatural powers of Maudgalyayana  
in the span of a single day  
he can calculate all beings  
in the lunar mansions of a trichiliocosm**

**If all beings in the ten directions  
became pratyekabuddhas  
and were they to live for a trillion years  
and possess Maudgalyayana's powers  
and spend their whole lives  
exhausting all intellectual strength  
in calculating the number  
of those in Amitabha's assembly  
at the range of one hundred billion  
still they would not come close  
to even a single percent of the total**

**Imagine an ocean boundlessly deep and wide  
suppose one were to take a single hair  
and split it into hundreds of pieces  
fragmented as small as atoms  
if one were to take a single atom  
and soak up one drop of the ocean  
which do you think is largest  
the drop of water on this fragment or the ocean?**

**Ananda,  
the likes of Maudgalyayana**



who know the total number  
are like a drop of water on a fragment of hair  
those who know it not are like the ocean's water  
the lifespan of the Buddha  
and his bodhisattvas and sravakas  
and his heavenly and human beings  
are all like this too  
unknowable through calculation and analogy

# Fourteen

*Jewel Trees,  
Far and Wide Throughout the  
Land*



**In the land of the Thus Come One  
there are jewel trees of many kinds  
made of pure gold and pure silver  
beryl, quartz and amber  
fine jade and carnelian**

**Some are formed solely from one jewel  
without mixture whatsoever  
others are formed from two or three  
or as many as seven  
mixed and merged together**

**Their roots, branches and trunks  
are formed from a selection of the seven jewels  
and their flowers, fruits and leaves  
are formed from others**

**Some have roots of pure gold and trunks of silver  
beryl branches with tips of quartz  
amber leaves, fine jade flowers and carnelian fruits**

**Others have the seven jewels  
as roots, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits  
each type merged together as one**

**Each kind is divided into rows  
row by row positioned straightly  
trunk by trunk aligned perfectly  
branches and leaves facing perfectly  
flowers placed in perfect position  
luxuriant colours and dazzling radiance  
more than the eye can behold**

<b>From time to time a fresh breeze blows issuing forth the five musical tones subtle earth and autumnal tones come naturally together in harmony jewel trees like these are found far and wide throughout the land</b>	<b>corresponding to the five elements and seasons e.g. earth = late summer</b>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

# Fifteen

*The Seat of Enlightenment*



At the seat of enlightenment  
there is a bodhi tree  
four million miles in height  
with a trunk five thousand leagues in circumference  
its branches and leaves stretch out in the four directions  
for two hundred thousand miles

Naturally formed from every type of precious stone  
its flowers and fruits are luxuriantly arrayed  
bright and dazzling, shining far and wide

Mani jewels of red, green, blue and white  
the most regal of gemstones  
they form a garland, linked together  
adorning the trunks of the jewel trees

Bells of gold and pearl  
hang between branches  
and wondrous and exquisite jewel nets  
are spread out, covering the treetops

Hundreds and thousands of colours  
reflect and beautify each other  
an infinite blazing light  
shines forth without limits

Every adornment appears when desired  
a gentle breeze drifting slowly  
touches the leaves and branches  
creating the infinitely wondrous dharma sound  
reaching each and every buddha land  
pure and all-encompassing  
mournful and resonant  
subtle and exquisite  
harmonious and refined  
a sound unequalled in the ten directions

If beings behold the bodhi tree and hear its sounds  
if they smell its fragrance and savour its fruits  
if they encounter its radiance  
and reflect upon its blessings  
they shall attain purity  
and clarity of the six faculties                      the five senses  
free from anguish and vexation                      & mental consciousness

Never regressing they shall reach  
the path of buddhahood  
after seeing this tree they shall acquire  
the three forms of acceptance  
the acceptance of the message  
the acceptance of compliance  
the acceptance of unborn dharma

The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,

In this buddha field  
the flowers, fruits and trees  
perform for beings a buddha's deeds

This is all thanks to Amitayus  
his awe-inspiring supernatural powers  
the power of his Primal Vow                      as fully described in  
the perfect nature of his vows                      48 parts above  
the clarity of his vows  
his devotion to these vows  
and his completion of these vows

# Sixteen

*Lecture Halls, Meditation  
Chambers and Observation  
Towers*



The lecture halls and meditation chambers of Amitayus  
and the railings of observation towers too  
are all naturally formed from the seven jewels  
above are nets of crystal mani jewels  
unrivalled in radiance and exquisiteness

The same is true of the palaces  
where a great many bodhisattvas reside  
inside stand bodhisattvas  
lecturing on and reciting the sutras  
while others take it in  
there are bodhisattvas too  
practising sitting and walking meditation  
reflecting on the way

In the air too are bodhisattvas  
lecturing on and reciting the sutras  
while others take it in  
in the air too are bodhisattvas  
practising sitting and walking meditation  
reflecting on the way

Some attain the rank of stream-enterer entering buddha path  
others become once-returners reborn once more before nirvana  
non-returners and arhats never reborn in the desire realm  
those yet to reach the stage  
of non-retrogression soon attain it  
all are mindful of the way  
they preach it and practise it  
all without exception are full of joy and gladness



# Seventeen

## *The Blessings of Springs and Pools*



To the left and right of the lecture halls  
are criss-crossing springs and pools  
of equal length, breadth and depth  
some are ten or twenty leagues large  
others hundreds and thousands  
sedate and fragrant  
they are blessed with eight virtues

Eight virtues: sweet, cool  
soft, light, clear, odourless  
drinkable & harmless

On their shores are countless sandalwood fragrance trees  
and auspicious bilva trees with fruits and flowers  
eternally fragrant, of dazzling radiance  
tapering branches dense with luxuriant foliage  
overlap and hang over the water  
nothing in our world can compare to their fragrance  
a breeze permeates the air with a rich aroma  
following the course of the water it spreads its sweet smells

Seven jewels adorn the pools  
golden sands line their beds  
utpala, padma, kumuda and pundarika flowers  
an assortment of colours, in bloom and radiant  
are spread far and wide across the water's surface

If sentient beings, passing through or bathing in the water  
wish for it to reach their feet  
or their knees, waist, armpits or neck  
if they wish for it to submerge their entire body  
if they wish it to be cold or warm  
if they wish its flow be calm or quick  
the water adapts itself accordingly  
enlarging the spirit and relaxing the body  
so pure it is invisible  
with jewelled sand so radiant  
from no depth does it fail to shine

Imperceptible ripples sedately alter course and collide  
creating unimaginably exquisite sounds

sometimes one hears  
the sound of the three jewels  
the sound of the perfections i.e. the Six Perfections  
the sound of tranquillity and stillness  
the sound of non-birth and non-cessation  
the sound of the ten powers and fearlessness a Tathagata's  
sometimes one hears powers  
the sound of the absence of nature, being and self  
the sound of great loving-kindness  
compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity  
the sound of initiation and sweet dew sprinkled on the crown

After hearing such sounds their mind is purified  
free from discriminative notions  
with a mind upright and in equilibrium  
their virtuous roots flower  
having heard what they heard  
they are at one with the dharma  
hearing whatever they want to hear  
no longer hearing what they dislike

Never regressing, their mind is fixed  
upon perfect and complete sambodhi  
beings from the ten directions are reborn there  
within a lotus flower in a pond of seven jewels  
spontaneously transformed and born anew  
they acquire a body, pure and empty  
a body without limitations

The agonies and vexations  
the sufferings and hardships  
of the three paths  
are to them unheard of  
such ideas cannot be conceived  
let alone experienced  
instead they enjoy these sounds  
natural and pleasant  
this is why this land is known as Sukhavati Ultimate Bliss

# Eighteen

*World-Surpassing  
and Extraordinary*



In the land of Sukhavati  
all beings are exquisite in appearance  
world-surpassing and extraordinary  
they are all of one kind, without the slightest distinction  
but for the sake of adapting to the customs of others  
they are given the names heavenly and human

The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,

Picture the impoverished, the suffering  
and destitute people of the world  
standing side by side emperors and kings  
would their appearances be comparable?

Emperors and kings would seem as ignoble  
in comparison with a Wheel-Turning King  
as the destitute would by their sides

The majesty of a Wheel-Turning King is unrivalled  
but compared with the King of Trayastrimsa i.e. Sakra  
they too would seem lowly and unsightly

If Sakra were compared  
with the sixth heaven divinities the highest of the  
he would be outclassed desire realm heavens  
by more than a hundred-thousand-fold

If the king of the sixth heaven i.e. Mara  
were compared with the radiant countenances  
of the bodhisattvas and sravakas of Sukhavati  
he would be outclassed by a trillionfold

The palaces and clothes they own  
the food and drink they enjoy  
can be compared with  
what is owned and enjoyed  
by the King of the Sixth Heaven

No being, heavenly or human can compete  
with the majesty of their powers  
nor their rank  
nor their mastery of supernatural transformations  
they are outmatched  
by a hundred, thousand, million-fold  
by an immeasurable degree

Ananda, you ought to know  
that Sukhavati, the land of Amitayus  
is adorned with inconceivable virtues

# Nineteen

*Complete Fulfilment*



In the world of Sukhavati  
sentient beings already reborn  
as well as those to be reborn  
in the present life  
or in a future life  
all gain wondrous bodies  
elegant and dignified in appearance  
blessed with infinite merits and virtues  
wisdom and perfect comprehension  
mastery of supernatural powers  
they enjoy great variety  
and an abundance of all things  
palaces and clothing, garlands and fragrant flowers  
canopies and items for adornment  
all appear at will when required  
within the span of a single thought

When one desires food  
an alms-bowl and utensils formed of seven jewels  
spontaneously appear before them  
food and drinks of one hundred flavours  
spontaneously overflow in abundance  
but although there is food  
there is nothing to be eaten  
its form is seen  
its fragrance is smelled  
using their minds they consume it  
increasing the strength of the body  
without the unpleasantness of waste  
they are supple in mind and body  
without attachment to taste  
when finished eating, the illusion ceases  
when the time comes again, it reappears

Marvellous jewelled clothing  
enjoyed in abundance  
caps, sashes and gemstone necklaces



of infinite radiance  
in hundreds and thousands of exquisite colours  
perfect in every way  
appear spontaneously on their bodies

Their dwellings match their appearances  
above are canopies made from nets of jewels  
from which hang bells  
made of unique and wondrous precious stones  
criss-crossing, they adorn all far and wide

The brilliant radiance of these lights and colours  
are unrivalled in beauty and splendour  
the railings of observation towers  
the eaves of palaces, their wings and galleries  
are sometimes wide, sometimes narrow  
sometimes square, sometimes round  
sometimes they float in the air  
sometimes they rest on the ground  
purified and tranquil  
they inspire joy and wonder  
appearing before them  
in accordance with their wishes  
all of which are satisfied to perfection

# Twenty

*Virtuous Wind,  
Raining Flowers*



In this buddha land  
whenever it is time to eat  
a virtuous breeze sedately arises  
brushing the nets and many jewel trees  
it produces wondrous voices  
which speak of suffering, emptiness, impermanence  
non-self and the perfections i.e. the Six Perfections  
and emanates ten thousand kinds  
of gentle, refined and virtuous fragrances  
causing impurities and predispositions  
in the listener to no longer arise

Touched by the breeze  
they are peaceful and contented  
like a bhikṣu who has attained cessation  
of perception and sensation

As a breeze stirs the trees of seven jewels  
fallen flowers collect on the ground below  
so that the buddha land is suffused all over  
with a great variety of colour and light

They are arranged according to colour  
without disorder, soft and gentle  
immaculate and smooth like cotton

When a foot treads upon them  
it submerges to the depth of four toes  
when the foot is raised  
they return to their original state

When the time for eating is complete  
the flowers vanish of their own accord  
and when the whole earth is purified  
fresh flowers rain down once more  
at particular times of the day  
spreading all over, far and wide  
just as before without the slightest deviation  
six times every day

# Twenty-One

*Jewel Lotuses  
and Buddha Light*



A great many jewel lotus flowers  
are spread across the land  
each possessing hundreds, thousands  
and millions of leaves and infinite colours

A blue flower's light is blue  
a white flower's light is white  
and same goes too for all other colours  
the darks, the yellows, the reds and purples

The dazzle of an infinite number of exquisite jewels  
and one hundred thousand mani jewels  
serve to enhance their uncommon beauty  
as luminous and radiant as the sun and moon

Some lotus flowers are as large as half a league  
others are as large as one, two or three  
or even as large as hundreds and thousands  
from within each flower emerges thirty-six trillion lights  
from within each light emerges thirty-six trillion buddhas  
with bodies of pure gold  
and every distinctive major and minor mark

Each and every buddha shines forth  
hundreds and thousands of lights  
filling everywhere in the ten directions  
with the teachings of the profound and subtle dharma

In this way these buddhas  
establish firmly upon the path  
an infinite number of beings

# Twenty-Two

*Assured Realisation  
of the Supreme Fruit*



Ananda, in this buddha land  
there is no darkness of dusk  
nor the light of fire, suns and moons  
nor the sparkling of stars  
nor the phenomena of day and night

There are no concepts like years and aeons  
no attachment to household  
no designation given to place  
nor discrimination between them  
instead there is only joy  
pure and unrivalled

If good sons and daughters  
those already reborn  
and those to be reborn in the future  
remain upon the straight path  
they are sure to attain  
perfect and complete sambodhi

Why is this so?  
because if one is on the wrong path  
or in a state of indecision  
they cannot know  
how this is accomplished

# Twenty-Three

*Praised by Buddhas  
in the Ten Directions*





Ananda, within the realms of the east  
as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges  
are buddhas as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges  
with long, broad tongues that emit infinite light  
and speak words that are truthful  
in praise of the inconceivable virtues of Amitayus

He is also praised by the buddhas  
within the worlds of the north, south and west  
as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges  
and the buddhas of the worlds  
in the four intercardinal directions  
as well as above and below  
as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges

Why is this so?  
because they hope that beings of other realms  
will hear the Buddha's name  
and become purified in mind

Recollecting, accepting and upholding his name  
they take refuge in it and worship him  
thus are they capable of developing a faith that is pure  
within the span of a single thought  
in which all virtuous roots are directed toward the desire  
to be reborn in this land  
in accordance with their wish  
they shall be born anew  
and thereafter reach the stage of non-retrogression  
and ultimately achieve perfect and complete sambodhi

# Twenty-Four

*The Three Classes  
of Reborn Beings*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,**

**Heavenly and human beings of the ten directions  
with minds fixed upon rebirth in this land  
belong to three distinct classes  
the superior class leave behind their homes  
and cast their desires aside  
they live ascetically and develop a mind set on bodhi  
directed toward and fixed upon Amitabha Buddha  
they cultivate virtues and vow to be reborn in his land**

**When such beings approach the end of their lives  
Amitabha Buddha appears before them  
alongside an assembly of nobles  
in a split-second they go with him  
to be reborn in his land  
thereupon they are transformed and born anew  
within a lotus flower formed of seven jewels  
acquiring wisdom, vigour and mastery  
of supernatural powers**

**It is for this reason, Ananda  
that beings who desire to see Amitabha  
in this present life  
must develop a supreme bodhi mind  
they must fix it upon Sukhavati  
they must accumulate virtuous roots  
they must maintain these roots  
and direct them forward  
by doing so they shall see the Buddha  
and be reborn in his land  
where they shall reach the stage of non-retrogression  
and ultimately achieve supreme bodhi**

**Although those of the intermediate class  
are incapable of living ascetically  
if they make great efforts in cultivating virtues**

**they can develop a mind fixed upon supreme bodhi  
directed toward and fixed upon Amitabha Buddha**

If they practise according to their abilities and virtues  
reverently uphold the precepts of purity  
erect stupas and icons                                 a monument housing relics  
and feed wandering monks  
hang silk fabrics and light lanterns  
scatter flowers and burn incense  
directing the merit accrued through these actions  
toward their desire to be reborn in this land  
then, at the end of their lives  
Amitabha's emanation body  
with the radiance, marks and characteristics  
of the real Buddha  
shall appear before them  
surrounded by his great assembly  
to receive and guide them  
thereupon they shall be led by his emanation  
to be reborn in his land  
where they shall remain  
within the stage of non-retrogression  
and achieve supreme bodhi  
in terms of spiritual virtues and wisdom  
they are inferior to those of the superior class

As for those of the inferior class  
if they are incapable of undertaking virtuous works  
they must develop the aspiration to attain supreme bodhi  
and a mind directed toward and fixed upon Amitabha Buddha  
if they are joyous and resolute in faith  
not giving rise to uncertainty  
with a heart of perfect sincerity  
and the desire to be reborn in his land  
they shall, at the end of their lives  
see the Buddha in a dream and attain rebirth  
in terms of spiritual virtues and wisdom  
they are inferior to those of the intermediate class

If beings abide in the Great Vehicle  
with minds purified and directed toward Amitayus  
then, even if they have practised buddha mindfulness  
as few as ten times  
desiring to be reborn in this land  
they shall hear the profound dharma  
and be liberated by faith  
and ultimately acquire purity of mind  
within the span of a single thought  
from which emerges a mind of single thought  
a mind solely mindful of the Buddha

At the end of their lives they shall see him  
as if it were a dream  
and be assured of rebirth in his land  
where they shall reach the stage of non-retrogression  
and achieve supreme bodhi

# Twenty-Five

*The True Cause of Rebirth*



Ananda, if good sons and daughters after hearing this sutra  
grasp it firmly, recite it, transcribe it and make offerings  
day and night, unceasingly seeking rebirth in this land  
if they develop a bodhi mind  
if they uphold the rules and precepts  
if they stand firm without transgressing  
if they bring blessings to all beings  
devoting their virtuous roots to their peace and happiness  
mindful of Amitabha, the buddha of the west and his land  
then, at the end of their lives  
they shall acquire the form and characteristics of a buddha  
as well as many kinds of adornment  
they shall be reborn in a land of jewels  
where they shall immediately hear the dharma  
and remain forever at the stage of non-retrogression

Ananda, if there are beings  
who desire to be reborn in his land  
even though they are incapable  
of exerting great effort in meditation  
and upholding to the utmost the teachings and precepts  
then, they must be virtuous in conduct  
they must not kill living beings  
they must not steal  
they must not succumb to sensual desire  
they must not tell lies  
they must not engage in artful talk  
they must not engage in malicious talk  
they must not engage in double talk  
they must not covet  
they must not succumb to rage  
they must not engage in foolish behaviour

If they adhere to these rules both night and day  
while reflecting upon the many blessings  
and adornments of Sukhavati, the realm of Amitabha  
and resolve in their minds to take refuge in him

to prostrate themselves before him and worship him  
then, at the end of their lives  
they shall not feel startled or panicked  
their minds shall be free from turmoil  
they shall attain immediate rebirth in his land

If there are people burdened with many affairs  
incapable of leaving home and possessing not the time  
to uphold the precepts and achieve a purified single mind  
then, when time permits  
they must remain upright in body and mind  
they must cut themselves off from desire  
casting all worries aside  
they must develop a heart of loving-kindness  
and vigorous energy

They must not succumb to anger and envy  
they must not succumb to greed and miserliness  
they must not succumb to remorse halfway along the path  
they must not succumb to hesitation and doubt  
they must obey their parents  
they must possess utmost sincerity and wholehearted faith  
they must truly believe in the profound nature  
of the Buddha's words  
they must truly believe that good deeds accrue merits  
they must reverently and unfailingly uphold this dharma  
they must contemplate and reflect upon  
their desire for salvation  
day and night, unceasingly  
they must be mindful of their desire to be reborn  
in the purified land of Amitabha  
for ten days and nights, or even as little as one  
if so, at the end of their lives  
they shall be reborn in this land

Those among the reborn  
who follow the bodhisattva path  
shall reach the stage of non-retrogression  
and acquire golden bodies  
replete with the thirty-two marks of a buddha



**All shall become buddhas  
and serve in a buddha land of their choosing  
when this is accomplished depends on their efforts  
but, in tirelessly seeking the way  
all shall achieve it, thus fulfilling their wishes**

**Ananda,  
this is why the Buddha Tathagatas  
from immeasurable and innumerable  
inconceivable, incomparable and limitless realms  
join together to extol and acclaim  
the spiritual virtues of Amitayus**

# Twenty-Six

*Pay Homage, Make Offerings  
and Hear the Dharma*



Ananda, when the great many bodhisattvas  
of the realms in the ten directions  
wish to pay homage to Sukhavati, the land of Amitayus  
they bring mandarava flowers, victory banners  
and parasols bedecked with jewels  
to the Buddha's abode  
and there they show him reverence  
they make offerings  
and are instructed in the dharma  
thereafter they edify beings by proclaiming the way  
and extolling the blessings and adornments of his land

Thereupon the Blessed One recited these verses,

In the buddha fields of the east  
as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges  
bodhisattvas as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges  
come to pay homage to Amitayus  
alongside the bodhisattvas of the north, south and west  
and the four intercardinal directions

Reverently they offer precious and exquisite gifts  
euphorically they sing the praises of the Most Honoured One  
in elegant and harmonious tones  
he who attained supernatural wisdom  
and passed through the profound dharma gateway

When they hear the Buddha's sacred name  
they acquire with ease the great blessing  
with devotion they practise every form of worship  
without succumbing to weariness  
they contemplate his extraordinary land  
so exquisite it is impossible to imagine  
entirely adorned with spiritual virtues  
it is impossible for other lands to compare

Once they develop a mind supreme

and desire to instantly achieve bodhi  
a smile appears on the golden face  
of the Infinite Honoured One  
and from his mouth emerges a radiant light  
that illuminates every realm in the ten directions

The light returns and encircles the Buddha  
thrice rotating before entering his crown  
when bodhisattvas see this light  
they immediately realise the state of non-retrogression  
all present thus celebrate and rejoice together

The sacred words of the Buddha	
resound like a thunderbolt	the Buddha's voice is
spoken in the all-encompassing	resonant, penetrating, pure,
and exquisite sounds of the eight tones	gentle, mournful, clear, harmonious & elegant

Upright adepts who have come	i.e. bodhisattvas
from the ten directions	
their desires, I know them all	
they are devoted to adorning the Pure Land	
and receiving the prophecy of buddhahood	
awakening to the knowledge	
that all dharmas are nothing	
but dreams, illusions and echoes	
by fulfilling every wondrous vow	
they are certain to form such a field	

Knowing that this land is but a reflection  
their minds are unceasingly fixed upon the universal vows  
reaching the end of the supreme bodhisattva path  
they possess the roots of every spiritual virtue  
devoting themselves to the ultimate path of bodhi  
they receive the prophecy of buddhahood  
comprehending the intrinsic nature of every dharma  
the emptiness of all things and the truth of non-self  
devoting themselves to the purification of a buddha land  
they are certain to form such a field

Hearing the dharma  
they are joyous in practice  
acquiring a state of utmost purity  
they are certain to receive from the Infinitely Respected One  
the prophecy of achieving complete sambodhi

Such a field is boundless and extraordinary  
this is the power of the Buddha's primal vow  
hearing his name they desire to be reborn  
and achieve with their own efforts  
the state of non-retrogression

The ultimate desire of bodhisattvas  
is that their own buddha field be no different  
ever mindful of the salvation of all beings  
they hope that all will develop a bodhi mind

Leaving behind their samsara bodies  
leading all to the other shore  
serving one hundred billion buddhas  
flying over and transforming every buddha field  
and then, with feelings of reverence and joy  
they depart, returning to the land  
of peace and sustenance

# Twenty-Seven

*Singing in Praise of the  
Buddha's Virtues*



**The Buddha told Ananda,**

**Bodhisattvas in this land are blessed  
by the power and glory of the Buddha  
within the duration of a meal  
they can travel to and fro  
between infinite pure lands  
in the ten directions  
and make offerings to every buddha**

**Flowers, incense, banners  
every item of worship  
as soon a notion for them occurs  
instantly they appear  
within their palms  
exquisite and singular  
like nothing this world has known  
to be presented to every buddha  
and the multitude of bodhisattvas**

**Scattered petals in the air  
form and make a single flower  
downwards they fall in a perfect circle  
becoming a canopy  
of hundreds and thousands of radiant colours  
colour after colour, each unique in fragrance  
permeating far and wide**

**Small canopies stretching as far as ten leagues  
transform again and again  
until they cover the whole trichiliocosm  
in order of old to new  
they transform and disappear  
if no more offerings of scattered petals are made  
those offered last remain in place**

**In the void, heavenly sounds are made**

exquisite voices, they sing in praise  
of the virtues of the Buddha  
then in a flash  
they all return to his land  
to gather in the lecture hall of seven jewels  
where Amitayus lectures on the Great Teaching  
and expounds the wondrous dharma  
leaving all without exception  
in a state of joy  
with faith and understanding  
they find the way

Thereupon a fragrant breeze blows  
through the trees of seven jewels  
producing the five musical tones  
infinite numbers of exquisite flowers are blown  
and scatter in the four directions  
spontaneous offerings like these  
are made unceasingly

From each divinity is offered  
a hundred thousand kinds of flowers and incense  
and ten thousand types of musical performance  
in homage to buddhas  
and the great multitude of bodhisattvas and sravakas  
from first to last they come and go  
in high spirits and full of cheer

This is thanks to the power  
of the primal vow of Amitayus  
past offerings made to tathagatas  
and the continuous flow of virtuous roots      through unceasing  
free from imperfection      mindfulness  
in addition to skilful practice  
assimilation and attainment      of virtues/adornment of Sukhavati



# Twenty-Eight

*The Divine Light  
of the Great Ones*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,**

**This buddha land's many bodhisattvas  
possess piercing vision and penetrating hearing  
in the eight directions, above and below  
of matters done, yet to come, and those just now unfolding  
of beings of all kinds, from the heavenly and human  
down to the crawling, flying and wriggling  
their thoughts both good and evil  
their words before they leave their mouths  
the moment they shall attain salvation  
the moment they shall find the way and be reborn  
all of it they know**

**Moreover, the light from the bodies  
of the sravakas of this buddha land  
shines as far as eight feet  
the light of bodhisattvas  
shines for hundreds of leagues  
among them, two reign supreme  
with majestic light that shines  
upon an entire trichiliocosm**

**Ananda asked the Buddha the names of these two bodhisattvas,  
and the Buddha answered,**

**One is Guanyin  
the other is Mahasthamaprapta  
they devote themselves within the world of men  
to the bodhisattva way  
reborn in this land  
they are often at the side of Amitabha Buddha  
they appear at will in any of the infinite abodes  
of the ten directions  
at present they reside in this realm  
bringing about great blessings and happiness  
worldly good sons and daughters  
if in peril or fright  
need only entrust themselves to Bodhisattva Guanyin  
and without exception they shall be saved**

# Twenty-Nine

*The Power of the Vow,  
Immense and Profound*



Ananda, bodhisattvas of this buddha land  
both present and future  
shall ultimately attain buddhahood in a single lifetime  
excepting those who take on the great vows  
and enter the realm of birth and death  
for the sake of saving the living  
using the lion's roar, donning the great armour  
adorning themselves with the virtues  
of the universal vows  
even when born into the world      5 corruptions: degeneration of  
of evil and the five corruptions      views, afflictions, beings,  
these wonders remain with them      their lifespans & the aeon itself  
until they reach buddhahood  
never experiencing the evil destinies  
no matter where born, remembering their past lives

Amitabha Buddha, wishing to save all beings  
living in the worlds of the ten directions  
leads them to rebirth in his land  
upon the path to nirvana  
as bodhisattvas, he leads them to buddhahood  
once buddhas they give others instruction  
and bring others salvation  
this process ever-ongoing  
is impossible to measure

The number of sravakas  
bodhisattvas and beings  
within the realms of the ten directions  
who are born into his buddha land  
upon the path to nirvana, becoming buddhas  
is impossible to measure

His buddha land is eternally in harmony  
with the one dharma, never changing  
...why is this so?

The great ocean governs the water  
all waters flow toward it and enter it  
how could it be that this ocean  
as a consequence  
expands or shrinks?

In the eight directions, above and below  
are countless buddha lands  
the land of Amitabha is immensely vast  
it is radiant and beautiful and full of joy  
it is supreme and without equal

This is a consequence of the time  
when as a bodhisattva  
he desired to seek the way  
and the virtues he accumulated  
he graciously bestowed  
upon all in the eight directions, above and below  
inexhaustible and limitless  
immense, profound and immeasurable  
impossible to express in words

# Thirty

*The Self-Cultivation  
of Bodhisattvas*



**Ananda, every bodhisattva in this buddha field  
their meditative concentration  
their knowledge and wisdom  
their supernatural powers  
and the power of their majesty  
are all without exception  
in a state of complete perfection**

**Possessing complete comprehension  
of the Buddha's esoteric teachings  
they have tamed every faculty  
they are flexible in body and mind  
thus they penetrate true wisdom  
with no more lingering bad habits  
they follow in the footsteps  
of the Buddha, taking the noble path  
with its seven branches of awakening**

**7 branches of awakening:**

- 1. mindfulness**
- 2. investigation of states**
- 3. energy   4. bliss**
- 5. tranquillity**
- 6. concentration**
- 7. equanimity**

**They develop five eyes  
which illuminate the truth  
and penetrate beyond the profane  
the flesh eye examines  
the divine eye penetrates  
the dharma eye purifies  
the wisdom eye sees the truth  
the buddha eye does it all**

**Awakened to the nature of dharma  
eloquent and self-possessed  
without constraint or obstruction  
skilfully they reveal  
the limitless expedient means  
existing within the world**

**Sincere and truthful in speech  
they reach the very essence of things  
saving all beings by teaching the true dharma  
beyond form and conditioning  
beyond attachment and freedom**

beyond all conception  
detached from delusion  
they receive and enjoy without grasping  
they travel to buddha fields far and wide  
without feelings of partiality and loathing  
nor do they entertain the notion  
of desiring non-desire  
nor do they feel enmity and resentment  
due to notions of the self and the other  
...why is this so?

Because bodhisattvas have great compassion  
and loving-kindness for every being  
and the desire to bring them the benefits  
which come from casting aside every attachment  
and acquiring infinite virtues  
and unimpeded wisdom  
that comprehends the ultimate reality  
beneath all dharmas  
perceiving origination and extinction

Speaking with skilful expedience  
never revelling in profane talk  
they take joy in discoursing upon the truth  
knowing that every dharma is empty and still  
the mental and physical afflictions of the body  
these two lingering factors are entirely no more

Within the three realms, they practise with impartiality  
upon the one vehicle, until they reach the other shore  
tearing asunder the web of doubt  
realizing that there is nothing to be obtained

Through expedient wisdom, they grow in knowledge  
always, from the very start, abiding firmly  
within the use of supernatural power  
they attain the path of the one vehicle

It was never due to any other that they were awoken



# Thirty-One

*True Virtues*



Vast and deep is their wisdom  
like the ocean  
lofty and expansive is their bodhi  
like Mount Sumeru  
majestically radiant are their bodies  
surpassing the sun and moon  
immaculately white are their minds  
like the Himalayas  
enduring like the earth  
entirely level and even  
purifying like water  
washing away all dirt  
blazing like fire  
burning the fuel of affliction  
never clinging like the wind  
free from obstruction  
the dharma resounds like a thunderbolt  
awakening the unconscious  
raining down droplets of sweet dharma  
refreshing all beings  
their great loving-kindness  
as vast as the void  
like an unblemished lotus flower  
untainted by dirt  
like a banyan tree  
providing shelter for many  
like a diamond cutter  
severing all attachments to delusion  
like the Cakravada mountains  
a horde of demons and heretics cannot shake them

Upright in mind, skilful and resolute  
they discourse upon the dharma  
without weariness  
they seek the dharma  
without fatigue  
their morals are like the beryl stone  
clear and transparent, both inside and out  
their words make beings

submit themselves joyfully  
beating the dharma drum  
erecting the dharma banner  
revealing the sun of wisdom  
eradicating the darkness of delusion  
pure and gentle  
serene in concentration and perceptive  
as great leaders  
taming themselves and others  
helping all living beings  
cast aside every attachment  
that they may be eternally detached  
from the three impurities  
free to indulge in their supernatural powers

As a result of the power of his vows  
and the virtuous roots they developed  
they vanquish the troops of Mara  
they honour and serve every buddha  
a bright lamp for the world  
creating a field of merit, unsurpassed  
a truly extraordinary fortune, worthy of reverence  
majestic and joyous, bold and fearless  
their appearance, their marks and characteristics  
their virtues and their eloquence  
are perfectly adorned and without equal  
unceasingly they are praised by all buddhas  
possessing a bodhisattva's every perfection  
abiding eternally in samadhi  
neither arising nor ceasing  
travelling to dharma sanctuaries far and wide  
leaving those on the two vehicles far behind

i.e. sravakas &  
pratyekabuddhas

Just now, Ananda  
I have merely provided a sketch  
of the virtues of reborn bodhisattvas  
in this realm of Sukhavati  
if I were to speak of them extensively  
I would not get through them all  
even after hundreds and thousands of aeons

# Thirty-Two

*Limitless Longevity  
and Happiness*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya Bodhisattva and the heavenly  
and human beings present,**

**Inexpressible are the virtues and wisdom  
of the sravakas and bodhisattvas  
of the land of Amitayus  
his land is wondrous and peaceful  
pure and full of joy**

**Why then, do you not strive  
to do good and be naturally placed  
upon the path of mindfulness**

**Coming and going  
making offerings  
gaining insight from the sutras  
following the way  
delighting in persistent cultivation**

**Able, valiant, wise  
with minds that do not deviate  
determined, never slacking  
on the outside unhurried  
on the inside charging forward  
capacious as the void  
reaching its centre  
the outer and inner are in harmony  
and in order, as a matter of course  
when one is self-restrained and upright  
mind and body are immaculate**

**Without craving and greed  
one's vows remain unshaken  
without increase or decrease  
seeking the way  
in harmony with what is right  
never turning toward heresy**

acting in accordance with the sutras  
complying with instruction  
never daring to overstep the line  
all for the sake of the path esteemed  
devoid of other thoughts

Free from anxiety  
naturally effortless  
empty, creating nothing  
peaceful and contented

Free from desire  
undertaking virtuous vows  
wholeheartedly seeking their fulfilment  
full of pity and compassion  
fully in accord with ritual and duty  
embracing the external and internal  
going beyond and gaining release  
naturally safeguarding  
their true immaculate whiteness

With unsurpassed ambition  
pure concentration, peace and joy  
like the breaking of dawn  
the way is cleared  
illuminating the real within the real  
the very root of reality  
its true lights and appearances  
permeate one another  
producing magnificent transformations

As the seven jewels emerge in Uttarakuru 1 of the 4 continents  
from the void emerges myriad things that surround Mt. Sumeru  
the radiant, the sublime, the luminous  
excellent and extraordinary, without comparison  
revealing that which has neither highs nor lows  
penetrating that which has no limits

Each of you ought to strive  
with great effort to seek this

for you are certain to attain  
the transcendent dharma  
and rebirth in the buddha land of Amitabha  
a land of immeasurable purity  
escaping the five destinies, blocked from evil paths

The path supreme and limitless  
is easy to reach  
but there, there are none or few  
not because people are contrary to this land  
but because their nature drags them from it

Cast aside ambition  
and be like the void  
strive in seeking the way and its power  
obtain life of utmost longevity  
and happiness without limit  
why cling to worldly things  
fighting and fussing over that which is fleeting

# Thirty-Three

*Encouraging Words,  
Spurring Advancement*





The worldly contend among each other  
over matters of little urgency  
in this world of extreme wickedness  
and intense suffering  
they strain their bodies with hasty exertion  
in pursuit of what brings them profit

Regardless of status, wealth, age and gender  
everyone frets unceasingly  
piling up worries  
slaves to their own hearts

Those with land, fuss over land  
those without, fuss over that  
with or without, worries are the same  
having one thing, they desire something else  
yearning to be like others

Even if they possess little  
still they fret  
over its impermanence  
by floods and fires  
robbers and thieves  
enemies and creditors  
it could be burnt  
set adrift or seized  
wiped out, gone forever

The heart is hard, the mind is inflexible  
incapable of letting go  
yet when life ends  
all is left behind  
nothing leaves here  
for both rich or poor  
worries and agonies come in many forms

People of the world  
father and son, brother and brother

husband and wife, parents and relatives  
all should share in mutual love and respect  
instead of hating and envying one another

Those who have, should share  
with those who have nought  
without greed or attachment  
always gentle in word and bearing  
never untoward or contrary

A quarrelsome mind  
full of passion and fury  
grows fiercer as time passes  
until at last it turns to hatred  
thus in worldly matters  
injury leads to more injury  
even if it comes not instantly  
you must urgently consider  
putting a stop to this cycle

In the midst of craving and desire  
people are born alone and die alone  
a solitary entrance, a solitary exit  
your joys and sorrows  
are made for you alone  
no one can take your place  
the ever-evolving manifestations  
of good and evil actions  
follow you through rebirth  
if paths diverge  
there is no hope of meeting again  
so why not, while time is ripe  
strive to do good  
...what exactly are you waiting for?

The worldly cannot perceive good and evil  
omens ill or otherwise  
portending fortune or disaster  
each compete in deeds  
the body knows not what it does

the spirit is mired in darkness  
thus they embrace other teachings  
and delusions beget more delusions  
impermanence is at their root  
enveloped in darkness  
they are in denial  
with no faith in the dharma  
lacking foresight, chasing pleasure  
led astray by enmity  
coveting material wealth  
and beautiful things  
all their lives without rest  
...what a pity

Their ancestors were evil  
thus they fail to recognise  
the way and its power  
for none have told them  
for this they can hardly be blamed

The rebirth destinies  
the good and evil paths  
in this they have no faith  
they say no such thing exists  
but what they see of others  
they shall soon see for themselves  
fathers weeping over sons  
sons weeping over fathers  
brother and brother, husband and wife  
weep and shed tears for one another  
passing away and being reborn  
longing for one another  
bound by worry and attachment  
no time to attain release

With love and affection  
they remain stuck to desire  
incapable of deep contemplation  
they cannot even consider following the way  
yet in no time at all

life comes to an end  
from this there is no escape

The way bewilders many  
the awakened are few  
they harbour a deadly poison  
and an evil aura enshrouds them  
in the deepest dark  
they commit deeds based on falsehood  
defying heaven and earth  
wilfully they commit the utmost evil  
until in an instant  
their life is snatched away  
from there they fall  
into the evil paths  
with no hope of escaping

You must consider casting evil aside  
and choosing what is good and practising it  
for the things you crave and desire  
the glorious, the beautiful  
cannot be preserved forever  
they all shall vanish  
in that you will find no pleasure

You must make the effort to be reborn  
in the land of peace and happiness  
where you can cultivate wisdom and insight  
virtues that cannot be rivalled  
do not fall pray to your desires  
do not betray the teachings and rules  
lest you fall behind the progress of others

# Thirty-Four

*Seeing the Light*



**Maitreya addressed the Buddha,**

**The Buddha speaks of the teachings and precepts  
with such depth and brilliance  
we are all enveloped in his compassion and beneficence  
liberated from worry and pain**

**The Buddha is the Dharma King  
pre-eminent among nobles  
with a radiance that illuminates  
and penetrates limitless depths**

**The Buddha is master  
of every heavenly and human being  
and today we meet him  
and hear his teaching of infinite life  
every one of us is filled with joy  
our minds have seen the light**

**The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,**

**Reverence shown to buddhas  
this is the greatest good  
truly you must practise buddha mindfulness  
and put an end to doubts  
uproot all cravings  
and block all sources of evil  
so you can wander freely  
through the three realms  
without entanglements  
opening and revealing the path that is true  
and saving those yet unsaved**

<b>You must understand that people in the ten directions have, for endless aeons gone back and forth between the five paths</b>	<b>5 paths of rebirth: heavenly, human, animal ghost &amp; hell denizen</b>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

their anxiety and suffering never ending  
they suffer when born  
they suffer when old  
they suffer intensely in sickness  
they suffer intensely in death  
foul-smelling and defiled  
in this there is no happiness

Therefore you must resolve  
to cleanse your mind of impurity  
to speak and act with faith and devotion  
with the outer and inner in perfect harmony  
such people can save themselves and uplift others  
carrying them to the other shore  
with total focus upon their aspiration  
they accumulate virtuous roots  
although one strives lifelong  
it amounts to a mere instant  
compared with the hereafter in the land of Amitayus  
where one experiences joy and happiness without limits  
where the cause of rebirth and death is forever uprooted  
where suffering and vexation are never more  
where one lives for a great many million aeons  
free to do as one wishes

Therefore each of you must strive  
and be beyond all doubt  
for those who commit such an error  
are reborn on the borderlands  
within walls formed of the seven jewels  
in state of disconnection for five hundred years

Maitreya addressed the Buddha,

For our sake,  
the Buddha has shone light upon his teachings  
thus we must focus solely upon study and practice  
and do so with reverence  
in accordance with his doctrine  
never daring to doubt

# Thirty-Five

*The Evils and Sufferings of an  
Impure World*





**The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,**

**In this world, to be capable  
of rectifying your mind  
and doing no evil  
is truly the greatest virtue  
...why is this so?**

**In all worlds in the ten directions  
good is abundant, evil is scarce  
to open the way and edify is easy  
only in this world of five evils  
is suffering so intense**

see below

**I now serve here as buddha  
to instruct and edify all living beings  
to help them abandon the five evils  
to depart from the five agonies  
to detach from the five burnings  
to subdue and reform their thinking  
to make them embrace the five goods  
and acquire their merits and virtues**

see below

**What are these five?**

evils

**The first:**

**Every kind of being in the world  
wishes to commit many evils  
to do others harm  
the strong oppresses the weak  
and in turn is oppressed  
by those even stronger**

**They hurt, they injure  
they wound, they kill  
they devour one another**

they do not know how to be good  
in consequence they receive a punishment most dire

Thus they are deprived and lonely  
deaf, blind and mute  
stupid and hateful  
physically infirm and mentally deranged  
all because in past lives  
they had no faith  
in the way and its power  
thus they were unwilling to do good

Those who are distinguished  
the nobles, the wealthy and powerful  
the worthy, the wise, the elders  
the intelligent and the brave  
the gifted and the insightful  
are the way they are  
due to the loving-kindness  
and filial piety practised in past lives  
and the good they did  
and the virtues they acquired  
this reality unfolds in the world  
right before our eyes

When their lives end  
they enter the netherworld  
reborn once more, they receive a body  
changing form and switching paths  
as a consequence  
there exist denizens of hell  
birds and beasts  
crawling, flying and wriggling creatures  
like the wordly dharma of imprisonment  
there is intense suffering  
a punishment most dire

Spirit and heavenly essence  
follow in the direction of one's crimes  
when receiving a lifespan, short or long

they go along together  
and are reborn together  
where retribution leads to further retribution

Yet the misfortune caused by evil  
has not ended  
when their end comes  
they cannot leave  
to and fro they pass within these paths  
for aeon after aeon  
exit is impossible  
salvation is impossible  
...an unspeakable sadness  
between heaven and earth  
it is naturally this way  
even if retribution comes not instantly  
good and evil deeds will return to the doer

The second:

People of the world  
are contrary to the dharma and the precepts  
they are profligate and dissolute  
arrogant and reckless  
they indulge themselves  
in whatever takes their fancy  
occupying high rank but lacking wisdom  
possessing authority but lacking uprightness  
they entrap others with false allegations  
bringing woe to the good and loyal  
what they think and what they say  
are not the same  
they use every kind of trickery and falsehood

People noble and lowly  
both here and overseas  
cheat and deceive each other  
due to ill-will and ignorance  
they desire to enrich themselves  
always craving more

Gains and losses  
result in rage and animosity  
destroying families and causing death  
heedless of the consequences  
the rich are miserly, unwilling to give  
clinging to desire, weighed down by greed  
the heart is vexed, the body suffers  
thus they are until their end

In the hereafter nothing comes with them  
but good and evil deeds  
the weal and woe they have created  
follows them through rebirth  
to a joyful place  
or one of bitter suffering

Moreover, when they see  
one who does good  
they despise them  
they speak ill of them  
they do not think of emulating them  
and measuring up to them

Perpetually they think of taking  
what is not theirs  
wishing to take advantage of others  
to benefit themselves  
and when all is gone  
they do it again to someone else

The divinities take note of this  
and so, in the end  
they enter the evil destinies  
as a matter of course  
upon the three paths  
of infinite troubles  
to and fro they pass  
for aeon after aeon  
exit is impossible  
...an unspeakable sadness

**The third:**

**People of the world  
are reliant on each other  
in their short lives  
lacking goodness are those  
neither upright in body nor mind  
perpetually full of wickedness  
perpetually full of illicit thoughts  
anxiety and vexation**

**Their perverse frame of mind  
reveals itself visibly  
they squander their family's wealth  
they engage in illegal affairs  
averse to that which they ought seek**

**Moreover, some of them get together  
they start wars and fight each other  
they assault and they pillage  
they wound and they slaughter  
they intimidate and they take by force  
and what they have taken  
they give to wives and children  
they exhaust themselves in making merry**

**Thus the masses feel hatred for them  
resulting in misery and suffering  
such evil is apparent  
to both man and spirit**

**The divinities take note  
so naturally they enter the evil paths  
of infinite suffering and vexation  
to and fro they pass  
for aeon after aeon  
exit is impossible  
....an unspeakable sadness**

**The fourth:**

**People of the world  
never think of doing good  
they use double talk and malicious words  
they tell lies and use artful language  
they despise and envy the good  
they destroy the worthy and wise  
they disobey mother and father  
they pay no heed to elders and teachers  
there is no trust between friends  
seldom are they honest  
they glorify themselves  
and claim to possess the way  
they act like tyrants  
with no respect for others  
yet they want to be admired  
they feel no shame  
they can neither be taught nor tamed  
ever full of pride  
yet they rely upon past lives  
protected by the fortune  
and virtues there accrued  
they do evil in this life  
until their fortune runs dry  
and their life expires  
thereupon, they are surrounded  
confronted by their evil deeds**

**Moreover, in the book of names  
they are recorded by divinities  
they are drawn toward calamity  
with no way of escaping  
instead they must advance  
and enter the boiling cauldron  
where mind and body are dashed to pieces  
the most intense suffering  
of consciousness and form  
at this point, repentance has come too late**

**The fifth:**

**People of the world  
are wavering and hesitant  
indolent and apathetic  
they are unwilling to do good  
or discipline themselves  
and pursue a vocation**

**They turn their backs on and disobey  
the instruction of their parents  
treating them like enemies  
their parents would have been better off  
had they never been born  
they betray their kindness  
they fail in their duties  
in no way returning what they owe**

**Dissolute and self-indulgent  
drunkards and gluttons  
boorish and belligerent  
insensible to human feeling  
unprincipled and uncivilised  
no admonishment can help  
in making them see the light**

**They spare no thought  
for the material well-being  
of family and friends  
never do they consider  
the kindness of their parents  
never are they mindful  
of their duty to friends and teachers  
from their minds, mouths and bodies  
not the slightest good emerges**

**In the Buddha's teachings  
they have no faith  
in rebirth, in good and evil  
they have no faith**

they desire to harm the worthy  
to create disorder within the samgha  
witless and benighted  
they believe themselves wise  
they know not where they came from in birth  
nor where they are heading in death

They are unkind and intractable  
yet they yearn for longevity  
of the things they have been taught  
with great loving-kindness  
they are unwilling to believe

Of the things they have been told  
at painstaking effort  
to them it has no benefit  
their hearts are sealed  
their minds are closed to understanding  
at the time ordained, their end shall come  
feeling remorse and fright  
they did no good ahead of time  
and only now do they repent  
...what is the use in that?

Between heaven and earth  
are five distinct paths  
the recompense for good and evil  
borne together are fortune and misfortune  
to be confronted on one's own  
no one can do it for them

The good do good  
by way of joy  
they partake in joy  
by way of wisdom  
they partake in wisdom  
the evil do evil  
by causing suffering  
they partake in suffering  
in a benighted state



**they experience darkness**

**Who comprehends this?  
only the Buddha comprehends  
few are those with faith  
few are those who practise  
his revealed words of instruction**

**Endlessly dying and being reborn  
never leaving the evil paths  
thus are the people of the world  
it is hard to get through them all**

**As a consequence the three paths exist  
as a matter of course  
where people experience  
infinite suffering and affliction  
where endlessly they pass to and fro  
for generation after generation  
for aeon after aeon  
with no hope of escaping  
release is impossible  
...an unspeakable sadness**

<b>Thus are the five evils, pains and burnings</b>	
<b>like a great fire scorching the body</b>	
<b>however, if one existing within them can</b>	
<b>focus their mind and control their thoughts</b>	<b>1st good</b>
<b>discipline their body and practise right-mindfulness</b>	<b>2nd good</b>
<b>make word and action correspond</b>	<b>3rd good</b>
<b>act with total sincerity</b>	<b>4th good</b>
<b>do only good and no evil</b>	<b>5th good</b>
<b>then, they alone shall attain liberation</b>	
<b>and acquire the fortune and blessings therein</b>	
<b>attaining longevity upon the path to nirvana</b>	
<b>these are the five goods</b>	

# Thirty-Six

*Repeated Instruction  
and Exhortation*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,**

**I told you that the five evils, pains and burnings  
give birth to one another  
those who still dare to commit them  
shall experience the evil paths**

**For some it begins in this life  
with sickness and calamity  
in a state neither alive nor dead  
for all to see**

**For some, when the time comes  
they enter the three evil paths  
their faces ablaze  
with misery and cruelty**

**Together with their enemies  
they wound and kill each other  
the insignificant and imperceptible  
turn into difficulties of great severity**

**All because of greed and attachment  
to material wealth and alluring things  
an unwillingness to show generosity  
each only out to satisfy themselves  
not caring whether their actions  
are upright or crooked**

**Driven by foolish desire  
to enrich themselves  
they compete for profit, for wealth and rank  
for glory, splendour and momentary pleasure**

**Incapable of forbearance  
they do not devote themselves  
to doing good  
their power and prestige  
in no time at all**

turns to dust and vanishes

The way of heaven unfolds  
delivering justice as a matter of course  
alone they stand in trepidation  
of the place they shall soon enter  
thus has it been  
from antiquity to the present day  
such misery... truly lamentable

You have heard the Buddha's teaching  
now consider it with care  
each of you  
upright and observant  
lifelong, never slacking

Venerate the noble and good  
extend to all your loving-kindness  
seek to go beyond this world  
uproot the origins of samsara  
and every kind of evil  
leave the three paths behind  
the way of trouble, fear and pain

Of your good actions, what shall be first?

You must rectify mind and body  
ears, eyes, mouth and nose  
physically and mentally purified  
in harmony with what is good

You must not succumb  
to craving and desire  
commit no evil deeds  
be gentle in word and bearing  
single-minded in conduct  
vigilant in every action  
calm and composed  
for hurried action ends in regret  
and a lack of care undermines effort

# Thirty-Seven

*A Poor Man Given  
Precious Jewels*



**You must extensively cultivate  
virtuous roots  
you must not transgress  
the prohibitions of the way**

**To have patience and effort  
a heart of loving-kindness, singly focused  
purified by the precepts  
for one day and one night  
surpasses a hundred years of good deeds  
in the land of Amitayus  
...why is this so?**

**Because this buddha land possesses  
every accumulated virtue  
every good  
not a single iota of evil**

**To do good here  
for ten days and nights  
surpasses a thousand years of good deeds  
in other buddha lands  
...why is this so?**

**in our world**

**In other buddha lands  
people naturally possess blessings and virtues  
for them, there is no situation  
where evil can be committed  
only in this world  
of little good and abundant evil  
where bitterness is swallowed  
and poison eaten  
is there never a taste of tranquillity**

**I have pity for you all  
and so I take great pains  
in instructing through analogy**

and imparting the dharma  
for all to uphold and consider  
and reverently practise  
senior and junior  
male and female  
loved ones and friends  
imparting to each other  
the words of instruction  
cautious and restrained in bearing  
in harmony with what is right and true  
cheerful in their filial devotion  
when they transgress in their deeds  
they admit their own error  
they leave behind evil  
and head toward the good  
hearing admonishment at dawn  
they have rectified by dusk  
holding fast to the teachings and precepts  
like a poor man given precious jewels

Amend past errors  
and cultivate for the future  
cleanse your mind  
make a change in behaviour  
and nature yields in response  
all that is desired shall be obtained

Where the Buddha's words  
are put into effect  
in cities and villages  
none are not edified  
everything under heaven is in harmony  
the sun and moon are bright and clear  
wind and rain come at the right season  
disasters and plagues never arise  
countries flourish, the people are at peace  
weapons are obsolete  
virtue and fellow-feeling are exalted  
courtesy is practised by all  
the land is free of robbers and thieves

free of all injustice  
the strong oppress not the weak  
and each person gets their due

I have pity for you all  
surpassing the fondness  
parents have for their children  
in this world I serve as buddha  
curing evil with goodness  
uprooting the misery of rebirth and death  
leading all to acquire the five virtues      practice of the  
and ascend to the ease of the non-conditioned      5 Goods above

After my final nirvana  
the way of my teachings  
shall gradually vanish  
the people will be false  
they will be flatterers  
once again they will do evil  
the five burnings and pains  
in the future, will exacerbate

Therefore you must impart to one another  
the teachings and precepts  
live in accordance with the Buddha's dharma  
never transgressing it

Maitreya Bodhisattva, with palms together, addressed the Buddha,

Such are the evils and sufferings  
of the people of the world  
just so, just so

The Buddha has compassion for all  
and all shall he save

I have received the Buddha's repeated instruction  
this, I dare neither transgress nor disregard



# Thirty-Eight

*Homage to the Buddha's Light*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Ananda,**

**If you wish to see the land  
where the Buddha  
of Immeasurable, Pure and Impartial Sambodhi  
and his many bodhisattvas and arhats reside  
you must arise and face the west  
toward the place where the sun sets  
prostrate with reverence  
and acclaim aloud**

***Homage to Amitabha Buddha***

**Chinese: Namo Amituofo**

**Japanese: Namu Amida Butsu**

**Ananda immediately arose. As he faced the west with palms  
together, he prostrated and announced,**

**I wish to see Sukhavati  
the world of Amitabha Buddha  
I wish to pay homage and serve him  
and plant many virtuous roots**

**Between his prostrations, he suddenly witnessed Amitabha  
Buddha,**

**His large and broad countenance  
his elegant and dignified appearance  
like a mountain made of gold  
rising above every world**

**Moreover, he heard the Buddha Tathagatas of every world in the  
ten directions praise the myriad virtues of Amitabha Buddha. Their  
praise was unimpeded and uninterrupted. Thereupon, he addressed  
the Buddha,**

**This buddha's purified field...  
never has such a thing been seen  
I wish to enjoy a life in this land**

**The Blessed One proclaimed,**

**Those reborn have already drawn near                      in past lives  
to infinite buddhas  
and have already planted  
many virtuous roots**

**If you desire to be reborn in this land  
you must be of one mind  
you must take refuge in him  
and worship him**

**As this was spoken,**

**Within the palm of Amitabha  
shone forth infinite light  
upon every buddha land  
so at that moment  
all were clearly visible  
as if an arm's length away  
due to extraordinary radiance  
and supreme purity  
of Amitabha Buddha**

<b>Within this realm</b>	
<b>the Black Mountains</b>	<b>Kalaparvata</b>
<b>the Snow Mountains</b>	<b>Himalayas</b>
<b>the Diamond Mountains</b>	<b>Vajraparvata</b>
<b>the Iron Ring Mountains</b>	<b>Cakravada (see above)</b>
<b>all mountains large and small</b>	
<b>rivers, groves and the palaces of divinities</b>	
<b>of every realm were illuminated</b>	
<b>just as the rising sun illuminates the world</b>	

**Even such places as the murky and dark  
chasms and creeks, the hidden and unseen  
all were revealed  
and all were of one colour                      i.e. gold**

Just as the end-of-aeon floods engulf the world  
submerging all things beneath a vast, boundless deluge  
leaving nothing visible but a great body of water  
so too did the radiance of this buddha  
obscure the light of every sravaka and bodhisattva  
so that only his light could be seen  
luminous and majestic

**bhiksus, bhiksunis,**

The fourfold assembly	upasakas, upasikas
the eight legions of devas and nagas	non-humans of desire realm
the human-yet-non-human and so on	horse/bird-men of
all beheld the world of Sukhavati	the eight legions
its myriad adornments	
and Amitabha Buddha upon his high seat	
awe-inspiring and majestic	
his marks and characteristics shining brightly	
surrounded and worshipped by sravakas and bodhisattvas	

Like Sumeru, king of mountains  
 rising from the surface of the ocean  
 clearly visible and shining brightly  
 pure and upright  
 free from all manner of impurity  
 without any incongruous element  
 solely adorned by myriad jewels  
 the abode of the noble and worthy

**Ananda, alongside the bodhisattvas  
and the other members among the masses  
joyously and eagerly paid homage  
touching his head to the ground  
and acclaiming aloud:**

*Homage to Amitabha*  
*the complete and perfect enlightened one*

**When everyone from the heavenly and human  
down to the crawling, flying and wriggling  
witnessed this radiant being  
their maladies and miseries**

without exception vanished  
released from all anxiety and vexation  
thereafter they were able  
to perform good deeds  
with hearts of loving-kindness  
experiencing joy and happiness

The sounds of instruments  
bells, chimes, zithers and harps  
unplayed, came naturally  
producing the five musical tones  
all heavenly and human beings of every buddha land  
scattered flowers in the void as offerings

Thereupon,  
as a consequence of the Buddha's awe-inspiring power  
the world of Sukhavati  
beyond millions of lands to the west  
appeared as if right before their eyes  
just as the pure divine eye  
perceives an object eight feet away  
thus too did they see this land  
and so too did all observe the world of men  
and Sakyamuni Tathagata  
surrounded by a multitude of bhiksus  
as he preached the dharma

# Thirty-Nine

*Maitreya Recounts  
His Visions*



**Thereupon, the Buddha proclaimed to Ananda and Maitreya Bodhisattva,**

**You saw the world of Sukhavati  
its palaces and pavilions  
its springs, pools and many trees  
were they not perfectly exquisite  
purified and adorned?**

**Did you not see every divinity  
from the realm of desire  
up to the highest heaven of the realm of subtle form  
rain down a great many fragrant flowers  
upon buddha lands far and wide?**

**Ananda replied,**

**Indeed, I saw**

**The Buddha continued,**

**Did you not hear the great voice of Amitabha Buddha  
proclaim throughout every world, edifying all beings?**

**Ananda replied,**

**Indeed, I heard**

**The Buddha continued,**

**Did you not see the pure practitioners of this land  
who wander freely within the void  
their palaces accompanying them  
without obstruction, far and wide  
throughout the ten directions  
make offerings to every buddha?**

And did you not witness  
their unceasing buddha mindfulness?

Again, did you all not see  
such transformations  
as multitude of birds  
dwelling in the void  
produce a great many sounds

Maitreya addressed the Buddha,

We saw them all  
exactly as the Buddha said

The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,

Did you not see too  
that among the people of this land  
were the womb-born?

Maitreya addressed the Buddha,

Blessed One, I saw the people of Sukhavati  
who dwell within wombs  
just as the divinities of the Yama Heaven  
dwell within palaces

Moreover, I saw beings  
within lotus flowers  
sitting in the lotus position      cross-legged,  
spontaneously transformed      soles of feet facing upward

For what reason  
are people of this land  
womb-born and spontaneously reborn?



# Forty

*The Borderland  
and the Citadel of Doubt*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,**

**There are sentient beings  
who cultivate spiritual virtues  
with a doubtful mind  
yet they desire  
to be reborn in this land**

**They cannot comprehend  
the Buddha's wisdom  
his inconceivable wisdom  
his indescribable wisdom  
his vast Great Vehicle wisdom  
his supreme, unequalled and unrivalled wisdom**

**In this wisdom they have doubts  
and little faith  
yet they believe  
in punishment and reward  
so they cultivate virtuous roots  
and wish to be reborn in this land**

**There are also sentient beings  
who accumulate virtuous roots  
and seek the Buddha's wisdom  
his universal wisdom  
his unequalled wisdom  
his inconceivable wisdom  
of awe-inspiring power and vastness**

**But regarding their own virtuous roots  
they cannot generate faith  
so regarding rebirth in the pure land  
their determination wavers  
for they have nothing to solely rely upon  
yet with the practice of unceasing buddha mindfulness  
formed as the root of their virtuous desire  
they can go on to attain rebirth**

Such people, although reborn in this land  
cannot approach the place of Amitayus  
they reach only so far as the borderland  
inside walls formed of the seven jewels

This is not the Buddha's doing  
but the consequence  
of their own conduct  
and their mind's orientation

There are also those  
who spontaneously acquire  
a body within a lotus flower  
in a pond of jewels  
the food and drink they enjoy  
can be compared with what is enjoyed  
in the Trayastrimsa heaven    see Heaven of the Thirty-Three above

Within these walls  
they cannot leave  
their dwellings are rooted to the ground  
they cannot make them larger at will

For five hundred years  
they cannot see the Buddha  
or hear the dharma  
nor can they see the bodhisattvas, sravakas  
and nobles of the samgha

They are not illuminated in wisdom  
and their knowledge of the sutras is slim  
their hearts are closed to understanding  
and their minds experience no joy  
for this reason  
those who exist here are called the womb-born

If sentient beings with clear-seeing faith  
in the Buddha's wisdom  
his supreme wisdom

have eradicated all doubts  
have faith in their own virtuous roots  
and perform many virtuous deeds  
with mind focused and directed ahead  
they shall be spontaneously transformed and reborn  
within a flower formed of the seven jewels  
there they shall sit in the lotus position  
and in a mere instant, their bodies shall become radiant  
with wisdom and virtue  
like bodhisattvas, perfect and complete

Maitreya, you should know  
that transformative rebirth  
is the result of superior wisdom  
and that for five hundred years  
the womb-born  
do not see the three jewels  
do not know the ways of bodhisattvas  
and do not acquire the virtues of their practice  
thus they have no way of serving Amitayus Buddha

You should know that this is because  
in past lives they lacked wisdom  
and harboured doubts

# Forty-One

*No More Doubts,  
The Buddha is Seen*



Imagine the prison of a Wheel-Turning King  
formed of the seven jewels  
where rule-breaking emperors are locked inside  
with towers and elegantly adorned palaces  
jewelled canopies and beds made of gold  
ornate windows and benches adored exquisitely  
with rare and precious stones

They enjoy the same food and clothing  
as the Wheel-Turning King  
but golden manacles bind their feet  
...could these lesser kings be happy there?

Maitreya addressed the Buddha,

Blessed One, they cannot be!  
throughout the time they are imprisoned and constrained  
their minds are not at ease

In vain, they devise many skilful means  
seeking their escape  
they seek out their closest servants  
but alas, there is nothing they can do  
only when the Wheel-Turning King is happy  
can they be set free

The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,

There are sentient beings like this too  
sinking into doubt and remorse  
they seek the Buddha's wisdom  
his supremely vast and great wisdom  
but they have no faith in their own virtuous roots  
yet when they hear the Buddha's name  
faith grows in their heart  
they are reborn in this land  
within a lotus flower  
from which they do not emerge

To be a lotus-womb dweller  
is like being in a garden or palace  
...why is this so?

On the inside all is purified  
devoid of all impurity and evil  
yet they remain there for five hundred years  
they cannot see the three jewels  
they cannot make offerings to buddhas  
they cannot serve them  
they are detached from all extraordinary, virtuous roots  
for this reason they suffer and experience no happiness

If these beings recognise  
the root source of their misdeeds  
if they practise deep self-reflection  
and seek to depart from this place  
only then can they leave  
when retribution for past errors  
has come to an end

Thereupon, they go instantly  
to the place of Amitayus  
and hear the dharma  
gradually they see the light  
and feel great joy  
able to make universal offerings  
to innumerable buddhas  
and cultivate spiritual virtues

Maiteya, you should know  
that to have doubts about bodhisattvas  
is to cause great harm  
and forfeit a great blessing  
therefore, you must have clear-seeing faith  
in the supreme wisdom of buddhas

**Maitreya addressed the Buddha,**

**Why is it that beings of this type  
do not seek rebirth  
although they do good deeds?**

**The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,**

**Beings of this type  
have shallow understanding  
having determined that the land in the west  
is no match for the world of divinities     i.e. rebirth as  
they believe it brings no joy                             heavenly being  
therefore they do not seek rebirth there**

**Maitreya addressed the Buddha,**

**If beings of this type  
due to misunderstanding  
do not seek rebirth in this buddha land  
how can they avoid the wheel of samsara?**

**The Buddha explained,**

**The virtuous roots planted  
by beings of this type  
cannot be detached from form  
they do not seek the Buddha's wisdom  
they are deeply attached to wordly pleasures  
and worldly karmic rewards  
although they cultivate merit  
they seek the outcome of man and divinity**

**They obtain their reward, an abundance of all things  
yet from the prison of the three realms  
they cannot escape  
their parents and wives, children and dependents  
may wish to help them  
but they cannot relinquish their heterodox views  
the very king of bad karma**



thus they remain upon samsara's wheel  
in a state of unease

Behold the witless and benighted  
who do not plant virtuous roots  
using worldly knowledge and clever words  
their hearts are led further astray  
how can they possibly escape  
the great hardship of death and rebirth

Moreover, there are beings  
who plant virtuous roots  
and cultivate great fields of merit  
yet they cling to form and conceptual thinking  
sentimental attachments, deep-rooted, weigh them down  
they seek escape, but in the end, it is unattainable

If those with wisdom without form  
plant many virtuous roots  
purify body and mind  
abandon all conceptions  
seek birth in a purified field  
and hasten toward buddhahood  
they shall be reborn in this buddha land  
liberated for all eternity

# Forty-Two

*The Rebirth  
of Bodhisattvas*



**Maitreya Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha,**

**Presently in the this world of men  
and every other buddha land  
how many non-retrogressing bodhisattvas are there  
who shall be reborn in the land of Sukhavati?**

## The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,

**In this world, there are seventy-two trillion bodhisattvas  
who have already made offerings to countless buddhas  
and planted many virtuous roots  
who shall be reborn in this land**

<b>Of the great many bodhisattvas on the lesser path who practise meritorious deeds who shall be reborn their number is immeasurable</b>	<b>i.e. on the first 10 of 52 stages of the Bodhisattva path</b>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------

**Not only are the multitude of bodhisattvas  
in our world  
reborn in this land  
but those of other buddha lands too**

**From the Buddha land of Far-Reaching Illumination  
there are eighteen million great bodhisattvas  
who shall be reborn in this land**

**From the north-eastern Treasure Storehouse buddha land  
there are nine trillion non-retrogressing bodhisattvas  
who shall be reborn in this land**

**From the buddha land of Immeasurable Sound  
the buddha land of Glorious Light  
the buddha land of Nagas and Devas  
the buddha land of Supreme Power**

the buddha land of the Lion  
the buddha land of Transcending Impurity  
the buddha land of Highest Virtue  
the buddha land of the Benevolent King  
the buddha land of the Flower Canopy  
the non-retrogressing bodhisattvas who shall be reborn  
in some cases  
number from one to ten trillion  
in some cases  
number from one hundred to a thousand trillion  
and even as much as ten thousand trillion

The twelfth buddha land is named Supreme Flower  
it possesses a countless number of bodhisattvas  
who have reached the stage of non-retrogression

Wise and courageous  
they have already made offerings  
to innumerable buddhas  
with great effort  
they set forth intently  
upon the path of the one vehicle  
within the span of seven days  
they can acquire the firm and secure dharma  
cultivated by great beings  
for hundreds, thousands and millions of aeons  
all bodhisattvas of this type shall be reborn

The thirteenth buddha land is called No Fear  
possessing seventy-nine million great bodhisattvas  
and an immeasurable number  
of lesser bodhisattvas, bhiksus and so on  
all of them shall be reborn

Of the buddhas and bodhisattvas  
in the worlds of the ten directions  
who shall be reborn  
one could spend an entire aeon  
merely stating their names  
and not get through them all

# Forty-Three

*This is Not the Lesser Vehicle*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,**

**Behold these many great bodhisattvas  
skilled at acquiring blessings**

**If there are good sons and good daughters  
who, upon hearing the name of Amitabha Buddha  
develop a loving mind with a single thought  
take refuge in him, pay him homage  
and practise in accordance with what has been taught  
you should know that these people  
because they have acquired the great benefit  
shall obtain the virtues I have spoken of**

**In their hearts they do not feel inferior  
nor do they hold themselves in high regard**

**The virtuous roots they have acquired  
are fully grown and developed**

**You should know that these people  
are not of the lesser vehicle**

**Within my dharma  
they have earned the reputation  
of being my number one disciples**

**For this reason, I tell you  
that the universe's divinities, humans and demigods  
must joyfully practise  
with a heart of wonder  
within this dharma  
they must develop the aspiration  
to lead innumerable sentient beings  
to swiftly and securely attain  
the state of non-retrogression  
as well as the desire to see**

**this vast and adorned buddha field  
its extraordinary power of assimilation  
its perfected spiritual virtues  
they must exert great effort  
and heed this dharma gateway                      i.e. method**

**In order to seek this dharma  
they must not develop  
a submissive, yielding heart  
of falseness and flattery  
even if they were to pass through a great inferno  
they must not succumb to doubt and regret  
...why is this so?**

**These countless numbers of bodhisattvas  
who seek this subtle dharma gate  
they listen with respect  
they never transgress  
yet there are many bodhisattvas  
who wish to hear this dharma but cannot                      see Chapter 44  
for this reason, you must seek it**

# Forty-Four

*The Prophecy  
of Sambodhi*





If, in the coming world  
up to the moment the true dharma disappears  
there are beings who plant many virtuous roots  
and make offerings to countless buddhas  
it shall be a consequence  
of the awe-inspiring power of the Thus Come One  
that they can acquire a dharma method so vast

Adopting it and holding it fast  
obtaining extensive knowledge of all knowledge  
feeling great determination and joy toward this dharma  
preaching widely for others' sake  
always cheerful in conduct

Good sons and good daughters  
if they have already sought  
are presently seeking  
or in the future shall seek this dharma  
then they shall obtain its blessings

You must be unshakeable, free from doubts  
plant many virtuous roots  
always cultivating  
unobstructed by misgivings  
never setting foot within  
prisons formed of precious jewels

Maitreya, beings with great awe-inspiring powers  
are capable of practising  
this vast and unique gateway  
of the Buddha dharma  
yet because they have not heard it  
there are ten million bodhisattvas  
now turning back  
from complete and perfect sambodhi

Maitreya, beings with great awe-inspiring powers

are capable of practising  
the vast and diverse gateways  
of the Buddha dharma  
yet because they have not heard of this method  
there are ten million bodhisattvas  
now turning away  
from complete and perfect sambodhi

If there are sentient beings  
who in light of this teaching  
transcribe it and pay it homage  
hold it fast and recite it aloud  
if for but a moment  
they preach for others' sake  
encouraging them to listen  
that they may no longer give rise  
to anxiety and vexation  
and even begin to contemplate  
this land, day and night  
and the spiritual virtues of the Buddha  
upon the supreme path  
all the way to the end  
never regressing  
then, these people  
when they reach the end of their lives  
would be able  
even if the trichiliocosm were engulfed in flames  
to pass through it and be reborn in this land

They have already  
come face to face with past buddhas  
they have received the prophecy of sambodhi  
and the unanimous praise of every tathagata

Thus you must devote yourself  
to faith and acceptance  
hold fast and recite  
preach and practise

# Forty-Five

*A Teaching Imparted for a  
Special Reason*



Today, for the sake of the multitude of sentient beings  
I discoursed upon this dharma  
causing all to see Amitayus Buddha  
and all that his land possesses

That which must be done  
can be sought by everyone

After my extinction  
you must not succumb again to doubt

In the world yet to come  
the way shall vanish

With loving-kindness and compassion  
I specifically leave you this teaching  
for one hundred years

Sentient beings who encounter this teaching  
in accordance with their wishes  
may all attain salvation

The Thus Come One  
appearing in this world  
such a thing  
is rarely encountered  
and rarely seen

The way of all buddhas  
such a thing  
is difficult to acquire  
and difficult to hear

To meet a good friend  
to hear the dharma  
and be able to practise it  
these are difficult too

For one who hears this teaching  
to have joyous faith in it  
and to hold fast to it  
is the most difficult of all difficulties  
nothing surpasses it

There are sentient beings  
who, when they hear the sound of the Buddha  
develop a purified heart of loving-kindness  
they become so overjoyed their hairs stand on end  
some even shed tears  
all because in past lives  
they followed the Buddha's path  
thus they are beyond the ordinary

Some hear the Buddha's name  
but in their hearts they are hesitant  
they have no faith in the Buddha's teachings  
they have come from evil paths  
not yet through with misfortune  
incurred in former lives  
they shall not be saved  
because they doubt  
because they have no faith  
because they have turned their backs

# Forty-Six

*Devoted Practice,  
Firmly Grasped*



**The Buddha proclaimed to Maitreya,**

**The supreme dharma of every Buddha Tathagata  
possessing the ten powers and fearlessness  
without obstruction, without attachment  
is a dharma so profound  
the dharma of a bodhisattva's perfections  
such a thing is rarely encountered  
even those capable of preaching the dharma  
struggle to explain it**

see Chapter 4

**Deep and unshakeable faith is now rarely encountered**

**Today I have proclaimed the truth  
about this vast and subtle dharma gateway  
praised by every buddha  
I entrust you to serve as its protector  
to aid sentient beings through the long night  
never allowing them to sink into the five destinies  
where one encounters great peril and pain**

**You must zealously practise  
in accordance with my teachings  
loyal and obedient to the Buddha  
always mindful of the master's kindness**

**You must help this dharma long endure  
without disappearing  
you must uphold it, never harming it  
or letting it fall to ruin  
you must not falsify it, add to it or subtract from it  
by always being mindful  
acquire the shortcut of the path**

**Thus is my dharma and thus have I spoken  
the practice of tathagatas  
this you must follow  
cultivate merit and do good  
seek rebirth in the Pure Land**

# Forty-Seven

*With Merit and Wisdom,  
the Dharma Can Be Heard*





**Thereupon, the Buddha delivered these verses,**

**If no prior merit and wisdom has been cultivated  
then this true dharma cannot be heard  
if offerings have been made to tathagatas  
then joyous faith can be had in this dharma**

**With the evils of arrogance  
indolence and heterodox views  
faith in the Tathagata's subtle dharma  
is impossible**

**It is impossible for a blind man  
eternally in darkness  
to guide others upon the path**

**Only by developing a multitude of virtues  
side-by-side with the Buddha  
can one practise the world-saving way**

**After you have heard this teaching  
hold fast to it and transcribe it  
recite it and sing its praises  
demonstrate it through your conduct  
and make offerings to buddhas**

**Thus, with single-minded pursuit  
of a land that is pure  
and determination to attain rebirth in Sukhavati  
even if an inferno were to engulf the entire trichilocosm  
borne along by the Buddha's awe-inspiring power  
one can pass beyond it**

**Only buddhas can comprehend  
the Thus Come One's vast and deep ocean of wisdom  
were a sravaka to meditate upon it for a million aeons  
exhausting all their supernatural power in the process**

still they could not fathom it

Only buddhas can comprehend  
the spiritual virtues of the Thus Come One  
and only the Blessed One can explain it

A human body is hard to obtain  
and a buddha is rarely encountered  
to listen to the dharma and acquire faith and wisdom  
this is the most difficult of all difficulties

Such beings shall become buddhas  
in conduct they shall surpass Samantabhadra  
and set foot upon the other shore  
thus the erudite and intellectual ought have faith  
that what I teach here is true

Now that you have had the fortune to hear  
a dharma so subtle and wondrous  
you must always practise buddha mindfulness  
and thus give birth to joyfulness  
you must hold fast to it  
and rescue far and wide  
those drifting within the cycle  
of rebirth and death

# Forty-Eight

*Blessings Gained From Hearing  
the Dharma*



After the Blessed One proclaimed this dharma, twelve hundred trillion sentient beings, of the heavenly and human worlds, were cleansed of all dust and impurity, and acquired the purity of the dharma eye.

Two trillion beings were rewarded with non-returner status.

Six thousand eight hundred bhiksus were cleansed of all defilements, acquiring liberation of mind.

Four trillion bodhisattvas, upon the path to supreme bodhi, remained firmly in the state of non-retrogression, self-adorned with the virtues of the Universal Vows.

Two trillion five hundred billion sentient beings acquired non-retrogressing forbearance.

Four hundred thousand trillion sentient beings, for the very first time, set their minds on supreme bodhi. By planting many virtuous roots, and aspiring to be reborn in Sukhavati, where Amitabha Buddha can be seen, all were guaranteed rebirth in the land of the Thus Come One. Every one of them, no matter where they came from, shall in turn become buddhas and share the title of Wondrous Sound Tathagata.

Moreover, from each buddha field in the ten directions, there were eight hundred thousand trillion people guaranteed rebirth in the present or a future life, who saw Amitabha Buddha, who acquired the prophecy of sambodhi, who attained acceptance of the dharma and who ultimately achieved supreme bodhi.

This was all a result of Amitabha Buddha's prior vow, to help all sentient beings attain rebirth in the land of Sukhavati.

Thereupon, the entire trichiliocosm experienced six great tremors and a myriad of extraordinary and miraculous transformations. A great light shone upon all in the ten directions.

Moreover, from every divinity in the void came exquisite melodies and sounds of rejoicing. This was heard, even by the divinities of the realm of subtle form. They praised this miraculous event.

A stream of countless wondrous flowers fell from the sky.

The Venerable Ananda, Maitreya Bodhisattva, as well as every bodhisattva, sravaka and the eight legions of devas and nagas—everyone in attendance heard the Buddha's dharma and experienced tremendous joy. They faithfully accepted it and reverently upheld it.

END