

Wisdom of the Buddhas



Venerable Wuling

Wisdom of the Buddhas



A World Free of Couflicts



Destiny Can Be Changed



The Love of Life

Wisdom of the Buddhas

Based on the Talks of
Venerable Master Chin Kung
Translated by Silent Voices

By Venerable Wu Ling

Venerable Wuling is an American Buddhist nun of the Pure Land school of Mahayana Buddhism. More of her writing can be found at www.amitabha-publications.org.

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The Corporation Republic of Hwa Dzan Society
2F., No. 333-1, Sec. 4. Hsin Yi Road, Taipei, Taiwan
Tel: (886) -2-2754-7178 Fax: (886) -2-2754-7262
Email: hwadzan@hwadzan.tw



Be Mindful of the Kindness of Others,
Repay the Kindness With Gratitude.

Today, we see an increasing number of people around the world starting to practice Buddhism but many do not understand what it is and thus cannot truly benefit from it. Buddhism is a most virtuous and perfect education directed by the Buddha towards all sentient beings in the universe. It covers a boundless range of phenomena and principles that is much broader than what is currently studied in modern universities. It is an education of the wisdom and understanding of life and the universe and is not a religion.

How can we tell that Buddhism is an education? Today, the terms teacher and student are only used in school. First, we call Buddha Shakyamuni our Original Teacher. In the sutras, those who listened to him were called students and this is what we call ourselves today. This teacher-student relationship is only found in education.

Another reason that Buddhism is an education is also to be found in the sutras, where we learn that the students would ask questions of the Buddha, who would often reply in turn with another question to help the students realize the answer themselves. If the students did not thoroughly understand, or thought that we would not understand, they would ask for further clarification. This is essentially a classroom discussion. Please understand that Buddha Shakyamuni simply taught; he conducted neither ceremonies nor rites.

Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings can help us to understand why we live as we do and how we can change and uncover our wisdom but this is not the worldly wisdom we think of today. Rather it is the ability to perfectly comprehend the true reality of life and the universe. One who has perceived this wisdom is called a Buddha, which means wisdom and enlightenment. Buddha Shakya-

muni, told us that all sentient beings possess this innate wisdom and ability, so all beings are equal. But, although we are equal in origin, presently we cannot see this because everyone's wisdom and abilities differ.

In our society, there are those who are intelligent and those who are not, those with great ability and those with less. This is due to our varying degrees of delusion. Our innate wisdom and abilities are thus temporarily lost. However, if we can break through this delusion, then we will be able to recover these abilities.

We often read in the sutras, which are recorded teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni, that Buddhas do not directly help sentient beings. They can only assist from the side by explaining how we delude ourselves. After realizing this, it is entirely up to us to diligently put his teachings into practice so that we may then become

Buddhas. Accomplishing this is attainable by all sentient beings. However, a teacher can only educate us about the principles, tell us of his or her experiences, and suggest various methods for our practice and attainment. The rest ultimately depends upon us. We are the ones who need to be enthusiastic and diligent in order to attain achievement.

Once we comprehend that Buddhism is an education, we will then see why in learning centers where this is understood, we do not regard the Buddha or Bodhisattva images as gods to be worshipped. Practitioners make offerings to these images for two reasons. First, we do so to remember and repay our gratitude for this truly great education that we have so fortunately encountered in this lifetime.

The second reason we make offerings to the Buddha is to follow the examples of the virtuous. Buddha Shakyamuni was an

ordinary person like us; yet, he reached enlightenment. What is there to stop us from achieving this as well? Therefore, his images serve to remind us every moment to advance diligently towards this goal.

The Buddha and Bodhisattva images are not to be regarded as gods or objects of superstition. The images of the Buddhas, who are perfectly enlightened beings and Bodhisattvas who are enlightened sentient beings, have many appearances. This has often led to the misconception that not only is Buddhism a religion, but one that worships many gods. These perfectly enlightened beings and enlightened sentient beings represent infinite wisdom and virtuous abilities that cannot be completely represented by merely 1 name. The names of the perfectly enlightened beings represent these complete, innate, and virtuous abilities already within our original-nature. The names of the

enlightened sentient beings represent cultivation of different virtues.

We said earlier that Buddhism is not a religion. Why is it not a philosophy, an academic study? Philosophy is just one course that is offered at a college or university. Buddhism is a whole university in itself. It includes many areas of learning not just one. In regards to time, it encompasses the past, present and future. In regards to space, it encompasses everything from our daily lives to the infinite universe.

We need a profound, intuitive comprehension to truly understand the reality of life and the universe. But, we are deluded, because we see everything in opposition to each other, not knowing that in reality everything is actually one, not two. This delusion is why we are leading lives of suffering and why the Six Realms exist. The wisdom and virtuous abilities in our original natures have yet

to be uncovered, so all our views and ways of interacting with life are incorrect. The erroneous acts committed due to these incorrect views and ways of interaction have resulted in the suffering of reincarnation within the Six Realms of heavens, demi-gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hells. The goal of the Buddha's teachings is to help us to break through our misconceptions, to be awakened, to escape this suffering to obtain happiness. What do we seek? Perfect Complete Enlightenment.

There are three stages of enlightenment. First is "*Proper Enlightenment.*" In our world, there are some very intelligent and wise people who have attained higher realization than most people have. However, although they may have reached a certain level of realization, the Buddha would not recognize their knowledge as the proper enlightenment, because they have not severed their afflictions, the conditions that cause pain, distress and suffering.

These individuals still dwell on the rights and wrongs of others, on greed, anger, ignorance, and arrogance. They still harbor wandering discriminatory thoughts, and attachments. In other words, their minds are not pure. Without the pure mind, the mind without discrimination or attachments, no matter how high the level of realization one reaches, it is still not the proper enlightenment.

In Buddhism, the standard for proper enlightenment is the pure mind from which wisdom arises. It is the wish of all Buddhas that we attain this proper enlightenment. This is the level of Arhats. They do not have illusory or misleading thoughts and views. They do not dwell on the rights and wrongs of others, or on thoughts of greed, anger, ignorance or arrogance. Only with this proper enlightenment can we obtain true happiness and transcend the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, death, hardships, the inability to have what we want, separation from our loved ones, and

association with those we dislike or even hate. And these occur in the human realms, one of the higher realms in the cycle of birth and death. Most of our time is spent in the lower realms where the suffering seems eternal and the lifetimes seem never-ending.

Practicing Buddhism is to accord with the teachings and to understand the root cause of our problems thus to rid ourselves of wandering discriminatory thoughts and attachments. We then can uncover our pure mind, in turn giving rise to true wisdom, which is proper enlightenment. Therefore, perfectly enlightened beings and enlightened sentient beings would not recognize worldly wisdom, as it lacks the pure mind, the proper enlightenment. Upon attaining this proper enlightenment, we will have the ability to transcend the endless cycles of reincarnation.

Whether talking about the Buddha's education or worldly education, it is essential to understand the concept of delving

deeply into one method in order to attain achievement. This is especially so in Buddhism. When we truly wish to learn effectively we need to follow only one teacher and to practice only one path to ensure a smooth journey. When following two teachers with two different paths, we are bound to become confused as to which path to take. Following three teachers catches us at a T street and with four teachers, we are stuck at a crossroads. Today, people like to learn a lot, but they often fail to attain a good result. The problem lies with being caught at those crossroads, confused as to which one to take. We need to follow just one teacher and concentrate on just one method to succeed and attain achievement in our practice.

What is this achievement? Attaining purity of mind. Upon achieving some degree of purity of mind, we will have fewer afflictions and thus an increase in true wisdom, enabling us to solve

problems in this world and beyond. There really is no way to solve problems without this true wisdom, therefore, it is essential in leading happy and fulfilling lives and on a broader scale, helping us to solve society's problems.

We need to break free of our own views to attain this wisdom for without it, we could misinterpret the meanings within the sutras. If we are able to do away with the mind of selfishness, then true benefits will be ours. With proper enlightenment, only when we have no ego or self-attachment, will we be able to differentiate true from false, proper from deviated and beneficial from harmful. Without breaking through our own views, we will not have these abilities.

One level above proper enlightenment is "*Equal and Proper E.*" Equal means equal to the Buddha, but not yet achieving Buddhahood. This is the level of a Bodhisattva. Equal and proper enlightenment requires us to break through one degree of

ignorance, to attain one degree of Dharma body, the original true body. At this point, the way we view the reality of life and the universe is very close to that of the Buddhas. After breaking through the very last degree of ignorance, perfecting wisdom and enlightenment, we achieve the third level, the *"Perfect Complete Enlightenment"* that is Buddhahood.

From the intrinsic nature of Buddhism, we realize that the purpose of our practice is to seek wisdom. Different methods are practiced by different people but the results or the level of the state of mind are the same. Therefore, to criticize other schools would be to slander both Buddha Shakyamuni and his teachings for all these methods were passed down to us from him. Choosing any of these methods will enable us to attain achievement. How can we say that one is better than another?

Among all these different methods, we just need to know how

to choose the one that is most suitable for us. First, it needs to be suitable because if we chose a method that was beyond us and was difficult to practice, we would not easily succeed. Second, it needs to be appropriate and convenient for our manner of living and third, it needs to be compatible with modern society, because we cannot separate ourselves from the world or from other people. But regardless of which method is chosen, it is essential to be rid of egotism and attachment in order to obtain the benefits or else all our efforts will be in vain.

Once we clearly understand the goal of the Buddha's teachings, we will view the sutras differently. These sutras are a vast collection and in order to obtain their benefits, it is necessary for us to know and understand its essence, which is the true reality of all phenomena, the true reality of life and the universe. Life refers to ourselves; universe refers to the living environment that sur-

rounds us. It would be incorrect to treat the teachings as an abstract, obscure learning that had nothing to do with our daily lives because every word in the sutras closely relates to our daily living.

Buddhism teaches us how to live in harmony with the true reality of life and the universe. In other words, we live perfect and wonderful lives similar to those of perfectly enlightened beings and enlightened sentient beings. This is the true, ultimate, and perfect Mahayana teaching. To practice Buddhism, we start by:

Being filial and respectful to parents, teachers and elders,
Having the great compassionate mind,
Nurturing our thinking and wisdom, and
Broadening our minds to care for all sentient beings.

Although in sequence they can also be practiced simultaneously, as each encompasses the others. Being filial includes compassion and wisdom; nurturing wisdom includes filial piety and

logic.

Once we have a general understanding of the teachings, how do we apply them daily? First, we need to know what each Buddha and Bodhisattva represents. If we do not, then Buddhism will be reduced to mere superstition. All Buddhist sutras contain these values, characteristics, and the ways of practice; therefore, learning only one sutra is sufficient. However, we need to know how to understand and apply the teachings effectively in our practice.

We will better do the teachings when we enter a way place, where we will see a container of water on the Buddha table. The clear water symbolizes the principle that our minds need to be as pure as the water; to be void of greed, anger and ignorance. It is calm without a single ripple indicating that we relate to other people and situations with the serene and non-discriminating mind of equality. Also, it is pure and calm, reflecting clearly and thoroughly

just as we would see everything around us in a mirror.

Offerings of flowers symbolize the cause as the blossoms result in the bearing of fruit, reminding us that there are consequences to our every thought, word and deed. Lamps or candles symbolize wisdom and brightness illuminating the darkness of our ignorance. The images of lotus flowers symbolize transcending the Ten Realms of existence. First it rises through the mud at the bottom of the pond, which symbolizes the Six Realms of birth and death. Then it rises through the water, which symbolizes the Four Sage Realms. Finally, it breaks through the surface of the water completely transcending the Ten Realms, reaching the one true Dharma realm, the stage of ultimate enlightenment.

The lotus flower teaches us that although we live in the world, we should not become polluted by our surroundings. The lotus flower above the water symbolizes that one day, all beings, from

those in the hell realms to those who are Bodhisattvas, will have Perfect Complete Enlightenment. The Buddha realm exceeds the Ten Realms and to become a Buddha is the ultimate goal of our teachings. So, when we see the lotus flower, we are reminded to practice the teachings as well as to transcend the Ten Realms.

Usually in the center of the main hall of a way place, there are statues of one Buddha and two Bodhisattvas representing our self-nature and our original entity. The two Bodhisattvas represent the virtuous abilities within our self-nature; understanding and practice. If the Buddha in the middle is Buddha Shakyamuni, then the two figures on either side of him will be Manjushri Bodhisattva and Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, respectively representing wisdom and application. Thus, understanding and practice are combined into one.

If the hall has the three sages of the Western Pure Land with

Buddha Amitabha in the middle, representing self-nature; then the two figures on either side of him will be Great Compassion Bodhisattva and Great Strength Bodhisattva. They respectively represent compassion and wisdom, completely symbolizing infinite wisdom and virtuous capabilities. So, we again see that Buddhism is a teaching.

There are profound teachings within the names of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The name Buddha Shakyamuni tells us the principles of his education. "Shakya" means humanity and kindness. "Muni" means purity of mind. The teaching of these two values is advocated because many people lack compassion and kindness, thus they are selfish. Sentient beings lack purity of mind and constantly dwell in wandering thoughts, greed, anger, ignorance, and arrogance. Any Bodhisattva who becomes a Buddha in this world will be named Shakyamuni to teach us the remedy

for our problems. Once the representations of the Buddha and Bodhisattva images are intuitively understood just by looking at them, we will perfectly comprehend the goal of the Buddha's teachings.

The main principle of our practice is awakening, proper thoughts, and purity. An initial step in our learning is to Take Refuge in the Triple Jewels. After we have the compassionate heart to Take Refuge in the Triple Jewels by accepting, learning, and practicing Buddhism, we request a Dharma Master to pass on the principles and goal of practicing Buddhism. The Triple Jewels are the Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha. When we take refuge in the Buddha, we are returning from our deluded state of mind and relying upon an awakened, understanding mind. When we take refuge in the Dharma we are returning from incorrect views by relying upon proper views and understanding. When we take

refuge in the Sangha, we are returning from pollution and disharmony and relying upon Purity of Mind and the Six Harmonies.

The latter help us to get along harmoniously with others. Not only are these applicable within a Buddhist community but also in any organization or group be it a family, a nation, or the world. The first principle is to share the same goals and views. Everyone in this group shares similar thoughts and views, providing the foundation for living in harmony. If everyone has different views and ideas, then conflicts would be unavoidable, making the group discordant and worse.

The second principle is to abide by the same precepts and rules. There are both broad and narrow meanings within the word "Precept." The narrower meaning includes upholding the five or ten layperson precepts, monk or nun precepts, or Bodhisattva

precepts as well as the Buddha's teachings. In a broader sense, abiding by the precepts includes abiding by codes of behavior, customs, rules and laws of the entire world.

Next, we practice the third principle of living and practicing together harmoniously. This naturally leads to the fourth principle of according with others. When living together and sharing a common consensus, a group would naturally not have any conflicts. To practice with the same goal and to achieve improvement daily ensures that the community will meet the fifth principle, that of experiencing the joy and inner peace from practicing the teachings.

The sixth principle is to share benefits harmoniously. This refers to our daily necessities for we really do not need more than these, wherever we are. Living by the Six Harmonies will help us to get along better with others. When with others, regardless of whether or not they follow the Six Harmonies, we ourselves need

to accord with the spirit of these principles to truly follow the teachings.

Another important guideline for our practice is the Three Learnings of abiding by the precepts, deep concentration and wisdom that summarize all the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni and of all the Buddhas in the past, present and future.

The teachings of the precepts place most emphasis on rules and laws that we need to follow to successfully interact with people and circumstances. This will enable the members of society to enjoy a wonderful and fulfilling life. Worlds absent of law and order are worlds of chaos. Although we may possess good fortune and wealth, we may still be unhappy, living in fear and insecurity if we have discarded law and order.

The precepts thoroughly explain the principles, methods and the state of mind we need to bring about a lawful society and

world. The Three Learnings clearly explain this concept. We practice self-discipline thru these precepts to attain deep concentration, then practice deep concentration to attain wisdom. In other words, we practice the Buddha's teachings in order to uncover our ultimate, perfect wisdom. Once we uncover this inner wisdom, we will know the true reality of life and the universe, including how to restore our original abilities.

Presently we are in a state of delusion. Delusion occurs when the mind and heart are not still, while an enlightened mind and heart remain unaffected. When our six senses encounter the environment; our minds and hearts cannot remain still and this gives rise to wandering thoughts.

The Buddha taught numerous ways of practice to enable us to remain unaffected in all situations, not giving rise to any wandering discriminatory thoughts or attachments, thus recovering our

original capabilities. This state of mind is deep concentration. Correcting our erroneous thoughts, speech, and behavior is cultivation. We accomplish these through self-discipline and concentration. For the pure mind, self-discipline is the external standard; deep concentration is the internal standard. While the external standard is important, the internal is much more important because it helps us to achieve our goal to attain wisdom. With self-discipline, we attain the concentration that gives rise to ultimate perfect wisdom.

Whether we practice Buddha Name Recitation, precept observation, mantra chanting, meditation, etc.; if we do not follow the guidelines, we cannot attain purity of mind. With one degree of purity of mind, we attain one degree of W. With two degrees of purity of mind, we attain two degrees of wisdom, etc. Therefore, practicing accordingly while maintaining and protecting our purity

of mind to give rise to true wisdom is crucial.

The Six Paramitas are the primary guidelines for Bodhisattvas. Each Paramita encompasses our whole way of living; for example, the first of the Six Paramitas is "Giving." Most people think of giving as simply donating money, but this is only one of the infinite kinds of giving. On appearance, giving is sacrificing oneself to give to others. However, from its intrinsic nature, giving is letting go.

We can practice giving of our wealth or physical strength. For example, without proper understanding, when we do the same work everyday, we usually feel these daily chores are repetitive and boring. If however, we could understand that we are cultivating the Bodhisattva Way by practicing the Six Paramitas, then our feelings of resentment will be replaced by joy.

Changing our perception of doing the same chores with a giv-

ing, non-attaching heart is practicing the Paramita of giving. Not only do we serve those we live or work with, but we also serve as a role model for many others and in this way, not just one but all beings benefit. Being a role model for others is practicing the Bodhisattva Way in guiding sentient beings. The Paramita of giving can be expanded to include the infinite universe.

Giving is comprised of three categories: wealth, teaching, and fearlessness. The giving of wealth includes internal and external wealth. Internal wealth involves all of our mental and physical labors that benefit others. External wealth is the giving of all other things, money, food, etc. As a result, we gain wealth.

The giving of teaching is the willingness to instruct others while not selfishly holding back any knowledge. It is to do our best in educating willing students. As a result, we gain intelligence and wisdom. The giving of fearlessness includes soothing away other's

fears and fostering a feeling of security. As a result, we gain health and long life. Most people wish for happiness, for wealth, intelligence, health and long life. The Law of Cause and Effect explains that when there is a good cause, a good reward will follow. However, we do not receive the reward without first planting the good cause. By practicing all three kinds of giving, we perfectly attain all of these rewards.

After careful observation, we will see that very few people have all they wish for. Some have wisdom, others have good fortune. They planted different seeds. Using Buddhist principles to observe society enables us to know how to conduct ourselves in the future.

Frankly, true wisdom is more important than good fortune. Wealth is good fortune, but properly using and allocating wealth requires much wisdom for without it possessing wealth may lead us

to create infinite negative karma from evil deeds, while thinking that we are doing good. Without wisdom, we are unable to distinguish true from false, or beneficial from harmful. Then, what may appear to have been good can turn out to have been bad and what may initially have appeared to be bad can turn out to have been good. Throughout all this we are usually unaware of having done anything wrong. Hence, we need insight to understand the outcome of all good and bad deeds and we need wisdom to deeply understand and to be far-sighted enough to distinguish the truth.

The Second Paramita is abiding by the precepts or self-discipline. We follow the proper teachings, accord with the customs of society and abide by the rules and laws of a country. We follow both the law and its spirit.

The Third Paramita is "Patience." Whether interacting with people or circumstances, everything is attained from patience.

Without it, we cannot attain achievement in anything. Having patience to endure what others cannot, we achieve what others cannot.

The Fourth Paramita is "Diligence," seen as focused daily improvement, not trying to advance in many different directions. Advancing with diligence to a certain level, we attain concentration, the ability to remain unmoved and uninfluenced by external conditions. We achieve the Fifth Paramita of "Deep Concentration" when we are unmoved by all phenomena. It is seeing everything clearly and knowing that all is intuitive wisdom, the Prajna Wisdom that is the Sixth Paramita.

Today we do not exist in wisdom but in a state of delusion; not yet having understood that we are not individuals, but are just one very small part of the whole, not many but one. Our mistaken viewpoints have led to being immersed in selfish thoughts but we

need to replace these with thoughts of how to benefit others. Our selfishness, wandering discriminatory thoughts, attachments, and afflictions have hidden the truth from us. Buddha Shakyamuni taught us how to break thru these obstacles to awaken, to attain perfect wisdom and compassion, to end unhappiness, and to find genuine lasting joy, serenity, and peace for all beings.

THE TEN RECITATION METHOD

The Ten-Recitation method is a simple, convenient, and effective way of practicing Buddha Name Recitation. It is especially suitable for those who find little time in the day for cultivation. Practicing this method helps us to regain mindfulness of Buddha Amitabha and brings us peace and clarity in the present moment.

The practice begins first thing in the morning when we wake up. We sit up straight and clearly recite Buddha Amitabha's name ten times with an undisturbed mind, aloud or silently to ourselves. We repeat this process eight more times for the rest of the day. Altogether, we do one round of ten recitations, nine times a day, everyday as follows:

1. Upon waking up
2. Before starting breakfast
3. After finishing breakfast
4. Before work

5. Before starting lunch
6. After finishing lunch
7. Before starting dinner
8. After finishing dinner
9. At bedtime

Altogether, this method is practiced nine times daily. The key is regularity; disruption of this practice will reduce its effectiveness. Without interruption, as cultivators, we will soon feel an increase in our purity of mind and wisdom.

Diligent practice of the Ten-Recitation method, together with unwavering belief and vows, can ensure fulfillment of our wish to reach the Western Pure Land of Infinite Life and Infinite Light. We hope everyone will practice accordingly.

Homage to Buddha Amitabha

GLOSSARY

Affliction 煩惱 Fannaο. Condition or cause of pain, distress, and suffering which disturbs the body and mind.

Alaya Consciousness 阿賴耶識 Alaiye Shi. Our store consciousness, the thought database from all of our past and present lives, good and bad.

Amitabha 阿彌陀 Amituo. The name of the Buddha of the Western Pure Land, primarily meaning Infinite Life and Infinite Light.

Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提 Anouduoluo Sanmiao Sanputi. Perfect Complete Enlightenment.

Arhat 阿羅漢 Aluohan. One who has reached self-realization, a state in which one possesses no erroneous views, speech, or behavior.

Asuras 阿修羅 Axiuluo. Quarrelsome, half-gods.

Attachments 執著 Zhizhuo. Fixed to certain ideas or objects.

Bodhi mind 菩提心 Puti Xin. The great compassionate and sincere mind, with every thought to attain complete self-realization for self and others.

Bodhisattva 菩薩 Pusa. One who has vowed to attain Supreme Enlightenment for themselves and all beings.

Buddha 佛 Fo. One who has reached perfection in both self-realization and helping others to reach realization.

Delusion 迷惑 Mi Huo. False beliefs and views.

Deva 天眾 Tian Zhong. Heavenly Beings or gods.

Dharma 法 Fa. 1) The teachings of the Buddha (generally capitalized in English); 2) Things, events, phenomena, everything in the universe; and 3) Duty, law,

doctrine.

Dusts 塵 Cheng. Metaphor for all the mundane things that can cloud our self-nature.

Eight Afflictions 八纏 / 纏縛 Ba Chan / Chan Fu. Absence of embarrassment and shamefulness, and the presence of jealousy, stinginess, misdeeds, drowsiness, sleep, and agitation.

Eight Consciousnesses 八識 Ba Shi. Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, Mana, and Alaya. Information from the sixth consciousness, which is the mind, is transmitted by the seventh consciousness, which is the Mana, to the eighth, which is the Alaya, our store consciousness, the thought database of our karma created from all our past and present lives, good or bad.

Eight Emotions of Others 八風 / 八世俗法 Ba Feng / Ba Shisu Fa. Four pairs of emotions that hinder our practice: praise and blame, gain and loss, happiness and suffering, and fame and disgrace.

Eight Sufferings 八苦 Ba Ku. As human beings, we undergo the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, and death. We do not attain what we seek, suffer hardships, are parted from our loved ones and find ourselves in the presence of those whom we dislike or hate.

Eighth Ground Bodhisattva 八地菩薩 Ba Di Pu Sa. The eighth of the ten stages or grounds of a Bodhisattva's enlightenment, which summarize the most important steps in a Bodhisattva's path right before attaining Buddhahood. Some say it is at this level that Bodhisattvas reach the stage of Non-regression, the level at which they will never retreat from the Bodhisattva-path.

Eon 劫 Jie. 1,334,000,000 years. Often expressed as the time it would take for a mountain of solid rock of ten cubic leagues to wear down if the tip of a heavenly maiden's delicate tunic brushed against it every hundred years. The length of time between the creation and recreation of a world/universe, spanning the period of a world's formation, existence, destruction, and non-existence. A fantastically long time.

Field of merit 福田 Fu Tian. Someone who is worthy of offerings; for example, enlightened beings, monks and nuns, parents and teachers, animals and the needy.

Fifty-Two Levels of Bodhisattva Practice 菩薩五十二修行次第 Pusa Wushi Er Xiuxing Ci Di. Ten Beliefs (十信 Shi Xin), Ten Abodes (十住 Shi Zhu), Ten Conducts (十行 Shi Xing), Ten Transferences (十迴向 Shi Hui Xiang), Ten Grounds (十地 Shi Di), Equal-enlightenment (等覺 Deng Jue), and Perfect Complete Enlightenment (Buddhahood) (妙覺 Miao Jue)

Five Aggregates 五蘊 Wu Yun. Constituent elements of all existences: form (色 Se), feeling (受 Shou), conception (想 Xiang), impulse (行 Xing), and consciousness (識 Shi).

Five Classics 五經 Wu Jing. The Five Classics of Confucianism can be described in terms of five visions. The metaphysical by I Ching, Book of Changes (易經 Yi Jing), political by Book of History (書經 Shu Jing), poetic by Book of

Songs(詩經Shi Jing), social by Book of Rites (禮記Li Ji), and historical by Spring-Autumn Annals (春秋Chun Qiu).

Five Deadly Offenses 五逆 Wu Ni. Murdering one's own father or mother, causing a Buddha to bleed (destroying Buddha images), killing an Arhat, and disrupting the unity of the Sangha. One who commits any of these offenses is destined for the Avici Hell, the lowest of the hell realms.

Five Desires 五欲 Wu Yu. Wealth, lust, fame, food-drink, and sleep.

Five Extraordinary Abilities 五通 Wu Tong. 1. To be anywhere at will; 2. Heavenly Eye to see all forms without obstruction; 3. Heavenly Ear to hear all sounds without obstruction; 4. To know the thoughts of others; and 5. To do everything at will

Five Human Relationships 五倫 Wu Lun. These principles taught by Confucius are founded on traditional moral principles. They include those between husbands and wives, parents and children, siblings, friends, political leaders and

the public.

Five Kinds of Eyes 五眼 Wu Yan. 1. Human eyes (肉眼Rou Yan); 2. Heavenly eye (天眼Tian Yan), extraordinary ability of heavenly beings to see all things without obstruction; 3. Wisdom Eye (慧眼Hui Yan), ability of Theravada sages to perceive the principle of voidness; 4. Dharma Eye (法眼Fa Yan), Bodhisattva's ability to discern teaching methods for guiding people; 5. Buddha Eye (佛眼Fo Yan), to possess all of above. The last three correspond to triple truth. The Wisdom Eye realizes the truth of voidness, the Dharma-eye discerns provisional methods of teaching, and the Buddha Eye sees everything in its true-nature.

Five Pure Land Sutras and One Sastra 淨土五經一論 Jingtū Wujing Yi Lun.
(1) The Buddha Speaks of the Infinite Life Sutra of Adornment, Purity, Equality, and Enlightenment of the Mahayana School (The Infinite Life Sutra); (2) The Amitabha Sutra; (3) The Visualization on the Infinite Life Buddha Sutra; (4) "Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's Conduct and Vows", from the Flower Adornment Sutra; (5) "The Chapter on the Perfect Complete Realiza-

tion of Great Strength Bodhisattva through Buddha Name Recitation" from the Surangama Sutra; and (6) the Rebirth Treatise.

Five Virtues 五德 Wu De. Confucian virtues of gentleness, kindness, respectfulness, thriftiness, and humility.

Four Books 四書 Si Shu. Great Learning (大學 Da Xue), Doctrine of the Mean (中庸 Zhong Yong), Analects (論語 Lun Yu), and Mencius (孟子 Meng Zi).

Four Stages of Enlightenment (Arhatship) in Theravada Buddhism 四果 Si Guo. 1) Stream-enterer (須陀恒果/入流 Xutuohuan Guo/Ru Liu). By destroying various wrong views, one enters into the flow of Dharma-nature. 2. Once-returner (斯陀含果/一流/一來 Situohan Guo/Yi Liu/Yi Lai). By destroying obvious afflictions, one is subject to rebirth only once more in the heavenly realm. Then one descends to the human realm once more before final liberation from reincarnation. 3. Non-returner (阿那含果/不還/不來 Anahan Guo/

Bu Huan/Bu Lai). By destroying subtle afflictions, one is no longer subject to rebirth in the Desire Heaven Realm. 4. Arhat (阿羅漢果/不生 Aluohan Guo/Bu Sheng). By destroying all afflictions, one is no longer subject to reincarnation.

Four Studies 四教 Si Jiao. Confucian studies of virtuous conduct, speech, skills for earning a living and the arts.

Four Universal Vows of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas 四弘誓願 Si Hong Shi Yuan. (1) Sentient beings are innumerable, I vow to help them all. (2) Afflictions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them all. (3) Ways to practice are boundless, I vow to master them all. (4) Enlightenment is unsurpassable, I vow to attain it.

Good Fortune 福報 Fu Bao. Happiness, intelligence, wellbeing, prosperity, etc. The great benefits of the human and celestial realms; therefore, they are temporary and subject to birth and death.

Hungry Ghost 餓鬼 E Gui. One of the Three Lower Realms. Hungry ghosts

wander in a limbo-like state in which they can find no satisfaction for their desires, especially but not exclusively, for their hunger or thirst. One is reborn there because of greed.

Karma/Cause and Effect 業 Ye因果 Yin Guo. Consequences result from thought, speech, and behavior. Karma mainly applies to intentional thoughts.

Mahayana 大乘 Da Cheng. One of the two major branches of Buddhism, it is the Bodhisattva path of helping all sentient beings to attain Enlightenment.

Merits and Virtues 功德 Gong De. They are accumulated by doing good deeds selflessly without expectation of reward, wandering or discriminatory thoughts, or attachments.

Mindfulness of Buddha 念佛 Nian Fo. Initially the mind remembers the Buddha and does not forget. After further cultivation, one constantly contemplates the Buddha.

Nine Realms 九界 Jiu Jie. The ten realms minus the Buddha realm.

Non-regression 不退 Bu Tui. One who will never retreat from the Bodhisattva-path. It is not reached until attaining at least the eighth of the ten grounds of a Bodhisattva.

Patriarch 祖師 Zu Shi. Founder of a school and his primary successors in the transmission of its teachings.

Phenomena 事相 Shi Xiang. Things, events, happenings, everything in the entire universe.

Practice Guidelines 修學五大綱領 Xiuxue Wuda Ganglin. 1) The Three Conditions (三福 San Fu); 2) The Six Principles of Harmony (六和 Liu He); 3) The Three Learnings (三學, San Xue); 4) The Six Paramitas (六度 Liu Du); and 5) Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's Ten Great Vows (十大願 Shi Da Yuan).

Prajna-Wisdom 般若智慧 Boruo Zhihui. Intuitive wisdom.

Pratyekabuddha 辟支佛 Pi Zhi Fo. One who attains his enlightenment alone by meditating on the principle of Twelve Causations, independent of a teacher, with the objective of attaining Nirvana for him/herself.

Precepts 戒 Jie. Rules set up by Buddha Shakyamuni to guide his students from erroneous thoughts, speech, and behavior.

Pure Mind or Purity of Mind 清淨心 Qingjing Xin. The mind without wandering and discriminatory thoughts and attachments.

Retribution 報應 Bao Ying. Karmic punishment from erroneous thoughts, words, or deeds.

Root of Goodness 善根 Shan Gen. Good qualities or seeds sown in a good life to be reaped later.

Saha world 娑婆世界 Suopo Shijie. Refers to our solar system, filled with suffering and afflictions, yet gladly endured by its inhabitants.

Samadhi 三昧 San Mei. Proper enjoyment. Usually denotes the particular final stage of pure concentration and contemplation. There are many degrees and types of Samadhi.

Sangha 僧團 Seng Tuan. A group of four or more people who properly practice the Buddha's teaching together, especially the Six Principles of Harmony.

Sanskrit 梵文 Fan Wen. A language of ancient India.

Sastra 論 Lun. Commentaries on sutras that are primarily written by Bodhisattvas. Most translations use the word treatise for sastra in the title.

Self-Nature 自性 Zi Xing. Our original, true self that we still have, but is currently covered by deluded thoughts.

Sentient-being 眾生 Zhong Sheng. A living being that is self-aware and that can experience feeling or sensation.

Sharira 舍利子 She Li Zi. Relics that remain after cremation indicating the person had attained some degree of purity of body and mind.

Six Paramitas 六度 Liu Du. Giving (布施 Bu Shi), self-discipline (持戒 Chi Jie), patience (忍辱 Ren Ru), diligence (精進 Jing Jin), deep concentration (禪定 Chan Ding), and wisdom (智慧 Zhi Hui).

Six Harmonics 六和敬 Liu He Jing. 1) Share the same views and goals. 2) Observe the same precepts. 3) Live and practice together harmoniously. 4) Accord with others and do not quarrel. 5) Experience the inner peace and happiness from practicing the teachings. 6) Share benefits harmoniously.

Six Realms 六道 Liu Dao. Three upper realms are heavens, asuras, and humans. Three lower realms are animals, hungry ghosts, and hells.

Six Senses 六境 Liu Jing. Sight (色Se), sound (聲Shen), smell (香Xiang), taste (味Wei), touch (觸Chu), and thought (法Fa). External.

Six Sense Objects 六塵 Liu Chen. Form (色Se), sound (聲Shen), scent (香Xiang), taste (味Wei), texture (觸Chu), and thought (法Fa). Internal.

Six Sense Organs 六根 Liu Gen. Eyes, ears, nose, mouth, body and mind object.

Stream-enterer. (See Four Stages of Enlightenment in Theravada Buddhism.)

Sutra 經 Jing. Teaching by the Buddha, initially given verbally, later compiled and written down by the Buddha's students.

Ten Directions 十方 Shi Fang. North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, West, Northwest, above and below.

Ten Virtuous Conducts 十善業 Shi Shan Yie. No killing (不殺生 Bu Sha Sheng), stealing (不偷盜 Bu To Dao), sexual misconduct (不邪淫 Bu Xie Yin), lying (不妄語 Bu Wang Yu), abusive language (不惡口 Bu E Kou), bearing tales (不兩舌 Bu Liang She), seductive words (不綺語 Bu Qi Yu), greed (不貪 Bu Tan), anger (不瞋 Bu Chen), and ignorance (不癡 Bu Chi).

Ten Great Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva 普賢十大願 Puxian Shi Da Yuan. 1) Equally respect all beings and things. 2) Praise the virtues and kindnesses of others. 3) Make offerings extensively and respectfully. 4) Feel deep remorse for our faults that obstruct us from seeing our true-nature and vow not to repeat them. 5) Rejoice in every virtuous deed and do not harbor jealousy or hinder others. 6) Request those who truly practice to widely propagate the teachings. 7) Ask teachers to remain in the world and to guide us. 8) Tirelessly uphold the Buddha's teachings in our every thought, word, and deed. 9) Accord with those who are proper and patiently wait for the opportunity that allows us to guide those who are not. 10). Dedicate the peace and happiness gained from practicing the above deeds to all living beings, hoping that they will attain the unsurpassed understanding.

Ten (Dharma) Realms 十道/十法界 Shi Dao/Shi Fajie. Six Realms plus the Four Sage Realms of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Sound-hearers.

Theravada Buddhism 小乘 Xiao Cheng. The Path of strictly abiding by the precepts. The objective is to attain realization for him/herself. It is often called the path of the elders and is primarily practiced in Southern Asia and the west.

Three Conditions 三福 San Fu. The First Condition is to: A) Be filial to one's parents, B) Be respectful to one's teachers and elders, C) Be compassionate and not kill any living beings, and D) Follow the Ten Virtuous Conducts. The Second Condition is to: E) Take the Three Refuges, F) Abide by the precepts, laws and customs, and G) Conduct oneself in a proper and dignified manner. The Third Condition is to: H) Give rise to the Bodhi mind, I) Deeply believe in the Law of Cause and Effect and that chanting "Amitufo" is the cause and attaining Buddhahood is the effect, J) Recite and uphold Mahayana sutras, and K) Encourage others to advance on the path to Enlightenment.

Three Dharma Ages. 法運三時代 Fayun San Shidai The Dharma Perfect Age (正法 Zheng Fa) began with Buddha Shakyamuni's demise and lasted five hundred years, during which Enlightenment was often attained. The Dharma Semblance Age (像法 Xiang Fa) began after that and lasted one thousand years, during which Enlightenment was seldom attained. The Dharma Ending Age (末法 Muo Fa) that we are now in began after that and will last for ten thousand years during which Enlightenment will rarely be attained.

Three Kamas 三業 San Ye. Created by our body (身 Shen), mouth (口 Kou), and mind (意 Yi).

Three Lands 三土 San Tu. When we are born into the Pure Land through the state of Constant Mindfulness, we will be born into the Land where Both Sages and Ordinary Beings Dwell Together. With the state of One Mind Undisturbed in Mindfulness, we will be born into the Land Where Everything is Temporary. With the state of One Mind Undisturbed in Enlightenment, we will be born into the Land of Real Reward.

Three Learnings 三學 San Xue. Self-discipline, deep concentration, and wis-

dom.

Three Levels of Achievement. 三種成就 San Zhong Chengjiu One Mind Undisturbed in Enlightenment (理一心不亂 Li YiXin BuLuan), One Mind Undisturbed in Mindfulness (事一心不亂 Shi YiXin BuLuan) and Constant Mindfulness (功夫成片 GongFu Cheng Pian).

Three Poisons 三毒 San Du. Greed (貪 Tan), anger (瞋 Chen), and ignorance (癡 Chi).

Three Refuges 三皈 San Gui. We take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. When we take refuge in the Buddha, we are returning from our deluded state of mind and relying upon an awakened, understanding mind. When we take refuge in the Dharma, we are returning from deviated views and relying upon proper views and understanding. When we take refuge in the Sangha, we are returning from pollution and disharmony and relying upon purity of mind and the Six Principles of Harmony.

Three Relationships. 三種關係 Sanzhong Guanxi. These three relationships taught by Confucius are among humans, among humans and spirits, and among

humans and the nature.

Three Periods of Time 三世 San Shi. Past, present, and future.

Transliteration 譯音 Yin Yi. The representation of letters or words in the corresponding characters of another alphabet, so the original sound is retained.

Virtues. See Merits.

Wandering Discriminatory Thoughts and Attachments 妄想分別執著
Wangxiang Fenbie Zhizhuo. Afflictions that cloud our true nature.

Way Place 道場 Dao Chang. Usually called a temple, a place where Buddhist practitioners come to practice. A way place is also called a Learning Center.

Western Pure Land 極樂世界 Jile Shijie. The world created by Buddha Amitabha, which is an ideal place of cultivation, for those who are born there are no longer subject to reincarnation.

DEDICATION OF MERIT

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,
All bring forth the heart of understanding
And live the teachings for the rest of this life,
Then be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

A World Free of Conflicts

Based on the Talks of
Venerable Master Chin Kung
Translated by Silent Voices

By Venerable Wu Ling

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on the back of this book for the most recent edition.



Be Mindful of the Kindness of Others,
Repay the Kindness With Gratitude.

In recent years, our world has become beset with adversities and our lives filled with increasing unhappiness. As time goes on, these adversities will become more and more severe, more and more frequent. Someone asked how the compassionate Buddha and Bodhisattvas help all sentient beings to be free from pain. They do this by teaching us to overcome greed, anger, and ignorance so that our minds will no longer be deluded, but awakened. By teaching us the Law of Cause and Effect.

To end our suffering, we first have to know what causes it. As human beings, we undergo the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, and death. We suffer hardships, the inability to attain what we seek, separation from those we love, and association with those whom we resent or even hate. We are surrounded by all of these with no apparent way of being truly free.

We need to understand that catalytic conditions or circum-

stances have to exist for a cause to generate an effect. By controlling these catalytic conditions, we can have some influence on our consequences. We need to practice good deeds during our lifetime to generate good karma. Then we will truly appreciate that living a happy and fulfilling life is the karmic result generated from a good cause and a good condition, and this is the way to attain liberation from suffering and to attain happiness.

Today, many of us feel the weight of our negative karma as we witness the unhappiness and suffering around us. They are caused by our selfish and erroneous behavior, by our choosing to benefit ourselves at the expense of others. How do we remove this negative karma? How do we prevent further occurrences? By dedicating ourselves to helping and benefiting society, by not protecting ourselves while harming others.

Most of us have the sub-conscious desire to control other

people, animals, even inanimate objects. But by letting go of this attachment, we can be liberated. Awakened beings live their lives with great ease. They fulfill their responsibility of advising and educating sentient beings by explaining to them the true reality of life and the universe, the Law of Cause and Effect by explaining that every cause, every thought, word and action has a result.

Whatever people decide to do, it is their choice, their consequence. We simply accord with the condition as we educate them and then leave the rest up to them. By doing this, our minds will remain serene, as it generates the concentration and thus the wisdom to effectively interact with people, matters, and objects. The benefits that can be derived from such practice are infinite and boundless. Not only can our present suffering be resolved, but our negative karma accumulated over infinite life times can be eliminated as well.

Why then are we unable to realize the true benefit? Because we are obstructed by our own negative karma, unable to see what is right be before our very eyes. We are constantly reminded by the images of awakened beings. Constantly prompted by our reciting the sutra, impelled by our daily chanting and listening to Dharma talks. Yet, we still are unable to truly comprehend the teachings, still unable to apply the principles in our daily lives.

We cannot blame the Buddha and Bodhisattvas for not helping. The fact is they are trying to; we are not paying attention. We have a wondrous and rare chance that is about to slip by us. To be born as human beings who are able to hear the teachings is an unbelievably rare opportunity, not encountered for millions of years. It is as rare as a bubble rising to the surface of a vast sea and breaking the surface of that sea within the one wreath of flowers that is floating upon it.

Allowing this to happen will be a tragic mistake that is entirely of our own making. To prevent this from happening, we need to reflect and feel remorse for our mistakes. This is a learning process that will enable us to overcome our afflictions and bad habits and thus to remove our negative karma. How do we do this? By feeling deep regret for our mistakes and vowing to not commit them again. Daily practice will help to decrease our negative karma. It is to practice in the midst of society, not to be separated from it. Our goal is the mind of sincerity, purity, equality, compassion, and awakening. Only with this mind will we be able to solve all problems. They cannot be solved by physical force, by war. They are solved with gentleness and loving-kindness toward all other beings, animate and inanimate.

It is in our best interest to be rid of the desire to control, for it will only result in our committing further transgressions, thus in-

creasing our negative karma. No one can truly control another. History provides us with many examples of countries that tried to use force to control another country; Hitler's invasion of Europe, the Japanese invasion of China, the Russians in Afghanistan and the United States in Vietnam. All failed.

Instead of those countries spending huge sums of money on warfare, they could have spent the money on caring for and supporting people who were suffering hardships. In this way, they would have peacefully won them over. Or they could have used the money to educate their own citizens, to help them become self-sufficient; to pay more attention to internal needs instead of constantly interfering with external affairs.

Our every thought needs to be of benefiting all sentient-beings. Not only in our behavior should we never hurt any sentient beings, but also we should never give rise to a single hostile

thought or say anything that can cause distress to others. If we can truly follow this teaching then in our daily lives no matter what we do, there will be great goodness, great gentleness. This is the way to truly influence people, with loving-kindness and compassion. Using physical force to try to solve problems will not only create enemies but will also generate the cause to be born into the hell realms. By practicing in accordance with the teachings, we will achieve results for in this way we will transform our minds. Since everything is a reflection of our minds, everything can be transformed by our minds. When we accord with the teachings, our thoughts will change; our actions will be proper and correct.

We would do well to let go of selfishness, to only have thoughts that benefit others. Instead, we are wrapped up in our own concerns, thinking only of protecting the interests of ourselves, our group or our country. This way of thinking has led to quarrels be-

tween people, feuds between families, and wars between countries. It has led to massive damage on both sides; the tragic loss of lives, the excessive monetary cost, the disastrous destruction of land; the final destruction of friendships and peace and the grave consequences incurred due to the Law of Cause and Effect.

Our complete lack of concern for plants, living and non-living creatures of our natural environment has resulted in the destruction of our environment. Ultimately, we are the ones who suffer from this negligence and lack of compassion. We are all one entity, one being, all interrelated closely with one another. Everything, including us arises from the coming together of causes, so to harm others is to harm ourselves.

Once we truly comprehend this, we will have no more problems. Being overly concerned with our own interests and those of our group and country, is the root cause of all misfortunes and adver-

sities. Taking care of this problem solves everything else. When we practice accordingly, with proper and caring behavior, we will see an increase in our good karma and a decrease in our bad. In turn, our suffering will be reduced or eliminated and we will experience a favorable change in our circumstances.

When we give rise to one single bad thought of inequality, we turn a favorable situation into an unfavorable one. However, with one single good thought of equality, the Buddha realm will appear in that moment. When we give rise to one single thought of holy beings, the Heaven realms will appear in that moment. Likewise, with one thought of greed, anger, or ignorance, our daily lives will become unsettled and unmanageable. However, with one thought of purity, our lives will become harmonious and peaceful.

Our lives are short. However, we are unbelievably fortunate to have been born as humans, able to learn and understand that the

Law of Cause and Effect is unchangeable, is permanent. We reap what we sow. By sowing good causes, we reap good consequences: sowing bad causes, we reap bad consequences. Even beings with perfect understanding, wisdom, and compassion cannot alter this reality.

However, with the causes that we have already planted, we can learn how to alter our catalytic conditions before they come into effect. Furthermore, we need to refrain from committing any more bad deeds and to do more good deeds, to distance ourselves from adverse conditions. In some cases, this can reduce or eliminate the bad effect. In this way, we can control our own consequences, transform our environment, and change the direction in which we are currently headed.

We are learning of more and more prophecies that speak of upcoming disasters, even of the end of the world. These prophe-

cies also tell us that these could either be reduced or delayed or even prevented if we replaced our incorrect ways with those that are good, with those that benefit others and not ourselves. But if we do not turn back now, then it will be very hard to avoid them.

It is crucial that people understand that using physical force cannot solve problems, for even if we destroy a country, even if we detonate enough bombs to wipe out the face of the earth, it still will not solve our problems. We cannot waste this opportunity but need to cultivate in a sincere and diligent manner, to apply the principles with unselfish thought and behavior. To be good, to be warm, to be sincere, to put all our efforts into helping others. In this way, all that is good will come our way.

Buddha Shakyamuni told us that there are three cataclysmic disasters in this world: fire, water, and wind. Fire is caused when we feel jealousy, feel hatred. Where do floods come from? From our

greed. Disasters caused by wind are the result of ignorance.

If we want to avoid or to be rid of these, we must sever our greed, anger, ignorance, and arrogance. We should neither feel greed for worldly teaching nor for any other teachings. For to feel the slightest trace will block us from severing the mind of greed - will block us from eradicating the disasters, which are increasing in both frequency and severity. This is very important. These have been predicted by many ancient prophecies from respected religious leaders in many different countries.

Three thousand years ago Buddha Shakyamuni told us of the partial destruction of the world, which would be from war, epidemic, and famine. He told of a war that would last for seven days and seven nights, then an epidemic that would last for seven months and seven days, and finally, a famine that would last for seven years, seven months and seven days. In the past, it was diffi-

cult to imagine how a war could last just seven days but have such devastating results. It was beyond imagination.

But anyone who has been to Hiroshima or Nagasaki would realize that the Buddha was describing nuclear warfare. In Nagasaki, after the atomic explosion, many people survived the explosion itself, but were infected with atomic fallout and consequently many of them died during the first six months. This can be described as an epidemic.

The radiation sickness that results from atomic fallout is insidious. It starts by destroying one white cell and gradually progresses until there is massive cell destruction then uncontrolled bleeding, and finally, death. Anyone, who was still alive at least seven months after the detonation would be considered as having survived the immediate effects of the bomb.

For years after the explosion, there were no trees - no plants -

no grass: all was barren. The trees and grass started to grow approximately eight years after the detonation of the bombs. It was as we had been told: the ground would grow nothing for seven years, seven months, seven days. In this period, all will suffer from famine.

From this, we realize that the partial destruction of the world that was told to us by the Buddha is indeed that of nuclear warfare. Could it really happen? Many believe it is very likely. Access to nuclear weapons is becoming more widespread, more difficult to control. No one knows how long this tentative control can be maintained. Very honestly, the only way to attain real control is to encourage and help all to understand the need to prevent human made tragedies. If we observe the world situation objectively, then we will see that it is very difficult to avoid this probable disaster.

If the war were to happen now, half of the world's population

could be killed. How can we escape such a war? We need to stop all bad thoughts, speech, and behavior and to accumulate good deeds. How? By ceasing all selfish ideas, by constantly thinking of how to benefit all others, by letting go of our own interest for the sake of others. This will help us to avoid all that is bad and embrace all that is good. But, if our every thought is only of ourselves, it will be very difficult for us to avoid even more problems.

Why do we persist in our anger, our hatred, our fighting? Why do we have conflicts, the inability to tolerate others? Why do we seem so determined to keep heading towards the brink? Selfishness. Wrong viewpoints. The inability to truly care for others. The inability to truly understand that everything arises from our minds. The inability to understand that every thought we have is instantly felt throughout the entire universe.

We need to let go of our selfishness and comprehend that the

whole universe is our home and that we are one with the universe. We have the same self-nature as enlightened beings. The difference between them and us is that they comprehend this. All sentient beings have been our past parents. All sentient beings are future enlightened beings. Understanding this, how can we not be respectful to all beings? How can we possibly harm them?

We originally had this comprehension, this great broad mindedness. Then why are we so narrow minded now? We are deluded, unable to see through our false beliefs and wrong viewpoints. Our innate wisdom and abilities are thus temporarily lost to us. However, if we can break through this delusion, then we will be able to uncover this wisdom for it is not permanently lost. In the Flower Adornment Sutra, we can see the broad-mindedness of enlightened beings. All of the infinite and countless numbers of beings at the assembly who gathered to hear this unsurpassed teaching are

one.

If we could just understand this true reality and expand our minds, then we too would recognize that no matter what race, what religion, what culture, we are all one. With this wisdom, discrimination, misunderstanding, and conflict among beings would naturally diminish. First, human made tragedies would be avoided. Then what we think of, as natural tragedies would likewise dissolve.

The environment changes with our minds. When our minds are serene and compassionate, our living environment will become tranquil and peaceful. Today our living environment is being polluted and destroyed. Some say that the earth is rapidly becoming unsuitable for living. How did this happen? It is the result of the bad intentions and deeds of we human beings and this is the real reason for what is happening today. To save our world, we need to use great wisdom to help those who are deluded to become awak-

ened. How? Through education. All the great sages have used education to overcome ignorance.

Recently, a practitioner asked how he could be assured of being freed from the cycle of birth and death, from reincarnation. He was told to let go of all desires, good, or bad. We cannot be truly free if we have not yet let go and we cannot let go because we are still clinging to something. Find it. We must find it! If we cannot, then even if we are born into the highest level of heaven, where we will live through eighty thousand cycles of creation, existence, and complete annihilation of the world, we will still be mired, still be lost in the cycle of birth and death. What can we do? Find out what we are clinging to and LET GO! Let go of all attachments. Let go of all feelings of gain and loss. Let go of discriminating and wandering thoughts. Let go of the thought of how others treat us. Let go of the thought of those who owe us, of those we owe.

Only with purity of mind can we let go and only then can we attain genuine and permanent happiness. If we cannot do this, then we are truly lost for our vows; our beliefs are not sincere enough. No matter how much we practice, we will be unable to be free, serene and at peace. For we are still clinging to one of the five desires of wealth, lust, fame, food or drink, and sleep. Still discriminating between what we perceive as right or wrong. Greed for these will lead us into the downward spiral of the three bad realms.

And although, with enough good karma, we can go to the highest heavenly realm of Neither Thought nor Non-thought, where the beings have a life span of eighty thousand eons; with enough bad karma we go to the hell realms, where the beings have a life span of infinite eons. When compared to eighty thousand eons, the time spent in the hell realms is unbelievably long. When we consider the time spent in this world compared to the other realms, our

time here is a flash of lightning, a drop of dew, a fleeting cloud; it is inconsequential.

Today, we still have obstacles due to our lack of understanding. Why can we not let go? We are still clinging to something. Because of this clinging, we are still mired, still lost in the cycle of birth and death, and still lost in the ten realms of existence. We need to know that if we cannot transcend the cycle of birth and death, most of our time will be spent in the three bad realms. Greed is the cause of the karma that results in our being born into the hungry ghost realm. Anger is the cause of our being born into the hell realm. Then why are we born into the animal realm? Because we were ignorant. Allow me to give you an example.

Once upon a time, there was a very famous priest in a very old religion. He decided it was the right day to perform the ritual sacrificing of a goat. In his ignorance, he thought this was an offering

demanded by his god. He obtained an appropriate goat for the sacrifice. He ordered his servants to take the goat to the holy river, wash him, and decorate him with flower garlands. Then they were to wash themselves, as part of the purification practice.

Down at the riverbank, the goat suddenly understood that today he would definitely be killed. He also became aware of his past births and deaths, and rebirths. He realized that the results of his past unwholesome deeds were about to finally be completed. So, he laughed an uproarious goat-laugh, like the clanging of cymbals. In the midst of his laughter, he realized another truth - that the priest, by sacrificing him, would suffer the same terrible results, due to his ignorance. So, he began to cry as loudly as he had just been laughing!

The servants, who were bathing in the holy river, heard first the laughing and then the crying. They were amazed. They asked the

goat, "Why did you loudly laugh and then just as loudly cry? What is the reason for this?" He replied, I will tell you the reason. But it must be in the presence of your master, the priest." Since they were very curious, they immediately took the sacrificial goat to the priest. They explained all that had happened. The priest too, became very curious. He respectfully asked the goat, "Sir, why did you laugh so loudly, and then just as loudly cry?"

The goat, remembering his past lives, said, "A long time ago, I too was a priest who, like you, was well educated in the sacred religious rites. I thought that to sacrifice a goat was a necessary offering to my god, which would benefit others, as well as myself in future rebirths. However, the true result of my action was that in my next 499 lives I myself have been beheaded!

"While being prepared for the sacrifice, I realized that today it is inevitable that I will lose my head for the 500th time. Then I will

finally be free of all the results of my unwholesome deed of so long ago. The joy of this made me laugh uncontrollably. "Then I suddenly realized that you, the priest, were about to repeat the same unwholesome action, and would be doomed to the same result of having your head chopped off in your next 500 lives! So, out of compassion and sympathy, my laughter turned to tears."

The priest was afraid this goat might be right, so he said, "Well, sir goat, I will not kill you." The goat replied, "Reverend priest, even if you do not kill me, I know that today I will lose my head and finally be released from the results of my past unwholesome action." The priest said, "Don't be afraid, my fine goat. I will provide the very best protection and personally guarantee that no harm will come to you." But the goat said, "Oh priest, your protection is very weak, compared to the power of my unwholesome deed to cause its necessary results."

So, the priest canceled the sacrifice, and began to have doubts about killing innocent animals. He released the goat and, along with his servants, followed him in order to protect him from any danger. The goat wandered into a rocky place. He saw some tender leaves on a branch and stretched out his neck to reach them. All of a sudden, a thunderstorm appeared out of nowhere. A lightning bolt struck an over-hanging rock, and cut off a sharp slab, which fell and chopped off the goat's head! He died instantly, and the thunderstorm disappeared.

There was a fairy that lived in a nearby tree and he had seen everything that had happened. He appeared, gently fluttering in the air overhead. He began to teach the curious people, saying, "Look at what happened to this poor goat. This was the result of killing animals! All beings are born, and suffer through sickness, old age, and death. But all wish to live, and not to die. Not seeing

that all have this in common, some kill other living beings. This causes suffering also to those who kill, both now and in countless future rebirths.

"Being ignorant that all deeds must cause results to the doer, some continue to kill and heap up more suffering on themselves in the future. Each time they kill, a part of themselves must also die in this present life and the suffering continues even by rebirth in hell worlds!" Those who heard the fairy speak felt that they were very lucky indeed. They gave up their ignorant killing, and were far better off, both in this life, and in pleasant rebirths.

Fellow practitioners and guests, please listen carefully. The Law of Cause and Effect is unchangeable, immutable. Our greed, anger, ignorance, and arrogance have resulted in disasters that are increasing in both frequency and severity and are approaching a scale that is impossible for us to imagine.

Everything arises from our minds. But just as we have given rise to the cause of this approaching disaster, we can also give rise to another, greater cause that can maybe reduce or possibly even prevent it from happening. We must replace thoughts of self with thoughts of all others. We must give up feelings of pride, the desires for fame and wealth. We must let go of thoughts of trying to control others. Let go of narrow-mindedness and biased viewpoints. Let go of criticizing, of blaming, of gossiping. Let go of the thought of those who owe us, of those we owe. We must let go!

Only by letting go, can we return to purity and tranquility. Only in this way, will our hearts become gentle; our minds become serene, as we give rise to the wisdom to accord with all beings, animate and inanimate. For only with gentle hearts and serene minds will we be able to solve our problems. The goodness that we can bring to others by using our loving-kindness and compassion is in-

finite - is boundless. And this is our best, our only way to bring true peace to our world. Not for ourselves but for the sake of all sentient beings.

THE TEN RECITATION METHOD

The Ten-Recitation method is a simple, convenient, and effective way of practicing Buddha Name Recitation. It is especially suitable for those who find little time in the day for cultivation. Practicing this method helps us to regain mindfulness of Buddha Amitabha and brings us peace and clarity in the present moment.

The practice begins first thing in the morning when we wake up. We sit up straight and clearly recite Buddha Amitabha's name ten times with an undisturbed mind, aloud or silently to ourselves. We repeat this process eight more times for the rest of the day. Altogether, we do one round of ten recitations, nine times a day, everyday as follows:

1. Upon waking up
2. Before starting breakfast

3. After finishing breakfast
4. Before work
5. Before starting lunch
6. After finishing lunch
7. Before starting dinner
8. After finishing dinner
9. At bedtime

Altogether, this method is practiced nine times daily. The key is regularity; disruption of this practice will reduce its effectiveness. Without interruption, as cultivators, we will soon feel an increase in our purity of mind and wisdom. Diligent practice of the Ten-Recitation method, together with unwavering belief and vows, can ensure fulfillment of our wish to reach the Western Pure Land of Infinite Life and Infinite Light. We hope everyone will practice accordingly.

Homage to Buddha Amitabha

GLOSSARY

Affliction 煩惱 Fannaο. Condition or cause of pain, distress, and suffering which disturbs the body and mind.

Amitabha 阿彌陀 Amituo. The name of the Buddha of the Western Pure Land, primarily meaning Infinite Life and Infinite Light.

Arhat 阿羅漢 Aluohan. One who has reached self-realization, a state in which one possesses no erroneous views, speech, or behavior.

Attachments 執著 Zhizhuο. Fixed to certain ideas or objects.

Bodhisattva 菩薩 Pusa. One who has vowed to attain Supreme

Enlightenment for themselves and all beings.

Buddha 佛 Fo. One who has reached perfection in both self-realization and helping others to reach realization.

Delusion 迷惑 Mi Huo. False beliefs and views.

Dharma 法 Fa. 1) The teachings of the Buddha (generally capitalized in English); 2) Things, events, phenomena, everything in the universe; and 3) Duty, law, doctrine.

Five Desires 五欲 Wu Yu. Wealth, lust, fame, food-drink, and sleep.

Five Pure Land Sutras and One Sastra 淨土五經一論 Jingtū Wujing Yi Lun. (1) The Buddha Speaks of the Infinite Life Su-

tra of Adornment, Purity, Equality, and Enlightenment of the Mahayana School (The Infinite Life Sutra); (2) The Amitabha Sutra; (3) The Visualization on the Infinite Life Buddha Sutra; (4) "Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's Conduct and Vows", from the Flower Adornment Sutra; (5) "The Chapter on the Perfect Complete Realization of Great Strength Bodhisattva through Buddha Name Recitation" from the Surangama Sutra; and (6) the Rebirth Treatise.

Four Stages of Enlightenment (Arhatship) in Theravada Buddhism 四果 Si Guo. 1) Stream-enterer (須陀恒果/入流 Xutuo-huan Guo/Ru Liu). By destroying various wrong views, one enters into the flow of Dharma-nature. 2. Once-returner (斯陀含果/一流/一來 Situohan Guo/Yi Liu/Yi Lai). By destroying obvious afflictions, one is subject to rebirth only once more in the heavenly realm. Then one descends to the human realm once more

before final liberation from reincarnation. 3. Non-returner (阿那含果/不還/不來 Anahan Guo/Bu Huan/Bu Lai). By destroying subtle afflictions, one is no longer subject to rebirth in the Desire Heaven Realm. 4. Arhat (阿羅漢果/不生 Aluohan Guo/Bu Sheng). By destroying all afflictions, one is no longer subject to reincarnation.

Four Universal Vows of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas 四弘誓願
Si Hong Shi Yuan. (1) Sentient beings are innumerable, I vow to help them all. (2) Afflictions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them all. (3) Ways to practice are boundless, I vow to master them all. (4) Enlightenment is unsurpassable, I vow to attain it.

Good Fortune 福報 Fu Bao. Happiness, intelligence, wellbeing, prosperity, etc. The great benefits of the human and celestial realms; therefore, they are temporary and subject to birth and

death.

Hungry Ghost 餓鬼 E Gui. One of the Three Lower Realms. Hungry ghosts wander in a limbo-like state in which they can find no satisfaction for their desires, especially but not exclusively, for their hunger or thirst. One is reborn there because of greed.

Karma/Cause and Effect 業 Ye 因果 Yin Guo. Consequences result from thought, speech, and behavior. Karma mainly applies to intentional thoughts.

Mahayana 大乘 Da Cheng. One of the two major branches of Buddhism, it is the Bodhisattva path of helping all sentient beings to attain Enlightenment.

Merits and Virtues 功德 Gong De. They are accumulated by

doing good deeds selflessly without expectation of reward, wandering or discriminatory thoughts, or attachments.

Practice Guidelines 修學五大綱領 Xiuxue Wuda Ganglin. 1) The Three Conditions (三福 San Fu); 2) The Six Principles of Harmony (六和 Liu He); 3) The Three Learnings (三學, San Xue); 4) The Six Paramitas (六度 Liu Du); and 5) Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's Ten Great Vows (十大願 Shi Da Yuan).

Pratyekabuddha 辟支佛 Pi Zhi Fo. One who attains his enlightenment alone by meditating on the principle of Twelve Causations, independent of a teacher, with the objective of attaining Nirvana for him/herself.

Precepts 戒 Jie. Rules set up by Buddha Shakyamuni to guide his students from erroneous thoughts, speech, and behavior.

Pure Mind or Purity of Mind 清淨心 Qingjing Xin. The mind without wandering and discriminatory thoughts and attachments.

Retribution 報應 Bao Ying. Karmic punishment from erroneous thoughts, words, or deeds.

Root of Goodness 善根 Shan Gen. Good qualities or seeds sown in a good life to be reaped later.

Saha world 娑婆世界 Suopo Shijie. Refers to our solar system, filled with suffering and afflictions, yet gladly endured by its inhabitants.

Sangha 僧團 Seng Tuan. A group of four or more people who properly practice the Buddha's teaching together, especially the Six Principles of Harmony.

Self-Nature 自性 Zi Xing. Our original, true self that we still have, but is currently covered by deluded thoughts.

Sentient-being 眾生 Zhong Sheng. A living being that is self-aware and that can experience feeling or sensation.

Six Paramitas 六度 Liu Du. Giving (布施 Bu Shi), self-discipline (持戒 Chi Jie), patience (忍辱 Ren Ru), diligence (精進 Jing Jin), deep concentration (禪定 Chan Ding), and wisdom (智慧 Zhi Hui).

Six Principles of Harmony 六和敬 Liu He Jing. 1) Share the same views and goals. 2) Observe the same precepts. 3) Live and practice together harmoniously. 4) Accord with others and do not quarrel. 5) Experience the inner peace and happiness from practicing the teachings. 6) Share benefits harmoniously.

Six Realms 六道 Liu Dao. Three upper realms are heavens, Asuras, and humans. Three lower realms are animals, hungry ghosts, and hells.

Ten Virtuous Conducts 十善業 Shi Shan Yic. No killing (不殺生 Bu Sha Sheng), stealing (不偷盜 Bu To Dao), sexual misconduct (不邪淫 Bu Xie Yin), lying (不妄語 Bu Wang Yu), abusive language (不惡口 Bu E Kou), bearing tales (不兩舌 Bu Liang She), seductive words (不綺語 Bu Qi Yu), greed (不貪 Bu Tan), anger (不瞋 Bu Chen), and ignorance (不癡 Bu Chi).

Ten Great Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva 普賢十大願 Puxian Shi Da Yuan. 1) Equally respect all beings and things. 2) Praise the virtues and kindnesses of others. 3) Make offerings extensively and respectfully. 4) Feel deep remorse for our faults that obstruct us from seeing our true-nature and vow not to repeat

them. 5) Rejoice in every virtuous deed and do not harbor jealousy or hinder others. 6) Request those who truly practice to widely propagate the teachings. 7) Ask teachers to remain in the world and to guide us. 8) Tirelessly uphold the Buddha's teachings in our every thought, word, and deed. 9) Accord with those who are proper and patiently wait for the opportunity that allows us to guide those who are not. 10). Dedicate the peace and happiness gained from practicing the above deeds to all living beings, hoping that they will attain the unsurpassed understanding.

Ten (Dharma) Realms 十道/十法界 Shi Dao/Shi Fajie. Six Realms plus the Four Sage Realms of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Sound-hearers.

Theravada Buddhism 小乘 Xiao Cheng. The Path of strictly abiding by the precepts. The objective is to attain realization for

him/herself. It is often called the path of the elders and is primarily practiced in Southern Asia and the west.

Three Conditions 三福 San Fu. The First Condition is to: A) Be filial to one's parents, B) Be respectful to one's teachers and elders, C) Be compassionate and not kill any living beings, and D) Follow the Ten Virtuous Conducts. The Second Condition is to: E) Take the Three Refuges, F) Abide by the precepts, laws and customs, and G) Conduct oneself in a proper and dignified manner. The Third Condition is to: H) Give rise to the Bodhi mind, I) Deeply believe in the Law of Cause and Effect and that chanting "Amitufo" is the cause and attaining Buddhahood is the effect, J) Recite and uphold Mahayana sutras, and K) Encourage others to advance on the path to Enlightenment.

Three Learnings 三學 San Xue. Self-discipline, deep concen-

tration, and wisdom.

Three Poisons 三毒 San Du. Greed (貪 Tan), anger (瞋 Chen), and ignorance (癡 Chi).

Three Refuges 三皈 San Gui. We take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. When we take refuge in the Buddha, we are returning from our deluded state of mind and relying upon an awakened, understanding mind. When we take refuge in the Dharma, we are returning from deviated views and relying upon proper views and understanding. When we take refuge in the Sangha, we are returning from pollution and disharmony and relying upon purity of mind and the Six Principles of Harmony.

Wandering Discriminatory Thoughts and Attachments 妄想分別執著 Wangxiang Fenbie Zhizhuo. Afflictions that cloud our

true nature.

Way Place 道場 Dao Chang. Usually called a temple, a place where Buddhist practitioners come to practice. A way place is also called a Learning Center.

Western Pure Land 極樂世界 Jile Shijie. The world created by Buddha Amitabha, which is an ideal place of cultivation, for those who are born there are no longer subject to reincarnation.

DEDICATION OF MERIT

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,
All bring forth the heart of understanding
And live the teachings for the rest of this life,
Then be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Destiny
Can Be
Changed

Based on the Talks of
Venerable Master Chin Kung
Translated by Silent Voices

By Venerable Wu Ling

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Be Mindful of the Kindness of Others,
Repay the Kindness With Gratitude.

Almost five hundred years ago, in China, a father sat down to write to his son. He wanted his son to know what had happened in his life. Many years before, when he was very young, he went to a temple and at that temple, he met a very distinguished man. He naturally paid his respects to this gentleman who in turn told him: "You are supposed to pass the imperial examination next year, why are you not studying?" Mr. Liao-Fan, for that was the father's name, asked the gentleman his name, where he was from, and how he was able to know what Mr. Liao-Fan was supposed to do. Mr. Kong, for that was the gentleman's name, told him that he knew how to predict what was going to happen, and that he was supposed to teach this art to Mr. Liao-Fan.

Mr. Liao-Fan went home and being a respectful and filial son told his mother everything that it happened. His mother wisely told him:

"Invite the gentleman to our house, but before we believe what people tell us, we need to first test them to make sure what they are saying is the truth; we do not just believe somebody because they say "trust me."

They invited Mr. Kong to their home and then asked him to please make predictions for the immediate future. Everything that Mr. Kong predicted turn out exactly as he said it would, so Mr. Liao-Fan asked Mr. Kong to please predict his entire lifetime. Mr. Kong then said, "You will pass a such and such an examination on such and such a day, and also attain a certain position. You will not have a son. You will die at the age of fifty-three on the 14th day of the eighth month between one and three o'clock in the morning."

Many years later Mr. Liao-Fan was up for promotion. Mr. Kong had predicted that he would not be given a promotion until he had received what would be equivalent in today's measurement system, to about 9150 liters of rice. But when Mr. Liao-Fan had received only 700 liters, his name was placed for a promotion and although everything has turned out as Mr. Kong had predicted, he still began to doubt the predictions. But then, due to a change of personnel, the promotion was turned down and it took more years until Mr. Liao-Fan was promoted. He did his calculations; he had received 9150 liters of rice. From then on, he understood everything is destined and he stopped worrying about many things.

A few years later, he went to a mountain to sit in mediation with a Zen Master. They set for three days and three nights without sleep, food, or water. After this meditation, the master said to Mr.

Liao-Fan: "You are very young to have accomplished this level of meditation, how are you able to do this?" Mr. Liao-Fan very honestly said that he knew everything that was destined, so there was not need to worry about things. At this, the master smiled and began to laugh and said, "I thought you were somebody extraordinary, but actually you are very ordinary, after all. You have not done anything to change your destiny!" To which Mr. Liao-Fan replied, "I didn't know we could change it." He then asked the master to please explain how we can change our destiny. The master initially told him that destiny could not bind those who cultivate great kindness or those who are thinking only of others, and who have given up thoughts of selfishness.

Next, the master said that he needed to correct his faults and to seek from within. The master quoted Master Hui-Neng, the

Sixth Patriarch of Zen, and said, "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 that one wishes for."

Master Yun-Gu said to Mr. Liao-Fan: "Tell me exactly what was predicted." Mr. Liao-Fan told him everything including that he would not have a son or receive an imperial appointment. The master then asked: "Why do you feel you do not deserve an imperial appointment or a son?" Mr. Liao-Fan replied that he was very quick-tempered, very impatient, unkind, and he was overly critical of others. He was very harsh in his speech; he would say things purposely to hurt others or just carelessly hurt others, he did not care.

The master explained to Mr. Liao-Fan that such faults were the

cause of why he was not getting what he wanted, of why his life was still so difficult. The master then taught Mr. Liao-Fan about cause and effect, which is the basic underlying principle to changing our destiny. We need to understand that everything in this life that happens to us is not because of something external to us, rather it is because of things that we have thought, said, or done in our previous lifetimes, because every single one of these will have a result. It may not happen right away. The result may not come for ten years, a hundred years, a thousand years, or a thousand lifetimes; but when conditions are right, the cause will generate an effect. Understanding this is crucial to changing our destiny.

Master Yun-Gu taught Mr. Liao-Fan that he needed to regret all of his faults. Like Mr. Liao-Fan, first we regret, then we find all of our faults and then we began to change our thoughts and be-

havior. This is not easy to do; it takes a long time because we are trying to break the bad habits of many lifetimes. But we need to begin now.

Mr. Liao-Fan was very rare; he honestly told his teacher everything and then he sincerely did everything his teacher recommended. He did not do it for a short while; he did it for the rest of his life and this was how he changed his original destiny. The master told him: "Live as if everything in the past dissolved yesterday and all the future begins today. If you can accomplish this then you are a person born anew, a person of virtue and sincerity." The master told him to practice kindness, help others unselfishly without thinking of self-benefit and without any expectation of reward. With this, Mr. Liao-Fan paid his most sincere respects to Master Yun-Gu.

He went to pay his respects to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas and wrote down on a slip of paper his wish to pass the imperial examination and his pledge to perform three thousand virtuous deeds. Passing the examination had not been part of his original destiny. The master taught him that in addition to practicing kindness and good deeds, Mr. Liao-Fan was to chant a mantra, because for him this was the most suitable method of practice. Additionally, he was to seek purity of mind, and to stop having wandering wishful thoughts.

Mr. Liao-Fan left the mountain. The following year, he took the preliminary imperial examination and his placement was better than had been destined. He had already started to change his destiny. He was able to see the results so quickly because he was trying so diligently to improve. He watched his every single fault and kept

track of all of his merits and demerits, but it still took him ten years to complete his vow of three thousand good deeds; so, there were days that he did not accomplish one good deed! As was said previously, trying to change our bad habits is very difficult.

After he fulfilled his first pledge, he dedicated the merits and then he made a second wish and again pledged to complete three thousand meritorious deeds. This wish was to have a son and this had also not been destined for him. After a few years, his wife gave birth to a son, Tian-Qi. Mr. Liao-Fan continued to work hard to accomplish the meritorious deeds that would enable him to further improve his destiny.

This time he accomplished the three thousand deeds in just four years, so he and his wife, for his wife worked very hard with him to

fulfill the pledge, had accomplished the deeds much more quickly. However, accomplishing three thousand good deeds in four years is still not that outstanding, although it is a vast improvement over his previous time of ten years. Mr. Liao-Fan thought to himself that he still was not doing enough; so, he and his wife continue to work harder.

Next, he made a wish to pass a high level of the imperial examinations and this time he vowed to complete ten thousand meritorious deeds. His wife told him: "Before we were in contact with the public, we met people and had opportunities to help others. But now, we are living in the government residence; we don't see people as much, how can we possibly accomplish so many deeds."

Mr. Liao-Fan was thinking of this when he went to sleep and that

night he had a dream in which a heavenly being came to him assured him: "Do not worry, your ten thousand deeds have already been accomplished." The next morning, Mr. Liao-Fan woke up and remembered the dream. He wondered how had the heavenly being known about the ten thousand virtuous deeds and how could Mr. Liao-Fan have accomplished the deeds so quickly? He did not understand.

Shortly after that, when another Zen master was passing through the town, Mr. Liao-Fan invited him to the government residence and posed the question of whether he really could have accomplished ten thousand good deeds in such a short time. After all, it had taken him for so long, actually fourteen years to accomplish just six thousand! The Zen Master replied: "Yes, if one does a good deed with a true sincere heart without any expectation of

reward, then just one deed can be worth ten thousand.” The master essentially was saying what master Yun-Gu had tried to explain to Mr. Liao-Fan; we will attain everything when we are sincerely trying to help others.

Master Yun-Gu had taught Mr. Liao-Fan that the three ways to reform are to have a shameful heart, a fearful heart, and a determined courageous heart. First, we need to have a shameful heart. When we find a fault, we do not dismiss it by saying, “This is one of my faults, but I am human and humans have faults, so it’s okay. I will try to do better and if I do, great! If not, well - I am only human.” We need to feel deep feel remorse, to feel ashamed that we are still making mistake, when other beings have been able to correct their mistakes, to become awakened, and to become enlightened. The first step in sincerely trying to correct our faults is to have a

sense of shame. This had helped Mr. Liao-Fan when he was trying to correct himself. He was gradually learning how to stop thinking of himself and to start helping others. This is reflected in his accomplishing merits more quickly as he gradually did more to correct his faults through feeling shame.

His one deed that had helped so many was to reduce taxes on well over ten thousand people. This one act is what enabled him to accomplish so many good deeds so quickly. If Mr. Liao-Fan had not developed a shameful heart many years before, he would not have begun to correct his faults, and if he had not done so, ten thousand people would not have been helped. But even this was not going far enough.

Next, we need to have a fearful heart to reform. Mr. Liao-Fan had

dreamt that a heavenly beings had spoken to him and he had wondered how a heavenly being could have known what he was thinking. We are in the human realm - the human dimension, but there are many more dimensions. There are beings around us in other dimensions that we cannot see. However, some of them can see us, some of them have the abilities to know what we are thinking and to see everything that we are doing. Even when we think that we are alone, they are present, and this is how the heavenly being knew what Mr. Liao-Fan was thinking.

When we are outside in the public we tend to be on our good behavior, to be more respectful to others. When we are with those we live with, we tend to relax a little bit, to be more at ease, to be a little less respectful, and a little more impolite. And when we are by ourselves, we think that since nobody is around, we can relax for

we really don't need to try as hard. After all, we have been trying hard all day to be correct and polite to others; certainly, we can relax a bit this evening.

We may be able to hide from other people because as human beings our abilities are very low, we can only see what is right in front of us in the same room. But we need to remember that even if we are alone in a room, there are other beings with us. They see, they hear, and they know everything. We need to have a fearful heart, to know that we cannot hide anything from them. Some of these beings are awakened and enlightened beings and they understand when we do something wrong. But others just have extraordinary abilities not great wisdom, and they may not understand when we do something improper, or when we have unkind thoughts. So, we need to have a fearful heart because there are always other beings

around us and they know our every thought, word, and deed.

Next, understanding this, we need to have a determined and courageous heart. First, we develop shame and want to correct our faults. Then, we become aware that there are beings around who know what we think, say, and do. Finally, we become determined that we will change; that we will be very strict with ourselves. We will no longer continue to forgive ourselves - we forgive others - we do not forgive ourselves, we are self-critical.

But while we are critical of ourselves, we need to be very careful when correcting others. When doing so, it is best to correct others when no one else is around. This is difficult to do because we often lose our temper and criticize other people without caring where we are or who is present. We need to concentrate on cor-

recting our own faults. We are to try not to criticize others, and when we find that we are criticized, it is best not to become angry or defensive. Even when we feel that their criticism is unjustified, we need to resist the desire to defend ourselves. We should not do as we have done so often in the past, to immediately come up with excuses or say, “I didn’t do that, why are you criticizing me?” If instead, we try to say “I really do not think I have that fault now but I need to be careful not to develop it in the future.”

When people slander us or criticize us, whether true or untrue, it helps to reduce our negative karma. I know it is very difficult to do this, but this is how we began to change our faults, and changing our faults is the only way we will be able to change what is destined.

If we wish to know what is destined, what our future holds, we do not need to ask others. Think of what we did today. Did we help others; did we teach others something? If we taught them then we have planted the seeds for wisdom. If we saw that somebody was upset and we simply smiled at them, this was the giving of fearlessness, and we have planted the seeds of health and long life. If somebody was working in the kitchen and we helped them, this was the giving of wealth, for we have given of internal wealth as we helped another with our physical strength, and we have planted the seeds of wealth.

Previously, we said that Mr. Liao-Fan had accomplished ten thousand meritorious deeds with one act; but, he could have accomplished many more meritorious deeds. If he had done the act through absolute complete sincerity without any thought of self-

ishness then his act could have benefited infinite people. When we do something without any thought of self, of what is in it for me, then we are helping an infinite numbers of beings, because we are thinking as awakened beings, as Bodhisattvas think.

Mr. Liao-Fan learned that there are three methods of practice in reforming. The first is to change through behavior. I have spoken earlier of anger because, anger is one of the three poisons, and anger is so difficult for us to control. Something happens and our anger flares up and we have lost our temper and it is too late; we have become angry. We need to think after this happens: "I became angry, but I also understand cause and effect and I know that when I become angry, I plant the seeds of anger." Again, think about what happened today and you will know what lies ahead in your future. If we planted the seed for fearlessness, teaching, and

wealth, we will have health and long life, wisdom, and wealth. If we were impatient, uncaring, and angry today, we have planted the seeds for misery, loneliness, and being born into the hell realms.

The master told Mr. Liaofan to not brood on what was in the past. If we get into an argument with someone and then constantly replay what made us angry, each time we think of it, we again plant another seed for future anger. This is why the master said, "the past is over, do not dwell on." We are to think about what we did wrong, learn from it, and then forget about it. Think about what is happening now, think about how we can correct our faults to be sure we do not repeat them in the future.

When we try to correct faults through changing behavior, we realize how difficult this is. We find ourselves snapping at someone

before we can catch ourselves because the anger flared up so quickly. Actually, the anger did not just start today. We have known the other person in a previous lifetime. Many lifetimes ago one of you said something to the other and without even realizing it, you hurt the other one's feelings, and that was it, nothing else happened.

Many years later, many lifetimes later, when that other person met you again, he said something to hurt you and this time it was intentional, but again that was it. Each lifetime when you again encounter each other, the anger escalates. It is passed back and forth, until in one of those lifetimes yelling at each other is no longer enough, one of you will hit the other. Then many lifetimes later, one of you will kill the other. This is why we have conflicts and wars; it all starts from one careless comment. We did not think, we

did not mean to hurt the other person, we simply did not think. We need to understand that our irritability may seem very inconsequential right now, but the reality is that we have once again enabled that anger to grow.

The second way to change is through understanding. We understand cause and effect; we understand someone irritates us. Knowing this, if I can calm down and just think logically I will realize that if for no other reason, I do not wish to continue this in a future lifetime. This person is giving me enough trouble right now and we are having enough difficulties right now; I do not wish this to get any worse and I know it will get worse. So, I have to stop this destructive behavior now.

The only way we help others is through not being selfish. This an-

ger has gone back and forth and it can continue to do so getting worse each time. The other person feels as upset, as frustrated, and as unhappy as I do. For that person's sake, I need to sever this anger right now. I need to understand so when the next time something happens I can control the anger. If it flares up, maybe it doesn't flare up quite as severely, maybe it doesn't last quite as long. In this way, we began to get something control.

The third way to change is from the heart. Mr. Liaofan had reduced the taxes and consequently he benefited ten thousand people. But if he had acted from the heart of absolute sincerity, he would have benefited infinite people. To change from the heart is to solely think of other people. Mr. Liao-Fan wrote to his son that one of the reasons he had difficulty doing the kind deeds initially and why it took him so long to fulfill his first two pledges, was

because he knew what he should do but he was not doing it sincerely enough. He knew he do something, but he would stop and think: "Does that person deserve my help? Do I really want to do that?" He still had thoughts of himself mixed up in doing kindness for others, he still had not understood.

When we think only of benefiting others, when we change from the heart, we will do what others need, we will assist them in doing whatever proper things they are doing without a second thought. For example, if I wished to lift up this cup but found that it was too heavy, without thinking I would lift it up with both hands. I do not think about it, I do it automatically. We need to be this spontaneous in our helping other people. We see what they are doing is proper and good, and we automatically do everything we can to help them. In this way, we will be planting the seeds for others to

help us and we will be planting the seeds for a happier future. It was said earlier, if we want to know what lies in our future lifetimes, think of what we did and thought today. And when we go beyond having to think about helping others, when we do it spontaneously, we will start to dramatically change our futures even in this very lifetime.

Mr. Liao-Fan gradually changed his ways, but it took him a very long time to do so. Changing destiny takes time, but we are the only ones who can do this, because we are the ones who destined what is happening today. Everything arises from the mind. Mr. Liao-Fan had wanted to pass the imperial examinations, to have a son, and finally to pass the highest level of imperial examinations. He was destined to die at age fifty-three on the 14th day of the eighth lunar month between one and three o'clock in the morning.

He wrote to his son at the age of sixty-nine and died at the age of seventy-four. He had not made the wish to live a longer life. What happened? Mr. Liaofan had started to change as he sought to pass the examination, a son, and to pass the highest level examination. As we try to correct our faults and we seek to attain things, we may reach a level beyond wishing; at this point, we have gone beyond selfishness.

We spoke of heavenly beings, beings in other dimensions who know our thoughts. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas know our every wish; they know it the instant we give rise to it. We do not need to speak it or write it down on a piece of paper. Mr. Liaofan wrote his book to his son Tianqi, but he had two sons in a time when having sons to carry on the family name was of utmost importance. He authored several books, attained a good position with the imperial

government, and was well respected. He lived a long life. His book has been read and his name has been honored for almost five hundred years. He had reached the level beyond wishing, and had gone beyond selfishness. He thought only of helping others and although he made no more wishes and pledges, his life continued to change for the better. We too can attain what we want if we understand that we need to sincerely and honestly help all other beings. We do not have thoughts of selfishness; we do not ask what is in it for ourselves. We ask how can we help others. We become cautious of everything we think, say, and do.

Mr. Liaofan's destiny was predicted. He had seen that the predictions were correct when everything turned out exactly as Mr. Kong had said it would. Mr. Kong had said, "You will place in such and such a position in such and such a test." Mr. Liaofan at-

tained exactly that placement. Mr. Kong had said, "You will receive a promotion after you have received 9150 litres of rice." Mr. Liaofan's salary had reached exactly that amount when he received his promotion. He understood destiny existed. He went beyond! He met a good teacher. It was said earlier that he was very unusual; he practiced and did everything his teacher told him to do. This is very unusual. When most of us listen to those who are wiser, we nod and say, "Yes, very good," walk out the door, and gradually what we heard fades from our memory! Mr. Liaofan did not do that. He remembered; he was determined, nothing was going to stop him from changing his destiny; he was going to do exactly what his teacher said. He was a very rare individual; so rare that his book is still widely read several centuries after he wrote it.

His teacher had said, "Find your faults, regret, and correct your mistakes. Reform sincerely, practice kindness, concentrate the mind, and sever selfishness." Mr. Kong had predicted what would happen, but Mr. Liao-Fan had changed all of that! He had learned that destiny can be predicted, but it is not fixed, it is changeable. We, like Mr. Liaofan, can learn to have the shameful heart, fearful heart, determined and courageous heart. We too, can change first through behavior, then through understanding, and then from the heart. When we change from the heart, we will be able to create wonderful futures, not only for ourselves but help others to have them as well.

THE TEN RECITATION METHOD

The Ten-Recitation method is a simple, convenient, and effective way of practicing Buddha Name Recitation. It is especially suitable for those who find little time in the day for cultivation. Practicing this method helps us to regain mindfulness of Buddha Amitabha and brings us peace and clarity in the present moment.

The practice begins first thing in the morning when we wake up. We sit up straight and clearly recite Buddha Amitabha's name ten times with an undisturbed mind, aloud or silently to ourselves. We repeat this process eight more times for the rest of the day. Altogether, we do one round of ten recitations, nine times a day, everyday as follows:

1. Upon waking up
2. Before starting breakfast
3. After finishing breakfast

4. Before work
5. Before starting lunch
6. After finishing lunch
7. Before starting dinner
8. After finishing dinner
9. At bedtime

Altogether, this method is practiced nine times daily. The key is regularity; disruption of this practice will reduce its effectiveness. Without interruption, as cultivators, we will soon feel an increase in our purity of mind and wisdom.

Diligent practice of the Ten-Recitation method, together with unwavering belief and vows, can ensure fulfillment of our wish to reach the Western Pure Land of Infinite Life and Infinite Light. We hope everyone will practice accordingly.

Homage to Buddha Amitabha

GLOSSARY

Affliction 煩惱 Fannaο. Condition or cause of pain, distress, and suffering which disturbs the body and mind.

Alaya Consciousness 阿賴耶識 Alaiye Shi. Our store consciousness, the thought database from all of our past and present lives, good and bad.

Amitabha 阿彌陀 Amituo. The name of the Buddha of the Western Pure Land, primarily meaning Infinite Life and Infinite Light.

Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提 Anouduoluo Sanmiao Sanputi. Perfect Complete Enlightenment.

Arhat 阿羅漢 Aluohan. One who has reached self-realization, a state in which one possesses no erroneous views, speech, or behavior.

Asuras 阿修羅 Axiuluo. Quarrelsome, half-gods.

Attachments 執著 Zhizhuo. Fixed to certain ideas or objects.

Bodhi mind 菩提心 Puti Xin. The great compassionate and sincere mind, with every thought to attain complete self-realization for self and others.

Bodhisattva 菩薩 Pusa. One who has vowed to attain Supreme Enlightenment for themselves and all beings.

Buddha 佛 Fo. One who has reached perfection in both self-realization and helping others to reach realization.

Delusion 迷惑 Mi Huo. False beliefs and views.

Deva 天眾 Tian Zhong. Heavenly Beings or gods.

Dharma 法 Fa. 1) The teachings of the Buddha (generally capitalized in English); 2) Things, events, phenomena, everything in the universe; and 3) Duty, law,

doctrine.

Dusts 塵 Cheng. Metaphor for all the mundane things that can cloud our self-nature.

Eight Afflictions 八纏/纏縛 Ba Chan/Chan Fu. Absence of embarrassment and shamefulness, and the presence of jealousy, stinginess, misdeeds, drowsiness, sleep, and agitation.

Eight Consciousnesses 八識 Ba Shi. Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, Mana, and Alaya. Information from the sixth consciousness, which is the mind, is transmitted by the seventh consciousness, which is the Mana, to the eighth, which is the Alaya, our store consciousness, the thought database of our karma created from all our past and present lives, good or bad.

Eight Emotions of Others 八風/八世俗法 Ba Feng/Ba Shisu Fa. Four pairs of emotions that hinder our practice: praise and blame, gain and loss, happiness and suffering, and fame and disgrace.

Eight Sufferings 八苦 Ba Ku. As human beings, we undergo the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, and death. We do not attain what we seek, suffer hardships, are parted from our loved ones and find ourselves in the presence of those whom we dislike or hate.

Eighth Ground Bodhisattva 八地菩薩 Ba Di Pu Sa. The eighth of the ten stages or grounds of a Bodhisattva's enlightenment, which summarize the most important steps in a Bodhisattva's path right before attaining Buddhahood. Some say it is at this level that Bodhisattvas reach the stage of Non-regression, the level at which they will never retreat from the Bodhisattva-path.

Eon 劫 Jie. 1,334,000,000 years. Often expressed as the time it would take for a mountain of solid rock of ten cubic leagues to wear down if the tip of a heavenly maiden's delicate tunic brushed against it every hundred years. The length of time between the creation and recreation of a world/universe, spanning the period of a world's formation, existence, destruction, and non-existence. A fantastically long time.

Field of merit 福田 Fu Tian. Someone who is worthy of offerings; for example, enlightened beings, monks and nuns, parents and teachers, animals and the needy.

Fifty-Two Levels of Bodhisattva Practice 菩薩五十二修行次第 Pusa Wushi Er Xiuxing Ci Di. Ten Beliefs (十信 Shi Xin), Ten Abodes (十住 Shi Zhu), Ten Conducts (十行 Shi Xing), Ten Transferences (十迴向 Shi Hui Xiang), Ten Grounds (十地 Shi Di), Equal-enlightenment (等覺 Deng Jue), and Perfect Complete Enlightenment (Buddhahood) (妙覺 Miao Jue)

Five Aggregates 五蘊 Wu Yun. Constituent elements of all existences: form (色 Se), feeling (受 Shou), conception (想 Xiang), impulse (行 Xing), and consciousness (識 Shi).

Five Classics 五經 Wu Jing. The Five Classics of Confucianism can be described in terms of five visions. The metaphysical by I Ching, Book of Changes (易經 Yi Jing), political by Book of History (書經 Shu Jing), poetic by Book of

Songs (詩經 Shi Jing), social by Book of Rites (禮記 Li Ji), and historical by Spring-Autumn Annals (春秋 Chun Qiu).

Five Deadly Offenses 五逆 Wu Ni. Murdering one's own father or mother, causing a Buddha to bleed (destroying Buddha images), killing an Arhat, and disrupting the unity of the Sangha. One who commits any of these offenses is destined for the Avici Hell, the lowest of the hell realms.

Five Desires 五欲 Wu Yu. Wealth, lust, fame, food-drink, and sleep.

Five Extraordinary Abilities 五通 Wu Tong. 1. To be anywhere at will; 2. Heavenly Eye to see all forms without obstruction; 3. Heavenly Ear to hear all sounds without obstruction; 4. To know the thoughts of others; and 5. To do everything at will

Five Human Relationships 五倫 Wu Lun. These principles taught by Confucius are founded on traditional moral principles. They include those between husbands and wives, parents and children, siblings, friends, political leaders and

the public.

Five Kinds of Eyes 五眼 Wu Yan. 1 Human eyes (肉眼Rou Yan); 2. Heavenly eye (天眼Tian Yan), extraordinary ability of heavenly beings to see all things without obstruction; 3. Wisdom Eye (慧眼Hui Yan), ability of Theravada sages to perceive the principle of voidness; 4. Dharma Eye (法眼Fa Yan), Bodhisattva's ability to discern teaching methods for guiding people; 5. Buddha Eye (佛眼Fo Yan), to possess all of above. The last three correspond to triple truth. The Wisdom Eye realizes the truth of voidness, the Dharma-eye discerns provisional methods of teaching, and the Buddha Eye sees everything in its true nature.

Five Pure Land Sutras and One Sastra 淨土五經一論 Jingtū Wujing Yi Lun.
(1) The Buddha Speaks of the Infinite Life Sutra of Adornment, Purity, Equality, and Enlightenment of the Mahayana School (The Infinite Life Sutra); (2) The Amitabha Sutra; (3) The Visualization on the Infinite Life Buddha Sutra; (4) "Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's Conduct and Vows", from the

Flower Adornment Sutra; (5) "The Chapter on the Perfect Complete Realization of Great Strength Bodhisattva through Buddha Name Recitation" from the Surangama Sutra; and (6) the Rebirth Treatise.

Five Virtues 五德 Wu De. Confucian virtues of gentleness, kindness, respectfulness, thriftiness, and humility.

Four Books 四書 Si Shu. Great Learning (大學 Da Xue), Doctrine of the Mean (中庸 Zhong Yong), Analects (論語 Lun Yu), and Mencius (孟子 Meng Zi).

Four Stages of Enlightenment (Arhatship) in Theravada Buddhism 四果 Si Guo. 1) Stream-enterer (須陀洹果/入流 Xutuohuan Guo/Ru Liu). By destroying various wrong views, one enters into the flow of Dharma-nature. 2. Once-returner (斯陀含果/一流/一來 Situohan Guo/Yi Liu/Yi Lai). By destroying obvious afflictions, one is subject to rebirth only once more in the heavenly realm. Then one descends to the human realm once more before final libera-

tion from reincarnation. 3. Non-returner (阿那含果/不還/不來 Anahan Guo/Bu Huan/Bu Lai). By destroying subtle afflictions, one is no longer subject to rebirth in the Desire Heaven Realm. 4. Arhat (阿羅漢果/不生 Aluohan Guo/Bu Sheng). By destroying all afflictions, one is no longer subject to reincarnation.

Four Studies 四教 Si Jiao. Confucian studies of virtuous conduct, speech, skills for earning a living and the arts.

Four Universal Vows of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas 四弘誓願 Si Hong Shi Yuan. (1) Sentient beings are innumerable, I vow to help them all. (2) Afflictions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them all. (3) Ways to practice are boundless, I vow to master them all. (4) Enlightenment is unsurpassable, I vow to attain it.

Good Fortune 福報 Fu Bao. Happiness, intelligence, wellbeing, prosperity, etc. The great benefits of the human and celestial realms; therefore, they are temporary and subject to birth and death.

Hungry Ghost 餓鬼 È Gui. One of the Three Lower Realms. Hungry ghosts wander in a limbo-like state in which they can find no satisfaction for their desires, especially but not exclusively, for their hunger or thirst. One is reborn there because of greed.

Karma/Cause and Effect 業 Yè因果 Yin Guo. Consequences result from thought, speech, and behavior. Karma mainly applies to intentional thoughts.

Mahayana 大乘 Da Cheng. One of the two major branches of Buddhism, it is the Bodhisattva path of helping all sentient beings to attain Enlightenment.

Merits and Virtues 功德 Gong De. They are accumulated by doing good deeds selflessly without expectation of reward, wandering or discriminatory thoughts, or attachments.

Mindfulness of Buddha 念佛 Nian Fo. Initially the mind remembers the Buddha and does not forget. After further cultivation, one constantly contemplates the Buddha.

Nine Realms 九界 Jiu Jie. The ten realms minus the Buddha realm.

Non-regression 不退 Bu Tui. One who will never retreat from the Bodhisattva-path. It is not reached until attaining at least the eighth of the ten grounds of a Bodhisattva.

Patriarch 祖師 Zu Shi. Founder of a school and his primary successors in the transmission of its teachings.

Phenomena 事相 Shi Xiang. Things, events, happenings, everything in the entire universe.

Practice Guidelines 修學五大綱領 Xiuxue Wuda Ganglin. 1) The Three Conditions (三福 San Fu); 2) The Six Principles of Harmony (六和 Liu He); 3) The Three Learnings (三學, San Xue); 4) The Six Paramitas (六度 Liu Du); and 5) Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's Ten Great Vows (十大願 Shi Da Yuan).

Prajna-Wisdom 般若智慧 Boruo Zhihui. Intuitive wisdom.

Pratyekabuddha 辟支佛 Pi Zhi Fo. One who attains his enlightenment alone by meditating on the principle of Twelve Causations, independent of a teacher, with the objective of attaining Nirvana for him/herself.

Precepts 戒 Jie. Rules set up by Buddha Shakyamuni to guide his students from erroneous thoughts, speech, and behavior.

Pure Mind or Purity of Mind 清淨心 Qingjing Xin. The mind without wandering and discriminatory thoughts and attachments.

Retribution 報應 Bao Ying. Karmic punishment from erroneous thoughts, words, or deeds.

Root of Goodness 善根 Shan Gen. Good qualities or seeds sown in a good life to be reaped later.

Saha world 娑婆世界 Suopo Shijie. Refers to our solar system, filled with suffering and afflictions, yet gladly endured by its inhabitants.

Samadhi 三昧 San Mei. Proper enjoyment. Usually denotes the particular final stage of pure concentration and contemplation. There are many degrees and types of Samadhi.

Sangha 僧團 Seng Tuan. A group of four or more people who properly practice the Buddha's teaching together, especially the Six Principles of Harmony.

Sanskrit 梵文 Fan Wen. A language of ancient India.

Sastra 論 Lun. Commentaries on sutras that are primarily written by Bodhisattvas. Most translations use the word treatise for sastra in the title.

Self-Nature 自性 Zi Xing. Our original, true self that we still have, but is currently covered by deluded thoughts.

Sentient-being 眾生 Zhong Sheng. A living being that is self-aware and that can experience feeling or sensation.

Sharira 舍利子 She Li Zi. Relics that remain after cremation indicating the person had attained some degree of purity of body and mind.

Six Paramitas 六度 Liu Du. Giving (布施 Bu Shi), self-discipline (持戒 Chi Jie), patience (忍辱 Ren Ru), diligence (精進 Jing Jin), deep concentration (禪定 Chan Ding), and wisdom (智慧 Zhi Hui).

Six Harmonics 六和敬 Liu He Jing. 1) Share the same views and goals. 2) Observe the same precepts. 3) Live and practice together harmoniously. 4) Accord with others and do not quarrel. 5) Experience the inner peace and happiness from practicing the teachings. 6) Share benefits harmoniously.

Six Realms 六道 Liu Dao. Three upper realms are heavens, asuras, and humans. Three lower realms are animals, hungry ghosts, and hells.

Six Senses 六境 Liu Jing. Sight (色Se), sound (聲Shen), smell (香Xiang), taste (味Wei), touch (觸Chu), and thought (法Fa). External.

Six Sense Objects 六塵 Liu Chen. Form (色Se), sound (聲Shen), scent (香Xiang), taste (味Wei), texture (觸Chu), and thought (法Fa). Internal.

Six Sense Organs 六根 Liu Gen. Eyes, ears, nose, mouth, body and mind object.

Stream-enterer. (See Four Stages of Enlightenment in Theravada Buddhism.)

Sutra 經 Jing. Teaching by the Buddha, initially given verbally, later compiled and written down by the Buddha's students.

Ten Directions 十方 Shi Fang. North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, West, Northwest, above and below.

Ten Virtuous Conducts 十善業 Shi Shan Yie. No killing (不殺生 Bu Sha Sheng), stealing (不偷盜 Bu To Dao), sexual misconduct (不邪淫 Bu Xie Yin), lying (不妄語 Bu Wang Yu), abusive language (不惡口 Bu E Kou), bearing tales (不兩舌 Bu Liang She), seductive words (不綺語 Bu Qi Yu), greed (不貪 Bu Tan), anger (不瞋 Bu Chen), and ignorance (不癡 Bu Chi).

Ten Great Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva 普賢十大願 Puxian Shi Da Yuan. 1) Equally respect all beings and things. 2) Praise the virtues and kindnesses of others. 3) Make offerings extensively and respectfully. 4) Feel deep remorse for our faults that obstruct us from seeing our true-nature and vow not to repeat them. 5) Rejoice in every virtuous deed and do not harbor jealousy or hinder others. 6) Request those who truly practice to widely propagate the teachings. 7) Ask teachers to remain in the world and to guide us. 8) Tirelessly uphold the Buddha's teachings in our every thought, word, and deed. 9) Accord with those who are proper and patiently wait for the opportunity that allows us to guide those who are not. 10). Dedicate the peace and happiness gained from practicing the above deeds to all living beings, hoping that they will attain the unsurpassed understanding.

Ten (Dharma) Realms 十道/十法界 Shi Dao/Shi Fajie. Six Realms plus the Four Sage Realms of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Sound-hearers.

Theravada Buddhism 小乘 Xiao Cheng. The Path of strictly abiding by the precepts. The objective is to attain realization for him/herself. It is often called the path of the elders and is primarily practiced in Southern Asia and the west.

Three Conditions 三福 San Fu. The First Condition is to: A) Be filial to one's parents, B) Be respectful to one's teachers and elders, C) Be compassionate and not kill any living beings, and D) Follow the Ten Virtuous Conducts. The Second Condition is to: E) Take the Three Refuges, F) Abide by the precepts, laws and customs, and G) Conduct oneself in a proper and dignified manner. The Third Condition is to: H) Give rise to the Bodhi mind, I) Deeply believe in the Law of Cause and Effect and that chanting "Amitufo" is the cause and attaining Buddhahood is the effect, J) Recite and uphold Mahayana sutras, and K) Encourage others to advance on the path to Enlightenment.

Three Dharma Ages. 法運三時代 Fayun San Shidai The Dharma Perfect Age (正法 Zheng Fa) began with Buddha Shakyamuni's demise and lasted five hundred years, during which Enlightenment was often attained. The Dharma Semblance Age (像法 Xiang Fa) began after that and lasted one thousand years, during which Enlightenment was seldom attained. The Dharma Ending Age (末法 Muo Fa) that we are now in began after that and will last for ten thousand years during which Enlightenment will rarely be attained.

Three Karmas 三業 San Ye. Created by our body (身 Shen), mouth (口 Kou), and mind (意 Yi).

Three Lands 三土 San Tu. When we are born into the Pure Land through the state of Constant Mindfulness, we will be born into the Land where Both Sages and Ordinary Beings Dwell Together. With the state of One Mind Undisturbed in Mindfulness, we will be born into the Land Where Everything is Temporary. With the state of One Mind Undisturbed in Enlightenment, we will be born into the Land of Real Reward.

Three Learnings 三學 San Xue. Self-discipline, deep concentration, and wisdom.

Three Levels of Achievement. 三種成就 San Zhong Chengjiu One Mind Undisturbed in Enlightenment (理一心不亂 Li YiXin BuLuan), One Mind Undisturbed in Mindfulness (事一心不亂 Shi YiXin BuLuan) and Constant Mindfulness (功夫成片 GongFu ChengPian).

Three Poisons 三毒 San Du. Greed (貪 Tan), anger (瞋 Chen), and ignorance (癡 Chi).

Three Refuges 三皈 San Gui. We take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. When we take refuge in the Buddha, we are returning from our deluded state of mind and relying upon an awakened, understanding mind. When we take refuge in the Dharma, we are returning from deviated views and relying upon proper views and understanding. When we take refuge in the Sangha, we are returning from pollution and disharmony and relying upon purity of mind and the Six Principles of Harmony.

Three Relationships. 三種關係 Sanzhong Guanxi. These three relationships taught by Confucius are among humans, among humans and spirits, and among humans and the nature.

Three Periods of Time 三世 San Shi. Past, present, and future.

Transliteration 譯音 Yin Yi. The representation of letters or words in the corresponding characters of another alphabet, so the original sound is retained.

Virtues. See Merits.

Wandering Discriminatory Thoughts and Attachments 妄想分別執著
Wangxiang Fenbie Zhizhuo. Afflictions that cloud our true nature.

Way Place 道場 Dao Chang. Usually called a temple, a place where Buddhist practitioners come to practice. A way place is also called a Learning Center.

Western Pure Land 極樂世界 Jile Shijie. The world created by Buddha Amitabha, which is an ideal place of cultivation, for those who are born there are no longer subject to reincarnation.

DEDICATION OF MERIT

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,
All bring forth the heart of understanding
And live the teachings for the rest of this life,
Then be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

The Love of Life

Stories For Children of All Ages

Excerpts From the Book
Translated by GB Talovich

Edited by Silent Voices

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*Be Mindful of the Kindness of Others,
Repay the Kindness With Gratitude.*

THE CRYING APE

Long, long ago, a file of chariots rumbled quickly across the plain late one spring. The soldiers wore sparkling armor. Banners fluttered in the breeze. Following them came several generals with their swords and spears. They were followed by a beautiful chariot. Sitting in the chariot was the great King of Chu. Every year the King took a trip through his kingdom to inspect his land, to hunt, to train his troops, and to get out of his stuffy old palace.

The King had a general called Yang who is very famous for his archery. Even now, over two thousand years later, people still remember what a good shot he was. He never missed. The King trusted him. During the great hunt, the rabbits, deer and all the wild animals ran here and there in panic,

but nowhere was safe from the arrows of General Yang. If he shot one hundred times, he hit his target one hundred times.

On the plain was a huge old tree. As they passed, the soldiers heard a noise. They saw an ape in the branches above their heads. It jumped up and down disrespectfully, mocking the hunting soldiers. It even threw a nut at them.

"Okay, I'll teach you a lesson," said an archer as he aimed at the ape. But as he shot his arrow, the ape dodged, and the arrow hissed harmlessly through the branches. A shout of laughter went up from the troops.

"Lucky," snorted the soldier. "Take that!" He shot another arrow, and this time the ape didn't dodge - it snatched the arrow out of the air! Then it sniffed the arrow contemptuously before breaking it in two.

Now the soldiers were very mad. They shot arrows at it,

but the ape was so clever and so quick that it caught their arrows in mid-air and mocked them even more.

When the King saw how disrespectful the ape was, he ordered General Yang to go shoot down the smart-aleck ape. The ape seemed to understand, because as soon as General Yang rode toward the tree, the ape began to cry. Tears rolled down its face, and it sobbed and cried very piteously.

The King asked, "Why is the ape crying?" General Yang answered, "It must know that my arrows never miss, so no matter how cunning it may be, it must die now, at your highness' command. That is why it is crying."

The King hung his head in thought. How sad the ape was! All the other animals must be suffering too. His royal heart filled with compassion. He told General Yang to put away his weapons, and called off the hunt, so that no more ani-

mals would be hurt.

When he returned to his capital ahead of schedule, all the people there found out that the King had been moved by an ape's tears. The people were all very happy to have such a kind and loving King, so they worked very hard for their country, and from then on, Chu was strong and powerful for hundreds of years.

A TURTLE'S GRATITUDE

During the Chin dynasty of the fourth century, there was a middle-aged man called Kung. He was an official for the government, but he had practically the lowest official position in the whole government. His position was low, and so was his pay. Times were very difficult for him.

Once he saw a turtle someone was getting ready to eat. He felt sorry for it, so he bought the turtle and took it to the river and there he let it go. The turtle seemed to understand that Kung had saved it from the soup. As it swam away, it kept looking back at him. Kung watched it until he couldn't see it any more.

Years later, he had reached a better position. Leading troops, he quelled a rebellion and for his great deeds, the Em-

peror raised him to the rank of Lord, a high and powerful position.

The official insignia for the rank of Lord is a metal seal. When Kung was promoted, the royal artisans cast a seal for him, but for some reason, it came out with a turtle on top, and the turtle was looking back over its shoulder. They thought that was strange, so they melted the seal down, made a new mold, and cast it again, but it still came out with a turtle looking back over its shoulder! The artisans tried over and over again. Every time they made the mold very carefully; then everybody inspected it. Every time, the mold was fine, but every time they cast the seal, it came out with a turtle on top of it, and every time, the turtle's head was looking back over its shoulder!

The artisans thought this was uncanny. They decided to

go to the new Lord and see what he thought about it. They knelt in front of him, and said, "My Lord, as directed by our Emperor of Ten Thousand Years, we have tried to make a seal for you as a sign of your new rank, but every time we cast the mold, the seal comes out with a turtle on top. The turtle is always looking back over its shoulder."

"Carry on," Kung directed. "Do it over again." The artisans followed his command, but once again, the seal appeared with a turtle on top, looking back over its shoulder. Kung was perplexed. The news of this strange occurrence spread, and eventually reached the royal ears of the Emperor.

The Emperor called Kung in to explain why his seal always came with a turtle, but Kung was at a loss to explain. On his way home, Kung suddenly remembered something. The next day in court, he reported, "Your Highness's Loyal

minister has considered the manner of the seal and the unexplainable turtles. Perhaps I have found a reason.

"Many years ago, this minister happened to see a fisherman preparing to cook and eat a turtle he had caught. This minister felt sorry for the turtle, and so purchased said turtle from the fisherman and released it in the river. The turtle seemed to understand, for it swam along the surface of the water and looked back as if in gratitude.

"Your Highness has currently granted me the rank of Lord; the official seal has a turtle on it; this must be a sign that I have had the opportunity to win such favor from Your Highness due to the gratitude of that turtle, which must have moved Heaven on my behalf."

The Emperor told the court, "Those who do good will reap good rewards. The Lord Kung is an excellent example."

CHENG TANG AND THE NET

More than 3,500 years ago, there was a very kind and wise emperor. He was called Cheng Tang. Every year he traveled around his empire to visit all of his people and see if there was anything the government could do for them.

One beautiful day, the birds were singing and the animals were enjoying the nice weather. The Emperor smiled as he heard their pleasant calls. Then he saw huge nets spread where all the animals would get caught. He heard a trapper praying in a loud voice and this is what the trapper prayed:

“May all the birds in the sky;

May all the animals on the ground;

May all the beasts from north, east, west, and south,

Come into my net;

Let not one of them escape!"

Emperor Cheng Tang was upset to find such a greedy, heartless trapper, but he was also a very wise monarch. He did not command the trapper to stop hunting. Instead, with his own imperial hands, he took down three sides of the nets, leaving only one side.

The trapper wondered what was going on, but he couldn't just go up and punch the Emperor. Then he heard Emperor Cheng Tang praying out loud and this is what the Emperor prayed:

"May all who wish to dodge to the left, dodge to the left;

May all who wish to dodge to right, dodge to the right;

May all who wish to go over the nets, go over the nets;

May all who wish to duck under the nets, duck under the nets;

May only those who do not wish to live any more enter my nets."

With this, the trapper realized that he had been greedy and mean. He told everyone how kind their Emperor was, so all the people trusted Cheng Tang. The dynasty that he founded, ruled China for over 600 years.

TZU CHAN AND THE FISH

Tzu Chan was a statesman who lived during the Spring and Autumn period, some 2,500 years ago. Confucius praised his wisdom highly. Tzu Chan was so smart and so kind that Chinese people still honor him even today. He helped the poor and rescued those in danger. He enjoyed doing good, and in particular, he never liked to kill anything.

One day a friend sent him a present, several live fish. They were fat and looked delicious. They would certainly make a wonderful meal! When Tzu Chan received this gift, he was very grateful that his friend was so thoughtful. He accepted the gift happily. Then he called his servant.

"Take these fish and put them in the fishpond in the yard."

His servant said, "Master, this kind of fish is a very rare delicacy. If you put them in the fishpond, the water is not as clear as a mountain stream's, so their flesh will not be as soft, and they will not taste as good. You should eat them right away."

Tzu Chan smiled. "I am the boss here. Go do as you are told. How could I murder these poor, innocent fish just for the sake of their taste? I couldn't bear to do that."

The servant had to obey orders. As she poured the fish into the pond, she told them, "Boy, you sure are lucky fish! If you had been given to anybody but my master, you would already be cooking for dinner by now!"

THE DEER THAT SAVED ITS RESCUER

The murmuring brook in the green forest flowed past glorious wildflowers that decorated the area around the little house there.

The sun shone high in the sky. Suddenly, a deer raced into the courtyard of the house where a little boy was playing. The deer hooked the boy's clothing with its antlers. This scared the little boy so much he let out a howl that brought his mother running out to see what was wrong. She came out just in time to see the deer running off toward the mountains with her little boy.

She was horrified! She ran after the deer as fast as she could go, and not too far away, she found her little boy sitting safely on the grass. When he saw his mother, the little

boy laughed and stretched out his arms to her. She scooped him up. She was so happy she began to cry.

She hurried back to their home with her very precious son. When she got there, she stopped dead in her tracks, amazed at what she saw. The huge tree in back of their house had fallen over while she was out chasing after her son. The whole house was crushed under its enormous weight. The walls were squashed, and all the roofing tiles were smashed into powder. The chickens and dogs in the house were all dead. If she and her little boy had been in the house...

Then the little boy's mother remembered the day about a year before. A deer fleeing a hunter had run into her house. She felt sorry for the poor, frightened deer, so she quickly covered it with some clothes. When the hunter rushed in after it, he couldn't find it. He figured it must have gone out the

back door, so he kept chasing it, and when he was far, far away, she uncovered the deer and let it return to the forest.

The deer seemed to understand that she had saved its life, because as it left, it kept bowing its head to her, as if thanking her for her compassion. She never imagined that the deer could remember her kindness. That deer somehow knew the tree was going to fall and crush her, so it came back to show its gratitude.

When the boy's mother remembered all this, she thought, "Saving the life of another is the same as saving your own life."

ELEPHANTS TO THE RESCUE

Some two thousand years ago, in a river in ancient India, there was a pond full of fish. They lived happily in the clear water. They jumped and swam or just floated around enjoying their watery home.

But then for a long time it didn't rain and every day some more water evaporated. The pond had almost dried up. If the pond dried up, all of the fish would die under the hot, dry sun.

The sun kept beating down on the dry earth. An old man happened to walk by and he saw that the water was almost gone. His heart filled with compassion. He went straight to the king and said, "The water in the fish's pond is almost dry; the fish are in great danger. If it pleases your majesty,

you might send twenty elephants to carry water to save the fish."

The king was a Buddhist, as soon as he heard the old man's request, he said, "It is wonderful that you have such a kind and merciful heart. Go to the royal elephant stables and take as many elephants as you need to carry water to save those poor fish."

When the old man heard the king's reply, he took his two sons to the royal elephant stables. He selected twenty of the best elephants. Then he went to the breweries and borrowed as many skins as he could - in India in those days, liquor was stored and transported in skins. Getting the skins, the three led the twenty elephants to the biggest river in the region, and filled all the skins with water. Then the twenty royal elephants carried the heavy skins filled with water to the

fishpond, and they poured all the water into the pond.

After many trips, the pond was again full, just as it had been before the drought. The fish in the pond were saved! They leapt and played and swam back and forth.

When the old man saw how happy they were, and watched the ripples on the surface of the water's, all of the worries and sadness that the long years had gathered in his tired old heart were immediately swept away.

As the day turned into night, he and his sons cheerfully led the twenty elephants back to the royal stables and then they went to tell their king their good news.

THE BIRD'S REWARD

During the Han dynasty, about two thousand years ago, there lived a family called Yang. They were farmers, and had only one child, who was so precious to them that they named him Treasure.

Yang Treasure was not only clever, kind, and quick-witted, but he was also very good looking with his clear eyebrows and bright eyes. His parent shaved all of his hair off except for two locks on the top, which they then tied into two knots. Everybody agreed that he was very cute.

Yang Treasure loved nature. He spent a lot of time playing in the forests of the nearby Mountain. One day when he was nine years old, he was playing outdoors as usual. Suddenly he heard a cry above him. He looked up and saw a

hunting owl had just snatched a little bird, out of the air. The owl was so startled to discover someone watching it hunt that it dropped the bird, which fell to the ground. The bird was so dazed that it just lay there without moving.

Ants then came to take it away for food. The bird had been hurt by the owl's claws and the fall to the ground, so it couldn't move. Yang Treasure ran over and picked the bird up, brushing off the ants. He took the bird home and raised it in a bamboo cage.

He loved his little bird. He fed it flower petals and tended to its wounds until it was strong enough to fly. Then he took it to the forest and let it go. He told it, "You're free now! But watch out for owls! Goodbye!!"

Not long afterwards, he had a strange dream. A child dressed in brown clothes came to thank him for saving his

life. He presented Treasure with four priceless white jade bracelets. He said, "Sir, I am an envoy of the Heavenly Queen. You have saved my life. I would like to show my gratitude by presenting these four immaculate jade bracelets to you, with my blessing that your children and grandchildren be as spotless as pure jade, and that they hold posts in the top ranks of the government."

Yang Treasure did not want to take the gift, but the little boy dressed in brown insisted, so he finally took the bracelets. As soon as he did, he woke up and found it had just been a dream. "That sure was a strange dream," he thought as he shook his head. Yang Treasure's sons, grandsons, great-grandsons, and great-great-grandsons were as spotless as pure jade. For four generations, his descendants all held posts in the top ranks of the government.

MY LAP IS YOUR PERCH

Long ago, an old, old hermit lived deep in the woods. He was so kind that he never killed any living creature. One day he was sitting under an ancient tree. Just as he began to meditate, he felt a gust of wind coming towards him. "That's strange," he thought, and opened his eyes. He saw a little bird sitting in his lap. The bird was not at all flustered to be sitting there. In fact, it was quite at home, as if it were perching on a twig. The hermit recited the Buddha Amitabha's name, and said to himself, "So you think my lap is a perch? Well, then, I can hardly refuse. Amitabha, this is good. This is good."

Then the little bird curled up and went to sleep, right there in his lap. The hermit was afraid to disturb its dreams, so he

began looking into his own heart, and immediately entered a very deep state of meditation.

Much later, he left his meditation state, but the bird was still sleeping soundly. He didn't move, because he didn't want to bother it. He said very quietly, "Amitabha. Just keep sleeping. You can fly away when you've slept your full."

Finally, the little bird woke up. It flapped its wings and stretched its legs. It chirped quietly a few times. Then it straightened its feathers with its beak, and flapped its wings a few more times. Only then did it fly away.

When it had flown away, the old hermit got to his feet. He watched his little friend until it was out of sight. Then he left the tree and went back to his little hut.

SAVING THE DRAGON KING'S SON

Once there was an old doctor named Sun. He was very kind, especially to animals.

While he was taking a stroll outside the village one fine autumn day, he happened to see two children who had captured a snake. They were playing with it, and the snake was so exhausted that it was almost dead. The old man couldn't bear to see even a snake die, so he got some money out of his pocket and bought the snake from them. Then he took it to the edge of the pond and let it go.

A few days later, he was sitting in his study. He dozed off. Before long, he saw a man dressed in green come in. The man asked Sun to go with him. Sun went, and the man took him to an awesome palace. Everything was spick and

span. Sun had no idea where he was.

When Dr. Sun and his guide came into the main hall, a very important looking man came out. He looked very imperious. He addressed Sun, saying, "My son was out playing. If you had not saved him, sir, I am afraid that my son would not have gotten away with his life."

The man that had his servants serve a feast for their honored guest. After the feast, the father presented jewels and treasures to Sun, but the doctor didn't want any. The father insisted, so finally Sun said, "I have heard that in the Crystal Palace of the Dragon King," for by now he had figured out where he was, "there are many extraordinary medicines which can cure all illnesses and ailments which people contract. If you would be so kind as to transmit a few of your special prescriptions so that I might save suffering people,

that would be an act of great merit."

The Dragon King, as the father turned out to be, immediately got out jade tablets inscribed with 36 prescriptions and he gave these to old Sun. After he received the prescriptions, Dr. Sun returned to his study. He woke with a start. He realized it had been just a dream.

But the funny thing is that from then on, whenever he treated a patient, no matter how serious the patient's illness was, the patient was cured immediately. In this way, Sun saved many, many people.

THE SAMI WHO RESCUED THE ANTS

A little monk who is not old enough to become ordained is called a 'sami.'

Once there was a little sami who studied Buddhism with a very wise Teacher. He was a very good student. He was respectful, sincere, and obedient. He learned very quickly.

The Teacher was so wise that he could foretell the future. The Teacher knew from the beginning that his little student could not live very long. One day he counted and realized that the little student had only seven days left to live. He felt very sad.

He called the little sami to him and said, "Little sami, you haven't seen your mother for a long time. I think you need a vacation. You run on home and visit your mother, and come

back eight days from now." He did this so at least the little samí could die in his own parents' home.

When the little samí left, the Teacher was very sad. He thought he would never again see his little student.

Eight day later, who should show up but the little samí! His Teacher was delighted, but he was also puzzled, because the little student looked wonderful. He didn't look like someone who had been about to die.

Finally, the Teacher decided to find out what had happened. He told the boy, "Son, I have foretold the future many times, and I have never been wrong. I sent you home because you were doomed to die within seven days, but the seven days have already passed. Not only are you still alive, but you look great. The image of death has left you. How did you do this?"

The little samí was thunderstruck. He didn't have any idea how to answer his Teacher, so the Teacher entered the settled state of meditation. Before long, he understood:

"Son, on the way home, did you save some ants?"

"Yes, Teacher, on the way home I saw a whole bunch of ants trapped by some water. They were about to drown, so I got a piece of wood and rescued them."

"That's it, then. Your kind heart has earned you a long life. The wise men of old said, 'Saving one life earns more merit than building a temple, a pagoda of seven stories.' You have saved hundreds of lives, so you will live a very long time.

"You have earned a good future, but you still have to keep working to save living creatures. Spread the message of the Buddha. Teach all people to be compassionate. Tell everyone

not to kill living creatures. Let all animals live in peace."

The little sami never forgot his Teacher's words. He worked very hard and became a great monk. He lived for a long, long time.

THE MOTHER DEER

The forest was very still in the early morning. The rising sun lit up the earth, the forest, and the plains. The mountains glowed with a beautiful light, and the water glistened on the ripples in the stream. Everything was peaceful.

Suddenly a man appeared. He hurried across the stream and reached a meadow. He stopped and looked around him, as if he were looking for something. This man had a strong face, big ears, eyebrows like swords, and eyes like a tiger's. He had an adventurer's hat on his head. He held a bow in his left hand and his quiver of arrows hung on his right hip. He looked vigorous, tough, and lively. He loved the great outdoors, and he especially loved hunting. His name was Shu.

He spotted a fawn coming out of the forest. Shu smiled

and nocked an arrow. Zip! The fawn fell over almost as soon as the sound of the bow-string was heard. Shu was proud of his good shot. Just as he was about to go pick up his game, he saw the fawn's mother running to her child.

When the mother deer saw what had happened to her baby, she whimpered and cried, and licked her baby's wound.

Shu had never expected this to happen. He watched as the mother tended her baby, but Shu's aim had been too accurate. The wound was too deep, and before long, the little deer died.

When the little deer died, its mother fell down dead, as well. Shu was amazed. He couldn't figure out why the mother deer had died, too. He took out his hunting knife and cut open her corpse to find out what was wrong.

He saw that her organs, that everything inside of her had broken into tiny pieces! The mother deer was so sad that her

baby had been killed that everything inside of her had burst from her sorrow.

Shu then became terribly sorry for what he had done. Right away, he broke his bow across his knee and threw his arrows into the stream. He left his home and went deep into the mountains to find a Teacher. He worked hard for many years and finally he became a great Buddhist, a great peace-maker.

A DRAGON IN DISGUISE

There was an old man named Chu. He was well over sixty. He had done many good things throughout his life. In the old days, transportation was very difficult. He donated money to have roads made and bridges built so people could get around more easily. People in need could always count on him for help. His neighbors had many good things to say about him.

One day he saw a fisherman on his way to the market to sell a carp he had caught. This beautiful fish had red markings as bright and warm as a fire in the winter. Its eyes were as shiny as stars in the sky. Old Chu thought it would be a shame to eat such a beautiful fish. He bought the carp for a good price and put it in a pond. He felt very good about that.

But Chu was an old man, and nobody lives forever. Not long after that, he felt weak, very light-headed, and very sad. He thought he might not live much longer. As he was lying home sick, a little serving boy came in, and said, "Mister Chu, my master has sent me to invite you to eat with him."

Old Chu didn't recognize whose serving boy it was, but he thought getting out of bed might do him good; a meal out might lift up his spirits. He followed the boy. "I must really be sick," he thought as they made their way, "Everything looks hazy, and glowing in a golden light."

Before long, he found himself standing in front of an ornate palace with carved pillars and painted beams. A sign over the front door read, "The Crystal Palace".

"Strange! Isn't that the name of the dragon's palace?"

wondered Old Chu.

In a few moments, out came his host, a most impressive man with thick eye-brows, long eyes, and five long strands of whiskers. He looked lively and powerful, yet virtuous. After they had chatted a bit, Old Chu found out that his host was none other than the Dragon King himself!

Together they enjoyed a royal feast. The Dragon King told Old Chu, "One of my sons was out fooling around the other day, and was kidnapped by a bandit who was going to murder him! Fortunately, you were there to save him. For this we are most grateful.

"Actually, your time on this earth is just about up, but because you have rescued a dragon in the guise of a fish, you have earned the right to live longer. I have prepared this simple dinner to express my gratitude, and explain this to you."

Old Chu humbly replied, "I hardly dare to accept your generosity. From now on, I will do even more good deeds to show my deep gratitude."

After their feast, Old Chu woke up in bed with a full stomach. "It must have been a dream," he told himself. "But if it was a dream, why am I so full?"

He did many more good deeds, and died peacefully many years later without any suffering at the age of one hundred and twenty.

GENERAL MAO AND THE TURTLE

About 1,600 years ago, there was a kind-hearted Confucian scholar named Mao. Once, before he had passed the imperial examinations and become a government official, he happened to see a fisherman on his way to the market to sell a turtle. Mao Pao immediately bought the turtle, but instead of eating it, he took it to a nearby lake and let it go.

Later, Mao became a very powerful general. But, even the very best generals lose sometimes, and one time General Mao's forces were beaten and they had to run for their lives.

The enemy was following hot on their heels. General Mao was running as fast as anyone else. He reached a great lake, but there were no boats around, and there was no bridge. There was no way to cross the water. General Mao couldn't

swim, and anyway, he was dressed in battle armor, which would carry him straight to the bottom.

He looked back and saw the enemy was almost on top of him. He sighed and said, "The heavens have abandoned me!"

Rather than fall into enemy hands, General Mao prepared to take his own life. Just as he was about to commit suicide, he noticed something huge come to the surface of the water, and float over close to the shore where he was preparing to kill himself.

He had no time to worry about what was floating in the lake. The enemy was coming closer and closer. General Mao decided, "If I kill myself here, the enemy will capture my corpse. This will disgrace my country and my emperor. It will be better for me to throw myself into the lake so they cannot find my body." With that, he leaped into the water of

the lake. He was surprised for he landed on something. Then he started to move away from the shore, across the lake, to the other side. General Mao was astonished.

The enemy reached the lake. They yelled, they howled they shot arrows at General Mao, but he was already out of range. The arrows fell harmlessly into the water and didn't touch him. General Mao looked down and discovered he was standing on a huge turtle! The turtle took him to the other side of the lake. General Mao got off and went up the bank. The turtle came to the surface and nodded to him. Then it sank back into the water and swam away.

Then General Mao remembered; many years before, he had saved a turtle and released it in a lake - this very lake! Now, in his time of need, the turtle had come to rescue him: a life for a life!

BEES PREVENT A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

One day a bartender in a tavern happened to see that there was a bee drowning in one of his liquor kegs. He felt sorry for the little bee, so he lowered a chopstick to the bee so it could climb out. He put the chopstick down and watched as the bee dried out. It flapped its wings so they could dry out faster. Then, when it was all dry again, it flew away buzzing busily.

After that, the bartender noticed that quite a few bees were attracted by the smell of the liquor; they fell in, and drowned. From then on, he kept an eye out for them, and rescued many bees.

This went on for many years. One day, he was startled when bailiffs from the court marched into his tavern. With-

out a word of explanation, they handcuffed him and marched him off to the court. When he got there, he discovered he had been framed. Some captured bandits who held a grudge against him said that the bartender was one of their gang. The judge in charge of the case had him hauled in to behead him with the rest of them.

The bartender protested that he was innocent, but the bandits had already said he was guilty, so the authorities assumed he was guilty. The bartender's heart went cold. He saw the main judge pick up the red brush used for writing out the death sentence.

Just as the main judge picked up his brush to write, a loud buzzing was heard coming closer, getting louder and louder. A great swarm of bees came flying in the window and landed on the judge's red brush! The judge waved the brush to

shake them off, but more and more bees came. They didn't sting, but they wouldn't go away, either.

The judge thought this most extraordinary. He mused: "Perhaps these bees are here to prevent a miscarriage of justice."

At that, the main judge questioned the bandits again, and found contradictions in their testimony. He grilled them over again. This time he was sure that they had almost executed an innocent man.

Only when the judge called off the bartender's death sentence did the swarms of bees fly away. Then the judge asked the bartender if he knew why the bees had come to save him.

"I really don't know either, your honor, maybe it's because I have saved lots of bees that almost drowned in my liquor vats. They come to the smell. Then they fall in and can't get

out. When I see that, I always save them. Now, I guess they've come to save me."

"This is truly wonderful! You have had a narrow escape. Always remember that you owe your good life to your good deeds. Remember to do all the good deeds you can. You are sure to enjoy good fortune in the future."

The judge's words proved true. The bartender kept doing all the good deeds he could. His business got better year after year. He lived a long, happy life, and died peacefully, a very rich man.

DEDICATION OF MERIT

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,
All bring forth the heart of understanding
And live the teachings for the rest of this life,
Then be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

*“Wherever the Buddha’s teachings have flourished,
either in cities or countrysides,
people would gain inconceivable benefits.
The land and people would be enveloped in peace.
The sun and moon will shine clear and bright.
Wind and rain would appear accordingly,
and there will be no disasters.
Nations would be prosperous
and there would be no use for soldiers or weapons.
People would abide by morality and accord with laws.
They would be courteous and humble,
and everyone would be content without injustices.
There would be no thefts or violence.
The strong would not dominate the weak
and everyone would get their fair share.”*

~THE BUDDHA SPEAKS OF
THE INFINITE LIFE SUTRA OF
ADORNMENT, PURITY, EQUALITY
AND ENLIGHTENMENT OF
THE MAHAYANA SCHOOL~

GREAT VOW

**BODHISATTVA EARTH-TREASURY
(BODHISATTVA KSITIGARBHA)**

**“ Unless Hells become empty,
I vow not to attain Buddhahood;
Till all have achieved the Ultimate
Liberation,
I shall then consider my Enlightenment
full !”**

**Bodhisattva Earth-Treasury is
entrusted as the Caretaker of the World until
Buddha Maitreya reincarnates on Earth
in 5.7 billion years.**

**Reciting the Holy Name:
NAMO BODHISATTVA
EARTH-TREASURY**

**Karma-erasing Mantra:
OM BA LA MO LING TO NING SVAHA**

*With bad advisors forever left behind,
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.*

*The supreme and endless blessings
of Samantabhadra's deeds,
I now universally transfer.
May every living being, drowning and adrift,
Soon return to the Pure Land of Limitless Light!*

~The Vows of Samantabhadra~

*I vow that when my life approaches its end,
All obstructions will be swept away;
I will see Amitabha Buddha,
And be born in His Western Pure Land of
Ultimate Bliss and Peace.*

*When reborn in the Western Pure Land,
I will perfect and completely fulfill
Without exception these Great Vows,
To delight and benefit all beings.*

*~The Vows of Samantabhadra
Avatamsaka Sutra~*

In our practice, we strive to attain true sincerity towards others,
purity of mind within,
impartiality towards everything we see,
proper understanding of life and the universe, and
compassion in helping others in a wise unconditional way.

In attaining these, we will see through
to the truth of impermanence,
let go of all wandering thoughts and attachments,
attain freedom of mind and spirit,
accord with proper conditions to get along with the situation, and
be mindful of Amitabha Buddha, vowing to reach the Western Pure Land.

Compliments of
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