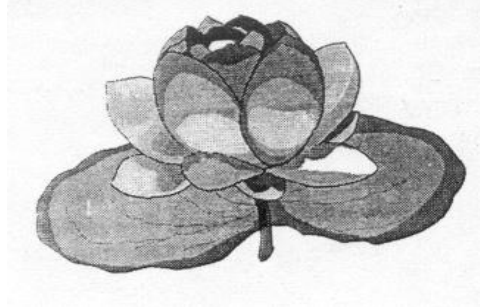


THIỆN PHÚC

**FAITH IN
BUDDHIST CULTIVATION**
(NIỀM TIN TRONG TU TẬP PHẬT GIÁO)



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Preface

A basic belief in Buddhism that Buddhists should affirmatively believe is that the world is filled with sufferings and afflictions that are caused by the desires, angers and ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual desires, and lying. If the above mentioned troubles could be removed, then the sufferings and afflictions would naturally end. The ultimate goal of a Buddhist is to look inward to find his own Buddha and not outward. Thus, the goal of a Buddhist is the development of self-dependency, the ability to set oneself free of sufferings and afflictions. Buddhism is strongly against a blind belief on other forces of salvation with no basic factors. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha always reminded his disciples: “You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it.” The Buddha taught us to try to recognize truth, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. Furthermore, Buddhists do not believe in god because there does not seem to be any concrete evidence to support this idea. The Buddha taught us to try to understand our fear, to lessen our desires and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth.

In daily life and cultivation, devout Buddhists should not believe in god because there does not seem to be any concrete evidence to support this idea. Who can answer questions on god? Who is god? Is god masculine or feminine or neuter? Who can provide ample evidence with real, concrete, substantial or irrefutable facts to prove the existence of god? So far, no one can. Buddhists suspend judgment until such evidence is forthcoming. Besides, such belief in god is not necessary for a really meaningful and happy life. If you believe that god make your life meaningful and happy, so be it. But remember, more than two-thirds of the world do not believe in god and who can

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

In Buddhist teachings, faith in supernatural power is only a need to sooth the people in distressed situations. In extremely distressed situations, people have a tendency to turn to faith, or exterior power for support, consolation and blessing. Buddhism, on the contrary, is indifferent metaphysical and supernatural questions for Buddhism maintains and upholds the ability and intellectual capacity of man. In Buddhism, man must not be passive and dependent on others. In Buddhism, man has his own responsibility to free himself. Thus the Buddha taught in the Nirvana Sutra: "You must light the torch for yourselves. The Buddha is one who leads the way. The goal of liberation can be reached only by you yourselves and nobody else." Buddhists never believe in the belief which is not based on reason or fact but on association of imaginations or magics. If you can show us (Buddhists) a careful study of the existence of a god written by a scientist, we will concede that belief in god is not fabulous. But we (Buddhists) have never heard of any research on god, and scientists simply wouldn't bother to study such impossible things, so I say there is no evidence for the existence of god. A long long time ago, when people had no knowledge of science, people were unable to explain the origin of the universe, so they turned to god as a creator of the universe, but in the twenty first century, scientists have explained very clearly on the origin of the universe without recourse to the god-idea. Thus we must see that our inability to explain the origin of the universe does not prove the existence of god or gods. Thus the Buddha always

reminded his disciples: “Do not rush to believe in anything without examining carefully, even my teachings.”

Besides, the Buddha advised his disciples not to exercise psychic power in order to convert people with blind faith. He was referring to the miraculous power to walk on water, to exercise spirits, raise the dead and perform the so-called supernatural practices. He was also referring to the miracles of prophesy such as thought-reading, sooth-saying, fortune-telling, and so on. When people with blind faith see the performance of such powers, their faith deepens; however, this belief is not true belief because it does not come from their own realization of the truth, but due to the blind faith. With the Buddha, the miracle of realization is a real miracle. When a person knows that he is greedy, angry, ignorant, pride of his own self, and full of wrong views, etc, and he is willing to end these wrong and unwholesome actions, he really realizes a miracle for his own life. When a murderer, a thief, a terrorist, a drunkard or an adulterer is made to realize that what he had been doing is wrong and gives up his bad, immoral and harmful way of life, this change can be regarded as a real miracle. According to Buddhism, there exists a real miracle when we clearly see life is no more than a process from coming into being, to formation, changing and destruction with full of sufferings and afflictions. Therefore, in no way we can avoid both the process formation and destruction and sufferings and afflictions. The more we try to avoid our problems or the more we try not to think about our problems, the more we accumulate problems inside ourselves. When we clearly understand the true nature of sufferings and afflictions, we'll be able to deal with them more effectively. Also according to Buddhist points of view, all the causes of sufferings and afflictions are ignorance, craving and hatred. These are the “three poisons of the mind”. Only by generating insight into the true nature of reality, we may be able to eliminate ignorance, able to achieve a completely purified state of mind, able to see right from wrong, good from bad, as well as other harmful anger and hatred in our daily life. Of course, each one of us wishes to be free from sufferings and afflictions, for these are the first factors for a happy life. However, as long as we still rely on someone else to save us by eliminating the problems for us, we still fear , avoid and try not to engage to confront our own problems, and therefore, problems never voluntarily leave us.

According to Buddhist points of view, sufferings and afflictions may be arisen as a result of our past karma. Understand this concept, we will never try to blame our problems on others. There is no reason for us to be too strick on ourselves, as human beings, we are all imperfect. Every one of us has at least once done some thing wrong. The important thing is whether or not we recognize and admit our wrong-doings that we have done in the past. If we admit that we're mistaken, there will be room for correction. In the noble teachings of the Buddha, it is honesty, kindness, understanding, patience, generosity, forgiveness, loyalty and other good qualities that truly protect us and give us true happiness and prosperity. A man who possesses the above mentioned characteristics, that man is travelling on the Path to the Buddha's Land. It is true that Buddhahood cannot be found outside. It has no limit and not be confined in the East, West, South or North. It is in fact, in every man's mind. In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Once upon a time, there was a father who was very old and death was hovering on him. He had a little son and wanted him to be well off in the future. He hid a very valuable diamond between the hems of his son's shirt and then gave him some advice. After his father's passing away, the son forgot completely about the hidden diamond. He became poor, wandering here and there to beg for help, met with nothing but refusal. One day, he suddenly remembered about the hidden treasure left by his father, from thence he became a rich man and no longer depended on others for help." In short, Buddhism is what the Buddha taught. His teaching was based on human inner wisdom. Buddhism always values reason. Blindly believing in everything is contrary to Buddha's teaching. The Buddha taught: "Do not believe blindly in my teachings. Always test them like using fire to test gold to determine whether it is authentic or counterfeit." Buddhism is not a religion versed in worshipping and imploring favors from deities.

Buddhism is different from other religions and doctrines in that it respects personal opinions, beliefs, and intellectual development. Buddhism does not prevent its disciples from learning other religious teachings. The Buddha said that if there were reasonable and rational teachings in other religions, His followers were free to respect such things. From that basic principle, the Buddha declared that there was nothing hidden in the sleeve of His saffron robe when referring to His

teachings. He also added that His doctrine was consistent with how people understood the Truth. It did not depend on the favors bestowed by any deity or any other spiritual power. The Buddha emphasized the concept of free inquiry when He asked His disciples to judge even the Tathagata in order to have an utter trustfulness in Him. He asked them to study, understand, and believe latter on. Whoever has not yet understood or still has doubt but blindly believes has thus defamed the Buddha. Doubt is not a sin because Buddhism has no creed to be believed. Doubt will automatically dissipate when people fully understand or perceive the Truth. In other words, whether the Buddha wanted or not, His teachings and the way of life preached by Him became a religion called "Buddhism." However, Buddhism is not a religion just for discussion, but it is a religion of deliverance for those who diligently cultivate. One needs not be a scholar or a blind devotee to become a Buddhist, all you need is your sincerity of cultivation. In Buddhism, blind faith has no ground, each one of us must know how to find and absorb what is relevant and what is not to our life and to our problems. If we pay a little attention we'll see that Buddhist doctrines are boundless and timeless, but they are the inconceivable truth for all time. Messages handed down to us by the Buddha remain eternally valuable. No one can argue against or deny the doctrine of impermanence in Buddhism. Impermanence does not mean that things are not existing. Impermanence means that everything continues in a flux, in a process of continuing change and evolution. Thus, Buddhism is able to adjust to different civilizations in different times in the world. Even in modern world, Buddhism is always appropriate in all circumstances. In fact, if you approach any aspect of Buddhism, you will immediately find out that it is something relevant, beneficial and applicable to your daily life. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that in Buddhism there is no such so-called bonds of supernatural ties, nor Godhead, nor creation, nor sin inherited from anyone else, other than what you yourself have done.

This little book titled "Faith In Buddhist Cultivation" is not a professional nor a profound philosophical study of the faith in Buddhism, but a book that simply points out faith that Buddhist practitioners should always have in their life and cultivation in Buddhist point of view, the teachings the Buddha on the faith and its

roles in daily cultivation. We'll also find in this little book typical matters on faith in Buddhism such as the story of Sariputra's showing his absolute faith in Buddhas during his last salute and bow to the World Honor One on the way to Kusinagara. Besides, we'll also find the Buddha's teachings on faith in Buddhism in the Kalama Sutra. According to Buddhist teachings, practitioners should have faith and rely on the Buddha dharma which include thirty-seven conditions leading to bodhi, four noble truths, four boundless minds, cause and effect, karmas and retributions, the principle of causation and the twelve links of causation, and so on. Devout Buddhists should always believe in right views for they are in accordance with correct dharmas. In cultivation, practitioners should never believe in wrong views for they arise from ignorance and do not tally with Buddhist teachings. Devout Buddhists should never harbor superstitions and Dead Buddhism. Last but not least, Devout Buddhists should never believe in the concept of soul and fate, the view of "Creator", the view of no cause, the concept of first cause, and so on. Truly speaking, faith plays an extremely important role in cultivation in Buddhism. Devout Buddhists should always remember that cultivation is only effective when we actually have a firm faith and apply the Buddha's teachings into practicing well-being exercises that are linked to established daily life patterns, makes our lives more peaceful, mindful, and happier. The journey advancing from Humans to Buddhas still demands continuous efforts with right faith and practices. Presently even with so many books on Buddhism available, I venture to compose this booklet titled "Faith In Buddhist Cultivation" in Vietnamese and English to spread basic teachings in Buddhism to all Vietnamese Buddhist followers, especially Buddhist beginners, hoping this little contribution will help Buddhists in different levels to understand on how to achieve and lead a life of peace, mindfulness and happiness.

Thiền Phúc

Chapter One

Cores of Buddhism

I. An Overview of Buddhism:

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

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

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

II. The Meanings of Buddhism:

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

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

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

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

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

III. Cores of Buddhism:

After the Buddha's Enlightenment at Buddha Gaya, he moved slowly across India until he reached the Deer Park near Benares, where he preached to five ascetics his First Sermon. The Sermon preached about the Middle Way between all extremes, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. In the Deer Park, Benares, at first the Buddha was ignored by the five brothers of Kaundinya, but as the Buddha approached them, they felt that there was something very special about him, so they automatically stood up as He drew near. Then the five men, with great respect, invited the Buddha to teach them what He has enlightened. So, the Buddha delivered His First Teaching: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma. He began to preach: "O monk! You must know that there are Four Noble Truths. The first is the Noble Truth of Suffering. Life is filled with the miseries and afflictions of old age, sickness, unhappiness and death. People chase after pleasure but find only pain. Even when they do find something pleasant they soon grow tired of it. Nowhere is there any real satisfaction or perfect peace. The second is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering. When our mind is filled with greed and desire and wandering thoughts, sufferings of all types follow. The third is the Noble Truth of the End of Suffering. When we remove all craving, desire, and wandering thoughts from our mind, sufferings will come to an end. We shall experience undescrivable happiness. And finally, the Noble Truth of the Path. The Path that helps us reach the ultimate wisdom." The path leading to the end (extinction) of suffering, the fourth of the four

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

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

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

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

The Buddha admitted the presence of sufferings and afflictions in human life because of the ignorant attachment to all things. But it is truly wrong to believe that Buddhism a religion of pessimism. This is not true even with a slight understanding of basic Buddhism. When the Buddha said that human life was full of sufferings and afflictions, he did not mean that life was pessimistic. In this manner, the Buddha admitted the presence of sufferings and afflictions in human life, and by a method of analysis he pointed out to his disciples that attachment to things without a correct view as to their nature is the cause of sufferings and afflictions. Impermanence and change are inherent in the nature of all things. This is their true nature and this is the correct view. He concluded: "As long as we are at variance with this truth, we

are bound to run into conflicts. We cannot alter or control the nature of things. The result is 'hope deferred made the heart sick'. The only solution lies in correcting our point of view." In fact, the thirst for things begets sorrow. When we like someone or something, we wish that they belonged to us and were with us forever. We never think about their true nature, in other words, or we refuse to think about their true nature. We expect them to survive forever, but time devours everything. Eventually we must yield to old age and freshness of the morning dew disappears before the rising sun. In the Nirvana Sutra, when Ananda and other disciples were so sad and cried when the Buddha lay on his death-bed, the Buddha taught: "Ananda! Lament not. Have I not already told you that from all good things we love and cherish we would be separated, sooner or later... that they would change their nature and perish. How then can Tathagata survive? This is not possible!" This is the philosophy which underlies the doctrine of the "Three Marks" (impermanence, suffering and no-self) of existence of the Buddhist view of life and the world. All Buddhist values are based on this. The Buddha expected of his disciples, both laity and clergy, good conduct and good behavior and decent standard of living in every way. With him, a simple living did not amount to degenerate human existence or to suffer oneself. The Buddha advised his disciples to follow the "Middle Path". It is to say not to attach to things nor to abandon them. The Buddha does not deny the "beauty", however, if one does not understand the true nature of the objects of beauty, one may end up with sufferings and afflictions or grief and disappointment. In the "Theragatha", the Buddha brought up the story of the Venerable Pakka. One day, going to the village for alms, Venerable Pakka sat down beneath a tree. Then a hawk, seizing some flesh flew up into the sky. Other hawks saw that attacked it, making it drop the piece of meat. Another hawk grabbed the fallen flesh, and was flundered by other hawks. And Pakka thought: "Just like that meat are worldly desires, common to all, full of pain and woe." And reflecting hereon, and how they were impermanent and so on, he continued to contemplate and eventually won Arahanship. The Buddha advised his disciples not to avoid or deny or attach to objects of beauty. Try not to make objects of beauty our objects of like or dislike. Whatever there is in the world, pleasant or unpleasant, we all have a tendency to attach to them, and

we develop a like or dislike to them. Thus we continue to experience sufferings and afflictions. Buddhists recognize beauty where the sense can perceive it, but in beauty we should also see its own change and destruction. And Buddhist should always remember the Buddha's teaching regarding to all component things: "Things that come into being, undergo change and are eventually destroyed." Therefore, Buddhists admire beauty but have no greed for acquisition and possession.

Chapter Two

Buddhist Life

Buddhism never separates itself from the secular life. On the contrary, the Buddha always reminded his followers, monks, nuns, upasakas and upasikas, to live the best and highest life and to get the most out of life. However, the best joy in life according to Buddhism are not the pleasures and materials, but the light-hearted and joyful happiness at all time in mind. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that it is true that we must study the Buddha's teachings, but the main thing is to live them in our daily life. If we can do this, we are truly Buddhists of a living Buddhism. If not, we are only embracing the corpse of a dead Buddhism. According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, there are two aspects of the Buddhist life. According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, there are two aspects of the Buddhist life. First, raising the desire for supreme enlightenment. The Sanskrit phrase for 'the desire for enlightenment' is 'bodhicittotpada," which is the abbreviation of 'Anuttarayam-samyaksambodhi-cittam-utpadam,' that is, 'to have a mind raised to supreme enlightenment.' In the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Buddha taught: "There are only a few people in this world who can clearly perceive what the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are and faithfully follow them; fewer are those who can raise their minds to supreme enlightenment; fewer still are those who practice prajnaparamita; fewer and fewer still are those who, most steadfastly practicing prajnaparamita and finally reaching the stage of no-turning back, abide in the state of Bodhisattvahood. Second, practicing the life of the Bodhisattva, that is, the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. Sudhana, the young pilgrim had his first awakening of the desire (cittotpada) under the direction of Manjusri, and his later pilgrimage consisted wholly in inquiries into living the life of enlightenment (bodhicarya). So says Manjusri to his disciple when he sends Sudhana off on his long, arduous 'Pilgrim's Progress': "Well done, well done, indeed, son of a good family! Having awakened the desire for supreme enlightenment, you now wish to seek for the life of the Bodhisattva. Oh! Son of a good family, it is a rare thing to see beings whose desire is raised to supreme

enlightenment; but it is a still rarer thing to see beings who, having awakened the desire for supreme enlightenment, proceed to seek for the life of the Bodhisattva. Therefore, oh, son of a good family, if you wish to attain the knowledge which is possessed by the All-knowing one, be ever assiduous to get associated with good friends (kalyanamitra). In the Prajnaparamita Sutra, after the awakening of the desire for supreme enlightenment is the practice of Prajnaparamitas. In the Avatamsaka Sutra, this practice is deeply associated with the life of the Bodhisattva known as Samantabhadra, and the Bodhicarya, the life of enlightenment, is identified with the Bhadracarya, the life of Bhadra, that is Samantabhadra.

Everyone has hopes that his wishes will be fulfilled someday. Hope itself is not wrong, for hope will help people try to reach to better situations. However, when a person begins to expect things have to happen the way he or she wishes, he or she begins to have trouble with disappointment. Thus, the Buddha taught: “Suffering of frustrated desire,” or unfulfilled wishes cause suffering (suffering due to unfulfilled wishes), or cannot get what one wants causes suffering. The pain which results from not receiving what one seeks, from disappointed hope or unrewarded effort, one of the eight sorrows. And therefore, the Buddha advised his disciples “content with few desires.” “Content with few desires” means having few desires; “knowing how to feel satisfied” means being content. Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to practice the Way. “Knowing how to feel satisfied and being content with material conditions” is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of body and mind and accomplish our supreme goal of cultivation. There are some people who regard this life as a life of suffering or pessimists may be tolerated as long as they are simply feeling dissatisfied with this life, but when they begin to give up this life as hopeless and try to escape to a better life by practicing austerities or self-mortifications, then they are to be abhorred. Some people believe that Buddhism is pessimistic because its significant viewpoint on the idea that there is nothing but hardship in this world, even pleasures end in hardship. It is totally wrong thinking that way. Buddhism believes that in this present life, there are both

pleasures and hardships. He who regards life as entirely pleasure will suffer when the so-called “happiness” ceases to exist. The Buddha believes that happiness and sufferings intertwine in our daily life. If one is ignorant of the fact that pleasures can cause hardships, one will be disappointed when that fact presents itself. Thus the Buddha teaches that one should regard hardship as hardship, accepting it as a fact and finding way to oppose it. Hence his emphasis on perseverance, fortitude, and forbearance, the latter being one of the six Perfections. In short, according to the Buddhist view, there are both pleasures and hardships in life, but one must not be discouraged when hardship comes, or lose oneself in rapture of joy when pleasure comes. Both pleasures and hardships must be taken alike with caution for we know that pleasures end in hardship. From this understanding, sincere Buddhists will be determined to cultivate diligently to turn both worldly pleasures and hardships to an eternally transcendental joy. It is to say that we are not bound to both worldly pleasures and hardships at all times. They come and go naturally. We are always live a life without worries, without afflictions because we know for sure that everything will pass. The Buddhist point of view on both optimism and pessimism is very clear: Buddhism is not optimistic nor pessimistic on human life. Two extremes of both optimism and pessimism are prevented by the moderate doctrine of Buddhism.

In Theravada countries, “Pirit” is a Pali term for a common practice for protecting of the Three Gems of laypeople, which involves reciting Buddhist texts as a way of generating merit. Often laypeople make donations to monks who do the recitation, believing that this activity makes merit both by supporting the monks and by causing the texts to be chanted. It is believed that this activity helps those who engage in it to accrue merit, which is conducive to a better rebirth, and it is also thought to bring benefits in the present life. The most common form of pirit involves a group of monks who chant a set of texts during the course of a night, then dedicate the merit to all beings. A worthwhile life, according to Mahayana Buddhist point of view, does not consist in merely spending one’s life in peace and quiet but in creating something good for other beings. When one tries to become a better person through his practice, this endeavor is the creation of good. When he does something for the benefit of other people, this is the creation of a

still higher standard of good. The various arts are the creation of beauty, and all honest professions are the creation of various kinds of energy that are beneficial to society. Creation is bound to bring with it pain and hardship. However, one finds life worth living when one makes a strenuous effort for the sake of something good. He endeavors to become a little better a person and to do just a little more for the good of other people, through such positive endeavor we are enabled to feel deep joy in our human lives.

Buddhism has a very special point of view in “the inner world”. For the understanding of the world within, science may not be of much help to us. Ultimate truth can not be found in science. To the scientist, knowledge is something that ties him more and more to this sentient existence. That knowledge, therefore, is not saving knowledge. To one who views the world and all it holds in its proper perspective, the primary concern of life is not mere speculation or vain voyaging into the imaginary regions of high fantasy, but the gaining of true happiness and freedom from ill or unsatisfactoriness. To him, true knowledge depends on this question: “Is this learning according to actuality? Can it be of use to us in the conquest of mental peace and tranquility, of real happiness?” To understand the world within we need the guidance, the instruction of a competent and genuine seer clarity of vision and depth of insight penetrate into the deepest recesses of life and cognize the true nature that underlies all appearance. He, indeed, is the true philosopher, true scientist who has grasped the meaning of change in the fullest sense and has transmuted this understanding into a realization of the deepest truths fathomable by man, the truths of the three signs or characteristics: Impermanence, Unsatisfactoriness, Non-self. No more can he be confused by the terrible or swept off his feet by the glamor of thing ephemeral. No more is it possible for him to have a clouded view of phenomena; for he has transcended all capacity for error through the perfect immunity which insight alone can give. Cultivator of the Way must leave behind everything, must use proper knowledge and views as their standard and cultivate vigorously. Our goal is to ‘leave behind the mark of speech’, so that there is nothing left to say. We also want to ‘leave behind the mark of the mind and its conditions,’ so that there is nothing left to climb on. We want to ‘leave behind the mark of written words.’ Once words also are gone, they can

not represent our speech at all. Since there is no way to express with words, what is there to remember? What is there that we can not put down? What is left to take so seriously? We should apply ourselves to this, and stop toying with superficial aspects.

Chapter Three

Faith in Buddhism

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

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

you have already sown the seed of hot-pepper, but you realize that you don't like to eat fruit that is hot, you stop fertilizing and watering the hot-pepper tree, the tree will wither and die, and will not produce any fruit. Similarly, if you know an action is bad and unwholesome, you refuse to act, of course you will not receive any bad or unwholesome consequence. The Buddha refuses to believe that whatever happens to a person, either good or bad, is due to chance, fate or fortune. Everything that happens has a specific cause or causes and there must be some tight relationships between the cause and the effect. Those who want to believe in Buddhism should not rush to become a Buddhist with the wrong understanding or blind belief in Buddhism. You should take your time to do more researches, to ask questions, and to consider carefully before making your final decision. Religions that worship god have always considered reason and wisdom as the enemy of faith and dogma for them there exist only "believe" or "not believe" and nothing else. In fact, if we accept that there exists a so-called almighty god, we cannot accept any of the findings of modern science; neither Darwin's science of biological evolution nor the theories of the nature and evolution of the universe coming from modern physics. They believe that a so-called creator god invented humankind and the universe all at once and that these three realms of god, man and universe, all are separate. However, modern science agrees with what the Buddha taught almost twenty-six centuries ago, and proves that the universe as one infinite process of change. Furthermore, the belief of salvation by god caused a serious danger to the whole world, especially from the first century to the end of the nineteenth century, for those who believe in the salvation of god believe that they must impose salvation on others. For this reason, Catholic countries sent their troops and priests all over the world to save others by force. And as a result, millions of people got killed or slaughtered and subjugated in the name of god. Buddhism is in contrast with other religions that believe in god. Buddhism teaches that one must develop wisdom. However, wisdom in Buddhism is not simply believing in what we are told or taught. True wisdom is to directly see and understand for ourselves. With this wisdom, people will have an open mind that listens to others' points of view rather than being closed-minded; people will also carefully examine facts that contradicts their belief rather than blindly believing.

Sincere Buddhists never believe in the law of eternity. The Buddha accepts the law of impermanence or change and denies the existence of eternal substances. Matter and spirit are false abstractions that, in reality, are only changing factors or dharmas which are connected and which arise in functional dependence on each other. Thus, Buddhist faith means that the devotee accepts the Buddha as a Teacher and a Guide, His doctrine as way of life, and the Sangha community as the exemplars of this way of life. According to Buddhist point of view in faith, everyone is completely free to make his own choice in faith, no one has the right to interfere with other people's choice. Let's take a close look in the Buddha's teaching in the Kalama Sutra: "Nothing should be accepted merely on the ground of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. Everything should be weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one's own true benefits. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected but left for further considerations." Therefore, we see clearly that Buddhism is based on personal experience, rationalism, practice, morality, and insight. There is no need to propitiate gods or masters. There is no blind adherence to a faith, rigid dogmas, rituals, scriptures, or myths. The Buddha always confirmed his disciples that a salvation can only be gained by man and by man only during his life without the least help from a so-called god or gods.

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

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

Buddhism considers human's liberation the priority. Once the Buddha was asked by a monk named Malunkyaputta, whether the world was eternal or not eternal, whether the world was finite or infinite, whether the soul was one thing and the body another, whether a Buddha existed after death or did not exist after death, and so on, and so on. The Buddha flatly refused to discuss such metaphysics, and instead gave him a parable. "It is as if a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and yet he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know by what man I was wounded,' or 'I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know of what the arrow with which I was wounded was made.'" As a practical man he should of course get himself treated by the physician at once, without demanding these unnecessary details which would not help him in the least. This was the attitude of the Buddha toward the metaphysical speculation which do not in any way help improve ourselves in our cultivation. The Buddha would say, "Do not go by reasoning, nor by argument." Besides, Buddhism does not accept such practices as fortune telling, wearing magic charms for protection, fixing lucky sites for building, prophesying and fixing lucky days, etc. All these practices are considered useless superstitions in Buddhism. However, because of greed, fear and ignorance, some Buddhists still try to stick to these superstitious practices. As soon as people understand the Buddha's teachings, they realize that a pure heart can protect them much better than empty words of fortune telling, or wearing nonsense charms, or ambiguous chanted words and they are no longer rely on such

meaningless things. In Buddhism, liberation is a motto which heightens (elevates) the unfettered spirit beyond the irrational wall of conventional restriction in which the faith of each individual must be chosen by that individual and by no one else. However, the Buddha always emphasized “Try to understand thoroughly before believing, even with my teachings, for acting freely and without knowing the real meaning of whatever you act sometimes you unintentionally destroy valuable traditions of yourselves. This is the same as a diamond being thrown into the dirt.” The Buddha continued to advise: “When you do anything you should think of its consequence.” Nowadays, more than 2,500 years after the Buddha’s time, all scientists believe that every event that takes place in the world is subject to the law of cause and effect. In other words, cause is the activity and effect is the result of the activity. The Buddha described the world as an unending flux of becoming. All is changeable, continuous transformation, ceaseless mutation, and a moving stream. Everything exists from moment to moment. Everything is recurring rotation of coming into being and then passing out of existence. Everything is moving from formation to destruction, from birth to death. The matter of material forms are also a continuous movement or change towards decay. This teaching of the impermanent nature of everything is one of the most important points of view of Buddhism. Nothing on earth partakes of the character of absolute reality. That is to say there will be no destruction of what is formed is impossible. Whatever is subject to origination is subject to destruction. Change is the very constituent of reality. In daily life, things move and change between extremes and contrasts, i.e., rise and fall, success and failure, gain and loss, honor and contempt, praise and blame, and so on. No one can be sure that a “rise” does not follow with a “fall”, a success does not follow with a failure, a gain with a loss, an honor with a contempt, and a praise with a blame. To thoroughly understand this rule of change or impermanence, Buddhists are no longer dominated by happiness, sorrow, delight, despair, disappointment, satisfaction, self-confidence and fear.

In the noble teachings of the Buddha, it is honesty, kindness, understanding, patience, generosity, forgiveness, loyalty and other good qualities that truly protect us and give us true happiness and prosperity. A man who possesses the above mentioned characteristics,

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

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

Chapter Four

Sariputra's Showing His Absolute Faith in Buddhas During His Last Salute & Bow to the Buddha

Sariputra was one of the ten major disciples of the Buddha, the foremost in wisdom among his Arhat disciples. He was born at Nalandagrama, the son of Sarika and Tisya, hence known as Upatisya; noted for his wisdom and learning; he is the right-hand attendant on Sakyamuni. The followers of the Abhidharma count him as their founder and other works are attributed, without evidence, to him. He figures prominently in certain sutras. He is said to have died before his Master; he is represented as standing with Maudgalyayana by the Buddha when entering nirvana. He is to appear as Padmaprabha Buddha. At that time, the Buddha sent forth the first 60 Arahants to proclaim the Dharma to the world. The Arahant Assaji went on his round for alms in Rajagaha, where he met Sariputra, who was attracted by his calm appearance. After offering him a seat and water, Sariputra exchanged courteous greeting with the holy monk and said: "Venerable! Calm and serene are your sense-organs, clean and clear is the hue of your skin. For whose sake have you renounced the world? Whose doctrine do you profess?" Assaji responded: "There is, friend, the Great Recluse, the son of the Sakyas, under that Blessed One I have gone forth. It is his Dharma that I profess. I am but new to the training. I cannot explain the Dharma in detail to you." However, Sariputra kept on requesting the Venerable to say something about the Dharma according to his ability. Assaji just uttered four-line stanza, skillfully summing up the essence of the Buddha's doctrine, the Law of Dependent Arising and the Four Noble Truths: "Of all things that proceed from a cause, their cause the Tathagata has explained, and also their cessation, thus teaches the Great Recluse." On hearing the first two lines, Sariputra was enlightened immediately. He attained Stream Entrant. He then went back to tell his friend, Moggalana, who also became a Stream Entrant at the conclusion of the stanza. They went to Veluvana to see the Buddha. A fortnight after the Buddha accepted them as his disciples, they both became Arahants. The

Buddha told his Order: “Monks, chief among my disciples who have won great wisdom is Sariputra, and chief among those who have achieved psychic power is Moggallana.” He was declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of his disciples in attainment of wisdom. He was also highly regarded because there are a number of discourses in the Pali Canon spoken by him, and a declaration by the Buddha that Sariputra’s words fully accord with his own doctrine. He was regarded as second only to the Buddha in turning the Wheel of the Law.

On the way to Kusinagara, when the Buddha and his assembly proceeded to **Nalanda**. Now the venerable Sariputta came to the place where the Buddha was, and having saluted him the last time, Sariputra took his seat respectfully at the Buddha's side, and said, “Lord! Such faith have I in the Blessed One is very strong that there has never been, nor will anyone better than the Blessed One, that is to say, as regards the higher wisdom.” The Blessed One replied: “How strong are the words of your mouth, Sariputta: verify, you had burst forth deep into a song of ecstasy! Surely then you have known all the Blessed Ones who in the long ages of the past have been holy Buddhas?” And the Buddha continued: “Then you had perceived all the Blessed Ones who in the long ages of the future shall be holy Buddhas? But at least, O Sariputta, you knew me as the holy Buddha now alive, and had penetrated my mind.” Sariputta said: **“O Lord! I surely know that the holy Buddhas in the long ages of the past, putting away all lust, ill-will, sloth, pride, and doubt, and knowing all those mental faults which make men weak, training their minds in the four kinds of mental activity, accomplishing exercising themselves in the sevenfold higher wisdom, received the Full Fruition of Enlightenment. And I know that the holy Buddhas in the long ages of the times to come will do the same. And I know that the Blessed One, the holy Buddha of to-day, has done so now.”** The Buddha said: **“Great is your faith, O Sariputta. But take heed that it be well grounded.”** Then, Sariputra requested permission to enter Nirvana first because in the past, the chief disciples of all the Buddhas before Sakyamuni all passes into Nirvana ahead of their own “World Honored One.” The venerable Ananda gathered everybody to bid farewell to elder Sariputra. Sariputra sternly encouraged the community to support the Sangha, in order to propagate the dharma and benefit the living. Then, Sariputra bade farewell to all and return to his native village to pass away into Nirvana.

Chapter Five

Faith In the Kalama Sutra

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

Faith (Sradha-skt) plays an extremely important role in Buddhism. It is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharmas (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees,

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

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

Chapter Six

Faith Plays An Important Role In Cultivation In Buddhism

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

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

According to Most Venerable Thích Thiên Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, he emphasized that to have Faith is to believe in the following six elements: 1) What is self-faith or faith in one's self? This is to have faith that everything is created within one's mind; therefore, if a practitioner recites Buddha, then, absolutely, Buddha will receive him or her. 2) What is faith in others? This is to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. 3) What is it to have faith in causation? This is to believe that reciting Buddha is the action or cause for gaining rebirth and enlightenment. 4) What is it to believe in effect? To believe in effect means to believe that in the matter of gaining rebirth and attaining Buddhahood as the end result, or the consequence of reciting Buddha. 5) What is it to have faith in practice? To have faith in practice means to believe in the existence of the Western Pureland and that the forms and characteristics in the Ultimate Bliss World that the Buddha spoke of it in the sutras are all true. It exists just as this Saha World really exists. 6) What is it to have faith in theory? This is to believe that "all theories are within the mind;" thus, the mind encompasses all the infinite Buddha Lands in the ten directions.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of indestructible faith of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supreme indestructible faith

of great knowledge of Buddhas: have indestructible faith in all Buddhas, in all Buddhas' teachings, in all wise and holy mendicants, in all enlightening beings, in all genuine teachers, in all sentient beings, in all great vows of enlightening beings, in all practices of enlightening beings, in honoring and serving all Buddhas, and in the skillful mystic techniques of enlightening beings. In the Surangama Sutra, book Eight, the Buddha reminded Ananda about the ten grades of Bodhisattva faith: 1) The mind that resides in faith and faith which destroys illusions. With the mind centered in the middle, they enter the flow where wonderful perfection reveals itself. From the truth of that wonderful perfection there repeatedly arise wonders of truth. They always dwell in the wonder of faith, until all false thinking is completely eliminated and the middle way is totally true. 2) True faith, unforgetfulness or the mind that resides in mindfulness. When true faith is clearly understood, then perfect penetration is total, and the three aspects of skandhas, places, and realms are no longer obstructions. Then all their habits throughout innumerable kalpas of past and future, during which they abandon bodies and receive bodies, appear to them now in the present moment. These good people can remember everything and forget nothing. This is called "The mind that resides in mindfulness." 3) Zealous progress or the mind that resides in vigor. When the wonderful perfection is completely true, that essential truth brings about a transformation. They go beyond the beginningless habits to reach the one essential brightness. Relying solely on this essential brightness, they progress toward true purity. This is called the mind of vigor. 4) Wisdom or the mind resides in wisdom. The essence of the mind reveals itself as total wisdom; this is called the mind that resides in wisdom. 5) Settled firmness on concentration, or settled firmness on concentration or the mind that resides in samadhi. As the wisdom and brightness are held steadfast, a profound stillness pervades. The stage at which the majesty of this stillness becomes constant and solid. This is called the mind that resides in samadhi. 6) Non-retrogression or the mind that resides in irreversibility. The light of samadhi emits brightness. When the essence of the brightness enters deeply within, they only advance and never retreat. This is called the mind of irreversibility. 7) Protection of the Truth or the mind that resides in protecting the Dharma. When the progress of their minds is

secure, and they hold their minds and protect them without loss, they connect with the life-breath of the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions. This is called the mind that protects the Dharma. 8) Reflexive powers or the mind that resides in Making Transferences. Protecting their light of enlightenment, they can use this wonderful force to return to the Buddha's light of compassion and come back to stand firm with the Buddha. It is like two mirrors that are set facing one another, so that between them the exquisite images interreflect and enter into one another layer upon layer. This is called the mind of transference. 9) The nirvana mind in effortlessness or the mind that resides in precepts. With this secret interplay of light, they obtain the Buddha's eternal solidity and unsurpassed wonderful purity. Dwelling in the unconditioned, they know no loss or dissipation. This is called the mind that resides in precepts. 10) Abiding in the precepts, or action at will in anything in anywhere or the mind that resides in vows. Abiding in the precepts with self-mastery, they can roam throughout the ten directions, going anywhere they wish. This is called the mind that resides in vows.

In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Do not have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Do not believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Do not believe in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly."

Chapter Seven

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

I. False Views In Buddhist Point of View:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

According to Buddhism, most wrong views arise from ignorance that cause people to possess views that are not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor do they tally with these wonderful teachings that the World's Honored One lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago. Ignorance means stupidity, or unenlightenment. Ignorance also means misunderstanding, being dull-witted ignorant, not conforming to the truth, not bright, dubious, blind, dark. Ignorance also means being dull-witted ignorant not knowing the four noble truths, not knowing sufferings, the causes of sufferings, the mental state after severing sufferings, and the way to sever sufferings. Ignorance which mistakes the illusory phenomena of this world for realities. In Buddhism, Avidya is noncognizance of the four noble truths, the three precious ones (triratna), and the law of karma, etc. Avidya is the first link of conditionality (pratityasampada), which leads to entanglement of the world of samsara and the root of all unwholesome in the world. This is the primary factor that enmeshes (làm vướng víu) beings in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In a Buddhist sense, it refers to lack of understanding of the four noble truths (Arya-satya), the effects of actions (karma), dependent arising (pratitya-samutpada), and other key Buddhist doctrines. In Madhyamaka, "Avidya" refers to the determination of the mind through ideas and concepts that permit beings to construct an ideal world that confers upon the everyday world

its forms and manifold quality, and that thus block vision of reality. "Avidya" is thus the nonrecognition of the true nature of the world, which is empty (shunyata), and the mistaken understanding of the nature of phenomena. Thus "avidya" has a double function: ignorance veils the true nature and also constructs the illusory appearance. "Avidya" characterizes the conventional reality. For the Sautrantikas and Vaibhashikas, "Avidya" means seeing the world as unitary and enduring, whereas in reality it is manifold and impermanent. "Avidya" confers substantiality on the world and its appearances. In the Yogachara's view, "avidya" means seeing the object as a unit independent of consciousness, when in reality it is identical with it. Ignorance means Unenlightened, the first or last of the twelve nidanas. Ignorance is Illusion or darkness without illumination, the ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Ignorance of the way of escape from sufferings, one of the three affluences that feed the stream of mortality or transmigration. Sometimes ignorance means "Maya" or "Illusion." It means complete darkness without illumination. The ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Ignorance is the main cause of our non-enlightenment. Ignorance is only a false mark, so it is subject to production, extinction, increase, decrease, defilement, purity, and so on. Ignorance is the main cause of our birth, old age, worry, grief, misery, and sickness, and death. Ignorance is one of the three fires which must be allowed to die out before Nirvana is attained. The erroneous state of mind which arises from belief in self. In Zen, ignorance is not seeing things as they really are. It is failing to understand the truth about life. As long as we have not developed our minds to obtain wisdom, we remain ignorant of the true nature of things. According to Buddhism, ignorance means regarding the self as real. Due to ignorance, people do not see things as they really are, and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. They become blind under the delusion of self, clinging to things which are impermanent, changeable, and perishable. Once anger arises, one has nothing but "ignorance." In order to eliminate "ignorance," you should meditate on causality. All of our psychological problems are rooted in ignorance, in delusion. Ignorance is the crowning corruption. Our greeds, hates, conceits and a host of other defilements go hand in hand with our

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

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

In many Buddhist scriptures, especially in the Kalama Sutra, on sraddha, the Buddha wanted to advise his disciples that not to have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Not to believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Not to believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Not to believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Not to believe in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly. Therefore, Buddhists should not blindly believe nor blindly cultivate on inverted views for they are surely not in accordance with Buddhist teachings.

According to Buddhist teachings, there are many different kinds of wrong views. However, in the limitation of this writing, we only mention some typical wrong views that can impact our life and cultivation. ***Two Kinds of Wrong Views:*** According to Buddhist teachings, there are two kinds of wrong view: First, holding to the real existence of material things. Second, holding to their entire unreality. There are still two other kinds of wrong view: First, holding to the view of total annihilation. Second, holding to the view of permanence or immortality. The view that personality is permanent. ***Three Kinds of Wrong Views:*** According to Bhikkhu Bodhi in Abhidhamma, there are three kinds of wrong views. First, Nihilism (natthika-ditthi), which denies the survival of the personality in any form after death, thus negating the moral significance of deeds. Second, the causality view (ahetuka-ditthi), which states that there is no cause or condition for the defilement and purification of beings, that beings are defiled and purified by chance, fate, or necessity. Third, the inefficacy of action view (akiriya-ditthi), which claims that deeds have no efficacy in producing results and thus invalidates moral distinctions. ***Four Kinds of Inverted Views: Four Currents That Carry Thinking Along:*** These are the defilements that sweep away the wholesome dharmas and cause sentient beings to drift and drown in the torrential stream of Samsara. These are wrong views, or the illusion of seeing things as they seem,

not as they really are: First, Wrong views, or the illusion of seeing things as they seem, not as they really are. Second, Desires, or thinking of desires. Third, Samsaric existence, or thinking of existence or life. Fourth, Ignorance, or Unenlightened thinking or condition. *Four Upside Down or Inverted Views*: Seeing things as they seem not as they are, e.g. the impermanent as permanent, misery as joy, non-ego as ego, and impurity as purity. First, considering what is really impermanent to be permanent. Second, considering what is really suffering to be joy. Third, considering what is not a self to be a self. Fourth, considering what is impure to be pure. ***Five Kinds of Wrong Views***: *Five Kinds of Gross Servants*: greed, anger, stupidity, arrogance, and doubt or doubtfulness. *Five Types of Sharp False Views*: body view, one-sided view, improper view, obstinate view, and precept fixation view. The five sharp wrong views: First, the view that there is a real and permanent body. The illusion of the body or self. The concept that all beings have reality and the five skandhas as not the constituents of the livings. False view that every man has a permanent lord within. Wrong view on the existence of a permanent ego. The erroneous doctrine that the ego or self composed of the temporary five skandhas, is a reality and permanent. The view that there is a real mine and thine. Believe that our self is our greatest and most precious possession in our eyes. We try by all means to satisfy to our self, irrespective of others' interest of rights. Second, extreme view (of extinction and/or permanence). Being prejudiced to one extreme or another. Third, perverse view which denying cause and effect (deviant views). *Fourth*, the view of grasping at views or stubborn perverted views, viewing inferior thing as superior, or counting the worse as the better. That is the tendency of those who maintain their point of view or resist and oppose change. For example, there are some out-dated customs still practiced in Vietnam such as using Chinese money papers and burning them at funeral ceremonies. In fact, Buddhist funeral rites are simple. Relatives and friends recite the Amitabha Sutra to help free the dead from suffering. Buddhists, especially monks and nuns, prefer cremation to burial, since the first mode is more economic, and hygienic than the second one. Moreover, with time, the burial grounds would extend considerably, reducing thus the land reserved for cultivation and other utilities. *Fifth*, view of grasping at precepts and

prohibitions. Rigid view in favor of rigorous ascetic prohibitions. This is a biased viewpoint tending to favor one side. Those who conceive this way think that practicing Buddha's teachings is equivalent to not practicing it. Another biased one claims that, after death man will be reborn as man, beast as beast, or that there is nothing left after death. The last viewpoint belongs to a materialistic philosophy that rejects the law of causality. ***Six Kinds of Wrong Views on the "Self"***: According to the Majjhima Nikaya, there are six wrong views on the "self". First, I have a self (there is a self for me). This is the view of the externalists who hold that the self exists permanently through all time. Second, I have no self (there is not a self for me). This is the view of annihilationists who hold to the destruction of the being. *Third*, by self, I perceive self. *Fourth*, by self, I perceive no-self. *Fifth*, by no-self, I perceive self. *Sixth*, it is this self for me that speaks, that feels, that experiences now here and now there the fruits of good and bad deeds, it is this self for me that is permanent, stable, eternal, unchanging, remaining the same forever. This is the belief of the eternalists who hold that this self undergoes the fruits of lovely or wicked actions in this or that born, abode, class of womb. This self is that consciousness that they hold as permanent, eternal, unchanging as the world, the sun, the moon, the earth, etc. ***Eight Kinds of Incorrect Views***: According to Buddhist teachings, there are eight incorrect views: First, holding to the idea of the existence of a permanent ego. Second, holding to the idea of the five skandhas as not the constituents of the living. Third, holding to the idea of fate or determination of length of life. Fourth, holding to the idea of a creator. Fifth, holding to the idea of permanence. Sixth, holding to the idea of annihilation. Seventh, holding to the idea of the reality of things. Eighth, holding to the idea of unreality of all things. ***Ten Kinds of Wrong Views***: According to Buddhist teachings, there are ten basic deluded views: Deluded views are illusory or misleading views and thoughts. There are ten basic deluded views which manifest themselves in relation to the Four Noble Truths in each of the three worlds: desire, form, and formless. The ten are greed, anger, delusion, arrogance, doubt, wrong view of self, one-sided view, deviant views, the view of being attached to views, view of grasping prohibitive precepts. According to The Buddha and His Teachings of Most Venerable Narada, there are ten kinds of wrong views. First, there is

no such virtue as generosity (There is no good effect in giving alms). Second, there is no such virtue as offering. Third, there is no effect or virtue in charitable actions or offering gifts to guests. Fourth, there is neither fruit nor result of good or evil deeds. Fifth, there is no such belief as this world. Sixth, there is no such world beyond. Seventh, there is no effect to anything done to mother. Eighth, there is no effect to anything done to father. Ninth, there are no beings that die and are reborn. Tenth, there are no righteous and well disciplined recluses and brahmins who having realized by their own super-intellect.

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

eight incorrect views. Believing that there is true existence of real being in objects, or that there is some entity that exists forever. The theory of Attachment on Eternalism believes in eternalism, believes that man was created by the will of some Deity. He will live his life and act according to his beliefs in order to return to Heaven or to be condemned forever in Hell. This theory does not conform to the Buddhist law of causality. In Buddhist view, men are tied to the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of reincarnation. This cycle turns around and around, compelling men to reincarnate in one of the six realms. Buddhists believe that Nihilism is false because it is based on incomplete understanding of reality. Eternalism is also wrong, because Buddhists cannot accept that there is anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable.

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

intellect this world and the world beyond, make known the same (Buddhas and Arahants).

According to the Studies of the Consciousness-Only, there are ten kinds of wrong views. ***The first wrong view is the Satkayadrsti:*** The view of the body or the view that there is a real and permanent body or view of egoism, the view that there is a real self or ego, or view of mine and thine, the view that there is a real mine and thine. Heresy of individuality. The illusion of the body is the erroneous belief that the ego or self composed of the temporary five skandhas, is a reality and permanent. The illusion of the body or self, one of the five wrong views. Thought of an ego, one of the three knots. There are two ways in which one comes to conceive the real existence of an ego, the one is subjective imagination and the other the objective conception of reality. Believe that our self is our greatest and most precious possession in our eyes. We try by all means to satisfy to our self, irrespective of others' interest of rights. ***The second wrong view is the Antagnahadrsti:*** Also called Biased views, extreme views, one-sided standpoint, or one-sided views. The state of clinging to one of the two extremes in the world of relativity, such as clinging to permanence, impermanence, being or non-being, etc. These views are also the two extreme views of annihilation and personal immortality, one of the five sharp wrong views. This is a biased viewpoint tending to favor one side. Those who conceive this way think that practicing Buddha's teachings is equivalent to not practicing it. Another biased one claims that, after death man will be reborn as man, beast as beast, or that there is nothing left after death. The last view belongs to a materialistic philosophy that rejects the law of causality. ***The third wrong view is the Drishti or Ditthi:*** Also called false views, heretical views, improper views, perverse views, heterodox views, not recognizing the doctrine of normal karma, to follow wrong views, or wrong views. In Buddhism, perverted views means holding to the real existence of material things or viewing the seeming as real and the ego as real, or not recognizing the doctrine of causality and karma. Perverted (wrong) views or opinions, not consistent with the dharma, one of the five heterodox opinions and ten evils. "Wrong views" are attitudes and doctrines that are antithetical to the teachings and practices of Buddhism. In Indian Buddhism, seven false views are commonly enumerated: 1) belief in a

truly existent self (atman); 2) rejection of the working of cause and effect (karma); 3) eternalism or belief that there is a soul that exists after death; 4) annihilationism or belief that the soul perishes after death; 5) adherence to false ethics; 6) perceiving negative actions as good; and 7) doubt regarding the central tenets of Buddhism. There were at least sixty-two heretical views (views of the externalist or non-Buddhist views) in the Buddha's time. ***The fourth wrong view is the Drstiparamasra:*** Attachment to one's view. Wrong views caused by attachment to one's own erroneous understandings. To hold heterodox doctrines and be obsessed with the sense of the self. That is the tendency of those who maintain their point of view or resist and oppose change. ***The fifth wrong view is the Silavrataparamasra:*** Upholding forbidden religious practices, clinging to mere rules and rituals, or rigid views in favor of rigorous ascetic prohibitions (covering oneself with ashes). Clinging to heterodox ascetic views, i.e. those of ultra-asceticism, one of the four attachments (catuh-paramarsa). In India there are still people who still uphold heterodox beliefs such as pressing the belly with a stone or throwing oneself from a high position into a fire in order to enjoy blessings. ***The sixth wrong view is the Kamaragaparamasra:*** The illusion or false views caused by desires. Desires for and love of the things of this life or craving (greed, affection, desire). Most people define happiness as the satisfaction of all desires. The desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. We can only realize the true happiness and a peaceful state of mind when our desires are few. This is one of the great steps towards the shore of liberation. ***The seventh wrong view is the Dosaparamasra:*** Anger is an emotional response to something that is inappropriate or unjust. If one does not obtain what one is greedy can lead to anger. Anger is an emotion involved in self-protection. However, according to Buddhist doctrines, anger manifests itself in a very crude manner, destroying the practitioner in a most effective way. Thus, according to the Buddha's teachings in the Dharmapada Sutra, to subdue anger and resentment, we must develop a compassionate mind by meditating on loving kindness, pity and compassion. According to

Buddhism, the basis of anger is usually fear for when we get angry we feel we are not afraid any more, however, this is only a blind power. The energy of anger, if it's not so destructive, it may not be of any constructive. In fact, extreme anger could eventually lead us even to taking our own life. Thus the Buddha taught: "When you are angry at someone, let step back and try to think about some of the positive qualities of that person. To be able to do this, your anger would be reduced by its own." A man was rowing his boat upstream on a very misty morning. Suddenly, he saw another boat coming downstream, not trying to avoid him. It was coming straight at him. He shouted, "Be careful!" but the boat came right into him, and his boat was almost sunk. The man became very angry, and began to shout at the other person, to give him a piece of his mind. But when he looked closely, he saw that there was no one in the other boat. Charlotte Joko Beck wrote in 'Nothing Special': "There's a killer shark in everybody. And the killer shark is unexperienced fear. Your way of covering it up is to look so nice and do so much and be so wonderful that nobody can possibly see who you really are, which is someone who is scared to death. As we uncover these layers of rage, it's important not to act out; we shouldn't inflict our rage on others. In genuine practice, our rage is simply a stage that passes. But for a time, we are more uncomfortable than when we started. That's inevitable; we're becoming more honest, and our false surface style is beginning to dissolve. The process doesn't go on forever, but it certainly can be most uncomfortable while it lasts. Occasionally we may explode, but that's better than evading or covering our reaction." Zen practitioners should always remember that hatred is one of the three fires which burn in the mind until allowed to die for fuelling. Anger is also one of the mula-klesa, or root causes of suffering. Anger manifests itself in a very crude manner, destroying the practitioner in a most effective way. To subdue anger and resentment, we must develop a compassionate mind. As in the case of lust or sense-desire, it is unwise or unsystematic attention that brings about ill-will, which when not checked propagates itself, saps the mind and clouds the vision. It distorts the entire mind and its properties and thus hinders awakening to truth, and blocks the path to freedom. Lust and ill-will based on ignorance, not only hamper mental growth, but act as the root cause of strife and dissension between man and man and nation and

nation. Besides, Zen practitioner should always pay close attention to your breathing because there is surely a so-called reciprocal character of mind and breathing (Prana), which means that a certain type of mind or mental activity is invariably accompanied by a breathing of corresponding character, whether transcendental or mundane. For instance, a particular mood, feeling, or thought is always accompanied, manifested, or reflected by a breathing of corresponding character and rhythm. Thus anger produces not merely an inflamed thought-feeling, but also a harsh and accentuated "roughness" of breathing. On the other hand, when there is a calm concentration on an intellectual problem, the thought and the breathing exhibit a like calmness. The binding of anger is one of the nine bonds that bind men to mortality, the fetter of hatred binding to transmigration. According to Buddhist psychology, the mental factor of aversion is always linked to the experience of pain. One may be greedy and happy, but never angry and happy at the same time. Anyone who cultures hatred, anger, malice, nurses revenge or keeps alive a grudge is bound to experience much suffering for he has laid hold a very potent source of it. Those who exercise their hatred on others as in killing, torturing or maiming may expect birth in a state, compared in the scriptural simile to a pitfull of glowing situations, where they will experience feelings which are exclusively painful, sharp, severe. Only in such an environment will they be able to experience all the misery which they, by their own cruelty to others, have brought upon themselves. The Buddha taught: "Bandits who steal merits are of no comparison to hatred and anger. Because when hatred and anger arise, inevitable innumerable karma will be created. Immediately thereafter, hundreds and thousands of obstructions will appear, masking the proper teachings of enlightenment, burying and dimming the Buddha Nature. Therefore, A thought of hatred and anger had just barely risen, ten thousands of karmic doors will open immediately. It is to say with just one thought of hatred, one must endure all such obstructions and obstacles." *The eighth wrong view is the Manaparamasra:* Proud, arrogance, self-conceit, or looking down on others. Haughty people are self-aggrandized and boasting. They tend to bully their superiors and trample the inferior. They refuse to learn any more or listen to advice or explanations; and as a result commit regrettable errors. Pride, regarding oneself as superior, one of

the ten wrong views. Pride means arrogance or haughtiness. Arrogance and pride, a kind of klesa, one of the five higher bonds of desire. Pride is asserting superiority over inferiors and equality with equals. Looking down on others. Haughty people are self-aggrandized and boasting. They tend to bully their superiors and trample the inferior. They refuse to learn any more or listen to advice or explanations; and as a result commit regrettable errors. Haughtiness means false arrogance, thinking oneself correct in spite of one's wrong conduct, thinking oneself is good in spite of one's very bad in reality. Haughtiness also means arrogance and conceit due to one's illusion of having completely understood what one has hardly comprehended at all. Practitioners should always remember that conceit and ingratitude belong to the eighth army of Mara. Conceit arises when practitioners begin to experience joy, rapture, delight, and other interesting things in practice. At this point they may wonder whether their teacher has actually attained this wondrous stage yet, whether other practitioners are practicing as hard as they are, and so forth. Conceit most often happens at the stage of insight when practitioners perceive the momentary arising and passing away of phenomena. It is a wonderful experience of being perfectly present, seeing how objects arise and pass away at the very moment when mindfulness alights on them. At this particular stage, a series of defilements can arise. They are specifically known as the "vipassana kilesas," defilements of insight. Since these defilements can become a harmful obstacle, it is important for practitioners to understand them clearly. The scriptures tell us that mana or conceit has the characteristic of bubbly energy, of a great zeal and enthusiasm arising in the mind. One overflows with energy and is filled with self-centered, self-glorifying thoughts like, "I'm so great, no one can compare with me." A prominent aspect of conceit is "stiffness and rigidity." One's mind feels stiff and bloated, like a python that has just swallowed some other creature. This aspect of mana is also reflected as tension in the body and posture. Its victims get big-headed and stiff-necked, and thus may find it difficult to bow respectfully to others. Conceit is really a fearsome mental state. It destroys gratitude, making it difficult to acknowledge that one owes any kind of debt to another person. Forgetting the good deeds other have done for us in the past, one belittles them and denigrates their virtues. Not only that, but one

also actively conceals the virtues of others so that no one will hold them in esteem. All of us have had benefactors in our lives, especially in childhood and younger days. Our parents, for example, gave us love, education and necessities of life at a time when we were helpless. Our teachers gave us knowledge. Friends helped us when we got into trouble. Remembering our debts to those who have helped us, we feel humble and grateful, and we hope for a chance to help them in turn. The Buddha taught: there are two types of rare and precious people in the world. The first type is a benefactor, one who is benevolent and kind, who helps another person for noble reasons, sparing no effort to help beings liberate themselves from the sufferings of samsara. The second type is the one who is grateful, who appreciates the good that has been done for him or her, and who tries to repay it when the time is ripe.” ***The ninth wrong view is the Avidyaparamasra:*** In Buddhism, Avidya is ignorance or noncognizance of the four noble truths, the three precious ones (triratna), and the law of karma, etc. Avidya is the first link of conditionality (pratityasampada), which leads to entanglement of the world of samsara and the root of all unwholesome in the world. This is the primary factor that enmeshes (làm vướng víu) beings in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In a Buddhist sense, it refers to lack of understanding of the four noble truths (Arya-satya), the effects of actions (karma), dependent arising (pratitya-samutpada), and other key Buddhist doctrines. In Madhyamaka, “Avidya” refers to the determination of the mind through ideas and concepts that permit beings to construct an ideal world that confers upon the everyday world its forms and manifold quality, and that thus block vision of reality. “Avidya” is thus the nonrecognition of the true nature of the world, which is empty (shunyata), and the mistaken understanding of the nature of phenomena. Thus “avidya” has a double function: ignorance veils the true nature and also constructs the illusory appearance. “Avidya” characterizes the conventional reality. For the Sautrantikas and Vaibhashikas, “Avidya” means seeing the world as unitary and enduring, whereas in reality it is manifold and impermanent. “Avidya” confers substantiality on the world and its appearances. In the Yogachara’s view, “avidya” means seeing the object as a unit independent of consciousness, when in reality it is identical with it. Ignorance is the main cause of our non-enlightenment. Ignorance is

only a false mark, so it is subject to production, extinction, increase, decrease, defilement, purity, and so on. Ignorance is the main cause of our birth, old age, worry, grief, misery, and sickness, and death. Ignorance is also a mind of illusion or darkness without illumination, the ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Ignorance is one of the three fires which must be allowed to die out before Nirvana is attained. The erroneous state of mind which arises from belief in self. ***The tenth wrong view is the Doubt and Delusion:*** Doubtful views or doubtfully to view, one of the ten wrong views. The overhanging cover of doubt, which prevents sentient beings from seeing and practicing good deeds, one of the five covers or mental and moral hindrances in cultivation. Bernard Glassman and Rick Fields wrote in 'Instructions to the Cook': "Doubt is a state of openness and unknowing. It's a willingness to not be in charge, to not know what is going to happen next. The state of doubt allows us to explore things in an open and fresh way. Like water, doubt is fluid. It had no fixed position. If you pour water into a round container, it becomes round, and if you pour water into a square container, it becomes square. In the same way, doubt or unknowing flows in accordance with the situation. It's the state of surrender, of being open to what is. Only when we raise sufficient doubt and questioning can we go further. Our problem with doubt is that we take it to be a negative thing. We think that because we don't understand or because we are not sure, there is something wrong. When we get caught by the negative aspects of doubt, we wallow in self-pity. 'How come I can't see it?' we say. But this doubt can be positive. Positive doubt can allow us to see what this life is about. It can help us get rid of our complacency."

Chapter Eight

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

(A) To Believe In Right Views For They Are Always In Accordance With Buddhist Teachings

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

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

Right view means to abandon a self-centered way of looking at things and to have a right view of the Buddha, that is “Nothing has its own self; everything exists due to temporary combination. If this exists, the other exists; if this ceases to exist, the other is in no way to be able to exist.” Right view also means profoundly and subtly understand our true nature. In Buddhism, right view means the seeing and understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Right View is one of the two trainings in Wisdom, the other training is Right Thought. Right view can be said to mean seeing things as they really are, or understanding the real truth about things, rather than simply seeing them as they appear to be. According to

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

II. Categories of Right View in Buddhist Teachings:

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

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

There are two conditions that are conducive to right understanding: Hearing from others that is hearing the Correct Law (Saddhamma), from others (Paratoghosa), and systematic attention or wise attention

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

every part and aspect of the Dhamma and functions as the key-note of Buddhism. Due to lack of right understanding, the ordinary man is blind to the true nature of life and fails to see the universal fact of life, suffering or unsatisfactoriness. He does not even try to grasp these facts, but hastily considers the doctrine as pessimism. It is natural perhaps, for beings engrossed in mundane pleasures, beings who crave more and more for gratification of the senses and hate pain, to resent the very idea of suffering and turn their back on it. They do not, however, realize that even as they condemn the idea of suffering and adhere to their own convenient and optimistic view of things, they are still being oppressed by the ever recurring unsatisfactory nature of life.

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

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

Strongly Believe in the Roles of Right View In the Four Noble Truths & the Eightfold Noble Path: In Buddhism, right view plays an extremely important role in both the teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path. Through Right view and right thought we eliminate greed, anger and ignorance: Through right view and right thinking we can eliminate greed, anger, and ignorance. The mind supported by wisdom will bring forth the Right Understanding which help us wholly and entirely free from the intoxication of sense desire (kama), from becoming (bhava), wrong views (ditthi) and ignorance (avijja). Right view also can refer to insight into the nature of the Dharma Body of the Buddha. Right view refers to your manner of

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

Thus, right understanding, which is the main spring in the Eightfold Noble Path, causes other factors of the co-ordinate system to move in proper relation. In other words, this view or understanding is the highest wisdom which sees the Ultimate Reality. That is to say to see things as they are. Understanding the four noble truths, the first of the eightfold noble path. Meanwhile, according to Buddhism, the eight noble paths play an extremely important role in Buddhist cultivation for these are the eight right (correct) ways; the paths leading to release from suffering, the goal of the third in the four noble truths. These are also eight in the 37 bodhi ways to enlightenment. Thus, the eight noble paths play a very important role cultivation in Buddhism. In order to provide answers to layman Visakha on the relationships between “eightfold noble path” and “disciplines-concentration-wisdom”, Bhikhuni Dhammadinna explained in the Culavedalla Sutta (the Shorter Set of Questions-and-Answers), in Majjhima Nikaya, book 44:

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

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

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

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

understanding and right thought we eliminate greed, anger and ignorance.

Regarding the Right Understanding, practitioners should try to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. Right understanding or right view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being influenced by prejudice or emotion. Right view helps differentiate the true from the false, and determines the true religious path for attaining liberation. Right understanding means to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. One of the most important of these is the law of karma, the law of cause and effect, every action brings a certain result, without any exception. There is no such 'no wholesome nor unwholesome' in Buddhism. Practitioners should always remember that whenever we act with greed, hatred, or delusion, pain and suffering come back to us. On the contrary, when our actions are motivated by generosity, love or wisdom, the results are happiness and peace. Devout Buddhists should always have a mindful mind to skilfully integrate the understanding of the law of karma into our lives. Right understanding also means profoundly and subtly understand our true nature. In Buddhism, right understanding means the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Right Understanding or Right View is one of the two trainings in Wisdom (the other training is Right Thought). Right understanding can be said to mean seeing things as they really are, or understanding the real truth about things, rather than simply seeing them as they appear to be. According to Buddhist point of view, it means insight, penetrative understanding, or seeing beneath the surface of things, etc., under the lens of the Four Noble Truths, Interdependent origination, impermanence, impersonality, and so forth. Right understanding can be acquired by ourselves or by acquiring the truths that are shown by others. The process of acquiring right understanding must follow the following order: first we must observe objectively the facts which we are presented, then consider their significance. It is to say first to study and then to consider and examine them, and finally attaining right understanding through contemplation. At this point, the two types of understanding, either by ourselves or through others, become

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

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

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

Regarding the Right Thought, practitioners should be free from sensual desire, ill-will, and cruelty. Right thought means thoughts that are free from sensual desire, ill-will, and cruelty. Thoughts free from ill-will means thoughts that are free from anger, for when anger is burning in the mind, both us and people around us will suffer. Right thoughts includes thoughts of renunciation, good will, and of compassion, or non-harm. These thoughts are to be cultivated and extended towards all living beings regardless of race, caste, clan, or creed. As they embrace all that breathes there are no compromising limitations. Right thought means that our reflection must be consistent with common sense, useful both to others and ourselves. We must strive to correct our faults, or change our wicked opinions. While meditating on the noble formula of “Precept, Concentration, and Wisdom,” we must realize that ‘ignorance’ is the main cause of suffering, the root of all wicked acts; therefore, we must look for a way to get rid of suffering for us and for others. A mind free from sensual lust, ill-will and cruelty. Right thought means resolve in favour of renunciation, goodwill and nonharming of sentient beings. Through meditation, we can recognize anger and let it go. At that time, the mind

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

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

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

Buddhist practitioners should always remember that although the main purpose of cultivation in Buddhism is enlightenment and

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

It is through right understanding that one sees cause and effect, the arising and ceasing of all conditioned things. The truth of the Dhamma can be only grasped in that way, and not through blind belief, wrong view, speculation or even by abstract philosophy. According to the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha says: “This Dhamma is for the wise and not for the unwise.” The Nikaya also explains the ways and means of attaining wisdom by stages and avoiding false views. Right understanding permeates the entire teaching, pervades every part and aspect of the Dhamma and functions as the key-note of Buddhism. Due to lack of right understanding, the ordinary man is blind to the true nature of life and fails to see the universal fact of life, suffering or unsatisfactoriness. He does not even try to grasp these facts, but hastily

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

As a matter of fact, right view is the foundation in the cultivation of wisdom. The right view is also the lighthouse that helps destroying ignorance and showing the real nature of the five aggregates. Owing to the correct view, practitioners bravely deny the dead Buddhism. Those who have faith in correct views always know that they, themselves, are responsible for their own karmas. Besides, correct views are also the foundation for cultivating to stop evil actions and to increase good actions. To have faith in correct views on sufferings will help practitioners pushing away obstacles and to advance on the path of cultivation. To have faith in correct views on the selflessness and impermanence of all things will help pushing away obstacles to advance on the path of cultivation. To have faith in correct views on the twelve links of causation also means seeing the Way, and so on.

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

To Have Faith in the Right View, Practitioners Will Cultivate & Live In Accordance With the Theory of Cause and Effect: In Buddhist teachings, right view on cause and effect is seeing that causality is a natural law, mentioning the relationship between cause and effect. All things come into being not without cause, since if there is no cause, there is no effect and vice-versa. As so sow, so shall you reap! Cause and effect never conflict with each other. Truly speaking, those who have correct view on cause and effect, or those who cultivate and live in accordance with the law of causality, they see the Way. According to Buddhism, cause is a primary force that produces an effect; effect is a result of that primary force. The law of causation governs everything in the universe without exception. Law of cause and effect or the relation between cause and effect in the sense of the Buddhist law of “Karma” The law of causation (reality itself as cause and effect in momentary

operation). Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action or effect has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situations. The Moral Causation in Buddhism means that a deed, good or bad, or indifferent, brings its own result on the doer. Good people are happy and bad ones unhappy. But in most cases “happiness” is understood not in its moral or spiritual sense but in the sense of material prosperity, social position, or political influence. For instance, kingship is considered the reward of one’s having faithfully practiced the ten deeds of goodness. If one meets a tragic death, he is thought to have committed something bad in his past lives even when he might have spent a blameless life in the present one.

Causality is a natural law, mentioning the relationship between cause and effect. All things come into being not without cause, since if there is no cause, there is no effect and vice-versa. As so sow, so shall you reap! Cause and effect never conflict with each other. In other words, cause and effect are always consistent with each other. If we want to have beans, we must sow bean seeds. If we want to have oranges, we must sow orange seeds. If wild weeds are planted, then it’s unreasonable for one to hope to harvest edible fruits. One cause cannot have any effect. To produce an effect, it is necessary to have some specific conditions. For instance, a grain of rice cannot produce a rice plant without the presence of sunlight, soil, water, and care. In the cause there is the effect; in the effect there is the cause. From the current cause, we can see the future effect and from the present effect we discerned the past cause. The development process from cause to effect is sometimes quick, sometimes slow. Sometimes cause and effect are simultaneous like that of beating a drum and hearing its sound. Sometimes cause and effect are three or four months away like that of the grain of rice. It takes about three to four, or five to six months from a rice seed to a young rice plant, then to a rice plant that can produce rice. Sometimes cause is result, result is cause or simultaneity of Cause and Effect. The cause has result as its cause, while the result has the cause as its result. It is like planting seeds; the seeds produce fruit, the fruit produces seeds. Sometimes it takes about ten years for a cause to turn into an effect. For instance, from the time the schoolboy enters the elementary school to the time he graduates a

four-year college, it takes him at least 14 years. Other causes may involve more time to produce effects, may be the whole life or two lives. Retribution of good and evil karma or cause and effect in the moral realm have their corresponding relations. According to Buddhism, whoever denies the rule of “cause and effect” will destroy all moral responsibility.

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

Some people believe in some other religions that man’s destiny is basically determined for him by God. God determines if a man deserves heaven or hell; he may even decide each man’s earthly destiny. Some other people believe in fatalism that each of us has a fate which we cannot change and about which we can do nothing. They believe that ‘Whatever will be will be.’ In this philosophy the agent that determines destiny is not a God, but rather a mysterious impersonal power called ‘Fate’ which transcend our understanding. Still some other people believe the exact opposite, they believe in indeterminism: everything happens by accident. They believe that if man is lucky, he will achieve happiness or success; if he is unlucky, he will suffer or fail, but whatever he receives, he receives not through any process of determination but by accident, by sheer coincidence.

According to the Karma Law in Buddhism, the present is a shadow of the past, the future a shadow of the present. Hence our action in the

present is most important, for what we do in the present determines the course of our future development. For this reason, Buddhist practitioners should always apply their minds to the present so that they may advance on the way. According to the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth, the causal relation between action and its results holds not only with regard to the present life but also with regard to past and future lives. This universal law of cause and effect is non-negotiable. Just as we cannot run away from our own shadows, so we cannot run away from the results of our actions. They will pursue us no matter where we hide. Besides, the Buddha also taught that negative or unwholesome mind creates negative or unwholesome thoughts (anger, hatred, harmful thoughts, wrong views, etc), speech (lying, harsh speech, double-tongued, etc), as well as deeds which are the causes of our sufferings, confusion and misery. Unwholesome or negative mind will destroy our inner peace and tranquility.

According to Buddhism, the pain or pleasure resulting in this life from the practices or causes and retributions of a previous life. Therefore, ancient virtues said: "If we wish to know what our lives were like in the past, just look at the retributions we are experiencing currently in this life. If we wish to know what retributions will happen to us in the future, just look and examine the actions we have created or are creating in this life." If we understand clearly this theory, then in our daily activities, sincere Buddhists are able to avoid unwholesome deeds and practice wholesome deeds. Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise, every resultant action has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situation. Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situation. Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. It's a fundamental principle for all living beings and all things that if one sows good deeds, he will surely reap a good harvest; if he sows bad deeds, he must inevitably reap a bad harvest.

Though the results may appear quickly or slowly, everyone will be sure to receive the results that accord with their actions. Anyone who has deeply understood this principle will never do evil.

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

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

In short, according to Buddhist teachings, you reap what you sow without any exception. By understanding and believing in the law of causality, Buddhists will not become superstitious, or alarmed, and rely passively on heaven authority. He knows that his life depends on his karmas. If he truly believes in such a causal mechanism, he strives to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If he continues to live a good life, devoting his time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings, he can eliminate all of his bad karmas. He knows that he is the only driving force of his success or failure, so he will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. He will put more effort into performing his duties satisfactorily. Realizing the value of the law of causality, he always cares for what he thinks, tells or does in order to avoid bad karma. Devout Buddhists should always remember that retribution of good and evil karma or cause and effect in the moral realm have their corresponding relations. As mentioned above, owing to having the correct view on cause and effect, practitioners see and understand the true nature of causality, thus, they always try to cultivate to maintain correct view on the causality in their life and cultivation. Those who deny the rule of “cause and effect” will destroy all moral responsibility.

To Have Faith in the Right View For It Is the Foundation In the Cultivation of Wisdom: The Noble Eightfold Path is the fourth Noble Truth in the Four Noble Truths that can help us prevent problems or deal with any problems we may come across in our daily life. This is the path that leads to the end of sufferings and afflictions. If we follow it, we are on the way to less suffering and more happiness. The eight right (correct) ways. The path leading to release from suffering, the goal of all Buddhist practitioners. These are eight in the 37 bodhi ways to enlightenment. The Noble Eightfold Path can be divided into three groups: virtue, concentration and wisdom. This is the only path; there are no short cuts to enlightenment and deliverance of the mind. All the practical guidance and instructions given by the Buddha to remove mental conflicts due to the unsatisfactoriness of life are to be found in the Noble Eightfold Path, from right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness,

right concentration. Practicing the Noble Eight-fold Path can bring about real advantages such as improvement of personal conditions. It is due to the elimination of all evil thoughts, words, and actions that we may commit in our daily life, and to the continuing practice of charitable work; improvement of living conditions. If everyone practiced this noble path, the world we are living now would be devoid of all miseries and sufferings caused by hatred, struggle, and war between men and men, countries and countries, or peoples and peoples. Peace would reign forever on earth. Besides, to cultivate the Eightfold Noble Path also means to practice meditation to attain of enlightenment or Bodhi Awareness. The Noble Eight-fold Path is the first basic condition for attaining Bodhi Consciousness that is untarnished (while Alaya Consciousness is still defiled).

According to Buddhist teachings, Right Understanding and Right Thought constitute wisdom, the first two Noble Paths of the Eightfold Noble Path. Right view refers to understanding of the “Four Holy Truths.” It also can refer to insight into the nature of the Dharma Body of the Buddha. Right view refers to your manner of regarding something, your mental outlook and your opinions, not to what you view with your eyes. Right understanding is of the highest importance of the Eightfold Noble Path, for the remaining seven factors of the path are guided by it. It ensures that right thoughts are held and it coordinates ideas; when as a result thoughts and ideas become clear and wholesome, man’s speech and action are also brought into proper relation. It is through right understanding that one gives up harmful or profitless effort and cultivates right effort which aids the development of right mindfulness. Right effort and right mindfulness guided by right understanding bring about right concentration. Thus, right understanding, which is the main spring in the Eightfold Noble Path, causes other factors of the co-ordinate system to move in proper relation. In Buddhism, right understanding means the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Right understanding, right views, or knowledge of the four noble truth. This understanding is the highest wisdom which sees the Ultimate Reality. That is to say to see things as they are. Understanding the four noble truths, the first of the eightfold noble path. Correct views refer to

accepting certain key Buddhist concepts such as the four noble truths (arya-satya), dependent arising (pratiya-samutpada), karma, etc., as well as to eliminating wrong views. Although there is no specific definition for the term sammaditthi in Buddhism, generally speaking, Right view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being influenced by prejudice or emotion. Right view helps differentiate the true from the false, and determines the true religious path for attaining liberation. Correct or Right View or Perfect View, freedom from the common delusion. Understanding correctly of the four noble truths of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the extinction of suffering, and of the path leading to the extinction of suffering. Understand correctly on the non-ego of existence (nonindividuality of existence). Right understanding means to have a correct understanding of oneself and the world. Although we may have our own view of the world, it may not always be right. If we understand things as they really are, we would be able to live a happier and more meaningful life. For example, students who understand that it is to their own benefit to learn would work hard to learn more and do better. When they do well, everyone will be happy, including their parents and teachers. Right Understanding also means understanding thoroughly and correctly the four noble truths and having penetrative insight into reality. Mundane right understanding means an ordinary worldling's knowledge of the efficacy of moral causation or of actions and their results. Therefore, mundane right understanding means the knowledge that accords with the Four Noble Truths. This is called mundane because the understanding is not yet free from taints. This may be called "knowing accordingly."

According to Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda in the Gems of Buddhism Wisdom, there are two sorts of understanding: First, an accumulated of memory, an intellectual grasping of a subject according to certain given data. Second, real deep understanding, a penetration or an intellectual seeing a thing in its true nature, without name and external label. This penetration is possible only when the mind is free from all impurities and is fully developed through meditation. Buddhist practitioners should try to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. Right understanding or right view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being

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

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

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

of the path are guided by it. It ensures that right thoughts are held and it co-operates ideas; when as a result thoughts and ideas become clear and wholesome, man's speech and action are also brought into proper relation.

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

to the highest degree. As a scientist resolves a limb into tissues and the tissues into cells, the Buddha analyzed all component and conditioned things into their fundamental elements, right down to their ultimates, and condemned shallow thinking, unsystematic attention, which tends to make man muddle-headed and hinders the investigation of the true nature of things. It is through right understanding that one sees cause and effect, the arising and ceasing of all conditioned things. The truth of the Dhamma can be only grasped in that way, and not through blind belief, wrong view, speculation or even by abstract philosophy.

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

To Have Faith in A Correct View Will Help in Not Be Wasting Time With Metaphysical Issues: The Buddha was not concerned with such metaphysical issues which only confuse man and upset his mental equilibrium. Their solution surely will not free mankind from misery and ill. That was why the Buddha hesitated to answer such questions, and at times refrained from explaining those which were often wrongly formulated. The Buddha was a practical teacher. His sole aim was to explain in all its detail the problem of Dukkha, suffering, the universal fact of life, to make people feel its full force, and to convince them of it. He has definitely told us what he explains and what he does not explain. Even questions relating to the past and the future, the Buddha’s answers were very clear: “Let be the past, let be the future, I

will teach you the Dhamma.” The Buddha always emphasized: “When this is, that comes to be. With the arising of this, that arises. When this is not, that does not come to be. With the cessation of this, that ceases.” This in a nutshell is the Buddhist doctrine of conditionality or Dependent Arising (paticca samuppada). And this forms the foundation of the Four Noble Truths, the central conception of Buddhism. In short, through the Buddha's teachings, we clearly see that those who have correct views will never be concerned with metaphysical issues for they all are useless for Buddhist practitioners and are considered worse than wrong views.

To Have Faith in Correct Views For It Is the Lighthouse That Helps Destroying Ignorance & Showing the Real Nature of the Five Aggregates: It should be reminded that according to Buddhism, the correct view is not only in accordance with Correct Buddhist teachings, but it also tally with these wonderful teachings that the World's Honored One. Those who have correct views on the five aggregates are those who see and understand the five aggregates in accordance with Buddhist teachings. According to Buddhist teachings, skandha only means the five aggregates or five aggregates of conditioned phenomena (constituents), or the five causally conditioned elements of existence forming a being or entity. According to Buddhist philosophy, each individual existence is composed of the five elements and because they are constantly changing, so those who attempt to cling to the “self” are subject to suffering. Though these factors are often referred to as the “aggregates of attachment” because they are impermanent and changing, ordinary people always develop desires for them. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five aggregates (Five Skandhas). The aggregates which make up a human being. The five skandhas are the roots of all ignorance. They keep sentient beings from realizing their always-existing Buddha-Nature. The five aggregates are considered as maras or demons fighting against the Buddha-nature of men. In accordance with the Dharma, life is comprised of five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness). Matter plus the four mental factors classified below as feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness combined together form life. The real nature of these five aggregates is explained in the Teaching of the

Buddha as follows: “Matter is equated to a heap of foam, feeling is like a bubble, perception is described as a mirage, mental formations are like a banana tree and consciousness is just an illusion. In short, according to Buddhism, right view is the lighthouse that helps practitioners destroy ignorance in order to be able to clearly see the real nature of the five aggregates that is basically empty. This view is totally in accordance with Buddhist teachings. It also tally with the wonderful teachings that the Buddha lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago. Therefore, Buddhist practitioners always try to maintain the correct view of "the five aggregates are totally empty" and always try to cultivate to eliminate obstructive ghosts arise from these five aggregates.

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

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

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

Skandha in Sanskrit means "group, aggregate, or heap." In Buddhism, Skandha means the trunk of a tree, or a body. Skandha also means the five aggregates or five aggregates of conditioned phenomena (constituents), or the five causally conditioned elements of existence forming a being or entity. According to Buddhist philosophy, each individual existence is composed of the five elements and because they are constantly changing, so those who attempt to cling to the "self" are subject to suffering. Though these factors are often

referred to as the “aggregates of attachment” because they are impermanent and changing, ordinary people always develop desires for them. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five aggregates. The aggregates which make up a human being. The five skandhas are the roots of all ignorance. They keep sentient beings from realizing their always-existing Buddha-Nature. The five aggregates are considered as maras or demons fighting against the Buddha-nature of men. In accordance with the Dharma, life is comprised of five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness). Matter plus the four mental factors classified below as feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness combined together form life. The real nature of these five aggregates is explained in the Teaching of the Buddha as follows: “Matter is equated to a heap of foam, feeling is like a bubble, perception is described as a mirage, mental formations are like a banana tree and consciousness is just an illusion. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in 'The Heart of Understanding': "If I am holding a cup of water and I ask you, 'Is this cup empty?' You will say, 'No, it is full of water.' But if I pour the water and ask you again, you may say, 'Yes, it is empty.' But, empty of what? My cup is empty of water, but it is not empty of air. To be empty is to be empty of something... When Avalokitesvara (Kuan-yin or Kannon, the Bodhisattva who embodies Compassion) says (in the Heart Sutra) that the five skandhas are equally empty, to help him be precise we must ask, 'Mr. Avalokitesvara, empty of what?' The five skandhas, which may be translated into English as five heaps, or five aggregates, are the five elements that comprise a human being... In fact, these are really five rivers flowing together in us: the river of form, which means our body, the river of feeling, the river of perceptions, the river of mental formations, and the river of consciousness. They are always flowing in us... Avalokitesvara looked deeply into the five skandhas..., and he discovered that none of them can be by itself alone... Form is empty of a separate self, but it is full of everything in the cosmos. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness."

According to Zen Master Seung Sahn in *The Compass of Zen*, the Heart Sutra teaches that "form is emptiness, and emptiness is form." Many people don't know what this means, even some long-time

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

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

Thong Thien was a Vietnamese Zen master from An La, North Vietnam. He was a disciple of Zen master Thường Chiếu at Lục Tổ Temple. After he became the dharma heir of the thirteenth generation of the Wu-Yun-T'ung Zen Sect, he returned to his home town to revive

and expand Buddhism there. He passed away in 1228. He always reminded his disciples: “The ancient virtues always advise us to keep seeing that the five aggregates are emptiness, the four elements are non-self, the true mind has no form, neither going, nor coming. The self-nature did not come when you were born; and will not go when you die. The true mind is always serene and all-embracing; and your mind and all scenes are one. If you always see that, you will soon attain enlightenment, be free from the bondage of the three periods, and become those who transcend the secular world. So, it is important for you not to cling to anything. We, ordinary people, do not see the five aggregates as phenomena but as an entity because of our deluded minds, and our innate desire to treat these as a self in order to pander to our self-importance. As a matter of fact, the real nature of these five aggregates is explained in the Teaching of the Buddha as follows: “Matter is equated to a heap of foam, feeling is like a bubble, perception is described as a mirage, mental formations are like a banana tree and consciousness is just an illusion. According to the Surangama Sutra, all the defiling objects that appear, all the illusory, ephemeral characteristics, spring up in the very spot where they also come to an end. They are what is called ‘illusory falseness.’ But their nature is in truth the bright substance of wonderful enlightenment. Thus it is throughout, up to the five skandhas and the six entrances, to the twelve places and the eighteen realms; the union and mixture of various causes and conditions account for their illusory and false existence, and the separation and dispersion of the causes and conditions result in their illusory and false extinction. Who would have thought that production, extinction, coming, and going are fundamentally the everlasting, wonderful light of the treasury of the Thus Come One, the unmoving, all-pervading perfection, the wonderful nature of true suchness! If within the true and permanent nature one seeks coming and going, confusion and enlightenment, or birth and death, there is nothing that can be obtained. Therefore, if you have patience and the will to see things as they truly are. If you would turn inwards to the recesses of your own minds and note with just bare attention (sati), not objectively without projecting an ego into the process, then cultivate this practice for a sufficient length of time, then you will see these five aggregates not as an entity but as a series of

physical and mental processes. Then you will not mistake the superficial for the real. You will then see that these aggregates arise and disappear in rapid succession, never being the same for two consecutive moments, never static but always in a state of flux, never being but always becoming.' The Buddha taught in the Lankavatara Sutra: 'The Tathagata is neither different nor not-different from the Skandhas.' (Skandhebhyo-nanyo-nanayas-tathagata).

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

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

of form, of feelings, of perceptions, of mental formations, and of consciousness.

To Have Faith in the Correct Views For It Helps Practitioners Bravely Denying the Dead Buddhism: Dead Buddhism is a kind of Buddhism with its superfluous organizations, classical rituals, multi-level offerings, dangling and incomprehensible sutras written in strange languages which puzzle the young people. In their view the Buddhist pagoda is a nursing home, a place especially reserved for the elderly, those who lack self-confidence or who are superstitious. Furthermore, there exists a dead Buddhism when the Buddhadharma is only in talking, not in practice. It's not enough to say that we believe in the Buddha; it's better not to know the Buddhadharma than knowing it only for talking. Time flies really fast like a flying arrow, and days and months fly by like a shuttlecock. The water waves follow one after another. Life is passing quickly in the same manner. Impermanence avoids nobody, youth is followed by old age moment after moment, and we gradually return to the decay and extinction of old age and death, leaving no trace or shadow. Buddhism is not culture-bound. It is not restricted to any particular society or race. In the contrary, it moves easily from one culture context to another because its emphasis is on internal practice rather than external forms of religious behavior. According to Dr. Peter Della Santina in the Tree of Enlightenment, the most important thing in Buddhism is that each practitioner develops his or her own mind, not on how he dresses, the kind of food he eats, the way he wears his hair, and so forth.

Although for the enlightened, delusions and enlightenment are not two (non-duality); delusions and enlightenment (delusion and awareness) are fundamentally the same. They are of the one Buddha-nature. They belong to the unity of all things. They are one and undivided truth, the Buddha-truth. They are the non-dual Truth represents No-Self and No-Dharma. However, for us, ordinary people, delusion is delusion and enlightenment is enlightenment. If we are not careful, we will soon become people with vain talk or diffusive trivial reasoning. Devout Buddhist should never idly talk on inconsequential topics only for amusement wastes our time and others' time. The worst thing is that we can become followers of a dead Buddhism with innumerable superstitions. This is a belief or rite unreasonably upheld

by faith such as venerating the head of tiger, and buffalo, the snake and centipede deities, the Lares, consulting fortuneteller, reading the horoscope, etc. Buddhism means wisdom, therefore, Buddhism never accept superstitions; however, superstitious beliefs and rituals are adopted to decorate a religion in order to attract the multitude. But after some time, the creeper which is planted to decorate the shrine outgrows and outshines the shrine, with the result that religious tenets are relegated to be the background and superstitious beliefs and rituals.

Dead Buddhism appears at temples where there are no monks and nuns who try to cultivate to break or disprove the false and make manifest the right. For Buddhism, refutation is necessary to save all sentient beings who are drowned in the sea of attachment while elucidation is also important in order to propagate the teaching of the Buddha. Lay people should always remember that the truth can be attained only by negation or refutation of wrong views within and without Buddhism, and of errors of followers of Dead Buddhism. When retaining wrong views or error, one will be blind to reason. How can a blind man get a right view without which the two extremes can never be avoided? The end of verbal refutation is the dawn of the Middle Path. Refutation and refutation only, can lead to the ultimate truth. The Middle Path, which is devoid of name and character is really the way of elucidation of a right view.

Dead Buddhism appears at temples where there are no monks and nuns who try to cultivate with six necessary points of reverent harmony or unity in a monastery or convent. According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta and Sangiti Sutta, there are six points of reverent harmony or unity in a monastery or convent or Sixfold rules of conduct for monks and nuns in a monastery. *First, Precept Concord:* Moral unity in observing the commandments (Always observing precepts together). A monk who, in public and in private, keeps persistently, unbroken and unaltered those rules of conduct that are spotless, leading to liberation, praised by the wise, unstained and conducive to concentration. *Second, Living Concord:* Bodily unity in form of worship (Always living together in peace). A monk who, in public and in private, shows loving-kindness to their fellows in acts of body. *Third, Idea Concord:* Doctrinal unity in views and explanations (Always discussing and absorbing the dharma together). A monk who, in public and in private,

continues in that noble view that leads to liberation, to the utter destruction of suffering. *Fourth, Beneficial Concord:* Economic unity in community of goods, deeds, studies or charity. They share with their virtuous fellows whatever they receive as a rightful gift, including the contents of their alms-bowls, which they do not keep to themselves. *Fifth, Speech Concord:* Oral unity in chanting (never arguing). A monk who, in public and in private, shows loving-kindness to their fellows in acts of speech. *Sixth, Thinking Concord:* Mental unity in faith (Always being happy). A monk who, in public or in private, shows loving-kindness to their fellows in acts of thought.

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

In short, as mentioned above, those who have correct views bravely deny dead Buddhism withcause of its superfluous organizations, classical rituals, multi-level offerings, dangling and incomprehensible sutras written in strange languages. There exists a dead Buddhism when the Buddhadharma is only in talking, not in practice. It's not enough to say that we believe in the Buddha; it's better not to know the Buddhadharma than knowing it only for talking. Dead Buddhism appears at temples where there are no monks and nuns who try to cultivate to break or disprove the false and make manifest the right. Dead Buddhism appears at temples where there are no monks and nuns who try to cultivate with six necessary points of reverent harmony or unity in a monastery or convent. Any temples where Monks and Nuns cannot live and cultivate together with the six points of reverent harmony set up by the Buddha, these temples belong to a so-called Dead Buddhism which any devout Buddhists should stay away. If not, sooner or later, we will take their dishamony to bring back to spread in our own families. Sincere Buddhists should always

remember that if we merely believe in Buddhism without practicing, it's no better than believing in a dead Buddhism. It's like going into a restaurant and reading the menu to enjoy ourselves without ordering any food for eating. It does not benefit us in the least. Thus, we should always bear in mind that if the Way is not put in practice, it's a dead or dead-end Way; if the virtue is not achieved by cultivating, it's not a real virtue. For these above reasons, lay people determine not to ignorantly follow Dead Buddhism!

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

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

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

According to Buddhist teachings, correct views are the foundation for cultivating to stop evil actions and to increase good actions. In other words, those who have right views always obey and practice in accordance with the Buddha's teachings in the Dharmapada Sutra, verse 183: Not to do evil, to do good, to purify one's mind, this is the teaching of the Buddhas." Good karma created by wholesome path such as practicing of the five precepts and the ten wholesome deeds, which will result in happiness. Good karmas are deeds that lead to birth in better realms. According to The Path of Purification, ten unwholesome deeds are both unprofitable action and courses that lead to unhappy destinies: killing living things, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, gossip, covetousness, ill-will, and wrong view. Zen Master Philip Kapleau wrote in the Awakening to Zen: "In classical Buddhism, actions are not termed 'good' or 'bad,' but rather 'skillful' or 'unskillful.' Skillful actions are those that arise from an awareness of Unity, or nonseparation. Such actions, not overly bound by attachment to thoughts of self and other, are spontaneous, wise, and compassionate. In Buddhist teachings, kusala karma (good karma, good deeds, skillful action) means volitional action that is done in accordance with the Aryan Eightfold Noble Path. So, Kusala karma is not only in accordance with the right action, but it is also always in accordance with the right view, right understanding, right speech, right livelihood, right energy, right concentration and right samadhi. Kusala karmas or good deeds will help a person control a lot of troubles arising from his mind. Inversely, if a person does evil deeds he will receive bad results in this life and the next existence which are suffering. A good man, an

honest man, especially one who believes in Buddhist ideas of causality and lives a good life. There are two classes of people in this life, those who are inclined to quarrel and addicted to dispute, and those who are bent to living in harmony and happy in friendliness. The first class can be classified wicked, ignorant and heedless folk. The second class comprised of good, wise and heedful people. The Buddha has made a clear distinction between wickedness and goodness and advises all his disciples not to do evil actions, to perform good ones and to purify their own heart. He know that it is easy to do evil action. To perform meritorious one far more difficult. But His disciples should know how to select in between evil and good, because wicked people will go to hell and undergo untold suffering, while good ones will go to Heaven and enjoy peaceful bliss. *There are ten meritorious deeds, or the ten paths of good action according to the Mahayana Buddhism: First*, to abstain from killing, but releasing beings is good. *Second*, to abstain from stealing, but giving is good. *Third*, to abstain from sexual misconduct, but being virtuous is good. *Fourth*, to abstain from lying, but telling the truth is good. *Fifth*, to abstain from speaking double-tongued (two-faced speech), but telling the truth is good. *Sixth*, to abstain from hurtful words (abusive slander), but speaking loving words is good. *Seventh*, to abstain from useless gossiping, but speaking useful words. *Eighth*, to abstain from being greedy and covetous. *Ninth*, to abstain from being angry, but being gentle is good. *Tenth*, to abstain from being attached (devoted) to wrong views, but understand correctly is good. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, chapter ten, the Buddha of the Fragrant Land, Vimalakirti said to Bodhisattvas of the Fragrant Land as follows: “As you have said, the Bodhisattvas of this world have strong compassion, and their lifelong works of salvation for all living beings surpass those done in other pure lands during hundreds and thousands of aeons. Why? Because they achieved ten excellent deeds which are not required in other pure lands.” What are these ten excellent deeds? They are: *First*, using charity (dana) to succour the poor. *Second*, using precept-keeping (sila) to help those who have broken the commandments. *Third*, using patient endurance (ksanti) to subdue their anger. *Fourth*, using zeal and devotion (virya) to cure their remissness. *Fifth*, using serenity (dhyana) to stop their confused thoughts. *Sixth*, using wisdom (prajna) to wipe out ignorance. *Seventh*,

putting an end to the eight distressful conditions for those suffering from them. *Eighth*, teaching Mahayana to those who cling to Hinayana. *Ninth*, cultivation of good roots for those in want of merits. *Tenth*, the four Bodhisattva winning devices for the purpose of leading all living beings to their goals (in Bodhisattva development).

Unskillful actions, on the other hand, grow out of the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred or anger, and delusion. As the primary delusion is that of self and other, thoughts and actions that arise from such condition of separation, of separateness we might say, tend to be reactive and self-protective. They can hardly form the basis of skillful life, that is, creative and fulfilling. For example, think of the first item of good character: not to kill but to cherish all life. It is not possible to commit murder unless the thought to take a life has arisen. One must have already seen a person as separate from oneself and one's own self-interest to conceive of him or her as someone to be killed. Out of this seed of separation, this thought in the mind, the deed can happen. Killing is the outward expression of a mind dominated by separation, specifically by anger or hatred. Deeds are thoughts made manifest. From unskillful thoughts, unskillful or pain-producing acts arise. Almost all action proceeds from thought." Talking about evil deeds, from the earliest period, Buddhist thought has argued that immoral actions are the result of ignorance (avidya), which prompts beings to engage in actions (karma) that will have negative consequences for them. Thus evil for Buddhism is a second-order problem, which is eliminated when ignorance is overcome. Thus the definition of sin and evil is pragmatic: evil actions are those that result in suffering and whose consequences are perceived as painful for beings who experience them. All karmas are controlled by the threefold deed (body, speech, and mind). Three deeds of the body, four deeds of the mouth, and three deeds of the mind. Unwholesome karmas are harmful actions, or conducts in thought, word, or deed (by the body, speech, and mind) to self and others which leads to evil recompense. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: As rust sprung from iron eats itself away when arisen, just like ill deeds lead the doer to a miserable state (Dharmapada 240). *There are ten Evil Actions:* All karmas are controlled by the threefold deed (body, speech, and mind). Three deeds of the body, four deeds of the mouth, and three deeds of the mind. Three in Action of Body (Kaya

Karma (skt): *First*, killing, taking the life of any beings, including human or animal. We do not free trapped animals; but, in contrast, we continue to kill and murder innocent creatures, such as fishing, hunting, etc. *Second*, stealing, all forms of acquiring for oneself that which belongs to another. We do not give, donate, or make offerings; but, in contrast, we continue to be selfish, stingy, and stealing from others. *Third*, sexual misconduct, all forms of sex-indulgence, by action or thoughts wants. We do not behave properly and honorably; but, in contrast, we continue to commit sexual misconduct or sexual promiscuity. Four in Action of Mouth (Vac Karma (skt)). The evil karma of speech is the mightiest. We must know that evil speech is even more dangerous than fire because fire can only destroy all material possessions and treasures of this world, but the fire of evil speech not only burns all the Seven Treasures of Enlightened beings and all virtues of liberation, but it will also reflect on the evil karma vipaka in the future. *Fourth*, false speech or telling lies or using obscene and lewd words or speech. We do not speak the truth; but, in contrast, we continue to lie and speak falsely. *Fifth*, insulting or coarsing abusive language or abusive slandering. We do not speak soothingly and comfortably; but, in contrast, we continue to speak wickedly and use a double-tongue to cause other harm and disadvantages. *Sixth*, useless gossiping and frivolous chattering. We do not speak kind and wholesome words; but, in contrast, we continue to speak wicked and unwholesome words, i.e., insulting or cursing others. *Seventh*, speaking two-faced speech, to slander or speak with a double-tongue or to speak ill of one friend to another. We do not speak words that are in accordance with the dharma; but, in contrast, we continue to speak ambiguous talks. Three in Action of Mind (Moras Karma (skt): *Eighth*, greed or covetousness (Libho (skt)). We do not know how to desire less and when is enough; but we continue to be greedy and covetous. *Ninth*, hatred or loss of temper profanity (Dosa (skt)). We do not have peace and tolerance toward others; but, in contrast, we continue to be malicious and to have hatred. *Tenth*, ignorance (Moha (skt)). We do not believe in the Law of Causes and Effects, but in contrast we continue to attach to our ignorance, and refuse to be near good knowledgeable advisors in order to learn and cultivate the proper dharma. In short, Pure Land practitioners should always remember

about the three commandments dealing with the body: not to kill, not to steal, and not to commit adultery; the four dealing with the mouth: not to lie, not to insult, not to exaggerate, and not to speak with a double-tongue; the three dealing with the mind: not to be greedy, not to be hatred, and not to be ignorant.

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: The evil-doer grieves in this world and in the next; he grieves in both. He grieves and suffers when he perceives the evil of his own deeds (Dharmapada 15). The virtuous man rejoices in this world, and in the next. He is happy in both worlds. He rejoices and delights when he perceives the purity of his own deeds (Dharmapada 16). The evil man suffers in this world and in the next. He suffers everywhere. He suffers whenever he thinks of the evil deeds he has done. Furthermore he suffers even more when he has gone to a woeful path (Dharmapada 17). The virtuous man is happy here in this world, and he is happy there in the next. He is happy everywhere. He is happy when he thinks of the good deeds he has done. Furthermore, he is even happier when he has gone to a blissful path (Dharmapada 18). Even an evil-doer sees good as long as evil deed has not yet ripened; but when his evil deed has ripened, then he sees the evil results (Dharmapada 119). Even a good person sees evil as long as his good deed has not yet ripened; but when his good deed has ripened, then he sees the good results (Dharmapada 120). Do not disregard small good, saying, “it will not matter to me.” Even by the falling of drop by drop, a water-jar is filled; likewise, the wise man, gathers his merit little by little (Dharmapada 122).” Some are born in a womb; evil-doers are reborn in hells; the righteous people go to blissful states; the undefiled ones pass away into Nirvana (Dharmapada 126). Neither in the sky, nor in mid-ocean, nor in mountain cave, nowhere on earth where one can escape from the consequences of his evil deeds (Dharmapada 127). A fool does not realize when he commits wrong deeds; by his own deeds the stupid man is tormented, like one is lighting fires wherein he must be burnt one day (Dharmapada 136).

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

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

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

The doctrine of no-self has two main characteristics: selflessness of things (dharma-nairatmya) and selflessness of person (pudgalanairatmya). Sometimes, the teaching of “not-self” causes confusion and misunderstanding. Any time we speak, we do say “I am speaking” or “I am talking”, etc. How can we deny the reality of that “I”? Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the Buddha never asked us to reject the use of the name or term “I”. The Buddha himself

still use a word “Tatathata” to refer to himself, no matter what is the meaning of the word, it is still a word or a name. When the Buddha taught about “not-self”, he stressed on the rejection of the idea that this name or term “I” stands for a substantial, permanent and changeless reality. The Buddha said that the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness) were not the self and that the self was not to be found in them. The Buddha’s rejection of the self is a rejection of the belief in a real, independent, permanent entity that is represented by the name or term “I”, for such a permanent entity would have to be independent, permanent, immutable and impervious to change, but such a permanent entity and/or such a self is nowhere to be found. When Sakyamuni Buddha put forth the notion of “no-self,” he upsets many concepts about life in the universe. He blasted our most firm and widespread conviction, that of a permanent self. Those who understand “not self” know that its function is to overthrow “self,” not to replace it with a new concept of reality. The notion of “not self” is a method, not a goal. If it becomes a concept, it must be destroyed along with all other concepts.

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

The Buddha used the following analysis to prove that the self is nowhere to be found either in the body or the mind. The body is not the self, for if the body were the self, the self would be impermanent,

would be subject to change, decay, destruction, and death. Hence the body cannot be the self. The self does not possess the body, in the sense that I possess a car or a television, because the self cannot control the body. The body falls ill, gets tired and old against our wishes. The body has an appearance, which often does not agree with our wishes. Hence in no way does the self possess the body. The self does not exist in the body. If we search our bodies from top to bottom, we can find nowhere locate the so-called "Self". The self is not in the bone or in the blood, in the marrow or in the hair or spittle. The "Self" is nowhere to be found within the body. The body does not exist in the self. For the body to exist in the self, the self would have to be found apart from the body and mind, but the self is nowhere to be found. The mind is not the self because, like the body, the mind is subject to constant change and is agitated like a monkey. The mind is happy one moment and unhappy the next. Hence the mind is not the self because the mind is constantly changing. The self does not possess the mind because the mind becomes excited or depressed against our wishes. Although we know that certain thoughts are wholesome and certain thoughts unwholesome, the mind pursues unwholesome thoughts and is different toward wholesome thoughts. Hence the self does not possess the mind because the mind acts independently of the self. The self does not exist in the mind. No matter how carefully we search the contents of our minds, no matter how we search our feelings, ideas, and inclinations, we can nowhere find the self in the mind and the mental states. The mind does not exist in the self because again the self would have to exist apart from the mind and body, but such a self is nowhere to be found.

We should reject the idea of a self for two reasons: 1) As long as we still cling to the self, we will always have to defend ourselves, our property, our prestige, opinions, and even our words. But once we give up the belief in an independent and permanent self, we will be able to live with everyone in peace and pleasure. 2) The Buddha taught: "Understanding not-self is a key to great enlightenment for the belief in a self is synonymous with ignorance, and ignorance is the most basic of the three afflictions (greed, anger, and stupidity). Once we identify, imagine, or conceive ourselves as an entity, we immediately create a schism, a separation between ourselves and the people and things

around us. Once we have this conception of self, we respond to the people and things around us with either attachment or aversion. That's the real danger of the belief of a self. Thus, the rejection of the self is not only the key of the end of sufferings and afflictions, but it is also a key to the entrance of the great enlightenment." Zen Practitioners should contemplate "No-self" in every step. Zen practitioners can comprehend these three characteristics by observing closely the mere lifting of the foot and the awareness of the lifting of the foot. By paying close attention to the movements, we see things arising and disappearing, and consequently we see for ourselves the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self nature of all conditioned phenomena.

Meanwhile, impermanence (Anitya) is the state of not being permanent, of lasting or existing only for a short time, of changing continually. Physical changes operating from the state of formation, to that of development, decay and disintegration are exact manifestations of the law of transformation. All things in the universe, from the small grain of sand, the human body, to the big one such as the earth, moon and sun are governed by the above law, and as such, must come through these four periods. This process of changes characterizes impermanence. Anitya is one of the three fundamental of everything existing: Impermanence (Anitya), Suffering (Duhkha) and Non-ego (Anatman). To understand thoroughly the impermanence of all things, Zen practitioners should contemplate that all things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will help us let go and at the same time to prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. Buddhism teaches that human beings' bodies are composed of five aggregates, called skandhas in Sanskrit. If the form created by the four elements is empty and without self, then human beings' bodies, created by the unification of the five skandhas, must also be empty and without self. Human beings' bodies are involved in a transformation process from second to second, minute to minute, continually experiencing impermanence in each moment. By looking

very deeply into the five skandhas, we can experience the selfless nature of our bodies, our passage through birth and death, and emptiness, thereby destroying the illusion that our bodies are permanent. In Buddhism, no-self is the most important subject for meditation. By meditating no-self, we can break through the barrier between self and other. When we no longer are separate from the universe, a completely harmonious existence with the universe is created. We see that all other human beings exist in us and that we exist in all other human beings. We see that the past and the future are contained in the present moment, and we can penetrate and be completely liberated from the cycle of birth and death. In short, once Buddhist practitioners equipped with correct views and have the ability to see the selflessness and impermanence of all things also means we are able to push away great obstacles of attachments and begin to advance on the very important steps of letting go on our own path of cultivation.

Buddhist practitioners should always mindful that all things are impermanent and have no-self. Let's look at ourselves, we will see that our bodies of today are completely different from those of yesterday. In fact, our body is just like a stream running swiftly, manifesting endlessly in different forms as waves rising and falling, as bubbles forming and popping. The waves and bubbles continuously appear large or small, high or low, clean or unclean, and so on and on so on. However, water has no form, is staying unconditioned, and being unmoved at all times. Buddhist practitioners should always mindful as such so that we can act, speak, and think mindfully and without discrimination. If we are able to do this, we are on the right tract of cultivation. Let's advance firmly on the way to emancipation; and let's not to cling to the world which is full of sufferings and afflictions! "Anitya" is the state of not being permanent, of lasting or existing only for a short time, of changing continually. Physical changes operating from the state of formation, to that of development, decay and disintegration are exact manifestations of the law of transformation. All things in the universe, from the small grain of sand, the human body, to the big one such as the earth, moon and sun are governed by the aove law, and as such, must come through these four periods. This process of changes characterizes impermanence. All things are impermanent,

their birth, existence, change, and death never resting for a moment. All things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. In most monasteries, at the end of ceremonies, monks and nuns often chant the verse of impermanence.

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

To understand thoroughly the impermanence of all things, Zen practitioners should contemplate that all things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. The Mahaparinirvana Sutra says: "All formations are impermanent; this is the law of appearing and disappearing. When appearing and disappearing disappear, then this stillness is bliss." This means that when there is no appearance or disappearance in our mind, that mind is bliss. This is a mind devoid of all thinking. The Mahaparinirvana Sutra says: "All things are impermanent. This is the law of appearing and disappearing. When appearing and disappearing disappear, then this stillness is bliss." The Diamond Sutra says: "All things that appear are transient. If we view all appearance as nonappearance, then we will see the true nature of all things." The Heart Sutra says: "Form does not differ from

emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form. That which form is emptiness, that which emptiness is form.” Thus, what is appearing and disappearing? What is impermanence and permanence? What is form and emptiness? In true stillness, in true nature, in true emptiness, there is no appearing or disappearing, no impermanence and permanence, no form and emptiness. The Sixth Patriarch said: “Originally there is nothing at all.” When appearing and disappearing disappear, then this stillness is bliss. But in reality, there is no stillness and no bliss. If we view all appearance as nonappearance, then we will see true nature of all things. But there is no true nature and no things. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. But there is no emptiness and no form. So when there is no thinking and no speech, already there is no appearing or disappearing, no impermanence or permanence, no form or emptiness. But to say that these things do not exist is incorrect. If we open our mouth, we are wrong. Can we see colors? can we hear sounds? Can we touch things? Is this form or is it emptiness? If we say even one word, we are wrong. And if we say nothing, we are wrong too. Therefore, what can we do? Appearing and disappearing, put it down! Impermanence and permanence, put it down! Form and emptiness, put it down! Spring comes and the snow melts: appearing and disappearing are just like this. The east wind blows the rainclouds west: impermanence and permanence are just like this. When we turn on the lamp, the whole room becomes bright: all truth is just like this. Form is form, emptiness is emptiness.

Impermanence of the body means that the body withers rapidly, soon grows old and debilitated, ending in death. The ancients have lamented: “Oh, that time when we were young and would ride bamboo sticks, pretending they were horses, in the twinkling of an eye, our hair is now spotted with the color of frost.” What happened to all those brave and intelligent young men and those beautiful and enchanting women of bygone days? They ended as in the following poem: “Rosy cheeks have faded, heroes have passed away; young students’ eyes, too, are weary and sad.” Impermanence of the mind means that the mind and thoughts of sentient beings are always changing, at times filled with love or anger, at times happy or sad. Those thoughts, upon close scrutiny, are illusory and false, like water bubbles. Impermanence of the environment means that not only do our surroundings always

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

Everything in this world is subject to change and perish; nothing remains constant for even a single moment. The fact of impermanence has been recognized not only in Buddhist thought but elsewhere in the history of ideas. It was the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus who remarked that one cannot step into the same river twice. He meant that everything keeps changing without a pause or the ever-changing and transient nature of things. As a matter of fact, if we watch ourselves,

we'll see that we are impermanent. Watch ourselves to see that we are living on a dream. We are changing swiftly and endlessly. Only one day yesterday, we had millions of different bodies, millions different feelings, and millions different minds just like a stream flowing swiftly. Look back and see all those bodies, feelings, and minds just like dreams, like echoes, like mirages. Then, if we look at the day before yesterday, we will be to feel just like millions of lives away. All are like a dream. If we are able to think this way, we will be able to feel that life and death flowing swiftly and endlessly in our whole body.

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

To Have Faith in the Correct Views On Sufferings Will Help Pushing Away Obstacles to Advance on the Path of Cultivation: In Buddhist teachings, right view on sufferings means seeing and understanding fundamental evils inherent in life which give rise to human sufferings. Sakyamuni Buddha is said to have expounded the Four Noble Truths in the Deer Park in Sarnath during his first sermon after attaining Buddhahood. The Buddha organized these ideas into the Fourfold Truth as follows: "Life consists entirely of suffering; suffering has causes; the causes of suffering can be extinguished; and there exists a way to extinguish the cause." As a matter of fact, after the

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

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

The Buddha regarded this world as a world of hardship, and taught the ways to cope with it. Then what are the reasons which make it a world of hardship? The first reason, as given by the Buddha is that all things are selfless or egoless, which means that no things, men, animals and inanimate objects , both living and not living, have what we may call their original self or real being. Let us consider man. A man does not have a core or a soul which he can consider to be his true self. A man exists, but he cannot grasp his real being, he cannot discover his own core, because the existence of a man is nothing but an “existence depending on a series of causations.” Everything that exists is there because of causations; it will disappear when the effects of the causation cease. The waves on the water’s surface certainly exist, but can it be said that a wave has its own self? Waves exist only while there is wind or current. Each wave has its own characteristics according to the combination of causations, the intensity of the winds and currents and their directions, etc. But when the effects of the causations cease, the waves are no more. Similarly, there cannot be a self which stands independent of causations. As long as a man is an existent depending on a series of causations, it is unreasonable for him to try to hold on to himself and to regard all things around him from the self-centered point of view. All men ought to deny their own selves and endeavor to help each other and to look for co-existence, because no man can ever be truly independent. If all things owe their existence to a series of causations, their existence is a conditional one; there is no

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

real state of our existence; Nirvana (negatively extinction; positively perfection) is our ideal, that is, perfect freedom, quiescence. In short, once Buddhist practitioners equipped with correct views and have the ability to see the truth of sufferings also means we are able to push away great obstacles of afflictions and begin to advance on the very important steps on our own path of cultivation.

Chapter Nine

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

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

To take refuge in the Triratna means to admit a lay person who believe in Buddhism to take the three refuges. He or she is admitted as a lay disciple, after recantation of his previous wrong belief and sincere repetition to the abbot or monk of the Three Refuges. According to Buddhist teachings, taking refuge in the three Refuges are three of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment. Practitioners should always remember that a Buddhist who does not take refuge in the Three Gems also means he or she does not believe in Buddhist teachings, no way he or she can cultivate in the framework of Buddhist teachings. It should be reminded that after the Buddha's Enlightenment at Buddha Gaya, he moved slowly across India until he reached the Deer Park near Benares, where he preached to five ascetics his First Sermon. The Sermon preached about the Middle Way between all extremes, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. In the Deer Park, Benares, at first the Buddha was ignored by the five brothers of Kaundinya, but as the Buddha approached them, they felt that there was something very special about him, so they automatically stood up as He drew near. Then the five men, with great respect, invited the Buddha to teach them what He has enlightened. So, the Buddha delivered His First Teaching: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma. The Buddha did preach the Buddha's Ideal, or the 'realization of the Buddha's Ideal in the world and started the foundation of Kingdom of Truth. The first time, the Buddha preached the Four Noble Truths: "This is suffering! Its nature is oppression. This is accumulation. Its nature is enticement. This is Cessation. Its nature is that it can be realized. This is the Way. Its nature is that it can be cultivated." The second time, the Buddha also preached the Four Noble Truths: "This is suffering! You should know it. This is accumulation. You should cut it off. This is Cessation. You should realize it. This is the Way. You should cultivate it." The Third Turning of the Four Noble

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

The example that the Buddha and his immediate disciples set, that glorious feat of a man, who stood before men as a man and declared a path of deliverance. To others, Buddhism would mean the massive doctrine as recorded in the Buddhist Tripitaka (literature), and it is described a very lofty, abstruse, complex and learned philosophy of life. The name Buddhism comes from the word “Bodhi” which means “waking up,” and thus Buddhism is the philosophy of Awakening. Therefore, the real definition of Buddhism is Noble Truth. The Buddha did not teach from theories. He always taught from a practical standpoint based on His understanding, His enlightenment, and His realization of the Truth. This philosophy has its origins in the experience of the man named Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, who was himself awakened at the age of 36. Buddhism is now older than 2,500 years old and has more than 800 million followers world wide, including Chinese followers in Mainland China. People in the West had heard of the Buddha and his teaching as early as the thirteenth century when Marco Polo (1254-1324), the Italian traveler

who explored Asia, wrote accounts on Buddhism in his book, "Travels of Marco Polo". From the eighteenth century onwards, Buddhist text were brought to Europe and translated into English, French and German. Until a hundred years ago, Buddhism was mainly an Asian philosophy but increasingly it is gaining adherents in Europe and America. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Alan Bennett, an Englishman, went to Burma to become a Buddhist monk. He was renamed Ananda Metteya. He returned to Britain in 1908. He was the first British person to become a Buddhist monk. He taught Dharma in Britain. Since then, Buddhist monks and nuns from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan, China and other Buddhist countries in Asia have come to the West, particularly over the last seventy years. Many of these teachers have kept to their original customs while others have adapted to some extent to meet the demands of living in a western society. In recent years, there has been a marked growth of interest in Buddhism in Europe. The membership of existing societies has increased and many new Buddhist centers have been established. Their members include large numbers of professionals and scholars. Today, Britain alone has over 140 Buddhist centers found in most major cities.

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

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

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

II. An Overview of the Triple Jewel:

A Sanskrit term for “three jewels,” or “threefold refuge,” which means taking refuge in Buddha as a teacher, in Dharma as medicine and in Sangha as companion on the path, which follows the invocation to the Buddha in Pansil and precedes the five-fold vow of Pansil or Pancha-Sila. To Buddhists, the Buddha is an object of veneration and the most safe source of refuge because he has found the path to liberation and taught it to others. The dharma, his teaching, is also a safe source of refuge because it outlines the path and means for us to cross the shore of birth and death. The Samgha (Sangha) is also another safe source of refuge because it comprises of people who have dedicated their lives to the cultivation of the Buddha-dharma with the vow: “Above to seek bodhi, below to save (transform) beings.” According to Buddhism, while Sakyamuni Buddha is the first person of

the Trinity, his Law the second, and the Order the third, all three by some are accounted as manifestations of the All-Buddha. The Buddha: The Supremely Enlightened Being. The iconography of Buddhas which have come down to us. The Dharma: The teaching imparted by the Buddha. All written sermons and discourses of Buddhas (that is, fully enlightened beings) as found in the sutras and other Buddhist texts still extant. The Sangha: The congregation of monks and nuns or genuine Dharma followers. Sangha consists of contemporary disciples who practice and realize the saving truth of the Unified Three Treasures that was first revealed by Sakyamuni Buddha. The foundation of Buddhism is the Three Treasures, without trust in which and reverence for there can be no Buddhist religious life. There are three kinds of Triratna (three Treasures).

According to Buddhism, while Sakyamuni Buddha is the first person of the Trinity, his Law the second, and the Order the third, all three by some are accounted as manifestations of the All-Buddha. The foundation of Buddhism is the Three Treasures, without trust in which and reverence for there can be no Buddhist religious life. There are three kinds of Triratna (three Treasures). It should be reminded that Buddha is an epithet of those who successfully break the hold of ignorance, liberate themselves from cyclic existence, and teach others the path to liberation. The word "Buddha" derived from the Sanskrit root budh, "to awaken," it refers to someone who attains Nirvana through meditative practice and the cultivation of such qualities as wisdom, patience, and generosity. Such a person will never again be reborn within cyclic existence, as all the cognitive ties that bind ordinary beings to continued rebirth have been severed. Through their meditative practice, buddhas have eliminated all craving, and defilements. The Buddha of the present era is referred to as "Sakyamuni" (Sage of the Sakya). He was born Siddhartha Gautama, a member of the Sakya clan. With Zen practitioners, the problem of emancipation is important, but the still more important one is, "Who or what is the Buddha?" When this is mastered, practitioners have rendered their full services. Dharma would mean 'that which is held to,' or 'the ideal' if we limit its meaning to mental affairs only. This ideal will be different in scope as conceived by different individuals. In the case of the Buddha it will be Perfect Enlightenment or Perfect

Wisdom (Bodhi). Dharma is the way of understanding and love taught by the Buddha. The Buddha says: “He who sees the Dharma sees me.”. All things are divided into two classes: physical and mental; that which has substance and resistance is physical, that which is devoid of these is mental (the root of all phenomena is mind). According to the Madhyamakas, Dharma is a protean word in Buddhism. In the broadest sense it means an impersonal spiritual energy behind and in everything. There are four important senses in which this word has been used in Buddhist philosophy and religion: Dharma in the sense of one ultimate Reality. It is both transcendent and immanent to the world, and also the governing law within it. Dharma in the sense of scripture, doctrine, religion, as the Buddhist Dharma. Dharma in the sense of righteousness, virtue, and piety. Dharma in the sense of ‘elements of existence.’ In this sense, it is generally used in plural. Sangha is a corporate assembly of at least three monks under a chair a senior monk, empowered to hear confession, or a community of monks and nuns who live in harmony in the six sentiments of concord.

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

their lives to the cultivation of the Buddha-dharma with the vow: “Above to seek bodhi, below to save (transform) beings.”

The foundation of Buddhism is the Three Treasures, without trust in which and reverence for there can be no Buddhist religious life. There are three kinds of Triratna (three Treasures). The Triple Jewel was defined in many different ways. *First, the Unified or One-Body Three Treasures:* “The Vairocana Buddha, representing the realization of the world of Emptiness, of Buddha-nature, of unconditioned Equality. The Dharma that is the law of beginningless and endless becoming, to which all phenomena are subject according to causes and conditions. The harmonious fusion of the preceding two, which constitutes total reality as experienced by the enlightened.” The Three Treasures are mutually related and interdependent. One unrealized in the Unified Three Treasures can neither comprehend in depth the import of Sakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, nor appreciate the infinite preciousness of his teachings, nor cherish as living images and pictures of Buddhas. Again, the Unified Three Treasures would be unknown had not it been made manifest by Sakyamuni in his own body and mind and the Way to its realization expounded by him. Lastly, without enlightened followers of the Buddhas’ Way in our own time to inspire and lead others along this Path to Self-realization, the Unified Three Treasures would be a remote ideal, the saga of Sakyamuni’s life desiccated history, and the Buddhas’ words lifeless abstractions. More, as each of us embodies the Unified Three Treasures, the foundation of the Three Treasures is none other than one’s own self. *Second, the Manifested Three Treasures:* “The Buddha is the historic Buddha Sakyamuni, who through his perfect enlightenment realized in himself the truth of the Unified Three Treasures. The Dharma, which comprises the spoken words and sermons of Sakyamuni Buddha wherein he elucidated the significance of the Unified Three Treasures and the way to its realization. The Sangha, Sakyamuni Buddha’s disciples, including the immediate disciples of the Buddha Sakyamuni and other followers of his day who heard, believed, and made real in their own bodies the Unified Three Treasures that he taught. The Sangha Treasure is the third treasure in the Triratna. The corporate assembly of at least three monks under a chair a senior monk, empowered to hear confession, or a community of monks and nuns who

live in harmony in the six sentiments of concord. “Sangha” is a Sanskrit term for “community.” The community of Buddhists. In a narrow sense, the term can be used just to refer to monks (Bhiksu) and nuns (Bhiksuni); however, in a wider sense, Sangha means four classes of disciples (monks, nuns, upasaka and upasika). Lay men (Upasaka) and lay women (Upasika) who have taken the five vows of the Pancasila (fivefold ethics). All four groups are required formally to adopt a set of rules and regulations. Monastics are bound to two hundred-fifty and three hundred forty-eight vows, however, the actual number varies between different Vinaya traditions. An important prerequisite for entry into any of the four categories is an initial commitment to practice of the Dharma, which is generally expressed by “taking refuge” in the “three jewels”: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.” *Third, the Abiding Three Treasures:* The Triratna in which the Buddha is the Supremely Enlightened Being. The iconography of Buddhas which have come down to us. The Dharma includes the teaching imparted by the Buddha. All written sermons and discourses of Buddhas (that is, fully enlightened beings) as found in the sutras and other Buddhist texts still extant. The Sangha includes the congregation of monks and nuns or genuine Dharma followers. Sangha consists of contemporary disciples who practice and realize the saving truth of the Unified Three Treasures that was first revealed by Sakyamuni Buddha.

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

The Manifested Three Treasures include: The first jewel is the Buddha: The Buddha is the person who has achieved the enlightenment that leads to release from the cycle of birth and death and has thereby attained complete liberation. The word Buddha is not a proper name but a title meaning “Enlightened One” or “Awakened One.” Prince Siddhartha was not born to be called Buddha. He was not born enlightened, nor did he receive the grace of any supernatural being; however, after many efforts, he became enlightened. It is obvious to Buddhists who believe in re-incarnation, that the Buddha did not come into the world for the first time. Like everyone else, he had undergone many births and deaths, had experienced the world as an animal, as a man, and as a god. During many rebirths, he would have shared the common fate of all that lives. A spiritual perfection like that of a Buddha cannot be the result of just one life. It must mature slowly throughout many ages and aeons. However, after His Enlightenment, the Buddha confirmed that any beings who sincerely try can also be freed from all clings and become enlightened as the Buddha. All Buddhists should be aware that the Buddha was not a god or any kind of supernatural being (supreme deity), nor was he a savior or creator who rescues sentient beings by taking upon himself the burden of their sins. Like us, he was born a man. The difference between the Buddha and an ordinary man is simply that the former has awakened to his Buddha nature while the latter is still deluded about it. However, the Buddha nature is equally present in all beings. According to Tao-Ch’o (562-645), one of the foremost devotees of the Pure Land school, in his *Book of Peace and Happiness*, one of the principal sources of the Pure Land doctrine. All the Buddhas save sentient beings in four ways. First, by oral teachings such as recorded in the twelve divisions of Buddhist literature; second, by their physical features of supernatural beauty; third, by their wonderful powers and virtues and transformations; and fourth, by reciting of their names, which when uttered by beings, will remove obstacles and result their rebirth in the presence of the Buddha.

The second jewel is the Dharma: Dharma is a very troublesome word to handle properly and yet at the same time it is one of the most important and essential technical terms in Buddhism. First, etymologically, it comes from the Sanskrit root “Dhri” means to hold, to bear, or to exist; there seems always to be something of the idea of

enduring also going along with it. The most common and most important meaning of “Dharma” in Buddhism is “truth,” “law,” or “religion.” Secondly, it is used in the sense of “existence,” “being,” “object,” or “thing.” Thirdly, it is synonymous with “virtue,” “righteousness,” or “norm,” not only in the ethical sense, but in the intellectual one also. Fourthly, it is occasionally used in a most comprehensive way, including all the senses mentioned above. In this case, we’d better leave the original untranslated rather than to seek for an equivalent in a foreign language. Besides, Dharma also means the cosmic law which is underlying our world. According to Buddhism, this is the law of karmically determined rebirth. Dharmas are all phenomena, things and manifestation of reality. All phenomena are subject to the law of causation, and this fundamental truth comprises the core of the Buddha’s teaching. In Buddhism, Dharma means the teaching of the Buddha (Understanding and Loving). The way of understanding and love taught by the Buddha. The Buddha says: “He who sees the Dharma sees me.” All things are divided into two classes: physical and mental; that which has substance and resistance is physical, that which is devoid of these is mental (the root of all phenomena is mind). The doctrines of Buddhism, norms of behavior and ethical rules including pitaka, vinaya and sila.

According to Prof. Junjiro Takakusu in *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, the word “Dharma” has five meanings. First, the Dharma would mean ‘that which is held to,’ or ‘the ideal’ if we limit its meaning to mental affairs only. This ideal will be different in scope as conceived by different individuals. In the case of the Buddha it will be Perfect Enlightenment or Perfect Wisdom (Bodhi). Secondly, the ideal as expressed in words will be his Sermon, Dialogue, Teaching, or Doctrine. Thirdly, the ideal as set forth for his pupils is the Rule, Discipline, Precept, or Morality. Fourthly, the ideal to be realized will be the Principle, Theory, Truth, Reason, Nature, Law, or Condition. Fifthly, the ideal as realized in a general sense will be Reality, Fact, Thing, Element (created and not created), Mind-and-Matter, or Idea-and-Phenomenon. According to the *Madhyamakas*, Dharma is a protean word in Buddhism. In the broadest sense it means an impersonal spiritual energy behind and in everything. There are four important senses in which this word has been used in Buddhist

philosophy and religion. First, Dharma in the sense of one ultimate Reality. It is both transcendent and immanent to the world, and also the governing law within it. Secondly, Dharma in the sense of scripture, doctrine, religion, as the Buddhist Dharma. Thirdly, Dharma in the sense of righteousness, virtue, and piety. Fourthly, Dharma in the sense of 'elements of existence.' In this sense, it is generally used in plural. According to the meaning of Dharma in Sanskrit, Dharma is a very troublesome word to handle properly and yet at the same time it is one of the most important and essential technical terms in Buddhism. Dharma has many meanings. A term derived from the Sanskrit root "dhr," which means "to hold," or "to bear"; there seems always to be something of the idea of enduring also going along with it. Originally, it means the cosmic law which underlying our world; above all, the law of karmically determined rebirth. The teaching of the Buddha, who recognized and regulated this law. In fact, dharma (universal truth) existed before the birth of the historical Buddha, who is no more than a manifestation of it. Today, "dharma" is most commonly used to refer to Buddhist doctrine and practice. Dharma is also one of the three jewels on which Buddhists rely for the attainment of liberation, the other jewels are the Buddha and the Samgha.

Besides, the term "Dharma" also means the teaching of the Buddhas which carry or hold the truth. The way of understanding and love taught by the Buddha doctrine. The Buddha taught the Dharma to help us escape the sufferings and afflictions caused by daily life and to prevent us from degrading human dignity, and descending into evil paths such as hells, hungry ghosts, and animals, etc. The Dharma is like a raft that gives us something to hang onto as we eliminate our attachments, which cause us to suffer and be stuck on this shore of birth and death. The Buddha's dharma refers to the methods of inward illumination; it takes us across the sea of our afflictions to the other shore, nirvana. Once we get there, even the Buddha's dharma should be relinquished. The Dharma is not an extraordinary law created by or given by anyone. According to the Buddha, our body itself is Dharma; our mind itself is Dharma; the whole universe is Dharma. By understanding the nature of our physical body, the nature of our mind, and worldly conditions, we realize the Dharma. The Dharma that is the law of beginningless and endless becoming, to which all phenomena

are subject according to causes and conditions. The Dharma, which comprises the spoken words and sermons of Sakyamuni Buddha wherein he elucidated the significance of the Unified Three Treasures and the way to its realization. The Dharma, the teaching imparted by the Buddha. All written sermons and discourses of Buddhas (that is, fully enlightened beings) as found in the sutras and other Buddhist texts still extant. According to the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra, the basic characteristic of all dharmas is not arising, not ceasing, not defiled, not immaculate, not increasing, not decreasing. The Buddha says: “He who sees the Dharma sees me.”

The third jewel is the Sangha: “Sangha” is a Sanskrit term for “community.” The community of Buddhists. In a narrow sense, the term can be used just to refer to monks (Bhiksu) and nuns (Bhiksuni); however, in a wider sense, Sangha means four classes of disciples (monks, nuns, upasaka and upasika). Lay men (Upasaka) and lay women (Upasika) who have taken the five vows of the Panca-sila (fivefold ethics). All four groups are required formally to adopt a set of rules and regulations. Monastics are bound to two hundred-fifty and three hundred forty-eight vows, however, the actual number varies between different Vinaya traditions. An important prerequisite for entry into any of the four categories is an initial commitment to practice of the Dharma, which is generally expressed by “taking refuge” in the “three jewels”: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The Sangha means the congregation of monks and nuns or genuine Dharma followers. Sangha consists of contemporary disciples who practice and realize the saving truth of the Unified Three Treasures that was first revealed by Sakyamuni Buddha. Sangha is a Sanskrit term means the monastic community as a whole. Sangha also means a harmonious association. This harmony at the level of inner truth means sharing the understanding of the truth of transcendental liberation. At the phenomenal level, harmony means dwelling together in harmony; harmony in speech means no arguments; harmony in perceptions; harmony in wealth or sharing material goods equally, and harmony in precepts or sharing the same precepts. Buddhist monks and nuns have left the family life to practice the Buddha’s teachings. They usually own only a few things, such as robes, an alms bowl and a razor to shave their heads. They aim to give up the need for material possessions.

They concentrate on their inner development and gain much understanding into the nature of things by leading a pure and simple life. Community (congregation) of monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists who cultivate the Way. The Buddhist Brotherhood or an assembly of brotherhood of monks. Sangha also means an assembly, collection, company, or society. The corporate assembly of at least three or four monks under a chairperson. “Sangha” is an Assembly of Buddhists; however, in a narrow sense, sangha means the members of which are called Bhikkhus or Bhikkhunis; however, in a wider sense, Sangha means four classes of disciples (monks, nuns, upasaka and upasika). Usually, an assembly of monks. The corporate assembly of at least three or four monks under a chairman, empowered to hear a confession, grant absolution, and ordain. The church or monastic order, the third member of the Triratna.

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

To take refuge in the Triratna, an admission of a lay disciple, after recantation of his previous wrong belief and sincere repetition to the abbot or monk of the Three Refuges. According to Buddhist teachings, taking refuge in the three Refuges are three of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment. Practitioners should always remember that there are several problems for a Buddhist who does not take refuge in the Three Gems. There is not any chance to get blessings from Buddhas, nor chance to imitate the compassion of the Buddhas. Thus, anger increased, and anger is one of the main causes of the rebirth in hell. Therefore, Buddhist sutras always say, “if one does not take refuge in Buddha, it’s easier to be reborn in hell. There is no chance to study Dharma in order to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad. Thus desire appears, and desire is one of the main causes of rebirth in the hungry ghost. Therefore, Buddhist sutras always say, “if one does not take refuge in the Dharma, it’s easier to be reborn in the hungry ghost realms.” There is no chance to meet the Sangha for guidance. Buddhist sutras always say, “If one does not take refuge in the Sangha, it’s easier to be reborn into the animal kingdom.” Not taking refuge in the Sangha means that there is no good example for one to follow. If there is no one who can show us the right path to cultivate all good and eliminate all-evil, then ignorance arises, and

ignorance is one of the main causes of rebirth in the animal realms. To take refuge in the Triratna, a Buddhist must first find a virtuous monk who has seriously observed precepts and has profound knowledge to represent the Sangha in performing an ordination ceremony.

For Zen practitioners, to take refuge in the Buddha as a supreme teacher. To take refuge in the Buddha means acknowledging the seed of enlightenment that is within ourselves, and we all have the possibility of emancipation. It also means taking refuge in those qualities which the Buddha embodies, qualities like fearlessness, wisdom, loving kindness, compassion, joy and letting go, and so on. Take refuge in the Dharma as the best medicine in life. Taking refuge in the Dharma means taking refuge in the law, in the way things are; it is acknowledging that our mind surrenders to the truth. Take refuge in the Sangha, wonderful Buddha's disciples. For Zen practitioners, taking refuge in the Sangha means taking support in those who have the same goal with us; those in the Buddhist community who can support, help, and guide us to achieve our goals of enlightenment and freedom. Any Buddhist follower must attend an initiation ceremony with the Three Gems, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, i.e., he or she must venerate the Buddha, follow his teachings, and respect all his ordained disciples. Buddhists swear to avoid deities and demons, pagans, and evil religious groups. A refuge is a place where people go when they are distressed or when they need safety and security. There are many types of refuge. When people are unhappy, they take refuge with their friends; when they are worried and frightened they might take refuge in false hope and beliefs. As they approach death, they might take refuge in the belief of an eternal heaven. But, as the Buddha says, none of these are true refuges because they do not give comfort and security based on reality. Taking refuge in the Three Gems is necessary for any Buddhists. It should be noted that the initiation ceremony, though simple, is the most important event for any Buddhist disciple, since it is his first step on the way toward liberation and illumination. This is also the first opportunity for a disciple to vow to diligently observe the five precepts, to become a vegetarian, to recite Buddhist sutras, to cultivate his own mind, to nurture himself with good deeds, and to follow the Buddha's footsteps toward his own enlightenment. Especially for Zen practitioners, taking refuge in the Three Gems is an indispensable

foundation. Therefore, owing to the taking refuge in the Three Gems, Zen practitioners, especially lay practitioners, know how to keep precepts. In fact, keeping precepts is extremely necessary for meditation practice, for it is a way of maintaining a basic purity of body, speech, and mind. The five precepts which should be followed are: not killing, which means refraining from knowingly taking any life, not even swatting a mosquito or stepping on an ant; not stealing, which means not taking anything which is not given; refraining from sexual misconduct, for lay practitioners, which means keep our body and mind purity; not lying or speaking falsely or harshly; and not taking intoxicants, which means not taking alcohol or drugs.

Truly speaking, Buddhism has indeed proved to be the genuine article and has given those people where it has come the highest right conduct for a human being. The gentle, courtesy and upright lives of the Buddhists from all over the world show that Buddhism has indeed proved to be the genuine article and has given those people where it has come the highest right conduct for a human being. If happiness is the result of good thoughts, words and actions; then indeed devout Buddhists have found the secret of right living. In fact, have we ever found true happiness resulting from wrong thinking and wrong doing, or can we ever sow evil cause and reap sweet fruits? Furthermore, Can any of us escape from the Law of Change or run away from the sufferings and afflictions? Devout Buddhists, especially laypeople, should try to understand the Four Noble Truths because the more we have the understanding of the Four Noble Truths, the more we respect the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sacred Disciples of the Buddha. Of course we all respect the Buddha, but all of us should gain a profound admiration for the Dharma too for at the time we do not have the Buddha, the Dharma is the true refuge for us, the lighthouse that guide us in our path of cultivation towards liberation. The process of “Taking refuge” is not a process that happens on the day of the ceremony of “Taking refuge”, or take place within just a few days, or a few years. It takes place not only in this very life, but also for many many aeons in the future. Besides, there are other benefits of taking refuge: First, we become a Buddhist. Second, we can destroy all previously accumulated karma. Third, we will easily accumulate a huge amount of merit. Fourth, we will seldom be bothered by the harmful actions of others.

Fifth, we will not fall to the lower realms. Sixth, we will effortlessly achieve our goal in the path of cultivation. Seventh, it is a matter of time, we will soon be enlightened.

IV. Meanings of Taking Refuge in the Triratna:

The three Refuges are three of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment. There are several problems for a Buddhist who does not take refuge in the Three Gems. There is no chance to meet the Sangha for guidance. Buddhist sutras always say, “If one does not take refuge in the Sangha, it’s easier to be reborn into the animal kingdom.” Not taking refuge in the Sangha means that there is no good example for one to follow. If there is no one who can show us the right path to cultivate all good and eliminate all-evil, then ignorance arises, and ignorance is one of the main causes of rebirth in the animal realms. There is no chance to study Dharma in order to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad. Thus desire appears, and desire is one of the main causes of rebirth in the hungry ghost. Therefore, Buddhist sutras always say, “If one does not take refuge in the Dharma, it’s easier to be reborn in the hungry ghost realms.” There is not any chance to get blessings from Buddhas, nor chance to imitate the compassion of the Buddhas. Thus, anger increased, and anger is one of the main causes of the rebirth in hell. Therefore, Buddhist sutras always say, “if one does not take refuge in Buddha, it’s easier to be reborn in hell. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Men were driven by fear to go to take refuge in the mountains, in the forests, and in sacred trees (Dharmapada 188). But that is not a safe refuge or no such refuge is supreme. A man who has gone to such refuge, is not delivered from all pain and afflictions (Dharmapada 189). On the contrary, he who take refuge in the Buddhas, the Dharma and the angha, sees with right knowledge (Dharmapada 190). With clear understanding of the four noble truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the destruction of suffering, and the eightfold noble path which leads to the cessation of suffering (Dharmapada 191). That is the secure refuge, the supreme refuge. He who has gone to that refuge, is released from all suffering (Dharmapada 192).”

The Buddha had said: “I am a realized Buddha, you will be the Buddha to be realized,” meaning that we all have a Buddha-nature

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

To take refuge in the Triratna, or to commit oneself to the Triratna, i.e. Buddha, Dharma, Sangha (Buddha, his Truth, and his Order). Those who sincerely take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha shall not go to the woeful realm. After casting human life away, they will fill the world of heaven. Any Buddhist follower must attend an initiation ceremony with the Three Gems, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, i.e., he or she must venerate the Buddha, follow his teachings, and respect all his ordained disciples. Buddhists swear to avoid deities and demons, pagans, and evil religious groups. A refuge is a place where people go when they are distressed or when they need safety and security. There are many types of refuge. When people are unhappy, they take refuge with their friends; when they are worried and frightened they might take refuge in false hope and beliefs. As they approach death, they might take refuge in the belief of an eternal heaven. But, as the Buddha says, none of these are true refuges because they do not give comfort and security based on reality. Taking refuge in the Three Gems is necessary for any Buddhists. It should be noted that the initiation ceremony, though simple, is the most important event for any Buddhist disciple, since it is his first step on the way toward liberation and illumination. This is also the first opportunity for a disciple to vow to diligently observe the five precepts, to become a vegetarian, to

recite Buddhist sutras, to cultivate his own mind, to nurture himself with good deeds, and to follow the Buddha's footsteps toward his own enlightenment.

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

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

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

There are five stages of taking refuge: Take refuge in the Buddha, take refuge in the Dharma, take refuge in the Sangha, take refuge in the eight commandments, and take refuge in the Ten Commandments. These are five modes of trisarana, or formulas of trust in the Triratna, taken by those who: First, those who turn from heresy. Second, those who take the five commandments. Third, those who take the eight commandments. Fourth, those who take the Ten Commandments. Fifth, those who take the complete commandments. The ceremony of taking refuge in the Triratna and observing precepts should be celebrated

solemnly in front of the Buddha's Shrine with the represent of the Sangha in performing an ordination ceremony. The initiation ceremony must be simple, depend on the situation of each place. However, it must be solemn. It is led by Buddhist Master who would grace it by standing before the altar decorated with the Buddha's portrait, with the assistance of other monks and nuns, relatives, and friends. As for the initiated, he must be clean and correctly dressed. Under the guidance of the Master, he must recite three times the penance verses in order to cleanse his karmas: "As a Buddhist disciple, I swear to follow in Buddha's footsteps during my lifetime, not in any god, deity or demon. As a Buddhist disciple, I swear to perform Buddhist Dharma during my lifetime, not pagan, heretic beliefs or practices. As a Buddhist disciple, I swear to listen to the Sangha during my lifetime, not evil religious groups."

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

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

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

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

(three times). Therefore, I shall now practice the profound path of Guru-Yidam yoga (three times). Om-Ah-Hum (three times). Pure clouds of outer, inner and secret offerings. Fearsome items and objects to bond us closely and fields of vision pervade the reaches of space, earth and sky spreading out inconceivably. In essence wisdom-knowledge in aspect inner offerings and various offerings objects as enjoyments of the six senses they function to generate the special wisdom-knowledge of bliss and voidness.

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

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

VI. Markless Triple Refuge In the Jewel Platform Sutra:

Markless Triple Refuge also means Own Mind Takes Refuge with Own Self-Nature. According to the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Treasure, the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-Neng, taught: Good Knowing Advisors, I will transmit the precepts of the triple refuge that has no mark. Good Knowing Advisors, take refuge with the enlightened, the honored, the doubly complete. Take refuge with the right, the honored, that is apart from desire. Take refuge with the pure, the honored among the multitudes. 'From this day forward, we call enlightenment our master and will never again take refuge with deviant demons or outside religions. We constantly enlighten ourselves by means of the Triple Jewel of our own self-nature.' Good Knowing Advisors, I exhort you all to take refuge with the Triple Jewel of your own nature: the Buddha, which is enlightenment; the Dharma, which is right; and the Sangha, which is pure. When your mind takes refuge with enlightenment, deviant confusion does not arise. Desire decreases, so that you know contentment and are able to keep away from wealth and from the opposite sex. That is called the honored, the doubly complete. When your mind takes refuge with what is right, there are no deviant views in any of your thoughts because there are no deviant views; there is no self, other, arrogance, greed, love or attachment. That is called the honored that is apart from desire. When your own mind takes refuge with the pure, your self-nature is not stained by attachment to any state of defilement, desire or love. That is called the honored among the multitudes. If you cultivate this practice, you take refuge with yourself. Common people do not understand that, and so, from morning to night, they take the triple-refuge precepts. They say they take refuge with the Buddha, but where is the Buddha? If they cannot see the Buddha, how can they return to him? Their talk is absurd. Good Knowing Advisors, each of you examine yourselves. Do not make wrong use of the mind. The Avatamsaka Sutra clearly states that you should take refuge with your own Buddha, not with some other Buddha. If you do not take refuge with the Buddha in yourself, there is no one you can rely on. Now that you are self-awakened, you should each take refuge with the Triple Jewel of your own mind. Within yourself, regulate your mind and nature; outside yourself, respect others. That is to take refuge with yourself." Good Knowing Advisors, when your own mind takes refuge with

your self-nature, it takes refuge with the true Buddha. To take refuge is to rid your self-nature of ego-centered and unwholesome thoughts as well as jealousy, obsequiousness, deceitfulness, contempt, pride, conceit, and deviant views, and all other unwholesome tendencies whenever they arise. To take refuge is to be always aware of your own transgressions and never to speak of other people's good or bad traits. Always to be humble and polite is to have penetrated to the self-nature without any obstacle. That is taking refuge."

In the Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra, Chapter Six, the Sixth Patriarch taught: "Good Knowing Advisors, now that you have taken refuge with the Triple Jewel, you should listen carefully while I explain to you the three bodies of a single substance, the self-nature of the Buddha, so that you may see the three bodies and become completely enlightened to your own self-nature. Repeat after me: I take refuge with the clear, pure Dharma-body of the Buddha within my own body. I take refuge with the hundred thousand myriad Transformation-bodies of the Buddha within my own body. I take refuge with the complete and full Reward-body of the Buddha within my own body. Good Knowing Advisors, the form-body is an inn; it cannot be returned to. The three bodies of the Buddha exist within the self-nature of worldly people but, because they are confused, they do not see the nature within them and so, seek the three bodies of the Tathagata outside themselves. They do not see that the three bodies of the Buddha are within their own bodies. Listen to what I say, for it can cause you to see the three bodies of your own self-nature within your own body. The three bodies of the Buddha arise from your own self-nature and are not obtained from outside. What is the clear pure Dharma-body Buddha? The worldly person's nature is basically clear and pure and, the ten thousand dharmas are produced from it. The thought of evil produces evil actions and the thought of good produces good actions. Thus, all dharmas exist within self-nature. This is like the sky which is always clear, and the sun and moon which are always bright, so that if they are obscured by floating clouds, it is bright above the clouds and dark below them. But if the wind suddenly blows and scatters the clouds, there is brightness above and below, and the myriad forms appear. The worldly person's nature constantly drifts like those clouds in the sky. Good Knowing Advisors, intelligence is like the sun and wisdom is like the moon. Intelligence and wisdom are constantly bright but, if you are attached to external states, the floating clouds of false thought cover the self-nature so that it cannot shine. If you meet a Good Knowing Advisor, if you listen to the true and right Dharma and cast out your own confusion and falseness, then inside and out there will be penetrating brightness, and within the self-nature all the ten thousand dharmas will appear. That is how it is with those who see their own nature. It is called the clear, pure Dharma-body of the Buddha."

Chapter Ten

To Have Faith & Reliance on the Buddha's Dharma

Before entering Nirvana, the Buddha emphasized in front of his disciples that in cultivation, Buddhists must definitely rely on the Buddha's Dharma. Reliance on the dharma means to base on the Buddha's teachings to cultivate. Buddha Dharma is Buddha's Teachings, or Law of Buddhist or universal law which preached by the Buddha, methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment. Buddhists, especially lay people only need to always remember the essence of Buddhist doctrine: "Do not get involved in evil deeds, do whatever benefits others, always keep the mind pure, that is all the Buddha's teaching. According to Zen Master Kosho Uchiyama in the Instructions for the Zen Cook: "We view heaven or hell, enlightenment or delusion all with the same eye, or to put it more positively, we throw our whole lives into whatever we encounter, and that is attitude of living out the Buddhadharmas. When we have developed this kind of attitude toward our lives, the meaning of living day by day changes completely, along with our valuation of the events and people and circumstances that arise. Since we no longer try to escape from delusion, misfortune, or adversity, nor chase after enlightenment and peace of mind, things like money and position lose their former value. People's reputations or their skills at maneuvering in society have no bearing on the way we see them as human beings, nor does a certificate of enlightenment make any impression on anyone. What is primary and essential is that as we develop this vision, the meaning of encountering the things, situations, or people in our lives completely changes." Besides, the Buddha also pointed out basic reliances in the Buddha-Dharma.

Four Reliances: The Buddha pointed out four basic principles for thorough understanding Buddhism for his His disciples, among them, *the first one* is to rely upon the dharma, or truth itself, and not upon the false interpretations of men (relying on the teaching, not on any person; or trust the teaching, not the person). *The second reliance* is relying on

the true meaning or spirit of a dharma statement in a sutra, not on the words of the statement (trust the meaning of the teaching, not the expression). *The third reliance* is relying on intuitive wisdom, not on intellectual understanding (trust intuitive wisdom, not normal consciousness). *The fourth reliance* is relying on sutras that give ultimate teachings, not on those which preach expedient teachings (trust discourses definitive meaning, not discourses of interpretable meaning). Furthermore, upon taking refuge in Triratna, when it's time for taking refuge in the Dharma Treasure, the follower vows: To the Dharma, I return and rely, vowing that all living beings deeply enter the sutra treasury, and have wisdom like the sea. ***Ten Reliances:*** According to The Flower Adornment Sutra, chapter 38 (Detachment from the World), the Great Enlightening Being Universally Good told Universal Wisdom that Offsprings of Buddha, Great Enlightening Beings have ten kinds of reliance which help them be able to obtain abodes of the unexcelled great knowledge of Buddhas. *First*, Great Enlightened Beings take the determination for enlightenment as a reliance, as they never forget it. *Second*, Great Enlightened Beings take spiritual friends as a reliance, harmonizing as one. *Third*, they take roots of goodness as a reliance, cultivating, gathering, and increasing them. *Fourth*, they take the transcendent ways as a reliance, fully practicing them. *Fifth*, they take all truths as a reliance, as they ultimately end in emancipation. *Sixth*, they take great vows as a reliance, as they enhance enlightenment. *Seventh*, Great Enlightened Beings take practice as a reliance, consummating them all. *Eighth*, Great Enlightened Beings take all Enlightening Beings as a reliance because they have the same one wisdom. *Ninth*, Great Enlightened Beings take honoring the Buddhas as a reliance because their faith is purified. *Tenth*, Great Enlightened Beings take all Buddhas as a reliance because they teach ceaselessly like benevolent parents. ***Ten Other Reliances:*** According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, chapter 38, there are ten kinds of basis on which Great Enlightening Beings carry out their practices. *First*, Enlightening Beings carry out the practices of Enlightening Beings based on honoring all Buddhas. *Second*, Enlightening Beings carry out the practices of taming all sentient beings. *Third*, Enlightening Beings associate with all good companions. *Fourth*, Enlightening Beings accumulate all roots of

goodness. *Fifth*, Enlightening Beings purify all Buddha-lands. *Sixth*, Enlightening Beings do not abandon all sentient beings. *Seventh*, Enlightening Beings enter deeply into all transcendent ways. *Eighth*, Enlightening Beings fulfill vows of Enlightening Beings. *Ninth*, Enlightening Beings have infinite will for enlightenment. *Tenth*, Enlightening Beings rely on enlightenment of all Buddhas. In short, Buddhist practitioners should take all Buddhas as a reliance because they teach ceaselessly like benevolent parents.

Chapter Eleven

To Believe That Thirty-Seven Conditions Leading to Bodhi Will Surely Guide Practitioners From the Illusive Bank to the Shore of Enlightenment

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

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

Rddhipada or *four sufficiencies*. *Four meditations*, or four foundations of Mindfulness, or four objects on which memory or thought should dwell. Four types of Buddhist meditation for eradicating illusions and attaining enlightenment. Hinayana calls these practices ‘basis of action’ (kammathana) which is one of the modes of analytical meditation. *Five roots* or faculties are the five roots that give rise to other wholesome dharmas. The five sense-organs can be entrances to the hells; at the same time, they can be some of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with them, we create karmas and sins, but also with them, we can practise the right way. *The five powers* or faculties for any cultivator or the powers of five spiritual faculties which are developed through strengthening the five roots. Thus in Buddhism, power or ability is always used as the sense organs to discern the truth. In Mahayana Buddhism, it is the eighth “perfection” (paramita) of the tenfold list of perfections that a Bodhisattva cultivates on the path to Buddhahood. *Seven factors of enlightenment* bring extraordinary benefits for Buddhist practitioners. Once fully developed, they have the power to bring samsaric suffering to an end.” This means that the perpetual, cyclical birth and death of beings who are composed of mental and physical phenomena can come to a complete stop. Besides, these factors of enlightenment also have the capacity to pulverize mara’s armies, the destructive inner forces which keep us bound on the wheel of suffering and rebirth. The Buddha and enlightened ones develop the factors of enlightenment and are thus able to transcend all three realms of sensual pleasures, realm of subtle forms and formless realms. When fully developed, these factors of enlightenment bring practitioners to attain the peace and joy of Nirvana. In this they are comparable to strong and effective medicine. They confer the strength of mind necessary to withstand the ups and downs of life. Moreover, they often cause physical and mental illnesses. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are seven Limbs (factors) of Enlightenment, or the seven Bodhi shares. Practicing the seven awakening states will result in the following achievements: Elimination of evil; development of virtue; feeling of cheerfulness versus suffering; final enlightenment. However, one does not become enlightened by merely gazing into the sky or looking around on the earth. One does not enlightened by reading or

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

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

II. Devout Buddhists Always Believe That Thirty-Seven Conditions Leading to Bodhi Will Surely Guide Practitioners From the Illusive Bank to the Shore of Enlightenment:

The Buddha teachings preached by the Buddha are methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment without any exceptions. Besides the core teachings, do not get involved

in evil deeds, do whatever benefits others, always keep the mind pure, that is all the Buddha's teaching, Buddhist teachings still have a lot of other teachings that will surely guide practitioners from the illusive bank to the shore of enlightenment, among them, we have to first mention on the thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment.

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

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

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

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

Four Sufficiencies: The Four Sufficiencies or Roads to Fulfillment that the Buddha taught His disciples to equip them with the necessities for them to be successful in their cultivation. The Buddha called them ‘Four Sufficiencies’ for they are different roads that lead us onward. They are four different qualities of character, each reflecting a different strength of our personality. Practitioners should recognize which of them is our own particular strength, then we can develop what need be cultivated. One of the greatest challenges of practitioners is achieving the aim of emancipation, and bringing the liberating qualities of the mind to dissolve in each moment of our life in the present. The path of our mindfulness must be continuing from moment to moment and must be right here in this very life. *First, Sufficiency of Desire:* Desire to develop magic, strong aspiration or will (intensive longing). We nourish a strong desire to practice meditation in our daily life. When we possess this quality, we will sense that nothing can finally impede us in our cultivation. Furthermore, when we possess this quality, we feel that we will not be satisfied until we have realized our goal. This is a desire to cultivate, a powerful aspiration that leads us to success. Here a monk develops CONCENTRATION OF INTENTION accompanied by effort of the will power. *Second, Sufficiency of Concentration:* Endeavor to remember to practice correct dharmas (intense concentration or thoughts, intense concentration). Memory or

intense holding on to the position reached, or the love for the truth that keeps our mind continually absorbed in the practice. Endeavor to remember to practice correct dharmas has great purity of consciousness and is extremely ardent. Endeavor to remember to practice correct dharmas becomes a path to understanding when it fills our minds. Here a monk develops concentration of consciousness accompanied by effort of the thought power. Once we possess 'Endeavor to remember to practice correct dharmas', we continually reflect on Dharma and practice it; nothing else seems equally important. *Third, Sufficiency of Energy:* Intensified effort, or effort to realize magic, vigor or exertion. This is the quality of energy. Practitioners who possess this quality do not only remain undaunted by the effort required, but also find inspiration in the challenge. Here a monk develops concentration of energy accompanied by strenuous efforts. In fact, the Buddha was a typical example for this quality. Viriya is the energy expended to direct the mind persistently, continuously toward cultivation. Even ordinary people who are hardworking and industrious have the capacity to be heroic in whatever they do. Practitioners who are endowed with courageous effort will be bold in going forward, unafraid of the difficulties we may encounter in the path of cultivation. The special characteristics of "Viriya" is an enduring patience in the face of suffering or difficulty. Viriya is the ability to see to the end no matter what, even if one has to grit one's teeth. Practitioners need courageous effort, with its characteristic of forbearance in the face of difficulty. If we raise our energy level, the mind will gain enough strength to bear with challenges. Besides, viriya has the power to freshen the mind and keep it robust, even in difficult circumstances. There are two ways that help increase our energy level: To increase viriya by ourselves, and to seek out the inspiration from spiritual friends. Before His awakening, when He was still seeking the truth, He made this determination: "If the end is attainable by human effort, I will not rest or relax until it is attained. Let only my skin and sinews and bones remain. Let my flesh and blood dry up. I will not stop the course of my effort until I win that which may be won by human ability, human effort, and human exertion." *Fourth, Sufficiency of Contemplation:* Meditation on one subject means an intense contemplation (meditation on one subject, intense contemplation or meditation, investigation, or the state of

dhyana). Some people have a strong interest in understanding the deepest and most profound aspects of the dharmas. They are not satisfied to know just the surface of things. Here a monk develops concentration of investigation accompanied by effort of deep thinking, for this kind of mind contemplates the immensity of samsara, the circle of birth and death, the immensity of planes of existence, and the implications in our lives in this world. Practitioners cultivate the reflective knowledge into the rapid arising and passing away of phenomena, then we will have an intuitive insight of impermanence, suffering and no-self.

Four Kinds of Mindfulness: Four kinds of mindfulness are four basic subjects of Buddhist meditation: impermanence, suffering, no-self, and impurity. If we always remember and meditate on these four principles of reality, we will gradually be released from the round of birth and death (samsara). The first basic subject of Buddhist meditation is contemplation on impurity of the body. Impurity is the nature of our bodies and minds. Impurity means the absence of an immaculate state of being, one that is neither holy nor beautiful. From the psychological and physiological standpoint, human beings are impure. This is not negative or pessimistic, but an objective perspective on human beings. If we examine the constituents of our bodies from the hair on our head to the blood, pus, phlegm, excrement, urine, the many bacteria dwelling in the intestines, and the many diseases present waiting for the opportunity to develop, we can see clearly that our bodies are quite impure and subject to decay. Our bodies also create the motivation to pursue the satisfaction of our desires and passions. That is why the sutra regards the body as the place where misdeeds gather. Let us now consider our psychological state. Since we are unable to see the truth of impermanence, suffering, and the selfless nature of all things, our minds often become the victims of greed and hatred, and we act wrongly. So the sutra says, “The mind is the source of all confusion.” The second basic subject of Buddhist meditation is contemplation suffering of sensation. The ancient people of India said that all things are composed of four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Acknowledging this, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas understand that when there is a harmonious relationship among the four elements, there is peace. When the four elements are not in harmony, there is

suffering. Because all things are created by a combination of these elements, nothing can exist independently or permanently. All things are impermanent. Consequently, when we are caught up in the things of the world, we suffer from their impermanent nature. And since all things are empty, when we are caught up by things, we also suffer from their emptiness. Awareness of the existence of suffering leads us to begin to practice the way of realization. This is the first of the Four Noble Truths. When we lose awareness of and do not meditate on the existence of suffering in all things, we can easily be pushed around by passions and desires for worldly things, increasingly destroying our lives in the pursuit of these desires. Only by being aware of suffering can we find its cause, confront it directly, and eliminate it. The third basic subject of Buddhist meditation is contemplation on impermanence of the mind or the impermanent nature of all things. All things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. The fourth basic subject of Buddhist meditation is the contemplation of selflessness of things. For practitioners, they should see the nature of our bodies are selfless. Buddhism teaches that human beings' bodies are composed of five aggregates, called skandhas in Sanskrit. If the form created by the four elements is empty and without self, then human beings' bodies, created by the unification of the five skandhas, must also be empty and without self. Human beings' bodies are involved in a transformation process from second to second, minute to minute, continually experiencing impermanence in each moment. By looking very deeply into the five skandhas, we can experience the selfless nature of our bodies, our passage through birth and death, and emptiness, thereby destroying the illusion that our bodies are permanent. In Buddhism, no-self is the most important subject for meditation. By meditating no-self, we can break through the barrier between self and other. When we no longer are separate from the universe, a completely harmonious existence with the universe is

created. We see that all other human beings exist in us and that we exist in all other human beings. We see that the past and the future are contained in the present moment, and we can penetrate and be completely liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

Four meditations, or four foundations of Mindfulness, or four objects on which memory or thought should dwell. Four types of Buddhist meditation for eradicating illusions and attaining enlightenment. Hinayana calls these practices ‘basis of action’ (kammathana) which is one of the modes of analytical meditation. Some forty such meditations are given in the Visuddha-Magga: four ‘measureless meditations, ten impurities, four formless states, ten universals, ten remembrances, one sign, and one mental reflex. *First, Meditation and Full Realization on the Impurity of the Body:* Due to illusions, most of us think that our body is more valuable than any thing else. So it needs be provided with better foods and expensive clothes. Therefore, the ‘struggle for life’ has come into play. Life is no longer a peaceful place, but a battle field with greed, hatred, envy, arrogance, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying. Evil karma is gradually formed as a result. Earnest Buddhists should view the body (eye, ear, skin, hair, nose, tongue, mouth, anus, etc) is unclean (Quán thân bất tịnh) which covered with a bag of skin, inside are flesh, fat, bone, blood, mucus and waste matters of which no one wishes to touch. The body itself, if not being washed frequently with fragrant water and soap, no one wants to stay close to it. In addition, it is prone to decay minute after minute, second after second. If we stop breathing, what is the body called if not a corpse? During the first day, its color is changing. A few days later, it becomes bluish and produces offensive odor. At this time, even if that disintegrated body once was the most beautiful woman or a handsome man, no one wants to be close to it. Earnest Buddhist should always contemplate that the body is unclean. This contemplation is designed to cure greed, attachment, selfishness, and arrogance. Also, when people realize that they are physically and biologically the same, they would easily understand, tolerate and compassionate among themselves and others. The discrimination against the aging, people with disabilities, and the other race would be diminished. As we see above, through contemplation we see that our body is not clean. It is viewed as a skinned bag containing

dirty trash that will soon be disintegrated. Therefore, we must not become attached to it. The nature of our bodies and minds are impure which is neither holy nor beautiful. From psychological and physiological standpoint, human beings are impure. This is not negative or pessimistic. Objectively speaking, if we examine the constituents of our bodies from the hair, blood, pus, excrement, urine, intestines, liver, and stomach, etc., they are dwelling places for many bacteria. Many diseases are awaiting for the opportunity to develop. In fact, our bodies are impure and subject to decay. The body as an abode of mindfulness. Contemplation of the impurity of the body, or to contemplate the body as impure. Mindfulness of the body as impure and utterly filthy (consider the body is impure). This negates the idea of "Purity.". Here a monk abides contemplating body as body, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. *Second, Meditation and Full Realization on the Evils of Sensations:* All sensations are evil, no matter they are painful, joyous, or indifferent sensations. To view all the feelings are painful. There are three kinds of feelings: pleasures, pain and neutral ones; however, according to Buddha's teaching, all feelings are painful because they are impermanent, transcient, ungraspable, and therefore, they are unreal, illusive and deceptive (quán thọ thị khổ). Furthermore, when you accept something from others, naturally, you have to do something else for them in return. It might cost you more than what you have accepted. However, we can easily refuse material things, but the hardest thing to escape is our own feelings. Feeling is a form of acceptance that most of us could easily be trapped. It is very subtle, but its effect is so destructible. We usually feel whatever conveyed to us by the six senses. For example, hearing someone bad-mouth on us, we feel angry at once. Seeing something profitable, we readily feel greedy. After all, if we don't cultivate, greed and angry are two uncontrollable agents which dominate and overwhelm our daily activities. To contemplate all the feelings are painful will gradually assist us to keep the feelings under control as well as to purify our mind; and as a result, provide us the joy and peace. We experience good and bad feelings from our five senses. But good feelings never last long; and sooner or later they will disappear. Only bad feelings remain from which we will suffer. Nothing in the universe can exist independently or permanently. All

things including bodies of human beings are composed of four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. When there is a harmonious relationship among these four elements, there is peace. When the four elements are not in harmony, there is suffering. Feelings as an abode of mindfulness, or to contemplate all feelings or sensations lead to suffering, or mindfulness of feeling as the cause of suffering. Sensation or consciousness as always resulting in suffering (receiving is self-binding; consider feelings or the senses as a source of suffering). This negates the idea of “Joy.” Here a monk abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering. According to the Satipatthanasutta, contemplation of feelings or sensations means to be mindful of our feeling, including pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent or neutral. When experiencing a pleasant feeling we should know that it is a pleasant feeling because we are mindful of the feeling. The same with regard to all other feelings. We try to experience each feeling as it really is. Generally, we are depressed when we are experiencing unpleasant feelings and are elated by pleasant feelings. Contemplation of feelings or sensations will help us to experience all feelings with a detached outlook, with equanimity and avoid becoming a slave to sensations. Through the contemplation of feelings, we also learn to realize that there is only a feeling, a sensation. That feeling or sensation itself is not lasting and there is no permanent entity or “self” that feels. According to the Satipatthana Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha taught “How, Bhikkhus, does a Bhikkhu abide contemplating feelings as feelings? Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling, a Bhikkhu understands: ‘I feel a pleasant feeling;’ when feeling a painful feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a painful feeling;’ when feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.’ When feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a worldly pleasant feeling;’ when feeling an unworldly pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel an unworldly pleasant feeling;’ when feeling a worldly painful feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a worldly painful feeling;’ when feeling an unworldly painful feeling, he understands: ‘I feel an unworldly painful feeling;’ when feeling a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling;’ when feeling an unworldly neither-

painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.' In this way he abides contemplating feelings as feelings internally, or he abides contemplating feelings as feelings externally, or he abides contemplating feelings as feelings both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in feelings their arising factors, or he abides contemplating in feelings their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in feelings both their arising and vanishing factors. Or else, mindfulness that 'there is feeling' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And, he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a Bhikkhu abides contemplating feelings as feelings." Cultivation on the Sensations means meditation and full realization on the evils of sensations, no matter they are painful, joyous, or indifferent sensations. We experience good and bad feelings from our five senses. But good feelings never last long; and sooner or later they will disappear. Only bad feelings remain from which we will suffer. Nothing in the universe can exist independently or permanently. All things including bodies of human beings are composed of four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. When there is a harmonious relationship among these four elements, there is peace. When the four elements are not in harmony, there is suffering. Feelings as an abode of mindfulness, or to contemplate all feelings or sensations lead to suffering, or mindfulness of feeling as the cause of suffering. Sensation or consciousness as always resulting in suffering (receiving is self-binding. Consider feelings or the senses as a source of suffering). This negates the idea of "Joy." Here a monk abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. *Third, Meditation and Full Realization on the Evanescence or Impermanence of Mind and Thoughts:* Realization the impermanence of mind and thoughts means contemplating the impermanence of all thoughts. To view the mind is transient or impermanent. Most people think that their mind is not changed; therefore, they attach to whatever they think. They believe that what they think reflects the truth. Probably some of them would discover that their mind is changing, but they refuse to accept it. Buddhist practitioners should always contemplate their wholesome and

unwholesome minds, they are all subject to rising and destroying. They have no real entity. In sitting meditation, one will have the chance to recognize the facts that the mind keeps jumping in a fast speed as pictures on a movie screen. The body, therefore, always feels restless and eager to react on the thinking pulses. That is why people are rarely calm down or experiencing true happiness. Earnest Buddhists should always remember that the mind does not have any “real entity” to itself. It changes from second to second. That’s why the Buddha viewed the mind of an ordinary person is like a swinging monkey, the wind, lightning or a drop of morning dew. This contemplation helps the practitioners see that everything is changed so that the practitioners will have the ability to eliminate attachment to what they think. Impermanence is the key nature of all things. From moment to moment, all things in this universe, including human’s bodies and minds are in constant transformation. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation and destruction. Mind as an abode of mindfulness, or mindfulness of the mind as impermanent, or to contemplate the mind as impermanent. Ordinary mind is impermanent, merely one sensation after another (mind is everchanging, consider the mind to be a constant state of flux). This negates the idea of “Permanence.” Here a monk abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. However, on what mind do we have to contemplate? According to the Siksasamuccaya Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Cultivator searches all around for this thought. But what thought? Is it the passionate, hateful or confused one? Or is it the past, future, or present one? The past one no longer exists, the future one has not yet arrived, and the present one has no stability. In the Satipatthana Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha taught: “For thought, Kasyapa, cannot be apprehended, inside, or outside, or in between. For thought is immaterial, invisible, nonresisting, inconceivable, unsupported, and non-residing. Thought has never been seen by any of the Buddhas, nor do they see it, nor will they see it. And what the Buddhas never see, how can that be observable process, except in the sense that dharmas proceed by the way of mistaken perception? Thought is like a magical illusion; by an imagination of what is actually unreal it takes hold of a manifold variety of rebirths. A

thought is like the stream of a river, without any staying power; as soon as it is produced it breaks up and disappears. A thought is like a flame of a lamp, and it proceeds through causes and conditions. A thought is like lightning, it breaks up in a moment and does not stay on. Searching thought all around, cultivator does not see it in the skandhas, or in the elements, or in the sense-fields. Unable to see thought, he seeks to find the trend of thought, and asks himself: "Whence is the genesis of thought?" And it occurs to him that "where is an object, there thought arises." Is then the thought one thing and the object another? No, what is the object that just is the thought. If the object were one thing and the thought another, then there would be a double state of thought. So the object itself is just thought. Can then thought review thought? No, thought cannot review thought. As the blade of a sword cannot cut itself, so can a thought not see itself. Moreover, vexed and pressed hard on all sides, thought proceeds, without any staying power, like a monkey or like the wind. It ranges far, bodiless, easily changing, agitated by the objects of sense, with the six sense-fields for its sphere, connected with one thing after another. The stability of thought, its one-pointedness, its immobility, its undistraughtness, its one-pointed calm, its nondistraction, that is on the other hand called mindfulness as to thought. In short, the contemplation of mind speaks to us of the importance of following and studying our own mind, of being aware of arising thoughts in our mind, including lust, hatred, and delusion which are the root causes of all wrong doing. In the contemplation of mind, we know through mindfulness both the wholesome and unwholesome states of mind. We see them without attachment or aversion. This will help us understand the real function of our mind. Therefore, those who practice contemplation of mind constantly will be able to learn how to control the mind. Contemplation of mind also helps us realize that the so-called "mind" is only an ever-changing process consisting of changing mental factors and that there is no abiding entity called "ego" or "self." According to the Satipatthana Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha taught: "Bhikkhus, does a Bhikhu abide contemplating mind as mind? Here a Bhikhu understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and mind unaffected by lust as mind unaffected by lust. He understands mind affected by hate as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate as mind unaffected by hate. He

understands mind affected by delusion as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion. He understands contracted mind as contracted mind, and distracted mind as distracted mind. He understands exalted mind as exalted mind, and unexalted mind as unexalted mind. He understands surpassed mind as surpassed mind, and unsurpassed mind as unsurpassed mind. He understands concentrated mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind. He understands liberated mind as liberated mind, and unliberated mind as unliberated mind. In this way he abides contemplating mind as mind internally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind externally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind both internally and externally. Or else, he abides contemplating in mind its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that ‘there is mind’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a Bhikkhu abides contemplating mind as mind.” *Fourth, Contemplation of Mental Objects:* Contemplation of mental objects means contemplation of mind-objects, or meditation and full realization on the transiency selflessness of all elements (contemplating that all the dharmas are without their own nature). The contemplation of mental objects or mind contents means to be mindful on all essential dharmas. The contemplation of mental objects is not mere thinking or deliberation, it goes with mindfulness in discerning mind objects as when they arise and cease. For example, when there is a sense desire arising, we immediately know that a sense desire is arising in us; when a sense desire is present, we immediately know that a sense desire is present in us; when a sense desire is ceasing, we immediately know that a sense desire is ceasing. In other words, when there is sense desire in us, or when sense desire is absent, we immediately know or be mindful that there is sense desire or no sense desire in us. We should always be mindful with the same regard to the other hindrances, as well as the five aggregates of clinging (body or material form, feelings, perception, mental formation, and consciousness). We should also be mindful with the six internal and six external sense-bases. Through the contemplation of mental factors on

the six internal and external sense-bases, we know well the eye, the visible form and the fetter that arises dependent on both the eye and the form. We also know well the ear, sounds, and related fetters; the nose, smells and related fetters; the tongue and tastes; the body and tactile objects; the mind and mind objects, and know well the fetter arising dependent on both. We also know the ceasing of the fetter. Similarly, we discern the seven factors of enlightenment, and the Four Noble Truths, and so on. Thus we live mindfully investigating and understanding the mental objects. We live independent, clinging to nothing in the world. Our life is totally free from any attachments. Practitioners must contemplate to see that everything is without-self and has no real nature. Everything in the world, either physical or mental, is dependent upon each other to function or survive. They are not free from one another or free to act on their own, on their own will. They do not have a "self." They are not capable of being self-existent. A human body is composed of billions of cells that depend on one another; one cell dies will effect so many other cells. Similarly, a house, a car, a road, a mountain, or a river all are compounded, not being self-existent. Everything, therefore, is a combination of other things. For instance, without nutritious foods, water, and fresh air, this body will certainly be reduced to a skeleton and eventually disintegrated. Thus the Buddha taught: "All existents are selfless, empty, and impermanent." Practitioners who always contemplate 'the dharma is without-self,' they should become more humble and likable. In fact, everything has no real nature, they are only a combination of the four elements, and each element is empty and without a self of itself, thus everything is without a self. Dharmas (real things and phenomena) as an abode of mindfulness, or mindfulness of dharmas as dependent, without self-entity, or to contemplate all things as being dependent, without self-nature or self-identity. All phenomena lack self-nature. There is no such thing as an ego. Things in general as being dependent and without a nature of their own (things are composed and egoless or consider everything in the world as being a consequence of causes and conditions and that nothing remains unchanged forever). This negates the idea of "Personality." Here a monk abides contemplating monf-objects as mind-objects, ardent,

clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.

According to Majjhima Nikaya and Digha Nikaya, the Buddha taught: “Bhiksus! Whoever should be able to develop these Four Foundations of mindfulness for seven years, one of these two fruits may be expected by him: ‘either Arahantship in this life or the state of Non-returning in the future. Bhiksus! Let alone 7 years. Should anyone be able to develop these Four Foundations of mindfulness for six years, five years, four years, three years, two years, one year... then one of the two above mentioned fruits may also be expected by him. Bhiksus! Let alone one year. Should anyone be able to develop these Four Foundations of mindfulness for seven months, six months... half a month, then one of the two above mentioned fruits may also be expected by him. Bhiksus! Let alone half a month. Should anyone be able to develop these Four Foundations of mindfulness for a week, then one of the two above mentioned fruits may also be expected by him. This is the only way, Bhiksus, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for winning the right path, for realizing Nirvana, namely, the Four Foundations of mindfulness.”

The Five Faculties: According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five roots or faculties (indriyani). These are the five roots that give rise to other wholesome dharmas. The five sense-organs can be entrances to the hells; at the same time, they can be some of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with them, we create karmas and sins, but also with them, we can practise the right way. *First, Virtue of Belief:* Faith or Sense of belief in the Triple Gem and the Four Noble Truths. Sraddhendriya also means the mind of faith. Faith in a religion, unlike intellectual learning, does not enable a believer to have the power to save others as well as himself if he understands it only in theory. When he believe from the depths of his heart, his belief produces power. His faith cannot be said to be true until he attains such a mental state. *Second, Virtue of Active Vigor:* Energy (vigor) or Sense of endeavor or vigor to cultivate good deeds. The spirit endeavoring purely and incessantly. Faith alone is not enough. Our religious lives cannot be true unless we maintain our faith purely and constantly endeavor so

that our religious spirit does not weaken or lose its power. *Third, Virtue of Mindfulness:* Memory or Mindfulness or Sense of memory or right memory. The mind that always focuses upon the Buddha. Practically speaking, of course, it is impossible for us to completely forget the Buddha for even a moment. When a student devotes himself to his studies or when an adult is entirely absorbed in his work, he must concentrate on one object. Doing so accords with the way to Buddhahood. While devoting ourselves to a particular object, we reflect, "I am caused to live by the Buddha." When we complete a difficult task we feel relieved, we thank the Buddha, saying, "How lucky I am! I am protected by the Buddha." When an evil thought flashes across our mind or we suddenly feel angry, we instantly examine ourselves, thinking, "Is this the way to Buddhahood?" The mind that thus keeps the Buddha in mind at all times is "sense of memory." *Fourth, Virtue of Concentration:* Sense of meditation or Visionary meditation, samadhi, or virtue of concentration. The sense of meditation implies a determined mind. Once we have faith in a religion, we are never agitated by anything, whatever may happen. We bear patiently all persecution and temptation, and we continue to believe only in one religion. We must constantly maintain such firm determination, never becoming discouraged. We cannot be said to be real people with a religious faith unless we have such a mental attitude. *Fifth, Virtue of Wisdom or Awareness:* Sense of wisdom or thinking of the truth. The wisdom that people of religion must maintain. This is not a self-centered wisdom but the true wisdom that we obtain when we perfectly free ourselves from ego and illusion. So long as we have this wisdom, we will not take the wrong way. We can say the same thing of our belief in religion itself, not to mention in our daily lives. If we are attached to a selfish, small desire, we are apt to stray toward a mistaken religion. However, earnestly we may believe in it, endeavoring to practice its teaching, keeping it in mind, and devoting ourselves to it, we cannot be saved because of its basically wrong teaching, and we sink farther and farther into the world of illusion. There are many instances around us of people following such a course. Although "sense of wisdom" is mentioned as the last of the five organs leading man to good conduct, it should be the first in the order in which we enter a religious life.

According to the Aditta-pariyaya Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya, Volume 5.48.2, the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus about the 'Five Faculties' thus: "Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculty of faith, the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, and the faculty of wisdom. And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is a person of faith, one who places faith in the enlightenment of the Tathagata thus: 'The Blessed One is an Arahant, fully enlightened, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.' And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of energy? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple dwells with energy aroused for the abandoning of unwholesome states and the acquisition of wholesome states; he is strong, valiant, not shirking the responsibility of cultivating wholesome states. He generates desire for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the arising of unarisen wholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the maintenance of arisen wholesome states, for their non-decline, increase, expansion, and fulfilment by development; he makes an effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. This is called the faculty of energy. And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of mindfulness? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and discernment, one who remembers and recollects what was done long ago and said long ago. He dwells contemplating the body in the body ... feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... mental phenomena in mental phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having put away covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. This is called the faculty of mindfulness. And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple, having made relinquishment the object, gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind. Secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, he enters and dwells in the first jhana, which is accompanied by thought and examination, with rapture and happiness

born of seclusion. With the subsiding of thought and examination, he enters and dwells in the second jhana, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without thought and examination, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he dwells equanimous and, mindful and clearly comprehending, he experiences happiness with the body; he enters and dwells in the third jhana of which the noble ones declare: 'He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.' With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and displeasure, he enters and dwells in the fourth jhana, which is neither painful nor pleasant and includes the purification of mindfulness by equanimity. This is called the faculty of concentration. And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of wisdom? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is wise; he possesses wisdom directed to arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. He understands as it really is: 'This is suffering.' He understands as it really is: 'This is the origin of suffering.' He understands as it really is: 'This is the cessation of suffering.' He understands as it really is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' This is called the faculty of wisdom. These, bhikkhus, are the five faculties."

The Five Powers: The five powers or faculties for any cultivator or the powers of five spiritual faculties which are developed through strengthening the five roots. Thus in Buddhism, power or ability is always used as the sense organs to discern the truth. In Mahayana Buddhism, it is the eighth "perfection" (paramita) of the tenfold list of perfections that a Bodhisattva cultivates on the path to Buddhahood. It is developed on the eighth bodhisattva level (bhumi). *First, Power of Faith:* Also called force of belief which precludes all false belief or the faith to believe. *Second, Power of Zeal:* Also called force of active vigor which leads to overcoming all obstacles or the will to make the endeavor. *Third, Power of Memory:* Also called mindfulness, or force of mindfulness which is achieved through meditation or the faculty of alertness. *Fourth, Power of Meditation (Dhyana):* Also called force of concentration which leads to eliminate all passions and desires or the ability to concentrate one's mind. *Fifth, Power of Wisdom:* Also called force of wisdom which rests on insight into the four noble truths and

leads to the knowledge that liberates the ability to maintain clear wisdom. Besides, there is also a tenfold list of qualities that in both Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana are said to be unique to fully awakened Buddhas (Samyak-Sambuddha): 1) power of knowledge of what is possible and what is impossible or the power to distinguish right from wrong (sthanasthana-jnana-bala); power of knowledge of retributions of actions or the power of knowing karmic retributions throughout the three periods of time (karma-vipaka-jnana-bala); 3) power of knowledge of the concentrations, eight stages of liberations, meditative absorptions, and attainments (dhyana-vimoksa-samadhi-samapatti-jnana-bala); 4) power of knowledge of the relative qualities of beings or the power of complete knowledge of the powers and faculties of all beings (indrya-parapara-jnana-bala); 5) power of knowledge of the various intentions of beings or the power of complete knowledge of the desires or moral direction of every being (nanadhimukti-jnana-bala); 6) power of knowledge of the various states of beings or the power of knowing the states of others (nanadhatu-jnana-bala); 7) power of knowledge of the ways in which beings go everywhere within cyclic existence and nirvana (sarvatragamini-pratipajjnana-bala); 8) power of knowledge of former abodes (purva-nivasa-jnana-bala); 9) power of knowledge of death and rebirth (cyutyu-papada-jnana-bala); 10) power of knowledge that the defilements have been extinguished (asrava-jnana-bala). The five powers include the power of Faith or force of belief which precludes all false belief; power of Zeal or force of active vigor which leads to overcoming all obstacles; power of Memory, or mindfulness, or force of mindfulness which is achieved through meditation; power of Meditation (Dhyana) or force of concentration which leads to eliminate all passions and desires; and power of Wisdom (awareness) or force of wisdom which rests on insight into the four noble truths and leads to the knowledge that liberates.

Seven Bodhi Shares: In Buddhism, the seven Bodhi Shares are also called the seven limbs of enlightenment. The Buddha always told His disciples: “All of the factors of enlightenment bring extraordinary benefits. Once fully developed, they have the power to bring samsaric suffering to an end.” This means that the perpetual, cyclical birth and death of beings who are composed of mental and physical phenomena

can come to a complete stop. Besides, these factors of enlightenment also have the capacity to pulverize mara's armies, the destructive inner forces which keep us bound on the wheel of suffering and rebirth. The Buddha and enlightened ones develop the factors of enlightenment and are thus able to transcend all three realms of sensual pleasures, realm of subtle forms and formless realms. When fully developed, these factors of enlightenment bring practitioners to attain the peace and joy of Nirvana. In this they are comparable to strong and effective medicine. They confer the strength of mind necessary to withstand the ups and downs of life. Moreover, they often cure physical and mental illnesses. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are seven Limbs (factors) of Enlightenment, or the seven Bodhi shares. Practicing the seven awakening states will result in the following achievements: Elimination of evil; development of virtue; feeling of cheerfulness versus suffering; final enlightenment.

Cultivators can not become enlightened by merely gazing into the sky or just look down on earth. Cultivators can not obtain the way by simply reading books or studying the scriptures, nor by thinking, nor by wishing for becoming Buddha. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are seven Limbs (factors) of Enlightenment, or the seven Bodhi shares. They are necessary conditions or prerequisites which cause enlightenment to arise. Practicing the seven awakening states will result in the following achievements: Elimination of evil; development of virtue; feeling of cheerfulness versus suffering; final enlightenment. The word "Bojjhanga" is a Pali term for "factors of enlightenment." It is made up of "Bodhi," which means enlightenment or an enlightened person, and "anga," is a causative factor. Thus a "bojjhanga" is a causative factor of an enlightened being, or a cause for enlightenment. A second sense of the word "Bojjhanga" is based on alternative meanings of its two Pali roots. Thus the alternative meaning of bodhi is the knowledge that comprehends or sees the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Noble Path. Sometimes, seven factors of enlightenment are known as 'sambojjhanga'. The prefix 'sam' means 'full' or 'complete'; however, the prefix does not change the meaning of the seven factors of enlightenment. All practitioners come to understand the Four Noble Truths to some extent, but according to Buddhism, true comprehension

of them requires a particular, transforming moment of consciousness, known as path consciousness. This is one of the culminating insights of meditation practice for it includes the experience of Nirvana. Once a practitioner has experienced this, he or she is deeply knows the Four Noble Truths, and thus is considered to contain the “bojjhargas” inside him or herself. Such a person is called noble. Thus, “Bojjhargas” or enlightenment factors also are parts or qualities of a noble person. The seven factors of enlightenment include Selection of the proper dharma, Constant effort, Cheerfulness or high spirits, Peaceful mind, Remembrance of the Dharma, Concentration ability, and Non-attachment ability. Zen practitioners can find each one of the seven factors of enlightenment in all phases of meditation practices. Zen practitioners should always remember the Buddha’s reminder: “If the four foundations of mindfulness are practiced persistently and repeatedly, the seven factors of enlightenment will be automatically and fully developed.” Thus, the Buddha Himself emphasized the relationships between Zen and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment very clearly. However, one does not become enlightened by merely gazing into the sky or looking around on the earth. One does not enlightened by reading or studying the scriptures, nor by thinking, nor by wishing for enlightened state to burst into one’s mind. There are certain necessary conditions or prerequisites which cause enlightenment to arise. How can one develop these factors in himself or herself? By means of cultivation of precepts, meditation, and wisdom. *First, Selection of the Proper Dharma:* Discrimination of true or false, or keen investigation of phenomena (dharma). It is the sharp analytical knowledge of understanding the true nature of all constituent things, animate or inanimate, human or divine. It is seeing things in their proper perspective. Only through meditation we can see all component things in their fundamental elements, right down to their ultimates. Through keen meditation and investigation, one understands that all compounded things pass through the inconceivably rapid moments of arising, reaching a peak and ceasing, just as a river in flood sweeps to climax and fades away; the whole universe is constantly changing, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments; all things in fact are subject to conditions, causes and effects; what is impermanent and not lasting producing painful or sorrow fruit; there

doesn't exist a so-called permanent and everlasting soul or self; the true nature of the three characteristics, or laws of transiency, sorrow, and non-self. *Second, Constant Effort:* Energy, zeal or undeflected progress. It is a mental property and the sixth limb of the Noble Eightfold Path, there called right effort. Effort is the energy expended to direct the mind persistently, continuously in meditation, and toward the object of observation. Zen practitioners should have courageous efforts in meditation practices. The Buddha has not proclaimed himself a saviour willing and able to take upon himself the evil of all sentient beings. He is only a Path-Revealer. Each one of us must put forth the necessary effort and work out his own deliverance with heedfulness. He cannot walk for anyone on this path. Thus he advised that each Buddhist should be sincerely zealous, strong and firm in the purpose of reaching the final aim. He also advised: "Be islands unto yourselves, be your own refuge." Thus did the Master exhort his followers to acquire self-reliance. A follower of the Buddha should not under any circumstances relinquish hope and effort; for the Buddha was one who never gave up courage and effort even as a bodhisattva. Zen practitioners should be patient and accept difficulties and challenges during practicing meditation; should leave behind habits and hobbies of ordinary life; and should try their best to practice meditation continually. One of the most difficult things for Zen practitioners is the wandering mind, it never wants to stay on the object you want to observe, but rather wandering around and around all day long. In our body, any time we cross our legs to practice meditation, we are likely to experience some level of pain in our body. Sometimes, we decide to try to sit still for an hour with our legs crossed, but only after ten minutes, we feel numb in our feet and stiff in our neck, and so on, and so on. Zen practitioners need courageous effort to face difficulties and challenges. Once we develop our courageous effort, the mind gains strength to bear with pain in a patient and courageous way. Effort has the power to freshen the mind and keep it strong in any difficult circumstances. Zen practitioners should always have the effort and energy to cultivate the following four things: effort to initiate virtues not yet arisen; effort to consolidate, increase, and not deteriorate virtues already arisen; effort not to initiate sins not yet arisen; effort to eliminate sins already arisen. In The Dhammapada Sutta, sentence

280, the Buddha taught: “The idler who does not strive, who, though, young and strong, is full of sloth, who is weak in resolution and thought, that lazy and idle man will never find the way to wisdom, the way to enlightenment and deliverance.” *Third, Cheerfulness or High Spirits:* Rapture means joy, happiness, or delight; but a special characteristic of Rapture is that it can pervade associated mental states, making them delight and happy and bringing a sense of deep satisfaction. “Piti” is a mental property, and is a quality which deeply influences both the body and mind. A man lacking in this quality cannot advance along the path to enlightenment. In him there will always arise sullen indifference to the Dharma, an aversion to the practice of meditation, and morbid manifestations. Zen practitioners should always remember that Rapture only develops when the mind is relatively clean of afflictions. In order for us to be clean of afflictions, we have no other choices but to be mindful from moment to moment so that concentration arises and the afflictions are eliminated. Therefore, we must be developing Rapture through mindfulness continuously, whether when we are walking, standing, lying down, sitting, or doing other tasks. To practice “piti” or joy, Buddhist cultivators should always remember that happiness is a matter of the mind and it should never be sought in external and material things, though they may be instrumental in any way. Only those who possess the quality of contentment can experience real happiness. Buddhist cultivators should always remember that there is a vast difference between pleasure and happiness. Pleasure, or pleasant feeling, is something very momentary and fleeting. Pleasant feeling may be an indicative sign of suffering, for what we hug in great glee this moment, may turn to be a source of suffering the next moment. Seeing a form, hearing a sound, perceiving an odour, tasting a flavour, feeling some tangible thing, cognizing an idea, we are usually moved, and from those sense objects and mental objects, we experience a certain degree of pleasure. However, they are all temporary; they are only a passing show of phenomena. Real happiness or rapture does not come through grasping or clinging to things, animate or inanimate, but from giving up. The Buddha left behind his glorious palace, beautiful wife, good son, as well as kingdom authority, and became a homeless monk. Eventually he attained enlightenment and deliverance, do we have any other choices if we wish to attain enlightenment and

deliverance? *Fourth, Peaceful Mind:* Peaceful mind means ease, tranquility, riddance of all grossness or weight of body or mind so that they may be light, free and at ease. Many people's minds are always in a state of agitation all the time. Their minds wandering here and there non-stop. When the mind is scattered, it is difficult for us to control our actions. On the contrary, we begin to act according to whims and fancies without considering properly whether an action is wholesome or not. There are two kinds of tranquility: the calm of the body means the calm of all mental properties rather than the only physical body. In other words, calm of the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, and the volitional activities or conformations; the calm of the mind, or the calm of the aggregate of consciousness. A man who cultivates calm of the mind does not get upset, confused or excited when confronted with the eight vicissitudes (8 winds or influences) of the world. He is able to understand the rise and fall (come into being and pass away), as well as the momentary fragility of all things. It is hard to tranquilize the mind. It trembles and it is unsteady, difficult to guard and hold back. In the Dhammapada, from sentence 33 to 36, the Buddha taught: "The mind quivers like a fish just taken from its watery home and thrown on the dry ground. It wanders at will." Calmness is not weakness. Only a person of culture is able to present the calm attitude at all times. It is not so difficult to be calm under favourable circumstances, but it is indeed difficult for a Buddhist to remain calm in the midst of unfavourable circumstances. Only the calm mind can help the aspirant to achieve enlightenment and deliverance. *Fifth, Remembrance of the Dharma:* Mindfulness, relinquishment, or power of remembering the various states passed through in contemplation. It is the instrument most efficacious in self-mastery. Besides, 'Sati' also means the power of observation, and the function of mindfulness is to keep the object always in view, neither forgetting it nor allowing it to disappear out of our contemplation. Remembrance of the Dharma includes meditation and full realization on the impurity of the body, when mindfulness is present, the object of observation will be noted without forgetfulness; contemplation of feeling or understanding that feeling is suffering; contemplation of mind, and Contemplation of thought; and contemplation of the no-self of mental objects. A person cannot be heedful unless he is fully controlling all his actions, whether they are

mental, verbal or physical at every moment of his walking life. In other words, he must zealously observe all commandments required of him. In the Digha Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha's final admonition to his disciples before entering the Nirvana: "Transient are all component things. Work out your deliverance with mindfulness." Venerable Saripura also advised everybody with his last words: "Strive on with mindfulness to obtain your deliverance." In the Anguttara Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Monks, I know not of any other single thing of such power to cause the arising of good thoughts if not yet arisen, or to cause the waning of evil thoughts if already arisen, as heedfulness. In him who is heedful, good thoughts not yet arisen, do arise, and evil thoughts, if arisen, do wane." *Sixth, Concentration Ability:* Concentration has the ability to keep the mind in Stability, concentration; or power to keep the mind in a given realm undiverted. Concentration is a mental factor which lands on the object of observation. Concentration also pricks into, penetrates into, and stays in the object of observation. The nature of concentration is nondispersal, nondissipation, and nonscatteredness. A mind of concentration is a mind that sticks with the object of observation, sinks into it, and remains still and calm in it. During practicing of meditation, Zen practitioners should stick their mind to the object of observation or contemplate directly mental or physical phenomena without resorting to the thinking process at all. Although the moment of samadhi is momentary, such samadhi can arise from moment to moment without breaks in between if we try to practice continuously. Besides, concentration also has the ability to collect the mind together. It can keep all other mental factors in a group so that they do not scatter or disperse. Thus, the mind remains firmly embedded in the object. It is only the tranquilized mind that can easily concentrate on a subject of meditation. Once the mind is quiet and still, wisdom will arise and we can see things as they really are. Therefore, concentration is the most proximate cause for the unfolding of wisdom. The unified mind brings the five hindrances under subjugation (sensual desire, anger, stiffness and torpor, agitation and worry, and doubt hindrances), for step by step, wisdom will penetrate into more and more profound levels of truth. At that time, Zen practitioners will see clearly the natures of impermanence, suffering, and absence of self of all things, and

therefore, no hindrance can dominate us anymore. Many are the impediments that confront a meditator, an aspirant for enlightenment, especially the five hindrances that hinder concentrative thoughts, and obstruct the way to deliverance. Concentration is the intensified steadiness of the mind comparable to an unflickering flame of a lamp in a windless place. Concentration has the ability to maintain the mind and the mental properties in a state of balance. It is concentration that fixes the mind aright and causes it to be unmoved; dispels passions and not only helps the mind undisturbed, but also helps bring purity and placidity of mind. One who is intent to practice “concentration” should always zealously observe Buddhist commandments, for it is virtue that nourishes mental life, and make it coherent and calm. *Seventh, Non-attachment Ability:* Equanimity means complete abandonment, detachment, or indifferent to all disturbances of the sub-conscious or ecstatic mind. The Sanskrit word ‘Upekṣa’ means equanimity, calmness, unbiased, unprejudice, and so on. In Zen, a mind of complete abandonment is a mind that remains unbiased and calm when confronting difficulties and challenges. A mind of equanimity is a state of balancing of energy, and it can be achieved in daily cultivation. According to The Abhidharma, “equanimity” means neutrality. It is mental equipoise and not hedonic indifference. Equanimity is the result of a calm concentrative mind. According to the Buddha, the best way to bring about equanimity is wise attention and continuous mindfulness. Once a mind of equanimity is developed, one moment of equanimity causes a succeeding moment of equanimity to arise, and so on. In our nowadays violent society, amidst the welter of experience, gain and loss, good repute and ill-repute, praise and blame, happiness and suffering, a man with the mind of equanimity will never waver. Zen practitioners have the mind of equanimity which understands that there is no one to own anything. In Dharmapada, sentence 83, the Buddha taught: “Truly the good give up longing for everything. The good sages not with thoughts of craving. Touched by happiness or by pain, the wise show neither elation nor depression.” A man who has reached perfect neutrality through the cultivation of equanimity, always avoids the following four wrong paths: the path of greed, hate, cowardice, and delusion. A man who has reached perfect neutrality through cultivation

of equanimity, always has his serene neutrality which enables him to see all beings impartially.

The Eighthfold Noble Path: The Noble Eightfold Path is the fourth Noble Truth in the Four Noble Truths that can help us prevent problems or deal with any problems we may come across in our daily life. This is the path that leads to the end of sufferings and afflictions. If we follow it, we are on the way to less suffering and more happiness. The eight right (correct) ways. The path leading to release from suffering, the goal of the third in the four noble truths. These are eight in the 37 bodhi ways to enlightenment. Practicing the Noble Eight-fold Path can bring about real advantages such as improvement of personal conditions. It is due to the elimination of all evil thoughts, words, and actions that we may commit in our daily life, and to the continuing practice of charitable work; improvement of living conditions. If everyone practiced this noble path, the world we are living now would be devoid of all miseries and sufferings caused by hatred, struggle, and war between men and men, countries and countries, or peoples and peoples. Peace would reign forever on earth. Besides, to cultivate the Eightfold Noble Path also means to practice meditation to attain of enlightenment or Bodhi Awareness. The Noble Eight-fold Path is the first basic condition for attaining Bodhi Consciousness that is untarnished while Alaya Consciousness is still defiled. *First, Right View:* Buddhist practitioners of mindfulness should try to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. Right understanding or right view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being influenced by prejudice or emotion. Right view helps differentiate the true from the false, and determines the true religious path for attaining liberation. Right understanding means to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. One of the most important of these is the law of karma, the law of cause and effect, every action brings a certain result, without any exception. There is no such 'no wholesome nor unwholesome' in Buddhism. Zen practitioners should always remember that whenever we act with greed, hatred, or delusion, pain and suffering come back to us. On the contrary, when our actions are motivated by generosity, love or wisdom, the results are happiness and peace. Devout Buddhists should always have a mindful mind to skilfully integrate the

understanding of the law of karma into our lives. Right understanding also means profoundly and subtly understand our true nature. In Buddhism, right understanding means the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Right Understanding or Right View is one of the two trainings in Wisdom (the other training is Right Thought). Right understanding can be said to mean seeing things as they really are, or understanding the real truth about things, rather than simply seeing them as they appear to be. According to Buddhist point of view, it means insight, penetrative understanding, or seeing beneath the surface of things, etc., under the lens of the Four Noble Truths, Interdependent origination, impermanence, impersonality, and so forth. Right understanding can be acquired by ourselves or by acquiring the truths that are shown by others. The process of acquiring right understanding must follow the following order: first we must observe objectively the facts which we are presented, then consider their significance. It is to say first to study and then to consider and examine them, and finally attaining right understanding through contemplation. At this point, the two types of understanding, either by ourselves or through others, become indistinguishable. To summarize, the process of acquiring right understanding are as follows: to observe and to study, to examine intellectually what we have observed and studied, to contemplate what we have examined. In short, Right Understanding means the understanding of the four noble truths: the truths of suffering and its causes perpetuate cyclic existence, the truths of cessation and the path are the way to liberation. The mind supported by wisdom will bring forth the Right Understanding which help us wholly and entirely free from the intoxication of sense desire (kama), from becoming (bhava), wrong views (ditthi) and ignorance (avijja). Buddhist practitioners should develop right understanding by seeing impermanence, suffering, and not-self in everything, which leads to detachment and loss infatuation. Detachment is not aversion. An aversion to something we once liked is temporary, and the craving for it will return. Practitioners do not seek for a life of pleasure, but to find peace. Peace is within oneself, to be found in the same place as agitation and suffering. It is not found in a forest or on a hilltop, nor is it given by a teacher. Practitioners meditate to investigate suffering, see

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

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

adhere to their own convenient and optimistic view of things, they are still being oppressed by the ever recurring unsatisfactory nature of life. *Second, Right Thought:* Buddhist practitioners should be free from sensual desire, ill-will, and cruelty. Right thought means thoughts that are free from sensual desire, ill-will, and cruelty. Thoughts free from ill-will means thoughts that are free from anger, for when anger is burning in the mind, both us and people around us will suffer. Right thoughts includes thoughts of renunciation, good will, and of compassion, or non-harm. These thoughts are to be cultivated and extended towards all living beings regardless of race, caste, clan, or creed. As they embrace all that breathes there are no compromising limitations. Right thought means that our reflection must be consistent with common sense, useful both to others and ourselves. We must strive to correct our faults, or change our wicked opinions. While meditating on the noble formula of “Precept, Concentration, and Wisdom,” we must realize that ‘ignorance’ is the main cause of suffering, the root of all wicked acts; therefore, we must look for a way to get rid of suffering for us and for others. A mind free from sensual lust, ill-will and cruelty. Right thought means resolve in favour of renunciation, goodwill and nonharming of sentient beings. Through meditation, we can recognize anger and let it go. At that time, the mind becomes light and easy, expressing its natural loving-kindness. Also through meditation, we can recognize cruelty and let it go. At that time, we will have the mind of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to alleviate it. Right Thought is one of the two trainings in Wisdom (the other training is Right View or Right Understanding). Right thought or right thinking means avoiding attachment and aversion. According to Buddhism, the causes of suffering and afflictions are said to be ignorance, attachment, and aversion. When right understanding removes ignorance, right thought removes attachment and aversion; therefore, right understanding and right thought remove the causes of suffering. To remove attachment and greed we must cultivate renunciation, while to remove aversion and anger we must cultivate love and compassion. Renunciation is developed by contemplating the unsatisfactory nature of existence, especially the unsatisfactory nature of pleasures of the senses, for pleasures of the sens are likened to salt water, the more we drink, the

more we feel thirsty. Through understanding the unsatisfactory nature of existence and recognizing the undesirable consequences of pleasures of the senses, we can easily cultivate renunciation and detachment. To develop love and compassion through recognizing the essential equality of all living beings. Like human beings, all other beings fear death and tremble at the idea of punishment. Understanding this, we should not kill other beings or cause them to be killed. Like human beings, all other beings desire life and happiness. Understanding this, we should not place ourselves above others or regard ourselves any differently from the way we regard others. Right thought means the thoughts of non-attachment, benevolence and non-harmfulness. On a deeper level, Right Thought refers to the mind that subtly analyzes Emptiness, thus leading us to perceive it directly.

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

powerful tool to influence others and if we use it wisely, many people will benefit. Speech can influence millions of people. It is said that a harsh word can wound more deeply than a weapon, whereas a gentle word can change the heart and mind of even the most hardened criminal. Therefore, right speech implies respect for truth and respect for the well being of others. It is to say right speech means the avoidance of lying, backbiting or slander, harsh speech and idle talk. *Fourth, Correct Action:* Buddhist practitioners of mindfulness should choose a right way to do things for ourselves. Right action means to choose a right way to do things for ourselves, not killing, not inflicting pain and afflictions on others, not stealing, not taking what is not ours, not committing sexual misconduct, and not causing suffering to others out of greed or desire for pleasant sensations. Right action involves action beneficial to both others and ourselves. We must always act for the happiness of the community, conforming to our sense of duty, without any ulterior motive for damaging others' interests, occupations, positions, honors, or lives. We must also keep strict control of our "action, speech, and mind," carrying out ten meritorious actions and avoiding ten evil ones. Right action also means to abstain from injuring living beings, from stealing and from unlawful sexual intercourse. No one among us can avoid our past karma; however, we have the right to choose the right way to do things for ourselves. To say this so we can understand that we have to reap what we sowed in the past; however, we have the right to try to cultivate to have a more peaceful life in the present time. Right action is one of the three higher trainings in Ethics (two other trainings are Right Speech and Right Livelihood). Right action implies respect for life, respect for property, and respect for personal relationships. Respect for life means not to kill or tell others to kill living beings, respect for property means not to steal or tell others to steal, respect for personal relationships means to avoid sexual misconduct (avoid adultery). Right action means acting properly. Right action can help us avoid creating the three destructive actions of the body (killing, stealing and unwise sexual behavior). Right action teaches us to be aware of the effects of our actions on others. Once we possess Right Action, instead of doing whatever pleases us at the moment, we'll be considerate of others, and of course, automatically our relationships will improve and others will be happier in our

company. Right Action also includes giving old people a hand in their house work, helping storm and flood victims, and rescuing people from danger, and so on. *Fifth, Right Livelihood:* Practitioners of mindfulness should choose a right career for ourselves. Right livelihood means to choose a right career for ourselves, which is not harmful to others; not having work which involves killing, stealing or dishonesty. Right livelihood also involves action beneficial to both others and ourselves. We must always act for the happiness of the community, conforming to our sense of duty, without any ulterior motive for damaging others' interests, occupations, positions, honors, or lives. We must also keep strict control of our "action, speech, and mind," carrying out ten meritorious actions and avoiding ten evil ones. Perfect conduct also means avoidance of actions that conflict with moral discipline. Right livelihood means earning a living in a way that does not violate basic moral values. Right livelihood is an extension of the rules of right action to our roles as breadwinners in society. Right Livelihood also means that to earn a living in an appropriate way. Devout Buddhists should not engage in any of the physical or verbal negative actions to earn a living, nor should we cause others to do so. Wisdom and understanding in Buddhism must be integrated into our lives, then Buddhism can be called a living Buddhism. No one among us can avoid our past karma; however, we have the right to choose a right career for ourselves because it is very much within our freedom. To say this so we can understand that we have to reap what we sowed in the past; however, we have the right to try to cultivate to have a more peaceful life in the present time. Right livelihood is one of the three higher trainings in Ethics (two other trainings are Right Speech and Right Action). Right livelihood means to have a right work or a right occupation that can help us avoid creating the three destructive actions of the body (killing, stealing and unwise sexual behavior). Right livelihood teaches us to be aware of the effects of our actions on others. Once we possess Right Action, instead of doing whatever pleases us at the moment, we'll be considerate of others. The Buddha taught: "There are five kinds of livelihood that are discouraged for Buddhists: trading in animals for food (selling animals for slaughter), slaves (dealing in slaves), arms (selling arms and lethal weapons), poisons, and intoxicants (drugs and alcohol, selling intoxicating and/or

poisonous drinks). These five are not recommended because they contribute to the destroy of society and violate the values of respect for life and for the welfare of others.” Right Livelihood is an extension of the rules of right action to our roles as breadwinners in society. In the contrary, Buddhists should live by an honest profession that is free from harm to self and others. According to the Adornment Sutra, right livelihood is a weapon of enlightening beings, leading away from all wrong livelihood. Zen practitioners who abide by these can annihilate the afflictions, bondage, and compulsion accumulated by all sentient beings in the long night of ignorance. *Sixth, Right Effort:* Buddhist practitioners of mindfulness should be always hard-working, helpful to others and ourselves. Right effort means we must be always hard-working, helpful to others and ourselves. Do not kill, cheat, or lead a wanton, gamble life. On the contrary, always try to perform good deeds for having good karma. Correct (Right or Perfect) Zeal or Effort or Energy also means to try to avoid the arising of evil, demeritorious things have not yet arisen. Try to overcome the evil, demeritorious things that have already arisen. At the same time, try to produce meritorious things that have not yet arisen and try to maintain the meritorious things that have already arisen and not let them disappear, but to bring them to growth, to maturity and to the full perfection of development. Right effort also means cultivation of what is karmically wholesome and avoidance of what is karmically unwholesome. When developing right effort we must be sincere about our thoughts. If we analyze them we will find that our thoughts are not always good and wholesome. At times they are unwholesome and foolish, though we may not always express them in words and actions or both. Now if we allow such thoughts to rise repeatedly, it is a bad sign, for when an unhealthy thought is allowed to recur again and again, it tends to become a habit. It is, therefore, essential to make a real effort to keep unwholesome thoughts away from us. Until we succeed in stopping them to rise in our mind, unhealthy thoughts will always be taking possession of our mind. It is not only during the time of meditation that we need to cultivate our right effort. Right effort should be cultivated always whenever possible. In all our speech, actions and behavior, in our daily life, we need right effort to perform our duties wholeheartedly and successfully. If we lack right effort and give in to

sloth and indolence, we can not proceed with our cultivation. Right effort is one of the three trainings in meditation (two other trainings are Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration). Right effort means cultivating a confident attitude toward our undertakings, taking up and pursuing our task with energy and a will to carry them through to the end. In Buddhism, right effort means cultivating a confident attitude of mind, being attentive and aware. To progress on the path, we need to put our energy into Dharma practice. With enthusiastic effort, we can purify negative actions already done to prevent doing new ones in the future. In addition, effort also is necessary to maintain the virtuous states we've already generated, as well as to induce new ones in the future. *Seventh, Right Remembrance:* Buddhist practitioners of mindfulness have correct memory which retains the true and excludes the false. Right remembrance, the seventh of the eightfold noble path, means remembering correctly and thinking correctly. The looking or contemplating on the body and the spirit in such a way as to remain ardent, self-possessed and mindful. Right remembrance means looking on the body and spirit in such a way as to remain ardent, self-possessed and mindful, having overcome both hankering and dejection. Right mindfulness means to give heed to good deed for our own benefit and that of others. According to the eightfold noble path, right mindfulness means the one-pointedness of the mind, and Zen will help practitioner to have Right Remembrance. Through Zen we always have Right mindfulness. In fact, in our daily life activities, we should always be aware and attentive. We should always be aware of what we think, say and do. We must concentrate on everything we do before we can do it well. For instance, if we concentrate in class, we would not miss anything the teacher says. Right mindfulness also means remembrance including old mistakes to repent of and deep gratitude towards parents, country, humankind, and Buddhist Triple Gems. Right mindfulness also means the reflection on the present and future events or situations. We must meditate upon human sufferings that are caused by ignorance and decide to work for alleviating them, irrespective of possible difficulties and boredom. Correct Memory which retains the true and excludes the false. Dwell in contemplation of corporeality. Be mindful and putting away worldly greed and grief. Correct mindfulness also means ongoing mindfulness of body, feelings, thinking, and objects of thought.

Mindfulness means being aware of what is happening in the present moment. It means noticing the flow of things, when walking, to be aware of the movement of the body; in observing the breath, to be aware of the sensations of the in-out or raising-falling; to notice thoughts or feelings as they arise or as they disappear. Mindfulness brings the quality of poise, equilibrium and balance to the mind. Mindfulness also keeps the mind sharply focused, with the attitude of sitting back and watching the passing show of our surroundings. The function of the right effort is to be vigilant and check all unhealthy thoughts, and to cultivate, promote and maintain wholesome and pure thoughts arising in a man's mind. Right Mindfulness is one of the three trainings in meditation (two others are Right Effort and Right Concentration). Mindfulness is awareness or attention, and as such it means avoiding a distracted or cloudly state of mind. In the practice of the Dharma, right mindfulness plays as a kind of rein upon our minds for our minds are never concentrated or still. The Buddha taught: "The practice of mindfulness means mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of feelings, mindfulness of consciousness, and mindfulness of objects of the mind." In short, right mindfulness means to watch our body and mind and to know what we are doing at all times. Right Mindfulness is an important mental factor that enables us to remember and keep our attention on what is beneficial. Right Mindfulness plays an important role in meditation, i.e., Right mindfulness can help us clear the flurry of thoughts from our minds, and eventually, we'll be able to concentrate single-pointedly on our breath. Right mindfulness is the application or arousing of attention: be attentive to the activities of the body with the practice of concentration on breathing; be aware of all forms of feelings and sensations, pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, by contemplating their appearance and disappearance within oneself; be aware whether one's mind is lustful, hatred, deluded, distracted or concentrated; contemplate the impermanence of all things from arise, stay, change and decay to eliminate attachment. *Eight, Right Concentration*: Right Concentration or Correct Concentration. Detached from sensual objects, detached from unwholesome things, and enters into the first, second, third and fourth absorption. Right concentration means a strong concentration of our thoughts on a certain subject in order to set it clearly, consistent with Buddhist doctrine and

for the benefit of others and ourselves. Right meditation means to keep the mind steady and calm in order to see clearly the true nature of things. This type of mental practice can make us become more understanding and a happier person. "Correct concentration" requires the previous steps. Unless one has a concentrated mind that can fix itself calmly and one-pointedly on a single object without being distracted by laxity or excitement, one cannot properly enter into meditation, which requires intense concentration. Cultivating concentration in meditation means to learn to concentrate. In our meditation, we think that noises, cars, voices, sights, and so forth, are distractions that come and bother us when we want to be quiet. But who is bothering whom? Actually, we are the ones who go and bother them. The car, the sound, the noise, the sight, and so forth, are just following their own nature. We bother things through some false idea that they are outside of us and cling to the ideal of remaining quiet, undisturbed. We should learn to see that it is not things that bother us, that we go out to bother them. We should see the world as a mirror. It is all a reflection of mind. When we know this, we can grow in every moment, and every experience reveals truth and brings understanding. Normally, the untrained mind is full of worries and anxieties, so when a bit of tranquility arises from practicing meditation, we easily become attached to it, mistaking states of tranquility for the end of meditation. Sometimes we may even think we have put an end to lust or greed or hatred, only to be overwhelmed by them later on. Actually, it is worse to be caught in calmness than to be stuck in agitation, because at least we will want to escape from agitation, whereas we are content to remain in calmness and not go any further. Thus, when extraordinarily blissful, clear states arise from insight meditation practice, do not cling to them. Although this tranquility has a sweet taste, it too, must be seen as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and empty. Practicing meditation without thought of attaining absorption or any special state. Just know whether the mind is calm or not and, if so, whether a little or a lot. In this way it will develop on its own. Concentration must be firmly established for wisdom to arise. To concentrate the mind is like turning on the switch, there is no light, but we should not waste our time playing with the switch. Likewise, concentration is the empty bowl and wisdom is the food that fills it and makes the meal. Do not be attached

to the object of meditation such as a mantra. Know its purpose. If we succeed in concentrating our mind using the Buddha Recitation, let the Buddha recitation go, but it is a mistake to think that Buddha recitation is the end of our cultivation. Right concentration is the intensified steadiness of the mind comparable to the unflickering flame of a lamp in a windless place. It is concentration that fixes the mind right and causes it to be unmoved and undisturbed. The correct practice of “samadhi” maintains the mind and the mental properties in a state of balance. Many are the mental impediments that confront a practitioner, a meditator, but with support of Right Effort and Right Mindfulness the fully concentrated mind is capable of dispelling the impediments, the passions that disturb man. The perfect concentrated mind is not distracted by sense objects, for it sees things as they are, in their proper perspective. Right Concentration is one of the three trainings in Samadhi (two other trainings are Right Effort and Right Mindfulness). Right concentration means to concentrate the mind single-pointedly on an object. Our concentration or single-pointedness slowly improves through effort and mindfulness, until we attain calm abiding. Right Concentration may also help us progress to deeper states of concentration, the actual meditative stabilizations (form and formless realms).

Chapter Twelve

Buddhists Should Always Have Faith On the Four Noble Truths In Daily Life & Cultivation

A fundamental doctrine of Buddhism which clarifies the cause of suffering and the way to emancipation. Sakyamuni Buddha is said to have expounded the Four Noble Truths in the Deer Park in Sarnath during his first sermon after attaining Buddhahood. The Buddha organized these ideas into the Fourfold Truth as follows: “Life consists entirely of suffering; suffering has causes; the causes of suffering can be extinguished; and there exists a way to extinguish the cause.” Four Noble Truths are four of the most fundamental Buddhist theories. According to Most Venerable Piyadassi in “The Buddha’s Ancient Path,” in Buddhism, awakening from ignorance to full knowledge always implies the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths. The Enlightened One is called the Buddha simply because he understood the Truths in their fullness. The whole of his first sermon is devoted to the formulation of these Truths; for they are the essence of the Buddha’s teaching. “As the footprint of every creature that walks the earth can be contained in an elephant’s footprint, which is pre-eminent for size, so does the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths embrace all skilful Dhamma, or the entire teaching of the Buddha. In the original Pali texts, specifically in the discourses, these Four Noble Truths are made clear in detail and in diverse ways. Without a clear idea of the Truths, one can not know what the Buddha taught for forty-five years. To the Buddha the entire teaching is just the understanding of Dukkha, the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, and the understanding of the way out of this unsatisfactoriness. The entire teaching of the Buddha is nothing other than the application of this one principle. Thus, we clearly see that the Buddha discovered the Four Noble Truths, and the rest are logical developments and more detailed explanations of the Four Noble Truths. This is the typical teaching of the Buddhas of all ages. The supremacy of the Four Noble Truths in the teaching of the Buddha is extremely clear from the message of the Simsapa Grove as from the message of the Deer Park. At the time of

the Buddha, He always stressed that failing to comprehend and practice the Four Noble Truths have caused us to run on so long in the cycle of birth and death. In daily life and cultivation, practitioners should always have faith on the Four Noble Truths and should always remember that the Four Noble Truths are seen at any time when mindfulness and wisdom are present.

The Truth of Suffering: There is no equivalent translation in English for the word “Dukkha” in both Pali and Sanskrit. So the word “Dukkha” is often translated as “Suffering”. However, this English word is sometimes misleading because it connotes extreme pain. When the Buddha described our lives as “Dukkha”, he was referring to any and all unsatisfactory conditions. These range from minor disappointments, problems and difficulties to intense pain and misery. Therefore, Dukkha should be used to describe the fact that things are not completely right in our lives and could be better. In one word, all existence entails suffering. All existence is characterized by suffering and does not bring satisfaction. Through meditation, Zen practitioners may see directly that all physical and mental phenomena share the characteristic of suffering. *Truth of the causes of suffering:* According to Buddhist tenets, craving or desire is the cause of suffering. It creates dissension in the family and society that degenerates into war between races, nations, and groups of nations in the world. The truth of the origin of suffering or causes of suffering, or its location. All sufferings are caused by ignorance, which gives rise to craving and illusions (craving or grasping the wrong things), i.e. craving for life, for pleasure, for power, for wealth; the more he earns, the more he wants. *The Truth of an End to Suffering:* There is an end to suffering, and this state of no suffering is called Nirvana. Through meditation, mindfulness and wisdom are present, Zen practitioners see clearly suffering will be ceased when ignorance and other afflictions fall away and cease. *The Truth of the Path Leading to the End of Suffering:* Regarding the practicing of the Eight-fold Noble Truths, the Buddha taught: “Whoever accepts the four dogmas, and practises the Eightfold Noble Path will put an end to births and deaths.” For these reasons, Buddhists should always have faith on the Four Noble Truths in our own daily life and cultivation.

Chapter Thirteen

Believe That The Four Boundless Minds Can Help Guide Practitioners from the Illusive Bank to the Shore of Enlightenment

Devout Buddhists should always remember that the goal of a Buddhist is the development of self-dependency, the ability to set oneself free of sufferings and afflictions. Buddhism is strongly against a blind belief on other forces of salvation with no basic factors. The Buddha always reminded his disciples: “You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it.” The Buddha taught us to try to recognize the truth of right views, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. The Buddha teachings preached by the Buddha are methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment without any exceptions. Besides the core teachings, do not get involved in evil deeds, do whatever benefits others, always keep the mind pure, that is all the Buddha’s teaching, Buddhist teachings still have a lot of other teachings that will surely guide practitioners from the illusive bank to the shore of enlightenment, among them, we have to first mention on the four immeasurable minds for they can help guide practitioners from the illusive bank to the shore of enlightenment.

The immeasurable mind is the mind which is inconceivably immeasurable. In fact, there are a lot of small virtues that Buddhist practitioners need to prepare before and during practicing. Buddhist practitioners should cultivate to a point that they would be happy with other’s success and sympathy with other’s miseries. They would keep themselves modest when achieving success. However, the Buddha pointed out four immeasurable minds. These four immeasurable minds

are not only benefit immeasurable living beings, bringing immeasurable blessings to them, and producing immeasurable highly spiritual attainments in a world, in one life, but also spreads all over immeasurable worlds, in immeasurable future lives, shaping up immeasurable Buddha. The four immeasurables or infinite Buddha-states of mind (four immeasurable minds or the four virtues of infinite greatness). The four kinds of boundless mind, or four divine abodes. These states are called illimitables because they are to be radiated towards all living beings without limit or obstruction. They are also called brahmaviharas or divine abodes, or sublime states, because they are the mental dwellings of the brahma divinities in the Brahma-world.

It was the spirit of love and compassion taught by the Buddha that touched the heart of King Asoka, the great Buddhist Emperor of India in the third century B.C. Before he became a Buddhist he was a warlike monarch like his father, King Bimbisara, and his grandfather, King Candragupta. Wishing to extend his territories he invaded and conquered Kalinga. In this war thousands were slain, while many more were wounded and taken captive. Later, however, when he followed the Buddha's creed of compassion he realized the folly of killing. He felt very sad when he thought of the great slaughter, and gave up warfare. He is the only military monarch on record who after victory gave up conquest by war and inaugurated conquest by righteousness. As his Rock Edict XIII says, 'he sheathed the sword never to unsheathe it, and wish no harm to living beings.' The spread of the Buddha's creed of compassion throughout the Eastern world was largely due to the enterprise and tireless efforts of Asoka the Great. The Buddha-law made Asia mild and non-aggressive. However, modern civilization is pressing hard on Asian lands. It is known that with the rise and development of the so-called civilization, man's culture deteriorates and he changes for the worse. With the march of modern science very many changes have taken place, and all these changes and improvements, being material and external, tend to make modern man more and more worldly minded and sensuous with the result that he neglects the qualities of the mind, and becomes self-interested and heartless. The waves of materialism seem to influence mankind and affect their way of thinking and living. People are so bound by their senses, they live so exclusively in the material world that they fail to

contact the good within. Only the love and compassion taught by the Buddha can establish complete mental harmony and well-being.

Buddhist practitioners should always observe these four immeasurable minds, for they are four excellent virtues conducive to noble living. They banish selfishness and disharmony and promote altruism with other beings, unity in the family, and good brotherhood in communities. In meditation practice, they are four minds of deliverance, for through them we can recognize the good of others. Therefore, the four immeasurable minds can also be considered as excellent subjects of meditation, through them practitioners can develop more sublime states. By cultivating these noble virtues, practitioners can maintain a calm and pure mind. The Buddhist method of self-analysis, self-reflection, and self-discovery should never be taken to imply that we are to shut ourselves off from communion with our fellow men. To follow the way of cultivation in Buddhism is not to become isolated in a cage or cell, but to become free and open in our relations with our fellow beings. The search for self-realization always has its counterpart the development of a new way of relating to others, a way imbued with compassion, love and sympathy with all that live.

Mind of Immeasurable Loving Kindness: Kindness, benevolence, one of the principal Buddhist virtues. Maitri is a benevolence toward all beings that is free from attachment. Maitri can be developed gradually through meditation, first toward persons who are close to us, then to others, and at last to those who are indifferent and ill-disposed to us, for the mind of loving-kindness is the wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings. In the Dhammapada Sutta, the Buddha taught: "Hatred does not cease by hatred, hatred ceases only by love." In fact, compassion and loving-kindness are the utmost importance for human beings, for despite our strivings towards self-sufficiency, it remains a fact that people need one another. No man is an island at all. An island can exist alone in the sea, but a man cannot live alone. We need each other, and we must come to regard one another as friends and helpers whom we can look toward for mutual support. All men, as the doctrine of rebirth implies, are really brothers to each other, literally members of the big family, for in the repeated round of rebirth there is not one man or woman who has not at some time in the past been our father or mother, our sister or brother. Therefore we must learn to love each

other, to respect each other, to protect each other, and to give to the other what we would have for ourselves. To practice in Buddhism is to train oneself to eliminate hatred, anger, and selfishness and to develop loving-kindness toward all. We have our physical bodies and our own lives, but still we can live in harmony with each other and help each other to the best of our ability. In Buddhism, loving kindness is the greatest love toward all sentient beings. Immeasurable loving kindness is the greatest love dedicated to all sentient beings, together with the desire to bring them joy and happiness. Buddhist practitioners should be on permanent guard against the so-called 'carnal love disguised as loving-kindness', it is only one of the human joys. Human joy is totally impermanent; it is governed by misery, that is, when our passions such as greed, anger, and ignorance are satisfied, we feel pleased; but when they are not satisfied, we feel sad. To have a permanent joy, we must first sever all sufferings. Loving kindness generally goes together with pity whose role is to help the subjects sever his sufferings, while the role of loving kindness is to save sentient beings from sufferings and to bring them joy. However, loving-kindness is not an inborn characteristic. If we really want to develop our loving-kindness, we have to devote more time to practice. Sitting in meditation alone cannot bring us the so-called "loving-kindness." In order to achieve the loving-kindness, we must put loving-kindness in actions in our daily life. In our daily activities, we must develop empathy and closeness to others by reflecting on their sufferings. For example, when we know someone suffering, we should try our best to console them by kind words or to help them with our worldly possessions if needed. To respond to immeasurable human sufferings, we should have immeasurable loving kindness. To accomplish the heart of immeasurable loving kindness, Buddhist practitioners have developed their immeasurable loving kindness by using all means to save mankind. They act so according to two factors, specific case and specific time. Specific case, like the physician who gives a prescription according to the specific disease, the Bodhisattva shows us how to put an end to our sufferings. Specific time means the teachings must always be relevant to the era, period and situation of the sufferers and their needs. The Contemplation of the Mind Sutra teaches that we must avoid four opportune cases: What we say is not at the right place, what

we say is not in the right time, what we say is not relevant to the spiritual level of the subject, and what we say is not the right Buddhist Dharma. Meditation on the “Loving-kindness” is cultivating to attain a mind that bestows joy or happiness. Immeasurable Love, a mind of great kindness, or infinite loving-kindness. Boundless kindness (tenderness), or bestowing of joy or happiness. Here, a Buddhist practitioner, with a heart filled with loving-kindness. Thus he stays, spreading the thought of loving-kindness above, below, and across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with loving-kindness, abundant, magnified, unbounded, without hatred or ill-will. The loving-kindness is also the wish for the welfare and happiness of all living beings. It helps to eliminate ill-will. The powers of Loving-kindness is the Temporal Happiness and the Energy for Meditation Practices. Love has the power of bestowing temporal happiness upon us in this lifetime. Without love, people in this world will encounter a lot of problems (anger, hatred, jealousy, envy, arrogance, etc). A Buddhist should develop love for all sentient beings and to cherish others more than oneself. Love should be given equally to everyone including relatives or strangers, friends or foes, given without any conditions, without self-interests or attachment.

Mind of Immeasurable Compassion: Immeasurable Compassion means sympathy, or pity (compassion) for another in distress and desire to help him or to deliver others from suffering out of pity. The compassion is selfless, non-egoistic and based on the principle of universal equality. ‘Karuna’ means pity or compassion. In Pali and Sanskrit, ‘Karuna’ is defined as ‘the quality which makes the heart of the good man tremble and quiver at the distress of others.’ The quality that rouses tender feelings in the good man at the sight of others’ suffering. Cruelty, violence is the direct enemy of ‘karuna’. Though the latter may appear in the guise of a friend, it is not true ‘karuna’, but falsely sympathy; such sympathy is deceitful and one must try to distinguish true from false compassion. The compassionate man who refrains from harming and oppressing others and endeavors to relieve them of their distress, gives the gift of security to one and all, making no distinction whatsoever. To be kind does not mean to be passive. “Karuna” in Buddhism means compassionate, and compassionate does not mean to allow others to walk all over you, to allow yourself to be

destroyed. We must be kind to everybody, but we have to protect ourselves and protect others. If we need to lock someone up because he is dangerous, then we have to do that. But we have to do it with compassion. Our motivation is to prevent that person from continuing his course of destruction and from feeding his anger. For Buddhist practitioners, Compassion can help refraining from pride and selfishness. Immeasurable Compassion, a mind of great pity, or infinite compassion. Boundless pity, to save from suffering. Here a Buddhist practitioner, with a heart filled with compassion. Thus he stays, spreading the thought of compassion, above, below, across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with compassion, abundant, magnified, unbounded, without hatred or ill-will. Compassion also makes the heart quiver when other are subject to suffering. It is the wish to remove the suffering of others, and it is opposed to cruelty. Once we have fully developed compassion, our mind will be full with altruistic thoughts, and we automatically pledge to devote ourselves to freeing others from the the suffering. In addition, compassion also enables us to refrain from pride and selfishness. Compassion means wishing others be freed from problems and pain that they have undergone or are undergoing. Compassion is different from pity and other condescending attitudes. Compassion recognizes ourselves and others as equal in terms of wanting happiness and wanting to be free from misery, and enables us to help them with as much ease as we now help ourselves. “Active Compassion,” one of the most important and the outstanding quality of all buddhas and bodhisattvas; it is also the motivation behind their pursuit of awakening. Compassion extends itself without distinction to all sentient beings. “Karuna” refers to an attitude of active concern for the sufferings of other sentient beings. Practitioners must cultivate or increase compassion via wisdom (prajna). In Theravada, it is one of the four “immeasurables.” It involves developing a feeling of sympathy for countless sentient beings. According to the Mahayana Buddhism, compassion itself is insufficient, and it is said to be inferior to the “great compassion” of Bodhisattvas, which extends to all sentient beings, and this must be accompanied by wisdom to approach enlightenment. Thus, practitioners must train both “karuna” and “prajna,” with each balancing and enhancing the other. Karuna or compassion is one of the

most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, we do not kill or harm living beings.

Compassion means wishing others be freed from problems and pain that they have undergone or are undergoing. Compassion is different from pity and other condescending attitudes. Compassion recognizes ourselves and others as equal in terms of wanting happiness and wanting to be free from misery, and enables us to help them with as much ease as we now help ourselves. Immeasurable Compassion, a mind of great pity, or infinite compassion. Here a monk, with a heart filled with compassion. Thus he stays, spreading the thought of compassion, above, below, across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with compassion, abundant, magnified, unbounded, without hatred or ill-will. Compassion also makes the heart quiver when other are subject to suffering. It is the wish to remove the suffering of others, and it is opposed to cruelty. Bodhisattvas' compassion is inconceivable. Bodhisattvas are enlightenment-beings, Buddhas-to-be, however, they vow to continue stay in this world for a long period of time. Why? For the good of others, because they want to become capable of pulling others out of this great flood of sufferings and afflictions. But what personal benefit do they find in the benefit of others? To Bodhisattvas, the benefit of others is their own benefit, because they desire it that way. However, in saying so, who could believe that? It is true that some people devoid of pity and think only of themselves, find it hard to believe in the altruism of the Bodhisattvas. But compassionate people do so easily. Do we not see that certain people, confirmed in the absence of pity, find pleasure in the suffering of others, even when it is not useful to them? And we must admit that the Bodhisattvas, confirmed in pity, find pleasure in doing good to others without any egoistic preoccupation. Do we not see that certain, ignorant of the true nature of the conditioned Dharmas which constitute their so-called "Self", attach themselves to these dharmas, as a result, they suffer pains and afflictions because of this attachment. While we must admit that the Bodhisattvas, detach themselves from the conditioned Dharmas, no longer consider these Dharmas as "I" or "Mine", growing in pitying solicitude for others, and are ready to suffer pains for this solitude? Compassion is surely not a flabby state of mind. It is a strong enduring thing. When a person is in distress, it is truly compassionate

man's heart that trembles. This, however, is not sadness; it is this quacking of the heart that spurs him to action and incites him to rescue the distressed. And this needs strength of mind, much tolerance and equanimity. So, it is totally wrong to come to a hurry conclusion that compassion to be an expression of feebleness, because it has the quality of tenderness. The Buddhist conception of "Karuna" has no compromising limitations. All beings include even the tiniest creature that crawls at our feet. The Buddhist view of life is such that no living being is considered as outside the circle of "Metta and Karuna" which make no distinction between man, animal and insect, or between man and man, as, high and low, rich and poor, strong and weak, wise and unwise, dark and fair, Brahmin and Candala, and so forth; for "Metta and Karuna" are boundless and no sooner do we try to keep men apart on the false basis mentioned above, than the feeling of separateness creeps in and these boundless qualities become limited which is contrary to the teaching of the Buddha. We must be careful not to confuse compassion with morbid manifestations of sadness, with feelings of mental pain and with sentimentality. At the loss of a dear one, man weeps, but that is not compassion. If we analyze such feelings carefully we will conclude that they are outward manifestations of our inner thoughts of self affection. Why do we feel sad? Because our loved one has passed away. He who was our kin is now no more. We feel that we have lost the happiness and all else that we derived from him and so we are sad. Do we not see that all these feelings revolve round the 'I' and 'Mine'? Whether we like it or not, self interest was responsible for it all. Can we call this 'karuna', pity or compassion? Why do we not feel equally sad when others who are not our kin pass away before our eyes? Because we were not familiar with them, they were not ours, we have not lost anything and are not denied the pleasures and comforts we already enjoy.

According to Most Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh in "Anger," understanding and compassion are very powerful sources of energy. They are the opposite of stupidity and passivity. If you think that compassion is passive, weak, or cowardly, then you don't know what real understanding or compassion is. If you think that compassionate people do not resist and challenge injustice, you are wrong. They are warriors, heroes, and heroines who have gained many victories. When

you act with compassion, with non-violence, when you act on the basis of non-duality, you have to be very strong. You no longer act out of anger, you do not punish or blame. Compassion grows constantly inside of you, and you can succeed in your fight against injustice. Being compassion doesn't mean suffering unnecessarily or losing your common sense. Suppose you are leading a group of people doing walking meditation, moving slowly and beautifully. The walking meditation generates a lot of energy; it embraces everyone with calm, solidity, and peace. But suddenly it begins to rain. Would you continue to walk slowly, letting yourself and everyone else get soaked? That's not intelligent. If you are a good leader of the walking meditation, you will break into a jogging meditation. You still maintain the joy of the walking meditation. You can laugh and smile, and thus you prove that the practice is not stupid. You can also be mindful while running and avoid getting soaked. We have to practice in an intelligent way. Meditation is not a stupid act. Meditation is not just blindly following whatever the person next to you does. To meditate you have to be skillful and make good use of your intelligence. Zen practitioners should always remember that human beings are not our enemy. Our enemy is not the other person. Our enemy is the violence, ignorance, and injustice in us and in the other person. When we are armed with compassion and understanding, we fight not against other people, but against the tendency to invade, to dominate, and to exploit. We don't want to kill others, but we will not let them dominate and exploit us or other people. We have to protect ourselves. We are not stupid. We are very intelligent, and we have insight. Being compassionate does not mean allowing other people to do violence to themselves or to us. Being compassionate means being intelligent. Non-violent action that springs from love can only be intelligent action. When we talk about compassion, altruism and about others' well-being, we should not misunderstand that this means totally rejecting our own self-interest. Compassion and altruism is a result of a very strong state of mind, so strong that that person is capable of challenging the self-cherishing that loves only the self generation after generation. Compassion and altruism or working for the sake of others is one of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, we do not blame others.

Mind of Immeasurable Joy: Extreme joy in meditation. Joy is one of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, we renounce all unpleasant things and sorrows in our daily life, and for with it, we attain many kinds of balanced state. This is the third bodhyanga, the stage of joy on attaining the truth. Joyous mind is also a heart of joy in progress toward salvation of others. Joy for others' success or welfare and happiness. Sympathetic Joy, joy in the happiness of other beings. The practice of Mudita helps overcome taking pleasure in others' misfortunes and to eliminate the sense of separating between self and other. Immeasurable Joy, a mind of great joy, or infinite joy. Boundless joy (gladness), on seeing others rescued from suffering. Here a cultivator, with a heart filled with sympathetic joy. Thus he stays, spreading the thought of sympathetic joy above, below, across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with sympathetic joy, abundant, magnified, unbounded, without hatred or ill-will. Appreciative joy is the quality of rejoicing at the success and prosperity of others. It is the congratulatory attitude, and helps to eliminate envy and discontent over the success of others. Immeasurable inner joy also means to rejoice in all good, to rejoice in the welfare of others, or to do that which one enjoys, or to follow one's inclination. This is the fifth of the ten conducts and vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. Rejoice at others' merits and virtues means from the time of our initial resolve for all wisdom, we should diligently cultivate accumulation of blessings without regard for their bodies and lives, cultivate all the difficult ascetic practices and perfect the gates of various paramitas, enter bodhisattva grounds of wisdom and accomplish the unsurpassed Bodhi of all Buddhas. We should completely follow along with and rejoice in all of their good roots (big as well as small merits). Through meditation and study of the vicissitudes of life, practitioners can cultivate this sublime virtue of appreciating others' happiness, welfare and progress. As a matter of fact, when we can rejoice with the joy of others, our minds get purified, serene and noble.

Mind of Immeasurable Equanimity: One of the chief Buddhist virtues, that of renunciation, leading to a state of indifference without pleasure or pain, or independence of both. It is defined as the mind in equilibrium, i.e. above the distinction of things or persons, of self or others; indifferent, having abandoned the world and all things, and

having no affections or desires. Upeksha is one of the seven Bodhyangas. The Buddha taught: "If one wishes to penetrate into the profound realm of liberation of the Maha-Bodhisattvas, Buddhists must first be able to let go of all of the five desires of ordinary people." According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, when Manjusri Bodhisattva called on to enquire after Upasaka Vimalakirti's health, Manjusri asked Vimalakirti about "Upeksha". Manjusri asked Vimalakirti: "What should be relinquish (upeksha) of a Bodhisattva?" Vimalakirti replied: "In his work of salvation, a Bodhisattva should expect nothing (i.e. no gratitude or reward) in return." Detachment is the attitude of those who give up, forget, do not attach any importance for what they have done for the benefit of others. In general, we feel proud, self-aggrandized when we do something to help other people. Quarrels, conflicts, or clashes between men or groups of men are due to passions such as greed or anger whose source can be appraised as self-attachment or dharma-attachment. The Buddha taught that if there is someone who misjudges us, we must feel pity for him; we must forgive him in order to have peace in our mind. The Bodhisattvas have totally liberated themselves from both self-attachment and dharma-attachment. When people enjoy material or spiritual pleasures, the Bodhisattvas also rejoice, from their sense of compassion, pity, and inner joy. They always consider human beings as their benefactors who have created the opportunities for them to practice the Four Immeasurable Minds on their way to Enlightenment. In terms of the Immeasurable Detachment, the Bodhisattvas consider all men equal, the clever as the stupid, themselves as others, they do everything as they have done nothing, say everything as they have said nothing, attain all spiritual levels as they have attained nothing. Immeasurable Equanimity, a mind of great detachment, or infinite equanimity. Limitless indifference, such as rising above all emotions, or giving up all things. Here a practitioner, with a heart filled with equanimity. Thus he stays, spreading the thought of equanimity above, below, across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with equanimity, abundant, magnified, unbounded, without hatred or ill-will. Equanimity is also considered as a divine abode. It is the state of mind that regards others with impartiality, free from attachment and aversion. An impartial attitude is its chief characteristic, and it is opposed to favouritism and resentment. Mind of

Equanimity helps Zen practitioners to put aside two extremes of attachment and resentment. Through the mind of equanimity, Zen practitioners always follow the Middle Path, neither attached to the pleasant nor repelled by the unpleasant. Also through the mind of equanimity, Zen practitioners' mind can remain balanced without any temper, depression or anxiety. Equanimity plays a tremendous role for both in practice and in everyday life. Generally we get either swept away by pleasant and enticing objects, or worked up into a great state of agitation when confronted by unpleasant, undesirable objects. These hindrances are common among ordinary people. When we lack the ability to stay balanced and unfaltering, we are easily swept into extremes of craving or aversion. According to Zen Master U. Pandita in "In This Very Life", there are five ways to develop Equanimity: Balanced emotion toward all living beings. The first and foremost is to have an equanimity attitude toward all living beings. These are your loved ones, including animals. We can have a lot of attachment and desire associated with people we love, and also with our pets. To prepare the ground for equanimity to arise, we should try to cultivate an attitude of nonattachment and equanimity toward the people and animals we love. As worldly people, it may be necessary to have a certain amount of attachment in relationships, but excessive attachments is destructive to us as well as to loved ones. Balanced emotion toward inanimate things. To prepare the ground for equanimity to arise, we should also try to adopt an attitude of balance toward inanimate things, such as property, clothing. All of them will decay and perish because everything in this world must be subject to the law of impermanence. Avoiding people who are so attached to people and things. These people have a deep possessiveness, clinging to what they think belongs to them, both people and things. Some people find it is difficult to see another person enjoying or using their property. Choosing friends who do not have many attachments or possessions. Inclining the mind toward the state of equanimity. When the mind is focusing in the development of equanimity, it will not have time to wander off to thoughts of worldly business any more.

Chapter Fourteen

Always Believe in Cause and Effect For It Is the Core Rules In Daily Life & Cultivation

The Buddha always reminded his disciples: “You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it.” The Buddha taught us to try to recognize the truth of right views, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. The Buddha teachings preached by the Buddha are methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment without any exceptions.

Cause is a primary force that produces an effect; effect is a result of that primary force. The law of causation governs everything in the universe without exception. Law of cause and effect or the relation between cause and effect in the sense of the Buddhist law of “Karma”. The law of causation (reality itself as cause and effect in momentary operation). Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action or effect has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situations. The Moral Causation in Buddhism means that a deed, good or bad, or indifferent, brings its own result on the doer. Good people are happy and bad ones unhappy. But in most cases “happiness” is understood not in its moral or spiritual sense but in the sense of material prosperity, social position, or political influence. For instance, kingship is considered the reward of one’s having faithfully practiced the ten deeds of goodness. If one meets a tragic death, he is thought to have committed something bad in his past lives even when he might have spent a blameless life in the present one. Causality is a natural law, mentioning the relationship between cause and effect. All things come into being not without cause, since if there is no cause,

there is no effect and vice-versa. As so sow, so shall you reap. Cause and effect never conflict with each other. In other words, cause and effect are always consistent with each other. If we want to have beans, we must sow bean seeds. If we want to have oranges, we must sow orange seeds. If wild weeds are planted, then it's unreasonable for one to hope to harvest edible fruits. One cause cannot have any effect. To produce an effect, it is necessary to have some specific conditions. For instance, a grain of rice cannot produce a rice plant without the presence of sunlight, soil, water, and care. In the cause there is the effect; in the effect there is the cause. From the current cause, we can see the future effect and from the present effect we discerned the past cause. The development process from cause to effect is sometimes quick, sometimes slow. Sometimes cause and effect are simultaneous like that of beating a drum and hearing its sound. Sometimes cause and effect are three or four months away like that of the grain of rice. It takes about three to four, or five to six months from a rice seed to a young rice plant, then to a rice plant that can produce rice. Sometimes it takes about ten years for a cause to turn into an effect. For instance, from the time the schoolboy enters the elementary school to the time he graduates a four-year college, it takes him at least 14 years. Other causes may involve more time to produce effects, may be the whole life or two lives. By understanding and believing in the law of causality, Buddhists will not become superstitious, or alarmed, and rely passively on heaven authority. He knows that his life depends on his karmas. If he truly believes in such a causal mechanism, he strives to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If he continues to live a good life, devoting his time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings, he can eliminate all of his bad karmas. He knows that he is the only driving force of his success or failure, so he will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. He will put more effort into performing his duties satisfactorily. Realizing the value of the law of causality, he always cares for what he thinks, tells or does in order to avoid bad karma.

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According to Buddhism, for any Buddhists, especially lay Buddhists, the word "Devout" bears a great mission in many aspects, especially in Diligent Support of the Triratna, Study of Buddhist Teachings and Diligent Cultivation. **Thus, studying and understanding Buddhist teachings in the law of causality is very necessary, for it is the core rules in daily life and cultivation, and for this will help us not become superstitious, or confused, and rely passively on heaven authority.** He knows that his life depends on his karmas. If he truly believes in such a causal mechanism, he strives to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If he continues to live a good life, devoting his time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings, he can eliminate all of his bad karmas. He knows that he is the only driving force of his success or failure, so he will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. He will put more effort into performing his duties satisfactorily. Once, a devout Buddhist realizes the value of the law of causality, he always cares for what he thinks, tells or does in order to avoid bad karma. Devout Buddhists should always remember that retribution of

good and evil karma or cause and effect in the moral realm have their corresponding relations. According to Buddhism, whoever denies the rule of “cause and effect” will destroy all moral responsibility.

Some people believe in the theistic position that man’s destiny is basically determined for him by God. God determines if a man deserves heaven or hell; he may even decide each man’s earthly destiny. Some other people believe in fatalism that each of us has a fate which we cannot change and about which we can do nothing. They believe that ‘Whatever will be will be.’ In this philosophy the agent that determines destiny is not a God, but rather a mysterious impersonal power called ‘Fate’ which transcend our understanding. Still some other people believe the exact opposite, they believe in indeterminism: everything happens by accident. They believe that if man is lucky, he will achieve happiness or success; if he is unlucky, he will suffer or fail, but whatever he receives, he receives not through any process of determination but by accident, by sheer coincidence. In Christianity, the Christian worships God and prays to Him in order to obtain forgiveness from the results his evil actions hold out for him. Buddhism differs from other religions in that it sees the root cause of all evil in “ignorance” and not in “sin”, in an act of intellectual misapprehension and not in an act of volition and rebellion. As a practical definition of ignorance, we are offered the four perverted views which make us seek for permanence in what is inherently impermanent, ease in what is inseparable from suffering, selfhood in what is not linked to any self, and delight in what is essentially repulsive and disgusting. According to the Karma Law in Buddhism, the present is a shadow of the past, the future a shadow of the present. Hence our action in the present is most important, for what we do in the present determines the course of our future development. For this reason, Buddhist practitioners should always apply their minds to the present so that they may advance on the way. According to the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth, the causal relation between action and its results holds not only with regard to the present life but also with regard to past and future lives. This universal law of cause and effect is non-negotiable. Just as we cannot run away from our own shadows, so we cannot run away from the results of our actions. They will pursue us no matter where we hide. Besides, the Buddha also taught that

negative or unwholesome mind creates negative or unwholesome thoughts (anger, hatred, harmful thoughts, wrong views, etc), speech (lying, harsh speech, double-tongued, etc), as well as deeds which are the causes of our sufferings, confusion and misery. Unwholesome or negative mind will destroy our inner peace and tranquility.

Catholicism has a very good sentence in the Bible: “Ye shall reap what ye shall sow” and the theory of forgiveness through the grace of Christ or God. The sentence “Reap what you sow” is precisely in accordance with the natural law of karma; however, when talking about the grace of forgiveness completely denies this law. But in Buddhism, no one can forgive a person for his transgression. If he commits an evil deed, he has to reap the bad consequences, for all is governed by universal law and not by any arbitrary creator. According to Buddhism, the pain or pleasure resulting in this life from the practices or causes and retributions of a previous life. Therefore, ancient virtues said: “If we wish to know what our lives were like in the past, just look at the retributions we are experiencing currently in this life. If we wish to know what retributions will happen to us in the future, just look and examine the actions we have created or are creating in this life.” If we understand clearly this theory, then in our daily activities, sincere Buddhists are able to avoid unwholesome deeds and practice wholesome deeds. Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise, every resultant action has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situation. Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situation. Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. It’s a fundamental principle for all living beings and all things that if one sows good deeds, he will surely reap a good harvest; if he sows bad deeds, he must inevitably reap a bad harvest. Though the results may appear quickly or slowly, everyone will be sure to receive the results

that accord with their actions. Anyone who has deeply understood this principle will never do evil.

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

him at least 14 years. Other causes may involve more time to produce effects, may be the whole life or two lives.

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

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

In short, causality is a natural law, mentioning the relationship between cause and effect. All things come into being not without cause, since if there is no cause, there is no effect and vice-versa. As so sow, so shall you reap! Cause and effect never conflict with each other. In other words, cause and effect are always consistent with each other. If we want to have beans, we must sow bean seeds. If we want to have oranges, we must sow orange seeds. If wild weeds are planted, then it's unreasonable for one to hope to harvest edible fruits. One cause cannot have any effect. To produce an effect, it is necessary to have some specific conditions. For instance, a grain of rice cannot produce a rice plant without the presence of sunlight, soil, water, and care. In the cause there is the effect; in the effect there is the cause. From the current cause, we can see the future effect and from the present effect we discerned the past cause. The development process from cause to effect is sometimes quick, sometimes slow. Sometimes cause and effect are simultaneous like that of beating a drum and hearing its sound. Sometimes cause and effect are three or four months away like that of the grain of rice. It takes about three to four, or five to six months from a rice seed to a young rice plant, then to a rice plant that can produce rice. Sometimes it takes about ten years for a cause to turn into an effect. For instance, from the time the schoolboy enters the elementary school to the time he graduates a four-year college, it takes him at least 14 years. Other causes may involve more time to produce effects, may be the whole life or two lives. By understanding and

believing in the law of causality, Buddhists will not become superstitious, or alarmed, and rely passively on heaven authority. He knows that his life depends on his karmas. If he truly believes in such a causal mechanism, he strives to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If he continues to live a good life, devoting his time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings, he can eliminate all of his bad karmas. He knows that he is the only driving force of his success or failure, so he will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. He will put more effort into performing his duties satisfactorily. Realizing the value of the law of causality, he always cares for what he thinks, tells or does in order to avoid bad karma. Devout Buddhists should always remember that retribution of good and evil karma or cause and effect in the moral realm have their corresponding relations. According to Buddhism, whoever denies the rule of “cause and effect” will destroy all moral responsibility. The term “consequence” or “effect” contrasts with “cause,” or “Fruit” contrasts with “seed.” The effect by causing a further effect becomes also a cause. Retributions mean consequences (requisites) of one’s previous life. The pain or pleasure resulting in this life from the practices or causes and retributions of a previous life. Therefore, ancient virtues said: “If we wish to know what our lives were like in the past, just look at the retributions we are experiencing currently in this life. If we wish to know what retributions will happen to us in the future, just look and examine the actions we have created or are creating in this life.” If we understand clearly this theory, then in our daily activities, sincere Buddhists are able to avoid unwholesome deeds and practice wholesome deeds. Here are some beliefs of retributions in Buddhist point of view: The retributions of robber and petty thieves are poverty and acute suffering. The retributions of being stingy are frustrated desires. The retributions of being slandering and harsh speech are tongueless and cankerous mouth. The retribution of mean and greedy is poverty. The retribution of being creating hatred with others is to live an endangered life. The retribution of being laughing at or scolding the beggar is to starve to death at the road side. The retribution of being benefitting oneself by bringing harmness to others is to be life-long friendless. The retribution of bringing harm to others by spreading rumours is to become distrust

(mistrustful) forever. The retribution of being slandering the Triratna (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) is to enter Avici forever.

Chapter Fifteen

Devout Buddhists Always Believe In Karma and Retributions

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

sunk in the subconscious mind. This is the complexity and seriousness of the Karma.

Karma-reward means the retribution of karma (good or evil). However, according to the Hua-Yen sect, the body of karmic retribution, especially that assumed by a bodhisattva to accord with the conditions of those he seeks to save. Karma is one of the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism. Everything that we encounter in this life, good or bad, sweet or bitter, is a result of what we did in the past or from what we have done recently in this life. Good karma produces happiness; bad karma produces pain and suffering. So, what is karma? Karma is a Sanskrit word, literally means a deed or an action and a reaction, the continuing process of cause and effect. Moral or any good or bad action (however, the word 'karma' is usually used in the sense of evil bent or mind resulting from past wrongful actions) taken while living which causes corresponding future retribution, either good or evil transmigration (action and reaction, the continuing process of cause and effect). Our present life is formed and created through our actions and thoughts in our previous lives. Our present life and circumstances are the product of our past thoughts and actions, and in the same way our deeds in this life will fashion our future mode of existence. A karma can be created by body, speech, or mind. There are good karma, evil karma, and indifferent karma. All kinds of karma are accumulated by the Alayavijnana and Manas. Karma can be cultivated through religious practice (good), and uncultivated. For sentient being has lived through innumerable reincarnations, each has boundless karma. Whatever kind of karma is, a result would be followed accordingly, sooner or later. No one can escape the result of his own karma. Sensei Pat Enkyo O'Hara wrote in *Village Zen*: "If you talk about karma in terms of the Eightfold Path, the first grouping is Right Speech, Action, Livelihood: It's very clear to think of karma as action, as what happens. But when you consider Right Thought, karma is very subtle because it's internal: Karma starts with the thought pattern and has an effect right inside your mind. If you say something, it clearly affects the people around you. Any thought that you have is going to affect you, so the karma is internal, but it will eventually affect others around you because it has affected you. Thus, a Zen student is living some of her teacher's karma, and so too all the way back to Bodhidharma and the

Buddha. Their karma is what we're living out. So what's karma? It's not just what you hold in your personal life. It's what has happened in the world. That means that you can think of your personal life as the world, and you can begin to see that you are interconnected with the universe."

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

is still more profound, as it includes the karma that our own life has produced through the repetition of birth and death from the infinite past to the present. The power of karma is the strength of karma which produces good or evil fruit. Karmic power is the strength of karma. It is similar to a debt collector. There are many different strong and weak debt collectors. When we die, our consciousness will be taken by the strongest and greatest debt collector.

Devout Buddhists always believe that from morning to night, we create karma with our body, with our mouth, and with our mind. In our thoughts, we always think that people are bad. In our mouth, we always talk about other people's rights and wrongs, tell lies, say indecent things, scold people, backbite, and so on. Karma is one of the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism. Everything that we encounter in this life, good or bad, sweet or bitter, is a result of what we did in the past or from what we have done recently in this life. Good karma produces happiness; bad karma produces pain and suffering. So, what is karma? Karma is a Sanskrit word, literally means a deed or an action and a reaction, the continuing process of cause and effect. Moral or any good or bad action (however, the word 'karma' is usually used in the sense of evil bent or mind resulting from past wrongful actions) taken while living which causes corresponding future retribution, either good or evil transmigration (action and reaction, the continuing process of cause and effect). Karma is neither fatalism nor a doctrine of predetermination. Our present life is formed and created through our actions and thoughts in our previous lives. Our present life and circumstances are the product of our past thoughts and actions, and in the same way our deeds in this life will fashion our future mode of existence. According to the definition of the karma, the past influences the present but does not dominate it, for karma is past as well as present. However, both past and present influence the future. The past is a background against which life goes on from moment to moment. The future is yet to be. Only the present moment exists and the responsibility of using the present moment for good or bad lies with each individual. A karma can be created by body, speech, or mind. There are good karma, evil karma, and indifferent karma. All kinds of karma are accumulated by the Alayavijnana and Manas. Karma can be cultivated through religious practice (good), and uncultivated. For

sentient being has lived through innumerable reincarnations, each has boundless karma. Whatever kind of karma is, a result would be followed accordingly, sooner or later. No one can escape the result of his own karma.

Externalists believe that there exists a so-called Lot or Destiny. According to fatalism, each of us has a fate which we cannot change and about which we can do nothing. As they say “Whatever will be will be.” In this philosophy the agent that determines destiny is not, as in the theistic position, a personal God, but rather a mysterious impersonal power called “Fate” which transcends our understanding and hence our ability to persuade or manipulate. In Buddhism, there exists no such “destiny.” In fact, Buddhism considers this as a way or a path of going. Our destiny issues from our character, our character from our habits, our habits from our acts, and our acts from our thoughts. And since thoughts issue from the mind the ultimate determinant of our destiny. In fact, the mind is the only creator Buddhism recognizes, and the power of the mind the only significant power in the world. As Milton, an English poet in the seventeenth century, says: “The mind can make a heaven of hell, and a hell of heaven.” If we think good thoughts, our acts cannot be bad. By thinking good thoughts, we will produce better actions, develop better habits, mold better characters and inherit better destiny. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five gati (destinations, destinies). According to Buddhism, a “karma” is not a fate or a destiny; neither is it a simple, unconscious, and involuntary action. On the contrary, it is an intentional, conscious, deliberate, and willful action. Also according to Buddhism, any actions will lead to similar results without any exception. It is to say, “As one sows, so shall one reap.” According to one’s action, so shall be the fruit. If we do a wholesome action, we will get a wholesome fruit. If we do an unwholesome action, we will get an unwholesome result. Devout Buddhists should try to understand the law of karma. Once we understand that in our own life every action will have a similar and equal reaction, and once we understand that we will experience the effect of that action, we will refrain from committing unwholesome deeds. Karma is a product of body, speech and mind; while recompense is a product or result of karma. Karma is like a seed sown, and recompense is like a tree grown with fruits. When the body

does good things, the mouth speaks good words, the mind thinks of good ideas, then the karma is a good seed. In the contrary, the karma is an evil seed. According to the Buddhist doctrines, every action produces an effect and it is a cause first and effect afterwards. We therefore speak of “Karma” as the “Law of Cause and Effect.” There is no end to the result of an action if there is no end to the Karma. Life in nowadays society, it is extremely difficult for us not to create any karma; however, we should be very careful about our actions, so that their effect will be only good. Thus the Buddha taught: “To lead a good life, we Buddhists, especially devout Buddhists should make every effort to control the activities of your body, speech, and mind. Do not let these activities hurt you and others.” Recompense corresponds Karma without any exception. Naturally, good seed will produce a healthy tree and delicious fruits, while bad seed gives worse tree and fruits. Therefore, unless we clearly understand and diligently cultivate the laws of cause and effect, or karma and result, we cannot control our lives and experience a life the way we wish to. According to the Buddha-Dharma, no gods, nor heavenly deities, nor demons can assert their powers on us, we are totally free to build our lives the way we wish. According to Buddhist doctrines, karma is always just. It neither loves nor hates, neither rewards nor punishes. Karma and Recompense is simply the Law of Cause and Effect. If we accumulate good karma, the result will surely be happy and joyous. No demons can harm us. In the contrary, if we create evil karma, no matter how much and earnestly we pray for help, the result will surely be bitter and painful, no gods can save us.

According to Buddhism, man is the creator of his own life and his own destiny. All the good and bad that comes our way in life is the result of our own actions reacting upon us. Our joys and sorrows are the effects of which our actions, both in the distant and the immediate past, are the causes. And what we do in the present will determine what we become in the future. Since man is the creator of his own life, to enjoy a happy and peaceful life he must be a good creator, that is, he must create good karma. Good karma comes ultimately from a good mind, from a pure and calm mind. The law of karma binds together the past, present, and future lives of an individual through the course of his transmigration. To understand how such a connection is possible

between the experiences and actions of an individual in successive lives, we must take a brief look at the Buddhist analysis of consciousness. According to the Buddhist philosophy of consciousness, the Vijnanavada School, there are eight kinds of consciousness. The first five are the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body consciousnesses. These make possible the awareness of the five kinds of external sense data through the five sense-organs. The sixth consciousness is the intellectual consciousness, the faculty of judgment which discerns, compares, and distinguishes the sense-data and ideas. The seventh consciousness, called the manas, is the ego-consciousness, the inward awareness of oneself as an ego and the clinging to discrimination between oneself and others. Even when the first six kinds of consciousness are not functioning, for example, in deep sleep, the seventh consciousness is still present, and if threatened, this consciousness, through the impulse of self-protection, will cause us to awaken. The eighth consciousness is called Alaya-vijnana, the storehouse-consciousness. Because this consciousness is so deep, it is very difficult to understand. The alaya-vijnana is a repository which stores all the impressions of our deeds and experiences. Everything we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and do deposits, so to speak, a seed is a nucleus of karmic energy. Since the alaya hoards all the seeds of our past actions, it is the architect of our destiny. Our life and character reflect the seeds in our store-consciousness. If we deposit bad seeds, i.e., perform more evil actions, we will become bad persons. Since Buddhism places ultimate responsibility for our life in our own hands, if we want our hands to mold our life in a better way, we must launch our minds in a better direction, for it is the mind which controls the hands which mold our life. However, sometimes we know someone who is virtuous, gentle, kind, loving and wise, and yet his life is filled with troubles from morning to night. Why is this? What happens to our theory that good acts lead to happiness and bad acts to suffering? To understand this, we must realize that the fruits of karma do not necessarily mature in the same lifetime in which the karma is originally accumulated. Karma may bring about its consequences in the next life or in succeeding lives. If a person was good in a previous life, he may enjoy happiness and prosperity in this life even though his conduct now is bad. And a person who is very virtuous now may still

meet a lot of trouble because of bad karma from a past life. It is like planting different kinds of seeds; some will come to flower very fast, others will take a long time, maybe years. The law of cause and effect does not come about at different times, in different forms and at different locations. While some of our experiences are due to karma in the present life, others may be due to karma from previous lives. In the present life, we receive the results of our actions done in past lives as well as in the present. And what we reap in the future will be the result of what we do in the present. The doctrine of karma is not merely a doctrine of cause and effect, but of action and reaction. The doctrine holds that every action willfully performed by an agent, be it of thought, word, or deed, and tends to react upon that agent. The law of karma is a natural law, and its operation cannot be suspended by any power of a deity. Our action brings about their natural results. Recognizing this, Buddhists do not pray to a god for mercy but rather regulate their actions to bring them into harmony with the universal law. If they do evil, they try to discover their mistakes and rectify their ways; and if they do good things, they try to maintain and develop that good. Buddhists should not worry about the past, but rather be concerned about what we are doing in the present. Instead of running around seeking salvation, we should try to sow good seeds in the present and leave the results to the law of karma. The theory of karma in Buddhism makes man and no one else the architect of his own destiny. From moment to moment we are producing and creating our own destiny through our thought, our speech and our deeds. Thus the ancient said: "Sow a thought and reap an act; sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny."

The karma that we have now is very deep-rooted and complex, and includes the former karma that human beings have accumulated since their beginning. We also possess the "former karma" that we have produced ourselves in previous existences and to some extent the "former karma" that our ancestors have produced (for those who were born in the same family, from generation to generation, or in the same country, would bear the same kinds of karma to some extent). And of course we possess the "present karma" that we have produced ourselves in this life. Is it possible for an ordinary person to become

free from these karmas and enter the mental state of perfect freedom, escape from the world of illusion, by means of his own wisdom? This is clearly out of the question. What then, if anything, can we do about it? All that one has experienced, thought and felt in the past remains in the depths of one's subconscious mind. Psychologists recognize that the subconscious mind not only exerts a great influence on man's character and his mental functions but even causes various disorders. Because it is normally beyond our reach, we cannot control the subconscious mind by mere reflection and meditation.

Lay people believe that when we plant a black-pepper seed, black-pepper plant grows and we will reap black-pepper, not oranges. Similarly, when we act positively, happiness follows, not suffering. When we act destructively, misery comes, not happiness. Just as small seed can grow into a huge tree with much fruit, small actions can bring large result. Therefore, we should try to avoid even small negative actions and to create small negative ones. If the cause isn't created, the result does not occur. If no seed is planted, nothing grows. The person who hasn't created the cause to be killed, won't be even if he or she is in a car crash. According to the Buddha, man makes his own destiny. He should not blame anyone for his troubles since he alone is responsible for his own life, for either better or worse. Your difficulties and troubles are actually self-caused. They arise from actions rooted in greed, hatred and delusion. In fact, suffering is the price you pay for craving for existence and sensual pleasures. The price which comes as physical pain and mental agony is a heavy one to pay. It is like paying monthly payment for the brand new Chevrolet Corvette you own. The payment is the physical pain and mental agony you undergo, while the Corvette is your physical body through which you experience the worldly pleasures of the senses. You have to pay the price for the enjoyment: nothing is really free of charge unfortunately. If we act positively, the happy result will eventually occur. When we do negative actions, the imprints aren't lost even though they may not bring their results immediately. Devout Buddhists should always remember that, "the ocean's water may dry up, mountain may waste away, the actions done in former lives are never lost; on the contrary, they come to fruit though aeons after aeons pass, until at last the debt is paid." Body, speech, and mind all make karma when we cling. We

create habits that can make us suffer in the future. This is the fruit of our attachment, of our past defilement. Remember, not only body but also speech and mental action can make conditions for future results. If we did some act of kindness in the past and remember it today, we will be happy, and this happy state of mind is the result of past karma. In other words, all things conditioned by cause, both long-term and moment-to-moment.

Karma retributions are Consequences (requitals) of one's previous life. The pain or pleasure resulting in this life from the practices or causes and retributions of a previous life. Therefore, ancient virtues said: "If we wish to know what our lives were like in the past, just look at the retributions we are experiencing currently in this life. If we wish to know what retributions will happen to us in the future, just look and examine the actions we have created or are creating in this life." If we understand clearly this theory, then in our daily activities, sincere Buddhists are able to avoid unwholesome deeds and practice wholesome deeds. According to Buddhism, karma is the natural reward or retribution for a deed, brought about by the law of karma mentioned by the Buddha. The fruit of karma, conditions of rebirth depending on previous karmic conduct. Karma as wind blowing a person into good or evil rebirth. If a wholesome wind blows into a good place, beings will have pleasures; while an unwholesome wind blows into an evil place, beings will have miseries. Though karma was simply defined as deeds, in reality karma implies the accumulation of all our experiences and deeds since the birth of mankind, and since even before that time. The karma of previous existence that Buddhism teaches is still more profound, as it includes the karma that our own life has produced through the repetition of birth and death from the infinite past to the present. Layman P'ang-Yun said, "Ordinary people are small in courage and narrow in perspective; they always infer that this practice is easy, and that that one is difficult. They do not know that the discriminating mind which deems things to be easy or difficult, is itself the very mind that drags us down into Samsara in evils paths. If this mind is not uprooted, no liberation is possible."

The movement of karma is only a movement that continues unbroken. The being who passes away here and takes birth elsewhere is neither the same person nor a totally different one. There is the last

moment of consciousness (*cuti-citta* or *vinnana*) belonging to the immediately previous life; immediately next, upon the cessation of that consciousness, but conditioned by it, there arises the first moment of consciousness of the present birth which is called a relinking or rebirth-consciousness (*patisandhi-vinnana*). Similarly, the last thought-moment in this life conditions the first thought-moment in the next. In this way consciousness comes into being and passes away yielding place to new consciousness. Thus, this perpetual stream of consciousness goes on until existence ceases. Existence in a way is consciousness, the will to live, to continue. Practitioners should always remember that karma complete in one thought or at just one thought the work completed. If we have sincere thought or faith in cultivation, we surely reduce a lot the formation of new karmas. Once good or evil deeds committed, karmas are automatically formed without any exception. However, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ, a famous Zen Master in recent Vietnamese Buddhist history confirmed that: “Cultivation means transformation of karma.” Therefore, no matter what kind of karma, from previous or present, can be transformed.

According to Buddhist tradition, there are two kinds of karma: intentional karma and unintentional karma. Intentional karma which bears much heavier karma *vipaka* (*phala*). Unintentional karma which bears lighter karma *vipaka*. There are also two other kinds of karma: the wholesome and the unwholesome. Wholesome (good) karma such as giving charity, kind speech, helping others, etc. Unwholesome (bad) karma such as killing, stealing, lying and slandering. According to Prof. Junjiro Takakusu in the *Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, there are two kinds of action and action-influence. The first type of karma is the drawing action. Drawing action causes a being to be born as a man, as a deva, or as an animal; no other force can draw a living being into a particular form of life. The second type of karma is the fulfilling action. After the kind of life has been determined, the fulfilling action completes the formal quality of the living being so that it will be a thorough specimen of the kind. There are two kinds of action-influence. The first kind of action-influence is individual action-influence which creates the individual being. Individual action-influence or individual karmas are those actions that sentient beings act individually. The second kind of action-influence is common action-

influence creates the universe itself. The common-action-influence karma involved in this world system is not just that of human beings, but of every type of sentient being in the system. Also according to the Buddhist tradition, there are three kinds of karma: action (behavior) of the body, behavior of the speech, and behavior of the mind. There are three other kinds of karma: present life happy karma, present life unhappy karma, and karma of an imperturbable nature. There are still three other kinds of karma: karma of ordinary rebirth, karma of Hinayana Nirvana, and karma of Mahayana Nirvana. There are still three other kinds of karma: good karmas, bad karmas, and neutral karmas. There are still three other kinds of karma, which also called three stages of karma. The first stage of karma is the past karma. Past karma is the cause for some results (effects) reaped in the present life. The second stage of karma is the present karma with present results. Present karma is the cause for some results (effects) reaped in the present life (present deeds and their consequences in this life). The second stage of karma is the present karma with future results. Present karma (deed) is the cause for some or all results reaped in the next or future lives. Present deeds and their next life consequences (present deeds and consequences after next life).

Though karma was simply defined as deeds, in reality karma implies the accumulation of all our experiences and deeds since the birth of mankind, and since even before that time. The karma of previous existence that Buddhism teaches is still more profound, as it includes the karma that our own life has produced through the repetition of birth and death from the infinite past to the present. While the spiritual power is the power which comes from enlightenment or the right doctrine. In Zen, there is no definite standard by which one can measure the forces of Dharma and of Karma. The critical point is to see whether one can be aware of one's mind-essence in all activities at all times. Here one must know that both the force of Karma and the force of Dharma are illusory. If a man insists on riding himself of Karma and taking Dharma, according to Zen Master Tsung Kao Ta Hui, this man does not understand Buddhism. If he can really destroy Karma, he will find that the Dharma is also unreal. P'ang-Yun said, "Ordinary people are small in courage and narrow in perspective; they always infer that this practice is easy, and that that one is difficult.

They do not know that the discriminating mind which deems things to be easy or difficult, is itself the very mind that drags us down into Samsara. If this mind is not uprooted, no liberation is possible." Buddhist practitioners should always remember that the power of karma respect nobody, the talented or the dull. The screen or hindrance of past karmas which hinders the attainment of bodhi (hindrance to the attainment of Bodhi, which rises from the past karma). According to The Mind-Only School, apart from the obstacles caused by external factors, there are three other causes of karmic obstructions. The obstacles of karma is the most serious obstacles in the three types of obstacles for any Buddhist cultivators.

According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are four kinds of kamma. The first kind of karma is the black kamma, or evil deeds with black results. The second kind of karma is the bright kamma with bright result. The third kind of karma is the black-and-bright kamma with black-and-bright result. The fourth kind of karma is the kamma that is neither black nor bright, with neither black nor bright result, leading to the destruction of kamma. According to Mahayana Buddhism, there are four kinds of karmas. The first kind of karma is the accumulated karma, which results from many former lives. The second kind of karma is the repeated karma, which forms during the present life. The third kind of karma is the most dominant karma which is able to subjugate other karmas. The fourth kind of karma is the Near-Death Karma which is very strong. According to the Abhidharma, there are four types of kamma (karma): good karmas, bad karmas, neutral karmas, and karmas in the state of cessation. Especially, karmas in the state of cessation is the state of the activity's having ceased, and this remains in the mental continuum. This state of cessation is an affirming negative, an absence which includes something positive. It is a potency which is not just the mere cessation of the action, but has the capacity of producing an effect in the future. These states of cessation are capable of regenerating moment by moment until an effect is produced. No matter how much time passes, when it meets with the proper conditions, it fructifies or matures. If one has not engaged in a means to cause the potency to be reduced, such as confession and intention of restraint in committing these bad actions again, then these karmas will just remain. There are still four other

kinds of karma: productive kamma, supportive kamma, obstructive kamma, and destructive kamma.

When a disciple came to the Buddha penitent over past misdeeds, the Buddha did not promise any forgiveness, for He knew that each must reap the results of the seeds that he had sown. Instead He explained: “If you know that what you have done is wrong and harmful, from now on do not do it again. If you know that what you have done is right and profitable, continue to do it. Destroy bad karma and cultivate good karma. You should realize that what you are in the present is a shadow of what you were in the past, and what you will be in the future is a shadow of what you are now in the present. You should always apply your mind to the present so that you may advance on the way.” In the Anguttara Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Oh Bhikkhus! Mental volition is what I call action or karma. Having volition one acts by body, speech and thought.” In the Dhammapada Sutta, the Buddha taught: “Of all dharmas, mind is the forerunner, mind is chief. We are what we think, we have become what we thought (what we are today came from our thoughts of yesterday). If we speak or act with a deluded mind or evil thoughts, suffering or pain follows us, as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox (Dhammapada 1). Of all dharmas, mind is the forerunner, mind is chief. We are what we think, we have become what we thought. If we speak or act with a pure mind or thought, happiness and joy follows us, as our own shadow that never leaves (Dhammapada 2). The deed is not well done of which a man must repent, and the reward of which he receives, weeping, with tearful face; one reaps the fruit thereof (Dhammapada 67). The deed is well done when, after having done it, one repents not, and when, with joy and pleasure, one reaps the fruit thereof (Dhammapada 68). As long as the evil deed done does not bear fruit, the fool thinks it is as sweet as honey; but when it ripens, then he comes to grief (Dhammapada 69). Those Arhats whose mind is calm, whose speech and deed are calm. They have also obtained right knowing, they have thus become quiet men (Dhammapada 96). Let’s hasten up to do good. Let’s restrain our minds from evil thoughts, for the minds of those who are slow in doing good actions delight in evil (Dhammapada 116). If a person commits evil, let him not do it again and again; he should not rejoice therein, sorrow is the outcome of evil (Dhammapada 117). If a

person does a meritorious deed, he should do it habitually, he should find pleasures therein, happiness is the outcome of merit (Dhammapada 118). Even an evil-doer sees good deeds as long as evil deed has not yet ripened; but when his evil deed has ripened, then he sees the evil results (Dhammapada 119). Even a good person sees evil as long as his good deed has not yet ripened; but when his good deed has ripened, then he sees the good results (Dhammapada 120). Do not disregard (underestimate) small evil, saying, “It will not matter to me.” By the falling of drop by drop, a water-jar is filled; likewise, the fool becomes full of evil, even if he gathers it little by little (Dhammapada 121). Do not disregard small good, saying, “it will not matter to me.” Even by the falling of drop by drop, a water-jar is filled; likewise, the wise man, gathers his merit little by little (Dhammapada 122). An evil deed is better not done, a misdeed will bring future suffering. A good deed is better done now, for after doing it one does not grieve (Dhammapada 314). All conditioned things are without a real self. One who perceives this with wisdom, ceases grief and achieves liberation. This is the path of purity.” (Dhammapada 279).”

According to the Earth-Store Bodhisattva Sutra, the Earth-Store Bodhisattva advises sentient beings based on their circumstances: “If Earth Store Bodhisattva meets those who take life, he speaks of a retribution of a short lifespan. If he meets robbers and petty thieves, he speaks of a retribution of poverty and acute suffering. If he meets those who commit sexual misconduct, he speaks of the retribution of being born as pigeons and as mandarin ducks and drakes. If he meets those of harsh speech, he speaks of the retribution of a quarreling family. If he meets slanderers, he speaks of the retribution of a tongueless and cankerous mouth. If he meets those with anger and hatred, he speaks of being ugly and crippled. If he meets those who are stingy, he speaks of frustrated desires. If he meets gluttons, he speaks of the retribution of hunger, thirst and sicknesses (illnesses) of the throat. If he meets those who enjoy hunting, he speaks of a frightening insanity and disastrous fate. If he meets those who rebel against their parents, he speaks of the retribution of being killed in natural disasters. If he meets those who set fire to mountains or forests, he speaks of the retribution of seeking to commit suicide in the confusion of insanity. If he meets malicious parents or step-parents, he speaks of the retribution of being flogged in

future lives. If he meets those who net and trap young animals, he speaks of the retribution of being separated from their own children. If he meets those who slander the Triple Jewel, he speaks of the retribution of being blind, deaf or mute. If he meets those who slight the Dharma and regard the teachings with arrogance, he speaks of the retribution of dwelling in the evil paths forever. If he meets those who destroy or misuse possessions of the permanently dwelling, he speaks of the retribution of revolving in the hells for millions of kalpas. If he meets those who defile the pure conduct of others and falsely accuse the Sangha, he speaks of the retribution of an eternity in the animal realm. If he meets those who scald, burn, behead, chop up or otherwise harm living beings, he speaks of the retribution of repayment in kind. If he meets those who violate precepts and the regulations of pure eating, he speaks of the retribution of being born as birds and beasts suffering from hunger and thirst. If he meets those who are arrogant and haughty, he speaks of the retribution of being servile and of low classes. If he meets those whose double-tongued behavior causes dissension and discord, he speaks of retribution of tonguelessness (being mute) and speech impediments. If he meets those of deviant view, he speaks of the retribution of rebirth in the frontier regions.

In short, karma is one of the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism. Everything that we encounter in this life, good or bad, sweet or bitter, is a result of what we did in the past or from what we have done recently in this life. Good karma produces happiness; bad karma produces pain and suffering. So, what is karma? Karma is a Sanskrit word, literally means a deed or an action and a reaction, the continuing process of cause and effect. Moral or any good or bad action (however, the word 'karma' is usually used in the sense of evil bent or mind resulting from past wrongful actions) taken while living which causes corresponding future retribution, either good or evil transmigration (action and reaction, the continuing process of cause and effect). Our present life is formed and created through our actions and thoughts in our previous lives. Our present life and circumstances are the product of our past thoughts and actions, and in the same way our deeds in this life will fashion our future mode of existence. A karma can be created by body, speech, or mind. There are good karma, evil karma, and indifferent karma. All kinds of karma are accumulated by the

Alayavijnana and Manas. Karma can be cultivated through religious practice (good), and uncultivated. For Sentient being has lived through innumerable reincarnations, each has boundless karma. Whatever kind of karma is, a result would be followed accordingly, sooner or later. No one can escape the result of his own karma. As mentioned above, karma is a product of body, speech and mind; while recompense is a product or result of karma. Karma is like a seed sown, and recompense is like a tree grown with fruits. When the body does good things, the mouth speaks good words, the mind thinks of good ideas, then the karma is a good seed. In the contrary, the karma is an evil seed. Thus the Buddha taught: “To lead a good life, you Buddhists should make every effort to control the activities of your body, speech, and mind. Do not let these activities hurt you and others.” **Devout Buddhists always believe in karma and retributions; and always believe that recompense corresponds karma without any exception.** Naturally, good seed will produce a healthy tree and delicious fruits, while bad seed gives worse tree and fruits. Therefore, unless we clearly understand and diligently cultivate the laws of cause and effect, or karma and result, we cannot control our lives and experience a life the way we wish to. According to the Buddha-Dharma, no gods, nor heavenly deities, nor demons can assert their powers on us, we are totally free to build our lives the way we wish. If we accumulate good karma, the result will surely be happy and joyous. No demons can harm us. In the contrary, if we create evil karma, no matter how much and earnestly we pray for help, the result will surely be bitter and painful, no gods can save us. By understanding and believing in the law of causality, Buddhists, especially devout Buddhists, will not become superstitious, or alarmed, and rely passively on heaven authority. We know that our life depends on our karmas. If we truly believe in such a causal mechanism, we strive to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If we continue to live a good life, devoting our time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings, we can eliminate all of our bad karmas. We know that we are the only driving force of our success or failure, so we will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. We will put more effort into performing our duties satisfactorily. Realizing the value

of the law of causality, we always care for what we think, tell or do in order to avoid bad karma.

Chapter Sixteen

Always Have A Firm Faith On the Principle of Causation

In Buddhism, the principle of causation is one of the core teachings in Buddhist teachings. A Truth that is inconceivable! This is why Devout Buddhists should always have a firm faith on this principle. To have a firm faith in the principle of causation is to believe that everything is dependent upon conditions to come into being or survive in this universe. In other words, there is nothing that can be self-creating and self-existing, independent from others. All sentient beings, objects, elements, etc., in this world are determined by the law of conditioning, under the form of formation, stabilization, deterioration, and annihilation. According to Prof. Junjiro Takakusu in *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, all schools of Mahayana believe in the Principle of Causation. The theory of causation by Dharmadhatu is the climax of all the causation theories; it is actually the conclusion of the theory of causation origination, as it is the universal causation and is already within the theory of universal immanence, pansophism, cosmotheism, or whatever it may be called. The causation theory was explained first by action-influence, but as action originates in ideation, we had, secondly, the theory of causation by ideation-store. Since the ideation-store as the repository of seed-energy must originate from something else, we had, thirdly, the causation theory explained by the expression “Matrix of the Thus-come” (Tathagata-garbha) or Thusness. This curious term means that which conceals the Buddha. Because of concealment it has an impure side, but because of Buddhahood it has a pure side as well. It is a synonym of Thusness (Tathatva or Tathata, not Tattva=Thisness or Thatness) which has in its broadest sense both pure and impure nature. Through the energy of pure and impure causes it manifests the specific character of becoming as birth and death, or as good and evil. Thusness pervades all beings, or better, all beings are in the state of Thusness. Here, as the fourth stage, the causation theory by Dharmadhatu (universe) is set forth. It is the causation by all beings themselves and is the creation of the universe itself, or we can call it

the causation by the common action-influence of all beings. Intensively considered the universe will be a manifestation of Thusness or the Matrix of Tathagata (Thus-come). But extensively considered it is the causation of the universe by the universe itself and nothing more.

The theory of causation in Buddhism believes that everything relates in a formula as follows: From the existence of this, that becomes; from the happening of this, that happens. From the non-existence of this, that does not become; from the non-happening of this, that does not happen. Thus, the term “Causation” indicates the following: a thing arises from or is produced through the agency of a condition or a secondary cause. A thing does not take form unless there is an appropriate condition. This truth applies to all existence and all phenomena in the universe. The Buddha intuitively perceived this so profoundly that even modern science cannot probe further. When we look carefully at things around us, we find that water, stone, and even human beings are produced each according to a certain pattern with its own individual character. Through what power or direction are the conditions generated that produce various things in perfect order from such an amorphous energy as “sunyata?” When we consider this regularity and order, we cannot help admitting that some rule exists. It is the rule that causes all things exist. This indeed is the Law taught by the Buddha.

Devout Buddhists should always remember that the goal of a Buddhist is the development of self-dependency, the ability to set oneself free of sufferings and afflictions. Buddhism is strongly against a blind belief on other forces of salvation with no basic factors. The Buddha always reminded his disciples: “You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurrily judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it.” The Buddha taught us to try to recognize the truth of right views, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. The Buddha teachings preached by the Buddha are methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment without any exceptions.

Besides the core teachings, do not get involved in evil deeds, do whatever benefits others, always keep the mind pure, that is all the Buddha's teaching, Buddhist teachings still have a lot of other teachings that will surely guide practitioners from the illusive bank to the shore of enlightenment, among them, we have to first mention on the principle of causation and the functions of the twelve conditions of cause and effect.

Just consider that billions of years ago, the earth had no life; volcanoes poured forth torrents of lava, and vapor and gas filled the sky. However, when the earth cooled about two billions years ago, microscopic one-celled living creatures were produced. It goes without saying that they were produced through the working of the Law. They were born when the energy of "sunyata" forming the foundation of lava, gas, and vapor came into contact with appropriate conditions or a secondary cause. It is the Law that provided the conditions for the generation of life. Therefore, we realize that the Law is not cold, a mere abstract rule, but is full of vivid power causing everything to exist and live. Conversely, everything has the power of desiring to exist and to live. During the first two billions years of the development of the earth, even lava, gas, and vapor possessed the urge to live. That is why one-celled living creatures were generated from them when the conditions were right. These infinitesimal creatures endured all kinds of trials, including extreme heat and cold, tremendous floods, and torrential rains, for about two billions years, and continued to live. Moreover, they gradually evolved into more sophisticated forms, culminating in man. This evolution was caused by the urge to live of these first microscopic creatures. Life had mind, through which it desired to live, from the time even before it existed on earth. Such a will exists in everything in the universe. This will exists in man today. From the scientific point of view, man is formed by a combination of elementary particles; and if we analyze this still more deeply, we see that man is an accumulation of energy. Therefore, the mind desiring to live must surely exist in man.

We all know what dependent means, and what origination or arising means. However, according to the Buddha, the theory of independent origination was very deep. Many people believe that the theory of independent origination is one of the most difficult subjects in

Buddhism. As a matter of fact, on one occasion Ananda remarked that despite its apparent difficulty, the teaching of independent origination was actually quite simple; and the Buddha rebuked Ananda saying that in fact the teaching of independent origination was very deep, not that simple. However, the theory of independent origination in Buddhism is very clear and easy to understand. The Buddha gave two examples to make it clear for the Assembly. The Buddha has said the flame in an oil lamp burns dependent upon the oil and the wick. When the oil and the wick are present, the flame in an oil lamp burns. Besides, the wind factor is also important, if the wind blows strongly, the oil lamp cannot continue to burn. The second example on the sprout. The sprout is not only dependent on the seed, but also dependent on earth, water, air and sunlight. Therefore, there is no existing phenomenon that is not effect of dependent origination. All these phenomena cannot arise without a cause and one or more conditions. All things in the phenomenal world are brought into being by the combination of various cause and conditions (Twelve links of Dependent Origination), they are relative and without substantially or self-entity. The Buddha always expressed that his experience of enlightenment in one of two ways: either in terms of having understood the Four Noble Truths, or in terms of having understood interdependent origination. Buddhist practitioners who want to attain enlightenment, must understand the meaning of these truths.

According to Buddhism, whoever perceives the interdependent nature of reality sees the Dharma, and whoever sees the Dharma sees the Buddha. The principle of interdependent origination means that all conditioned things, phenomena, or events in the universe come into being only as a result of the interaction of various causes and conditions. Buddhism does not accept the argument that things can arise from nowhere, with no cause and conditions; nor does it accept another argument that things can arise on account of an almighty creator. According to Buddhism, all material objects are composed by parts to make the whole, and the whole depends upon the existence of part to exist. In other words, all things and events (everything) arise solely as a result of the mere coming together of the many factors which make them up. Therefore, there is nothing that has any independent or intrinsic identity of its own in this universe. However,

this is not to say that things do not exist; things do exist, but they do not have an independent or autonomous reality. When we understand the principle of interdependent origination or the fundamental insight into the nature of reality, we will realize that everything we perceive and experience arises as a result of the interaction and coming together of causes and conditions. In other words, when we thoroughly understand the principle of interdependent origination, we also understand the law of cause and effect.

Dependent Arising is an essential corollary to the second and third of the Four Noble Truths, and is not, as some are inclined to think, a later addition to the teaching of the Buddha. This Dependent Arising, this doctrine of conditionality, is often explained in severely practical terms, but it is not a mere pragmatical teaching, though it may appear to be so, owing to the shortness of the explanations. Those conversant with the Buddhist Canon know that in the doctrine of Dependent Arising is found that which brings out the basic principles of knowledge and wisdom in the Dhamma. In this teaching of the conditionality of everything in the world, can be realized the essence of the Buddha's outlook on life. This conditionality goes on uninterrupted and uncontrolled by self-agency or external agency of any sort. The doctrine of conditionality can not be labelled as determinism, because in this teaching both the physical environment and the moral causation (psychological causation) of the individual function together. The physical world influences man's mind, and mind, on the other hand, influences the physical world, obviously in a higher degree, for as the Buddha taught in the Samyutta-Nikaya: "The world is led by the mind." If we fail to understand the real significance and application to life of the Dependent Arising, we mistake it for a mechanical law of causality or even a simple simultaneous arising, a first beginning of all things, animate and inanimate. As there is no origination out of nothing in Buddhist thought, Dependent Arising shows the impossibility of a first cause. The first beginning of existence, of the life stream of living beings is inconceivable and as the Buddha says in the Samyutta-Nikaya: "Notions and speculations concerning the world may lead to mental derangement. O Monks! This wheel of existence, this cycle of continuity is without a visible end, and the first beginning of beings wandering and hurrying round, wrapt in ignorance and fettered by

craving is not to be perceived.” In fact, it is impossible to conceive of a first beginning. None can trace the ultimate origin of anything, not even of a grain of sand, let alone of human beings. It is useless and meaningless to seek a beginning in a beginningless past. Life is not an identity, it is a becoming. It is a flux of physiological and psychological changes.

Twenty centuries ago, the Buddha said: “Humanity and the world are the cause and conditions to be linked and to become.” His words have denied the presence of a Creator or God. They give us a scientific and objective outlook of the present world, related to the law of Conditioning. It means that everything is dependent upon conditions to come into being or survive. In other words, there is nothing that can be self-creating and self-existing, independent from others. All sentient beings, objects, elements, etc., in this world are determined by the law of conditioning, under the form of formation, stabilization, deterioration, and annihilation. Man is a small cosmos. He comes into being not by himself but by the activation of the law of transformation. The meaning of the Twelve Conditions of Cause-and-Effect are extremely deep and profound. They are important doors for cultivators to step into the realm of enlightenment, liberation from the cycle of birth, death, bondage, sufferings, and afflictions from the three worlds and six paths, and to attain Pratyeka-Buddhahood.

Buddhism does not agree with the existence of a so-called “self,” nor a so-called Creator. But this doesn’t mean that all beings and things do not exist. They do not exist with a substratum or a permanent essence in them, as people often think, but according to Buddhism beings and things do exist as causal relatives or combinations. All becomings, either personal or universal, originate from the principle of causation, and exist in causal combinations. The center of causation is one’s own action, and the action will leave it latent energy which decides the ensuing existence. Accordingly, our past forms our present, and the present forms the future. In this world, we are continuously creating and changing ourselves as a whole. According to the Madhyamaka philosophy, the doctrine of causal law (Pratityasamutpada) is exceedingly important in Buddhism. It is the causal law both of the universe and the lives of individuals. It is important from two points of view. Firstly, it gives a very clear idea of

the impermanent and conditioned nature of all phenomena. Secondly, it shows how birth, old age, death and all the miseries of phenomenal existence arise in dependence upon conditions, and how all the miseries cease in the absence of these conditions. The rise and subsidence of the elements of existence is not the correct interpretation of the causal law.

These definitions on the principle of causation are based on the interpretation of Prof. Junjiro Takakusu in *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*. Conditioned things arise from the secondary causes, in contrast with arising from the primal nature or *bhutatatha* (Tánh giác). Second, everything arises from conditions and not being spontaneous and self-contained has no separate and independent nature. Third, Buddhism does not give importance to the idea of the Root-Principle or the First Cause as other systems of philosophy often do; nor does it discuss the idea of cosmology. Naturally such a branch of philosophy as theology did not have grounds to develop in Buddhism. One should not expect any discussion of theology from a Buddhist philosopher. As for the problem of creation, Buddhism is ready to accept any theory that science may advance, for Buddhism does not recognize any conflict between religion and science. Fourth, according to Buddhism, human beings and all living things are self-created or self-creating. The universe is not homocentric; it is a co-creation of all beings. Naturally such a branch of philosophy as theology did not have grounds to develop in Buddhism. One should not expect any discussion of theology from a Buddhist philosopher. As for the problem of creation, Buddhism is ready to accept any theory that science may advance, for Buddhism does not recognize any conflict between religion and science. According to Buddhism, human beings and all living things are self-created or self-creating. The universe is not homocentric; it is a co-creation of all beings. Buddhism does not believe that all things came from one cause, but holds that everything is inevitably created out of more than two causes. The creations or becomings of the antecedent causes continue in time-series, past, present and future, like a chain. This chain is divided into twelve divisions and is called the Twelve Divisioned Cycle of Causation and Becomings. Since these divisions are interdependent, the process is called Dependent Production or Chain of causation. The formula of this theory is as follows: From the

existence of this, that becomes; from the happening of this, that happens. From the non-existence of this, that does not become; from the non-happening of this, that does not happen.

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In short, according to the Buddha, a cause refers to the cause you have planted, from which you reap a corresponding result without any exception. If you plant a good cause, you will get a good result. And if you plant a bad cause, you will obtain a bad result. So if you plant a certain cause with other conditions assemble, a certain retribution or result is brought about without any exception. The Buddha taught: “Because of a concatenation of causal chains there is birth, there is disappearance.” Cause and effect in Buddhism are not a matter of belief or disbelief. Even though you don’t believe in “cause and effect,” they just operate the way they are suppose to operate. The cause is the seed, what contributes to its growth is the conditions. Planting a seed in the ground is a cause. Conditions are aiding factors which contribute to the growth such as soil, water, sunlight, fertilizer, and the care of the gardener, etc. All things in the phenomanal world are brought into being by the combination of various causes and conditions (twelve links of Dependent Origination), they are relative and without substantiality or self-entity. According to the Majjhima Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Depending on the oil and wick does the light of the lamp burn; it is neither in the one, nor in the other, nor anything in itself; phenomena are, likewise, nothing in themselves. So do we, we do not exist accidentally, but exist and live by means of this Law. As soon as we realize this fact, we become aware of our firm foundation and set our minds at ease. Far from being capricious, this foundation rests on the Law, with which nothing can compare firmness. This assurance is the source of the great peace of mind that is not agitated by anything. It is the Law that imparts life of all of us. The Law is not something cold but is full of vigor and vivid with life. All things are unreal; they are deceptions; Nirvana is the only truth.”

Four Typical Types of Causation: According to Prof. Junjiro Takakusu in *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, all schools of Mahayana believe in the Principle of Causation. The theory of causation by Dharmadhatu is the climax of all the causation theories; it is actually the conclusion of the theory of causation origination, as it is the universal causation and is already within the theory of universal immanence, pansophism, cosmotheism, or whatever it may be called. The causation theory was explained first by action-influence, but as action originates in ideation, we had, secondly, the theory of causation

by ideation-store. Since the ideation-store as the repository of seed-energy must originate from something else, we had, thirdly, the causation theory explained by the expression “Matrix of the Thus-come” (Tathagata-garbha) or Thusness. This curious term means that which conceals the Buddha. Because of concealment it has an impure side, but because of Buddhahood it has a pure side as well. It is a synonym of Thusness (Tathatva or Tathata, not Tattva=Thisness or Thatness) which has in its broadest sense both pure and impure nature. Through the energy of pure and impure causes it manifests the specific character of becoming as birth and death, or as good and evil. Thusness pervades all beings, or better, all beings are in the state of Thusness. Here, as the fourth stage, the causation theory by Dharmadhatu (universe) is set forth. It is the causation by all beings themselves and is the creation of the universe itself, or we can call it the causation by the common action-influence of all beings. Intensively considered the universe will be a manifestation of Thusness or the Matrix of Tathagata (Thus-come). But extensively considered it is the causation of the universe by the universe itself and nothing more. There are many different kinds of Categories of Causation. Belows are four typical ones: *The First Category Is the “Causation by Action-Influence”*: Causation by action-influence is depicted in the Wheel of Life. There is law and order in the progress of cause and effect. This is the theory of causal Sequence. In the Twelve Divisioned Cycle of Causations and Becomings, it is impossible to point out which one is the first cause, because the twelve make a continuous circle which is called the Wheel of Life. People are accustomed to regard time as progressing in a straight line from the infinite past through present to infinite future. Buddhism, however, regards time as a circle with no beginning or end. Time is relative. The death of a living being is not the end; at once another life begins to go through a similar process of birth and death, and thus repeats the round of life over and over again. In this way a living being, when considered in relation to time, forms an endless continuum. It is impossible to define what a living being is, for it is always changing and progressing through the Divisions or Stages of Life. The whole series of stages must be taken in their entirety as representing the one individual being. Thus, a living being, when regarded in relation to space, forms a complex of five elements. The

Wheel of Life is a clever representation of the Buddhist conception of a living being in relation to both space and time. The Wheel of Life is a circle with no beginning, but it is customary to begin its exposition at Blindness (unconscious state). Blindness is only a continuation of Death. At death the body is abandoned, but Blindness remains as the crystallization of the effects of the actions performed during life. This Blindness is often termed Ignorance; but this ignorance should not be thought of as the antonym of knowing; it must include in its meaning both knowing and not knowing, blindness or blind mind, unconsciousness. Blindness leads to blind activity. The energy or the effect of this blind activity is the next stage, Motive or Will to Live. This Will to Live is not the kind of will which is used in the term "free will;" it is rather a blind motive toward life or the blind desire to live. Blindness and Will to Live are called the Two Causes of the past. They are causes when regarded subjectively from the present; but objectively regarded, the life in the past is a whole life just as much as is the life of the present. *The Second Category Is the "Causation by the Ideation-Store"*: Causation by the Ideation-store is used to explain the origin of action. Actions or karma are divided into three groups, i.e., those by the body, those by speech and those by volition. When one makes up one's mind to do something, one is responsible for it and is liable to retribution, because volition is a mind-action even if it is not expressed in speech or manifested in physical action. But the mind being the inmost recess of all actions, the causation ought to be attributed to the mind-store or Ideation-store. The Buddhist ideation theory divides the mind into eight faculties, i.e., the eye-sense, the ear-sense, the nose-sense, the tongue-sense, the body-sense, the coordinating sense-center or the sixth mano-vijnana, the individualizing thought-center of egotism or the seventh manas-vijnana, and the storing-center of ideation or the eighth alaya-vijnana, or Ideation-store. Of these eight faculties, the seventh and the eighth require explanation. The seventh, the Individualizing Center of Egotism is the center where all the selfish ideas, egotistic opinions, arrogance, self-love, illusions, and delusions arise. The eighth, the Storing Center of Ideation, is where the 'seeds' of all manifestations are deposited and later expressed in manifestations. Buddhism holds that the origin of all things and events is the effect of ideation. Every seed lies in the

Storing Center and when it sprouts out into the object-world a reflection returns as a new seed. That is, the mind reaches out into the outer world and, perceiving objects, puts new ideas into the mind-store. Again, this new seed sprouts out to reflect back a still newer seed. Thus the seeds accumulate and all are stored there together. When they are latent, we call them seeds, but when active we call them manifestations. The old seeds, the manifestations and the new seeds are mutually dependent upon each other, forming a cycle which forever repeats the same process. This is called the Chain of Causation by Ideation. That which makes the seed or subconscious thought sprout out into actual manifestation, that is, the motive force which makes the chain of causation move, is nothing but ideation. It is easy to see from this theory of Causation by Ideation that Delusion, Action and Suffering originate from mind-action, or ideation. The Storing Center of Ideation is carried across rebirth to determine what the next form of life will be. This Storing Center might be regarded as similar to the soul in other forms of religion. According to the Buddhist doctrine, however, what is reborn is not the soul, but is the result of the actions performed in the preceding life. In Buddhism the existence of the soul is denied. *The Third Category Is the "Causation By Thusness"*: Causation by Thusness is used to explain the origin of the ideation-store. The ideation-store of a human being is determined by his nature as a human being and this nature is a particular dynamic form of Thusness. One should not ask where Thusness or Matrix of Thus-come originates, because it is the noumenon, the ultimate indescribable Thusness. Thusness or suchness, is the only term which can be used to express the ultimate indefinable reality. It is otherwise called the Matrix of Thus-come. Thus-come is Buddha-nature hidden in ordinary human nature. "Thus-come" is a designation of the Buddha employed by himself instead of "I" or "we," but not without special meaning. After he had attained Enlightenment, he met the five ascetics with whom he had formerly shared his forest life. These five ascetics addressed him saying "Friend Gotama." The Buddha admonished them, saying that they ought not treat the Thus-come (thus enlightened I come) as their friend and their equal, because he was now the Enlightened One, the Victorious, All-wise One. When he had 'thus come' in his present position as the instructor of all men and even of

devas, they should treat him as the Blessed One and not as an old friend. Again, when the Buddha went back to Kapilavastu, his former home, he did not go to the palace of his father, but lived in the banyan grove outside the town, and as usual went out to beg daily. Suddhodana, his king-father, could not bear the idea of his own son, the prince, begging on the streets of Kapilavastu. At once, the king visited the Buddha in the grove and entreated him to return to the palace. The Buddha answered him in the following words: "If I were still your heir, I should return to the palace to share the comfort with you, but my lineage has changed. I am now a successor to the Buddhas of the past, all of whom have 'thus gone' (Tathagata) as I am doing at present, living in the woods and begging. So your Majesty must excuse me." The king understood the words perfectly and became a pupil of the Buddha at once. Thus come and thus gone have practically the same meaning. The Buddha used them both and usually in their plural forms. Sometimes the words were used for a sentient being who thus come, i.e., comes in the contrary way. Thus-come and Thus-gone can therefore be used in two senses: 'The one who is enlightened but comes in an ordinary way' or 'The one who comes in an ordinary way simply.' Now, Thusness or the Matrix of Thus-come or Thus-gone means the true state of all things in the universe, the source of an Enlightened One, the basis of enlightenment. When static, it is Enlightenment itself, with no relation to time or space; but, when dynamic, it is in human form assuming an ordinary way and feature of life. Thusness and the Matrix of Thus-come are practically one and the same, the ultimate truth. In Mahayana the ultimate truth is called Suchness or Thusness. We are now in a position to explain the Theory of Causation by Thusness. Thusness in its static sense is spaceless, timeless, all-equal, without beginning or end, formless, colorless, because the thing itself without its manifestation cannot be sensed or described. Thusness in its dynamic sense can assume any form; when driven by a pure cause it takes a lofty form; when driven by a tainted cause it takes a depraved form. Thusness, therefore, is of two states. The one is the Thusness itself; the other is its manifestation, its state of life and death. *The Fourth Category Is the "Causation by the Universal Principle"*: Dharmadhatu means the elements of the principle and has two aspects: the state of Thusness or noumenon and the world of

phenomenal manifestation. In this causation theory it is usually used in the latter sense, but in speaking of the ideal world as realized, the former sense is to be applied. Buddhism holds that nothing was created singly or individually. All things in the universe, matter and mind, arose simultaneously, all things in it depending upon one another, the influence of each mutually permeating and thereby making a universal symphony of harmonious totality. If one item were lacking, the universe would not be complete; without the rest, one item cannot be. When the whole cosmos arrives at a harmony of perfection, it is called the 'Universe One and True,' or the 'Lotus Store.' In this ideal universe all beings will be in perfect harmony, each finding no obstruction in the existence and activity of another. Although the idea of the interdependence and simultaneous rise of all things is called the Theory of Universal Causation, the nature of the rise being universal, it is rather a philosophy of the totality of all existence than a philosophy of origination.

Chapter Seventeen

To Have Faith in the Correct View Of the Twelve Links of Causation Also Means Seeing the Way

I. An Overview of the Dependent Origination In Buddhist Teachings:

According to the Buddha, a cause refers to the cause you have planted, from which you reap a corresponding result without any exception. If you plant a good cause, you will get a good result. And if you plant a bad cause, you will obtain a bad result. So if you plant a certain cause with other conditions assemble, a certain retribution or result is brought about without any exception. The Buddha taught: “Because of a concatenation of causal chains there is birth, there is disappearance.” Cause and effect in Buddhism are not a matter of belief or disbelief. Even though you don’t believe in “cause and effect,” they just operate the way they are suppose to operate. The cause is the seed, what contributes to its growth is the conditions. Planting a seed in the ground is a cause. Conditions are aiding factors which contribute to the growth such as soil, water, sunlight, fertilizer, and the care of the gardener, etc. According to Buddhism, human beings and all living things are self-created or self-creating. The universe is not homocentric; it is a co-creation of all beings. Buddhism does not believe that all things came from one cause, but holds that everything is inevitably created out of more than two causes. The creations or becomings of the antecedent causes continue in time-series, past, present and future, like a chain. This chain is divided into twelve divisions and is called the Twelve Divisioned Cycle of Causation and Becomings. Since these divisions are interdependent, the process is called Dependent Production or Chain of causation. The formula of this theory is as follows: From the existence of this, that becomes; from the happening of this, that happens. From the non-existence of this, that does not become; from the non-happening of this, that does not happen.

According to the Majjhima Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Depending on the oil and wick does the light of the lamp burn; it is neither in the one, nor in the other, nor anything in itself; phenomena are, likewise, nothing in themselves. So do we, we do not exist accidentally, but exist and live by means of this Law. As soon as we realize this fact, we become aware of our firm foundation and set our minds at ease. Far from being capricious, this foundation rests on the Law, with which nothing can compare firmness. This assurance is the source of the great peace of mind that is not agitated by anything. It is the Law that imparts life of all of us. The Law is not something cold but is full of vigor and vivid with life. All things are unreal; they are deceptions; Nirvana is the only truth.” Dependent origination means that all phenomena are produced and annihilated by causation. This term indicates the following: a thing arises from or is produced through the agency of a condition or a secondary cause. A thing does not take form unless there is an appropriate condition. This truth applies to all existence and all phenomena in the universe. The Buddha intuitively perceived this so profoundly that even modern science cannot probe further. When we look carefully at things around us, we find that water, stone, and even human beings are produced each according to a certain pattern with its own individual character. Through what power or direction are the conditions generated that produce various things in perfect order from such an amorphous energy as “sunyata?” When we consider this regularity and order, we cannot help admitting that some rule exists. It is the rule that causes all things exist. This indeed is the Law taught by the Buddha.

II. To Have Faith in the Correct View of Functions of the Twelve Links of Causation Also Means Seeing the Way:

An Overview of the Twelve Conditions of Cause-and-Effect: We do not exist accidentally, but exist and live by means of this Law. As soon as we realize this fact, we become aware of our firm foundation and set our minds at ease. Far from being capricious, this foundation rests on the Law, with which nothing can compare firmness. This assurance is the source of the great peace of mind that is not agitated by anything. It is the Law that imparts life of all of us. The Law is not something cold but is full of vigor and vivid with life. All things in the phenomenal

world are brought into being by the combination of various causes and conditions (twelve links of Dependent Origination), they are relative and without substantiality or self-entity. The twelve links of causes and effects are one of the basic teachings of Buddhism; the twelve links of causes and effects which explain the samsaric state of sentient beings' birth and death. The twelve links of "Cause and Effect" or "Karmic Causality" include: ignorance (unenlightenment), action (moving, activity, conception, disposition), consciousness, name and form, six organs (mắt, tai mũi, lưỡi, thân, ý/eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, contact (touch), feeling or perception (sensation), thirst (desire or craving or attachment), grasping (laying hold of), being (existing or owning or possessing), birth, old age, illness and death. Because of ignorance, the mind is moved. This Moving is the second link. If the mind is moved, it will move everything. So everything else comes into being due to that initial Moving. Subsequent to this Moving, the third link of Consciousness arises. Owing to the consciousness wrong views arise, that's the fourth link. Because of the wrong views, arising the fifth link of Form and Name. Form (visible), Name (invisible) combine themselves together to form everything else and of course there arises the Six Roots or Six Senses. When the six senses come into contact with the internal and external, the sixth link of Contact arises. After the arising of Contact, Perception or Feeling is brought forth. When happiness, unhappiness, anger, love, jealousy, etc are all perceived, the eighth link of attachment arises. When we attached to our perceptions, we have a tendency to grasp on whatever we have. It's very difficult to detach ourselves from them, the ninth link of Grasping arises. We always grasp our feelings very strongly and never let go what we grasp in hands, the tenth link of Owning or Possessing arises to bind us tightly with the samsara. Subsequent to Owning, there will arise Birth (the eleventh link), Old Age, Illness and Death (the twelfth link).

A Summary of Functions of the Twelve Links of Causation: The First Link Is Ignorance: The Sanskrit term Avidya means ignorance, stupidity, or unenlightenment. Avidya also means misunderstanding, being dull-witted ignorant, not conforming to the truth, not bright, dubious, blind, dark. Avidya also means being dull-witted ignorant not knowing the four noble truths, not knowing sufferings, the causes of sufferings, the mental state after severing sufferings, and the way to

sever sufferings. *The Second Link Is Volitional Actions:* Through ignorance are conditioned volitional actions. Ignorance which mistakes the illusory phenomena of this world for realities. With ignorance, there is activity, and then there is manifestation. With manifestation, there is consciousness. Acting from ignorance would result in bad or favorable karma which is conducive to reincarnation or liberation. *The Third Link Is Consciousness:* Through volitional actions is conditioned consciousness. Consciousness refers to discrimination. Activity refers to conditioned dharmas. When conditioned dharmas arise, thoughts of discrimination arise. With thoughts of discrimination, lots of troubles also arise. Vijnana means consciousness. If not liberated yet, after death, the body decays, but the subject's knowledge commonly called soul follows its reincarnation course in accordance with the three karmas of body, speech and mind. Only when his knowledge gains the status of purification, then he would be liberated from reincarnation. *The Fourth Link Is Name and Form:* Through consciousness are conditioned name and form. After birth, thanks to his consciousness, the subject recognizes that he now has a name and a form (body). Through name and form are conditioned the six senses-organs. Name and form are the trouble in life. Name brings the trouble of name, and form brings the trouble of form. In this life, name and form are the trouble, and the trouble is name and form. *The Fifth Link Is the Six Entrances:* The six sense organs (eye with form, ear with sound, nose with scent, tongue with taste, body with texture, mind with mental object). He is now has five senses and mind to get in touch with respective counterparts. Through the six senses-organs is conditioned contact. The six sense organs come about because we wish to understand things; that is why the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind arise. Why do the six sense organs come into being? Because of the desire to understand. However, who would have known that the more we try to understand, the more muddled we get. The more muddled we become, the less we understand. *The Sixth Link Is Contact:* Contact develops after the six senses-organs are made. Through contact is conditioned feeling. Contact refers to touching or encountering. When we do not understand, we go seeking everywhere just like a fly that keeps bumping into the wall. Why do we seek encounters? Because of our desire to understand. *The Seventh Link Is*

Feeling: Contact provokes all kinds of feelings, feelings of joy, sadness, pleasure or pain. Through feeling is conditioned craving. After we touch something, there is feeling. Before we run into difficulties, we feel very comfortable. Once we encounter difficulties, we feel very uncomfortable. When no one criticizes us, we feel very happy. But if anyone says something bad about us, we get upset. That is feeling. *The Eighth Link Is Love:* From the feeling of joy and pleasure, the subject tends to prolong it as much as possible. Through craving conditioned clinging. When we have feelings, love and attachment arise. Why do people feel insecure? It is because of love. Once there is love, there is also hatred, or detestation. We like and cling to favorable situations, but detest adverse states. Why do we feel happy? And why do we feel unhappy? It is because we have feelings of love and hate. Hate refers to dislike and loathing. Because of these, our troubles increase day after day. *The Ninth Link Is Clinging:* He becomes attached to what he likes or desires. Through clinging is conditioned the process of becoming. When we see something we like, we want to grasp it. What is grasping? It is the action motivated by the wish to obtain something. Because you are fond of something, you wish to obtain it. Once we obtain something, we have satisfied our desire. Why do we want to fulfill our desire? It is because we want to possess things. *The Tenth Link Is Possession:* With that wish for possession, “becoming” occurs. Driven by his desires, the subject tries to take in possession of what he wants such as money, houses, fame, honor, etc. Through the process of becoming is conditioned birth. Because of becoming, we want to possess things. *The Eleventh Link Is Birth:* Once we want to possess things, there is birth into the next life. Thus, craving, clinging and becoming make up the present causes which will accompany the subject in his birth. *The Twelfth Link Is Old Age and Death:* Through birth are conditioned decay, sorrow and death. In his new life, he will become old and die as every being does.

To Have Faith in the Correct View of Functions of the Twelve Links of Causation Also Means Seeing the Way: As mentioned in previous chapters, according to Buddhist point of view, it means insight, penetrative understanding, or seeing beneath the surface of things, etc., under the lens of the Four Noble Truths, Interdependent origination, impermanence, impersonality, and so forth. In Buddhist

teachings, right view on the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination means to see and understand the chains linking from ignorance to old age and death that are inherent in life and giving rise to human suffering. In other words, those who have correct views on the twelve links of causation also means seeing the core of Buddhist teachings. Dependent on Ignorance arises Conditioning Activities (ignorance gives rise to actions). Activities arises Relinking Consciousness (Actions give rise to consciousness). Dependent on Relinking Consciousness arises Mind and Matter (consciousness gives rise to form name). Dependent on Mind and Matter arises the Six Spheres of Sense (form name gives rise to six entrances). Dependent on the Six Spheres of Sense arises Contact (six entrances give rise to interactions). Dependent on Contact arises Feeling. Dependent on Feeling arises Craving. Dependent on Craving arises Grasping (love gives rise to possessiveness). Dependent on Grasping arises Becoming (possessiveness gives rise to existence). Dependent on Becoming arises Birth (existence gives rise to birth). Dependent on Birth arises Old Age and Sorrow (birth gives rise to old age and sufferings). Dependent on Old Age and Sorrow arises Death (old age and sufferings give rise to death). The Buddha Taught That the Eradication of Ignorance Also Meant to Stop the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination. The Buddha taught: "Because of a concatenation of causal chains there is birth, there is disappearance." Buddhism holds that nothing was created singly or individually. All things in the universe, matter and mind, arose simultaneously, all things in it depending upon one another, the influence of each mutually permeating and thereby making a universal symphony of harmonious totality. If one item were lacking, the universe would not be complete; without the rest, one item cannot be. The twelve causes or twelve links of dependent origination teaches that all phenomena in this world constantly change, appearing and disappearing, and that all changes are based on an established rule. Though all things change, this rule is immutable. This indeed is the Law taught by the Buddha. We do not exist accidentally, but exist and live by means of this Law. As soon as we realize this fact, we become aware of our firm foundation and set our minds at ease. Far from being capricious, this foundation rests on the Law, with which nothing can compare firmness. This assurance is the source of the great peace of

mind that is not agitated by anything. It is the Law that imparts life of all of us. The Law is not something cold but is full of vigor and vivid with life.

According to the Sutra on Right view (Samma-ditthi-sutta (p)--Samyag-drsti-sutra (skt)), everything arises from conditions and not being spontaneous and self-contained has no separate and independent nature. According to Buddhism, human beings and all living things are self-created or self-creating. The universe is not homocentric; it is a co-creation of all beings. Buddhism does not believe that all things came from one cause, but holds that everything is inevitably created out of more than two causes. The creations or becomings of the antecedent causes continue in time-series, past, present and future, like a chain. This chain is divided into twelve divisions and is called the Twelve Divisioned Cycle of Causation and Becomings. Since these divisions are interdependent, the process is called Dependent Production or Chain of causation. The formula of this theory is as follows: From the existence of this, that becomes; from the happening of this, that happens. From the non-existence of this, that does not become; from the non-happening of this, that does not happen. The twelve links of causes and effects are one of the basic teachings of Buddhism; the twelve links of causes and effects which explain the samsaric state of sentient beings' birth and death. The twelve links of "Cause and Effect" or "Karmic Causality" include: ignorance (unenlightenment), action (moving, activity, conception, disposition), consciousness, name and form, six organs (mắt, tai mõi, lỗĩ, thân, ý/eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, contact (touch), feeling or perception (sensation), thirst (desire or craving or attachment), grasping (laying hold of), being (existing or owning or possessing), birth, old age, illness and death. Because of ignorance, the mind is moved. This Moving is the second link. If the mind is moved, it will move everything. So everything else comes into being due to that initial Moving. Subsequent to this Moving, the third link of Consciousness arises. Owing to the consciousness wrong views arise, that's the fourth link. Because of the wrong views, arising the fifth link of Form and Name. Form (visible), Name (invisible) combine themselves together to form everything else and of course there arises the Six Roots or Six Senses. When the six senses come into contact with the internal and external, the sixth link of

Contact arises. After the arising of Contact, Perception or Feeling is brought forth. When happiness, unhappiness, anger, love, jealousy, etc are all perceived, the eighth link of attachment arises. When we are attached to our perceptions, we have a tendency to grasp on whatever we have. It's very difficult to detach ourselves from them, the ninth link of Grasping arises. We always grasp our feelings very strongly and never let go of what we grasp in hands, the tenth link of Owning or Possessing arises to bind us tightly with the samsara. Subsequent to Owning, there will arise Birth (the eleventh link), Old Age, Illness and Death (the twelfth link).

The Law of Dependent Origination is one of the most important teachings of the Buddha. This Law emphasizes an important principle that all phenomena in the universe are relative, conditioned states and do not arise independently of supportive conditions. Therefore, all things in the phenomenal world are brought into being by the combination of various causes and conditions (twelve links of Dependent Origination), they are relative and without substantiality or self-identity. In the Buddhist view, nothing in the world can exist alone; it must depend on others to maintain its presence. With regard to sentient being, especially human life, it is composed of twelve links in the chain of Dependent Origination from the past to the present and future. To understand the mechanism of birth, death, and reincarnation in this world, Buddhists should read and try to grasp the method of breaking this chain of Dependent Origination. The cause is the primary force that produces an effect. The condition is something indispensable to the production of effect. For instance, if we grow beans, we will harvest beans, but first we must have bean seeds and sow them in the soil. With sunlight, rain, watering, fertilizers and care, the seed will grow, become a plant and finally produce beans. The seed is the cause; the soil, sunlight, and water are the conditions. Cause combined with conditions give effect. In Buddhist view, a unique cause cannot produce anything. It should be combined with some conditions to create effect. Therefore, we can conclude that all living beings and things in the universe are interrelated in order to come into being. This is a "must." The twelve nidanas is the twelve links of Dependent Origination or the twelve links in the chain of existence. Conditioned arising or interdependent arising. All psychological and physical

phenomena constituting individual existence are interdependent and mutually condition each other. This is the twelve-link chain which entangles sentient beings in samsara. Twenty-five centuries ago, the Buddha said: "Humanity and the world are the cause and conditions to be linked and to become." His words have denied the presence of a Creator or God. They give us a scientific and objective outlook of the present world, related to the law of Conditioning. It means that everything is dependent upon conditions to come into being or survive. In other words, there is nothing that can be self-creating and self-existing, independent from others. All sentient beings, objects, elements, etc., in this world are determined by the law of conditioning, under the form of formation, stabilization, deterioration, and annihilation. Man is a small cosmos. He comes into being not by himself but by the activation of the law of transformation. The meaning of the Twelve Conditions of Cause-and-Effect are extremely deep and profound. They are important doors for cultivators to step into the realm of enlightenment, liberation from the cycle of birth, death, bondage, sufferings, and afflictions from the three worlds and six paths, and to attain Pratyeka-Buddhahood.

Buddhism believes that *Dependent on Ignorance arises Conditioning Activities (ignorance gives rise to actions)*: Ignorance (stupidity or darkness) develops into various crazy, chaotic, and delusional conducts and practices. *Dependent on Conditioning Activities arises Relinking Consciousness (Actions give rise to consciousness)*: Improper and delusional actions of body, speech, and mind give rise to a consciousness filled with discriminations of right, wrong, etc. *Dependent on Relinking Consciousness arises Mind and Matter (consciousness gives rise to form name)*: It is to say, consciousness (false discriminations) leads to having a physical body or form-name. *Dependent on Mind and Matter arises the Six Spheres of Sense (form name gives rise to six entrances)*: It is to say, the physical body gives birth to the six entrances of sight, hearing, scent, taste, body, and mind. *Dependent on the Six Spheres of Sense arises Contact (six entrances give rise to interactions)*: It is to say six entrances give rise to interactions, or the impure six faculties will breed attachments and wanting to connect with the six elements of form, sound, fragrance, flavor, touch, and dharma, such as sexual intimacies between a man

and a woman. *Dependent on Contact arises Feeling*: Interaction gives rise to reception, which means attachments and interactions with these elements breed yearnings to receive them, such as sight yearn for beautiful forms, taste yearn for great delicacies, etc. *Dependent on Feeling arises Craving*: In other words, reception gives rise to love. It is to say, having received and accepted such pleasures gives rise to love, fondness, etc. *Dependent on Craving arises Grasping (love gives rise to possessiveness)*: It is to say, love gives rise to covetousness, fixation, unwilling to let go. *Dependent on Grasping arises Becoming (possessiveness gives rise to existence)*: It is to say, from being possessive gives rise to the characteristic of private existence by discriminating what is 'mine' and what is not 'mine,' or everything is mine and nothing is yours, etc. *Dependent on Becoming arises Birth (existence gives rise to birth)*: It is to say, having the concept of private existence gives rise to rebirth, which is to change lives, and continue drowning in the cycle of birth and death in the three worlds and six realms as a sentient being. *Dependent on Birth arises Old Age and Sorrow (birth gives rise to old age and sufferings)*: It is to say, if there is birth, then there has to be a physical body of impermanence, and naturally, there is also old age and sufferings. *Dependent on Old Age and Sorrow arises Death (old age and sufferings give rise to death)*: It is to say, if there are old age and sufferings, there is eventually death

The Buddha taught that the eradication of ignorance also meant to stop the twelve links of dependent origination. In order to eradicate ignorance, we must go back to the past and observe the first step of the conditioning process and study how the twelve links operate in the past, present and future. However, as ordinary people, our level of understanding and practicing dharmas is still low; therefore, we cannot apply the first method of eradicating ignorance at the root like Bodhisattvas and Becoming-Buddhas, but we can do it by eradicating desire, clinging, and becoming. Therefore, we must keep from manifesting any strong desire, covetousness for acquisition. Without such a desire, we will be freed from clinging. If we are not attached to anything, we will be liberated from the cycle of birth and death. ***The Buddha conclusion about Nidana***: If a seed does not germinate, a shoot will not rise, and if a shoot does not rise, then there will be no plant. And if there is no plant, there won't be any leaves and branches.

The cessation of ignorance leads to the cessation of Conditioning Activities: When Ignorance is extinguished, Action is extinguished. It is to say, if ignorance ceases then all the false and mistaken conducts and practices will not transpire. *The cessation of Conditioning Activities leads to the cessation of relinking-Consciousness:* When Action is extinguished, Consciousness is extinguished. It is to say, if the improper and delusional actions of body, speech, and mind no longer exist, then the various consciousnesses filled with discriminations will also cease. *The cessation of Relinking-Consciousness leads to the cessation of Mind and Matter:* When consciousness is extinguished, form name is extinguished. It is to say, if the consciousness of false and mistaken discriminations of right and wrong is no longer born, then there will not be a body of form name (there is no reincarnation or rebirth). *The cessation of Mind and Matter leads to the cessation of the Six Spheres of Sense:* When form name is extinguished, the six entrances are extinguished. It is to say, if the body of form-name does not exist, then the six entrances of sight, hearing, smell, taste, body, and mind cannot exist. *The cessation of the Six Spheres of Sense leads to the cessation of Contact:* When the six entrances are extinguished, interactions are extinguished. In other words, if the impure body of six faculties does not exist, then the matter of lusts, attachments, and intimacies between men and women, and the desires for the six elements of form, sound, fragrance, flavor, touch, and dharma will also cease. *The cessation of Contact leads to the cessation of Feeling:* When interaction is extinguished, reception is extinguished. In other words, if there are no interactions and no connections, then there is no acceptance and reception. *The cessation of Feeling leads to the cessation of Craving:* When reception is extinguished, love is extinguished. In other words, if acceptance and reception do not occur, then there is no love, fondness, or yearning, etc. *The cessation of Craving leads to the cessation of Grasping:* When love is extinguished, possessiveness is extinguished. That is to say, if love and fondness do not rise, then there is no covetousness, fixation, or the unwillingness to let go, etc. *The cessation of Grasping leads to the cessation of Becoming:* When possessiveness is extinguished, existence is extinguished. In other words, if the characteristic of private existence and the possessive nature do not exist, then there is no separation of

what belongs to me, and what belongs to others. *The cessation of Becoming leads to the cessation of Birth:* When existence is extinguished, rebirth is extinguished. This means, if the ideas of what's mine and what's yours cease, then there is no more rebirth and reincarnation. *The cessation of Birth leads to the cessation of Old Age, Sickness and Sorrow:* When birth is extinguished, old age, sickness, and sorrow are also extinguished. In other words, if there is no birth, which means there is no physical body of impermanence, then there is no old age, sickness, and pain. The cessation of Birth also leads to the cessation of Old Age, Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief, and Despair.

Chapter Eighteen

Devout Practitioners Should Always Have A Firm Faith In Right Efforts to Break the False and Manifest the Right

I. An Overview of Right Efforts In Buddhist Teachings:

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

of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. *Fourth, endeavor to eliminate already-formed evil:* Effort to eliminate sins already arisen. Putting an end to existing evil, or to abandon demerit when it arises. To remove any evil as soon as it starts. Here a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen. For those who practice the Bodhisattva Way, they always try to try to maintain these right efforts to break the false and make manifest the right on which the first steps should be trying to eliminate wrong views at the same time to accomplish right views.

II. Buddhist Practitioners Should Always Have Faith In Right Efforts to Break the False and Manifest the Right:

According to Buddhist point of view, practitioners should have insight, penetrative understanding, or seeing beneath the surface of things, etc., under the lens of main teachings in Buddhism, i.e., the Four Noble Truths, the law of cause and effect, karma and retribution, sufferings, impermanence, impersonality, and so forth. And at the same time, should try their best to eliminate all wrong views in order to obtain a life of peace, mindfulness and happiness; and enlightenment and emancipation in cultivation. Besides, practitioners should also have a firm faith in breaking the false and manifesting the right. Refutation is necessary to save all sentient beings who are drowned in the sea of attachment while elucidation is also important in order to propagate the teaching of the Buddha. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas save all sentient beings by “Breaking (disproving) the false and making manifest the right.” According to the Madhyamika School, the doctrine of the school has three main aspects, the first aspect is the “refutation itself of a wrong view, at the same time, the elucidation of a right view.” ***First, refutation of all wrong views:*** Refutation means to refute all views based on attachment. Also views such as the ‘self’ or atman, the theory of Brahmanic philosophers. The pluralistic doctrines of the Buddhist

Abhidharma schools (Vaibhasika, Kosa, etc) and the dogmatic principles of Mahayana teachers are never passed without a detailed refutation. The Realistic or all exists, and the Nihilistic or nothing exists are equally condemned. *Second, elucidation of a right view:* According to Prof. Takakusu in The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy, the Madhyamika School strongly believed that the truth can be attained only by negation or refutation of wrong views within and without Buddhism, and of errors of both the Great and Small Vehicles. When retaining wrong views or error, one will be blind to reason. How can a blind man get a right view without which the two extremes can never be avoided? The end of verbal refutation is the dawn of the Middle Path. Refutation and refutation only, can lead to the ultimate truth. The Middle Path, which is devoid of name and character is really the way of elucidation of a right view.

We, Buddhist practitioners should try to see the real nature of all wrong views before being able to eliminate them. To be able to do this also means we push away great obstacles on our own path of cultivation. This is one of the most wonderful methods for practitioners. Some individuals cultivate without meditating on the Self-Nature. They just chase after externals or seek fame and profit, clinging to the fortunate circumstances of the present time, or they seek the fruits of future merits and blessings. In life there are cultivators who cultivate only according to the "Practice form characteristics," refusing to reflect internally to "Examine the True Nature." This is truly the way of cultivation of the majority of cultivators, lay and clergy, develop their minds in the present day Dharma Ending Age. They are everywhere similar to the abundance of sands of the Ganges. Buddhist practitioners should always remember that right understanding alone removes these illusions and helps man to cognize the real nature that underlies all appearance. It is only when man comes out of this cloud of illusions and perversions that he shines with true wisdom like the full moon that emerges brilliant from behind a black cloud.

Chapter Nineteen

Devout Buddhist Should Never Harbor Superstitions & Dead Buddhism

(A) Devout Buddhist Should Never Harbor Superstitions

I. An Overview of Right Faith & Superstitions in Buddhist Point of View:

Right or Correct Belief or faith should serve as the foundation, one of the five roots or organs producing a sound moral life. Faith plays an extremely important role in Buddhism. It is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharmas (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). The mind of faith. Correct Faith in a religion, unlike intellectual learning, does not enable a believer to have the power to save others as well as himself if he understands it only in theory. When he believe from the depths of his heart, his belief produces power. His faith cannot be said to be true until he attains such a mental state. Meanwhile, superstition is a wrong belief or rite unreasoningly upheld by faith such as venerating the head of tiger, and buffalo, the snake and centipede deities, the Lares, consulting fortuneteller, reading the horoscope, etc. Buddhism means wisdom, therefore, Buddhism never accept superstitions; however, superstitious beliefs and rituals are adopted to decorate a religion in order to attract the multitude. But after some time, the creeper which is planted to decorate the shrine outgrows and outshines the shrine, with the result that religious tenets are relegated to be the background and superstitious beliefs and rituals become predominant. Superstition also means to believe that the nature of images or statues is vivified into godship. Devout Buddhists should always remember that from the beginning, the Buddha condemned the observance of ceremonies and other external practices, which only tend to increase our spiritual blindness and our clinging to more superstitions.

II. Devout Buddhists Should Firmly Refuse & Never Harbor Superstitions:

As mentioned above, superstition is a wrong belief or rite unreasoningly upheld by faith such as venerating the head of tiger, and buffalo, the snake and centipede deities, the Lares, consulting fortuneteller, reading the horoscope, etc. Devout Buddhists should firmly refuse and never harbor superstitions. As a matter of fact, Buddhism does not accept such practices as fortune telling, wearing magic charms for protection, fixing lucky sites for building, prophessing and fixing lucky days, etc. Thus, devout Buddhists firmly refuse these kinds of superstitions. All these practices are considered useless superstitions in Buddhism. However, because of greed, fear and ignorance, some Buddhists still try to stick to these superstitious practices. According to Buddhism, superstition is one of the biggest demonic obstructions for Buddhists on their paths of cultivation. As soon as people understand the Buddha's teachings, they realize that a pure heart can protect them much better than empty words of fortune telling, or wearing nonsense charms, or ambiguous chanted words and they are no longer rely on such meaningless things. In the noble teachings of the Buddha, it is honesty, kindness, understanding, patience, generosity, forgiveness, loyalty and other good qualities that truly protect us and give us true happiness and prosperity. Strange principles and unorthodox theories. Belief or rite unreasoningly upheld by faith such as venerating the head of tiger, and buffalo, the snake and centipede deities, the Lares, consulting fortuneteller, reading the horoscope, etc., don't belong to the Buddhist teachings. Buddhism means wisdom. And, Buddhism never accept superstitions; however, superstitious beliefs and rituals are adopted to decorate a religion in order to attract the multitude. But, after some time, the creeper which is planted to decorate the shrine outgrows and outshines the shrine, with the result that religious tenets are relegated to the background and superstitious beliefs and rituals become predominant. With Buddhism, to believe religion without understanding it thoroughly, it's a blind faith, or it's not different from superstition. Even though understanding but understanding without finding to see if it's right or wrong, in

accordance or not in accordance with truth, with reality, it's also a form of superstition or wrong belief. Believe that when you sow a seed of hot-pepper, you will have a hot-pepper tree and eventually you will reap hot-pepper fruit. However, even though you have already sown the seed of hot-pepper, but you realize that you don't like to eat fruit that is hot, you stop fertilizing and watering the hot-pepper tree, the tree will wither and die, and will not produce any fruit. Similarly, if you know an action is bad and unwholesome, you refuse to act, of course you will not receive any bad or unwholesome consequence. The Buddha refuses to believe that whatever happens to a person, either good or bad, is due to chance, fate or fortune. Everything that happens has a specific cause or causes and there must be some tight relationships between the cause and the effect. Those who want to believe in Buddhism should not rush to become a Buddhist with the wrong understanding or blind belief in Buddhism. You should take your time to do more researches, to ask questions, and to consider carefully before making your final decision. Religions that worship god have always considered reason and wisdom as the enemy of faith and dogma for them there exist only "believe" or "not believe" and nothing else. In fact, if we accept that there exists a so-called almighty god, we cannot accept any of the findings of modern science; neither Darwin's science of biological evolution nor the theories of the nature and evolution of the universe coming from modern physics. They believe that a so-called creator god invented humankind and the universe all at once and that these three realms of god, man and universe, all are separate. However, modern science agrees with what the Buddha taught almost twenty-six centuries ago, and proves that the universe as one infinite process of change. Furthermore, the belief of salvation by god caused a serious danger to the whole world, especially from the first century to the end of the nineteenth century, for those who believe in the salvation of god believe that they must impose salvation on others. For this reason, Catholic countries sent their troops and priests all over the world to save others by force. And as a result, millions of people got killed or slaughtered and subjugated in the name of god. Buddhism is in contrast with other religions that believe in god. Buddhism teaches that one must develop wisdom. However, wisdom in Buddhism is not simply believing in what we are told or taught. True

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

***(B) Devout Buddhists Firmly Denounce &
Never Harbor the Kind of Dead Buddhism***

Dead Buddhism is a kind of Buddhism with its superfluous organizations, classical rituals, multi-level offerings, dangling and incomprehensible sutras written in strange languages which puzzle the young people. In their view the Buddhist pagoda is a nursing home, a place especially reserved for the elderly, those who lack self-

confidence or who are superstitious. Furthermore, there exists a dead Buddhism when the Buddhadharmā is only in talking, not in practice. It's not enough to say that we believe in the Buddha; it's better not to know the Buddhadharmā than knowing it only for talking. Time flies really fast like a flying arrow, and days and months fly by like a shuttlecock. The water waves follow one after another. Life is passing quickly in the same manner. Impermanence avoids nobody, youth is followed by old age moment after moment, and we gradually return to the decay and extinction of old age and death, leaving no trace or shadow. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that if we merely believe in Buddhism without practicing, it's no better than believing in a dead Buddhism. It's like going into a restaurant and reading the menu to enjoy ourselves without ordering any food for eating. It does not benefit us in the least. Thus, we should always bear in mind that if the Way is not put in practice, it's a dead or dead-end Way; if the virtue is not achieved by cultivating, it's not a real virtue. **For these above reasons, devout Buddhists firmly determine not only not to ignorantly follow Dead Buddhism, but also should firmly refuse and never harbor this kind of Dead Buddhism!**

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benefit us in the least. Thus, we should always bear in mind that if the Way is not put in practice, it's a dead or dead-end Way; if the virtue is not achieved by cultivating, it's not a real virtue.

Even though the Buddha is dead but 2,500 years later his teachings still help and save a lot of people, his example still inspires people, his words still continue to change lives. Only a Buddha could have such power centuries after his death. The Buddha did not claim that he was a god, the child of god or even the messenger from a god. He was simply a man who perfected himself and taught that if we followed his example, we could perfect ourselves also. He never asked his followers to worship him as a god. In fact, He prohibited his followers to praise him as a god, for in doing this Buddhism is no different from a kind of Dead Buddhism. He told his followers that he could not give favours or blessings to those who worship him with personal expectations or calamities to those who don't worship him. He asked his followers to respect him as students respect their teacher. He also reminded his followers to worship a statue of the Buddha means to remind ourselves to try to develop peace and love within ourselves. The perfume of incense reminds us of the pervading influence of virtue, the lamp reminds us of the light of knowledge and the followers which soon fade and die, remind us of impermanence. When we bow, we express our gratitude to the Buddha for what his teachings have given us. This is the core nature of Buddhist worship. A lot of people have misunderstood the meaning of "worship" in Buddhism, even devout Buddhists. Buddhists do not believe that the Buddha is a god, so in no way they could possibly believe that a piece of wood or metal (statue) is a god. In Buddhism, the statue of the Buddha is used to symbolize human perfection. The statue of the Buddha also reminds us of the human dimension in Buddhist teaching, the fact that Buddhism is man-centered, not god-centered, that we must look inward (within) not outward (without) to find perfection and understanding. So in no way one can say that Buddhists worship god or idols. In fact, a long long time ago, when primitive man found himself in a dangerous and hostile situations, the fear of wild animals, of not being able to find enough food, of diseases, and of natural calamities or phenomena such as storms, hurricanes, volcanoes, thunder, and lightning, etc. He found no security in his surroundings and he had no ability to explain those

phenomena, therefore, he created the idea of gods in order to give him comfort in good times, and courage him in times of danger and consolation when things went wrong. They believed that god arranged everything. Generations after generations, man continues to follow his ancestors in a so-called “faith in god” without any further thinkings. Some says they believe in god because god responds to their prayers when they feel fear or frustration. Some say they believe in god because their parents and grandparents believed in god. Some others say that they prefer to go to church than to temple because those who go to churches seem richer and more honorable than those who go to temples, and so on, and so on.

Dead Buddhism appears at temples where there are no monks and nuns who try to cultivate to break or disprove the false and make manifest the right. For Buddhism, refutation is necessary to save all sentient beings who are drowned in the sea of attachment while elucidation is also important in order to propagate the teaching of the Buddha. Buddhists should always remember that the truth can be attained only by negation or refutation of wrong views within and without Buddhism, and of errors of followers of Dead Buddhism. When retaining wrong views or error, one will be blind to reason. How can a blind man get a right view without which the two extremes can never be avoided? The end of verbal refutation is the dawn of the Middle Path. Refutation and refutation only, can lead to the ultimate truth. The Middel Path, which is devoid of name and character is really the way of elucidation of a right view.

Dead Buddhism appears at temples where there are no monks and nuns who try to cultivate with six necessary points of reverent harmony or unity in a monastery or convent. According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta and Sangiti Sutta, there are six points of reverent harmony or unity in a monastery or convent or Sixfold rules of conduct for monks and nuns in a monastery. *First, Precept Concord:* Moral unity in observing the commandments (Always observing precepts together). A monk who, in public and in private, keeps persistently, unbroken and unaltered those rules of conduct that are spotless, leading to liberation, praised by the wise, unstained and conducive to concentration. *Second, Living Concord:* Bodily unity in form of worship (Always living together in peace). A monk who, in public and in private, shows loving-

kindness to their fellows in acts of body. *Third, Idea Concord:* Doctrinal unity in views and explanations (Always discussing and absorbing the dharma together). A monk who, in public and in private, continues in that noble view that leads to liberation, to the utter destruction of suffering. *Fourth, Beneficial Concord:* Economic unity in community of goods, deeds, studies or charity. They share with their virtuous fellows whatever they receive as a rightful gift, including the contents of their alms-bowls, which they do not keep to themselves. *Fifth, Speech Concord:* Oral unity in chanting (never arguing). A monk who, in public and in private, shows loving-kindness to their fellows in acts of speech. *Sixth, Thinking Concord:* Mental unity in faith (Always being happy). A monk who, in public or in private, shows loving-kindness to their fellows in acts of thought.

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

The worst thing is that we can become followers of a dead Buddhism with innumerable superstitions. This type of Dead Buddhism appears at temples where monks and nuns allow such practices as fortune telling, wearing magic charms for protection, fixing lucky sites for building, prophessing and fixing lucky days, etc., for Buddhism never accepts these practices of superstitions. All these practices are considered useless superstitions in Buddhism. However, because of greed, fear and ignorance, some Buddhists still try to stick to these superstitious practices. As soon as people understand the Buddha's teachings, they realize that a pure heart can protect them much better than empty words of fortune telling, or wearing nonsense charms, or ambiguous chanted words and they are no longer rely on such meaningless things. In the noble teachings of the Buddha, it is honesty, kindness, understanding, patience, generosity, forgiveness, loyalty and

other good qualities that truly protect us and give us true happiness and prosperity. Strange principles and unorthodox theories. Belief or rite unreasonably upheld by faith such as venerating the head of tiger, and buffalo, the snake and centipede deities, the Lares, consulting fortuneteller, reading the horoscope, etc., don't belong to the Buddhist teachings. Buddhism means wisdom. And, Buddhism never accept superstitions; however, superstitious beliefs and rituals are adopted to decorate a religion in order to attract the multitude. But, after some time, the creeper which is planted to decorate the shrine outgrows and outshines the shrine, with the result that religious tenets are relegated to the background and superstitious beliefs and rituals become predominant. With Buddhism, to believe religion without understanding it thoroughly, it's a blind faith, or it's not different from superstition. Even though understanding but understanding without finding to see if it's right or wrong, in accordance or not in accordance with truth, with reality, it's also a form of superstition or wrong belief. Believe that when you sow a seed of hot-pepper, you will have a hot-pepper tree and eventually you will reap hot-pepper fruit. However, even though you have already sown the seed of hot-pepper, but you realize that you don't like to eat fruit that is hot, you stop fertilizing and watering the hot-pepper tree, the tree will wither and die, and will not produce any fruit. Similarly, if you know an action is bad and unwholesome, you refuse to act, of course you will not receive any bad or unwholesome consequence. The Buddha refuses to believe that whatever happens to a person, either good or bad, is due to chance, fate or fortune. Everything that happens has a specific cause or causes and there must be some tight relationships between the cause and the effect. Those who want to believe in Buddhism should not rush to become a Buddhist with the wrong understanding or blind belief in Buddhism. You should take your time to do more researches, to ask questions, and to consider carefully before making your final decision. Religions that worship god have always considered reason and wisdom as the enemy of faith and dogma for them there exist only "believe" or "not believe" and nothing else. In fact, if we accept that there exists a so-called almighty god, we cannot accept any of the findings of modern science; neither Darwin's science of biological evolution nor the theories of the nature and evolution of the universe coming from

modern physics. They believe that a so-called creator god invented humankind and the universe all at once and that these three realms of god, man and universe, all are separate. However, modern science agrees with what the Buddha taught almost twenty-six centuries ago, and proves that the universe as one infinite process of change. Furthermore, the belief of salvation by god caused a serious danger to the whole world, especially from the first century to the end of the nineteenth century, for those who believe in the salvation of god believe that they must impose salvation on others. For this reason, Catholic countries sent their troops and priests all over the world to save others by force. And as a result, millions of people got killed or slaughtered and subjugated in the name of god. Buddhism is in contrast with other religions that believe in god. Buddhism teaches that one must develop wisdom. However, wisdom in Buddhism is not simply believing in what we are told or taught. True wisdom is to directly see and understand for ourselves. With this wisdom, people will have an open mind that listens to others' points of view rather than being closed-minded; people will also carefully examine facts that contradicts their belief rather than blindly believing. Sincere Buddhists never believe in the law of eternity. The Buddha accepts the law of impermanence or change and denies the existence of eternal substances. Matter and spirit are false abstractions that, in reality, are only changing factors or dharmas which are connected and which arise in functional dependence on each other. Thus, Buddhist faith means that the devotee accepts the Buddha as a Teacher and a Guide, His doctrine as way of life, and the Sangha community as the exemplars of this way of life. According to Buddhist point of view in faith, everyone is completely free to make his own choice in faith, no one has the right to interfere with other people's choice. Let's take a close look in the Buddha's teaching in the Kalama Sutra: "Nothing should be accepted merely on the ground of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. Everything should be weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one's own true benefits. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected but left for further considerations." Therefore, we see clearly that Buddhism is based on personal experience, rationalism, practice, morality, and

insight. There is no need to propitiate gods or masters. Devout Buddhists should always remember that there is no blind adherence to a faith, rigid dogmas, rituals, holy scriptures, or myths. The Buddha always confirmed his disciples that a salvation can only be gained by man and by man only during his life without the least help from a so-called god or gods.

Although for the enlightened, delusions and enlightenment are not two (non-duality); delusions and enlightenment (delusion and awareness) are fundamentally the same. They are of the one Buddha-nature. They belong to the unity of all things. They are one and undivided truth, the Buddha-truth. They are the non-dual Truth represents No-Self and No-Dharma. However, for us, ordinary people, delusion is delusion and enlightenment is enlightenment. If we are not careful, we will soon become people with vain talk or diffusive trivial reasoning. Devout Buddhists should never idly talk on inconsequential topics only for amusement wastes our time and others' time. Buddhists should always remember that our present life and circumstances are the product of our past thoughts and actions, and in the same way our deeds in this life will fashion our future mode of existence. A karma can be created by body, speech, or mind. There are good karma, evil karma, and indifferent karma. All kinds of karma are accumulated by the Alayavijnana and Manas. Karma can be cultivated through religious practice (good), and uncultivated. For Sentient being has lived through innumerable reincarnations, each has boundless karma. Whatever kind of karma is, a result would be followed accordingly, sooner or later. No one can escape the result of his own karma. By understanding and believing in the law of causality, Buddhists, especially lay people, will not become superstitious, or alarmed, and rely passively on heaven authority. He knows that his life depends on his karmas. If he truly believes in such a causal mechanism, he strives to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If he continues to live a good life, devoting his time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings, he can eliminate all of his bad karmas. He knows that he is the only driving force of his success or failure, so he will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. He will put more effort into performing his duties satisfactorily.

Ralizing the value of the law of causality, he always cares for what he thinks, tells or does in order to avoid bad karma.

Truly speaking, not only Buddhists but the who world also are indebted to the Buddha for it is He who first showed the Way to free human beings from the coils of lush, anger, stupidity, arrogance, doubtness, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying... To Him, religion was not a bargain, but a Noble Way of life to gain enlightenment and liberation. When the Buddha said that life is an ocean of sufferings; he did not mean to draw a pessimistic picture of life; however, He wanted to explain clearly causes of sufferings and afflictions, then He showed us the Path of Elimination of Sufferings. Besides, each and every teachings of His, from Dharma, Four Noble Truths, Eight Noble Paths, Causes and Effects, Karmas and Retributions, Rebirth, and Egolessness, and so on, all of the above help creating a kind of Living Buddhism. If we, Buddhists, can enter and advance on the Path of Buddhism, not talking about becoming a Buddha, at the very moment, at least, we can reduce evil thoughts, selfishness, hatred, anger, jealousy, grudges, and ill-will. Furthermore, when advancing on this Path, we can reduce the bas effect of the bad karma that we committed in many aeons in the past, for this the Path that the Buddha advanced for overcoming the bad effects.

In short, devout Buddhists should never ignorantly follow a Dead Buddhism under any forms and there is not a doubt that Buddhism was a religion of the truth and a living philosophy more than 26 centuries ago. It's still now a religion of the truth and a living philosophy in this very century (the twenty-first century). Buddhism is in accord with all the progresses of nowadays science and it will always be in accord with science at all times. Its basic teachings of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, equanimity, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, as well as the basic five precepts of not killing, not stealing, not committing sexual misconduct, not lying and not dring alcohol and not doing drugs... are always a torch that lights the darkness of the world. The message of peace and of love and happiness of Buddhism to living beings of all kinds is always the glorious truth for all human beings. Everyone can achieve the highest goal in Buddhism, no mater who is that person, clergyperson or lay person. However, the most important

thing we all must remember is making an honest effort to follow the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha and his great disciples did not achieve their ultimate goal by accident. The Buddha and his disciples were once ordinary sentient beings like us. They were once afflicted by the impurities of the mind, attachment, aversion, and ignorance. They all became either Buddhas or Saints now, but for us, we are still creating and creating more and more unwholesome deeds and continuing going up and down in the cycle of birth and death? Devout Buddhists should listen to the Buddha's teachings, should purify our actions, words and mind to achieve true wisdom, the wisdom that help us understand the truth and to attain the ultimate goal of Buddhism. In other words, if we sincerely cultivate in accordance with the Buddha's teachings, one day not too far, everyone of us would be able to do good deeds, to avoid bad deeds; everyone of us would try our best to help others whenever possible and not to harm anyone, our mind would be mindful at all times. Thus there is no doubt that the Buddha's Dharma will benefit us with happiness and prosperity in this life and in the next. Eventually, it will lead us to the ultimate goal of liberation, the supreme bliss of Nirvana. Devout Buddhists should always remember that Buddhism is the path that the Buddha, the Great Enlightened in human history, once trode on and did become a Buddha. Devout Buddhists should always remember that treading on the paths leading to the Buddha does not mean to renounce the world and to enter into a temple as a monk or nun, but it means to enter into practicing well-being exercises that are linked to established daily life patterns, makes our lives more peaceful. Devout Buddhists should always remember the goal of any Buddhist cultivator is to achieve self-enlightening (examine with one's own intelligence, and not depending upon another), enlightening or awakening of others, then achieve the final accomplishment, that is to become a Buddha. Because Buddhist religion is the path of returning to self (looking inward), the goal of its education must be inward and not outward for appearances and matters. As mentioned above, the main causes of sufferings and afflictions are greed, anger, hatred, ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and so on... and the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to help sentient beings, especially, human beings to eliminate these troubles so that if we are not able to become a Buddha, at least we can become a real

Buddhist who has a peaceful, mindful and happy life. So, treading on the paths leading to the Buddha helps us to experience calmness and clarity, acceptance and gratitude, love and connection in our daily life. It will also help us to develop new habits of appropriate pausing, habits of knowing how to stop from continuing doing unwholesome activities. Let's try to follow the Buddha's footsteps to tread on the paths leading to Buddhahood, then we will see that to experience peace does not mean that we have to be in a place where there is no noise, no trouble, or no hard work. As a matter of fact, peace is really to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in our heart. For devout Buddhists, once you make up your mind to follow the Buddha's footsteps, should persevere and never have the intention of retreat; step by step, you should try your best to set a strong foundation on calmness, mindfulness and happiness. Over the times, this will help us form habits which make our life better and better. In fact, once we have these habits, they will become our natural habits. Once they become integrated in our lifestyle, we will always live with them. The journey "From being a common person to becoming a Buddha" demands continuous efforts and practices with right understanding. Hoping some day, everybody will soon become Buddha!

Chapter Twenty

Devout Buddhists Do Not Believe in The View of the Concept on Fate

Before starting this writing we should affirm once again on the view of the concept of fate. According to Buddhism, the view of the concept of fate is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with these wonderful teachings that the World's Honored One lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago. **For these above reasons, devout Buddhists firmly determine not to believe in the Concept on Fate.** As a matter of fact, Buddhism has no concern with either determinism or determinateness because it is a religion of self-creation. It holds the theory of free will within the sphere of human beings. Buddhism, therefore, has nothing to do with fatalism, for it does not admit the existence of anything like destiny or the decree of fate. According to Buddhism, all living beings have assumed the present life as the result of self-creation, and are, even at present, in the midst of creating themselves. Birth and death are not the predestined fate of a living being but only a corollary of action or karma. One who acts must sooner or later reap the result of such action. Nobody can determine the fate of anybody else in this universe. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts; it is made up of our thoughts." Thus, there is no room for the idea of "Creation" in Buddhism.

According to fatalism, each of us has a fate which we cannot change and about which we can do nothing. As they says "Whatever will be will be." In this philosophy the agent that determine destiny is not, as in the theistic position, a personal God, but rather a mysterious impersonal power called "Fate" which transcends our understanding and hence our ability to persuade or manipulate. In Buddhism, there exists no such "destiny." In fact, Buddhism consider this as a way or a path of going. Our destiny issues from our character, our character from our habits, our habits from our acts, and our acts from our thoughts. And since thoughts issue from the mind the ultimate determinant of our destiny. In fact, the mind is the only creator Buddhism recognizes, and

the power of the mind the only significant power in the world. As Milton, an English poet in the seventeenth century, says: “The mind can make a heaven of hell, and a hell of heaven.” If we think good thoughts, our acts cannot be bad. By thinking good thoughts, we will produce better actions, develop better habits, mold better characters and inherit better destiny. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five gati According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five gati (destinations, destinies): hells, hungry ghosts or starving demons or the realm of hungry ghosts, animals, human beings or humankind, and devas or heaven or deva world. In short, **devout Buddhist do not believe in the concept of fate because it is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with these wonderful teachings that the Buddha lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago.**

Chapter Twenty-One

Devout Buddhists Do Not Believe in the View of a So-Called “Creator” For It Is Not In Accordance With Buddhist Teachings

In Buddhism, there is no distinction between a divine or a supreme being and common mortals. The highest form of being is the Buddha. All people have the inherent ability and potential to become Buddhas if they follow and cultivate the teachings set forth by Shakyamuni Buddha. By following the Buddha’s teachings and Buddhist practices, anyone can eventually become Buddhas. A Buddha is also a human being, but one who comes to a realization and thoroughly understands the workings and meaning of life and the universe. When one comes to that realization and truly knows and understands oneself and everything, he is called “Buddha” or he is said to have attained enlightenment. He is also called “the Enlightened One.” Before entering details of this writing we should affirm once again on the view of the concept of a so-called Creator. Devout Buddhists firmly determine not to believe in the view of a so-called Creator for it is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with these wonderful teachings that the World's Honored One lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago. Externalists believe that there exists a so-called “Creator” or “Almighty God” who makes (creates) and transforms all being at his will. The Buddha taught that there is no so-called “Creator God.” Human beings were not created by a creator god, nor are they the result of a long process of evolution, as suggested by Darwinian and Neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory. According to the Digha Nikaya sutra, both physical world and beings are not the products of any creator, but merely the products of an evolutionary process. In other words, everything in this world whether good or bad, lucky or unlucky, happy or sad, all come from the power of a supreme Creator, the only Ruler to have the power of reward and punishment. Buddhism, in the contrary, is not a system of blind faith and worship. In Buddhism, there is no such thing as belief in a body of dogmas which have to be

taken on faith, or such belief in a Supreme Being. As a matter of fact, Buddhism does not believe that there exists a so-called Absolute God that is essentially transcendent to human beings. So the Buddha teaches “Dependent Co-origination” or “Conditional Co-production” as the dharma or the truth. This teaching emphasizes that everything is temporally and ontologically interdependent, co-arising and co-ceasing with everything else. Nothing exists independently, or can be said to be self-existing. Buddhism does not believe the notion of ‘one enduring reality underlying the universe’; nor does Buddhism accept the monotheistic notion of One Absolute God as the ultimate reality. According to the Buddha’s teaching, there have always been people, though not necessarily on our planet. The appearance of physical human bodies in anywhere begins with the mental generation of human karma. Mind, not physical body, is the primary factor in this process. Human beings are not a special product of a so-called God and are not independent of the other forms of sentient life in the universe and can be reborn in others of the six paths of rebirth. Likewise, other sentient beings can be reborn as human beings.

Other religions believe that God gives his doctrine in the form of a message to one man who then spread it to others, so they must believe what the man has said even though the so-called “Creator” he has claimed is always invisible to them. The Buddha on the other hand, whenever the Buddha spoke anything, it was because he had personally experimented the validity of the saying for himself as an ordinary human being. He claimed no divinity. He never claimed anything like receiving knowledge from outside sources. Throughout His ministry He always asserted that His listeners were free to question Him and challenge His Teachings so that they could personally realize the truth. Therefore He said: “Come and see, not come and believe.” Sincere Buddhists should ask ourselves which is more to reliable, the testimony of one who speaks from personal experience, or that of one who claims to have heard it from someone else who is always invisible. In short, according to Buddhism, the view of the concept of a so-called Creator is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with these wonderful teachings that the Buddha lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Devout Buddhists Do Not Believe in the View of No Cause For It Is Not In Accordance With Buddhist Teachings

According to Buddhism, the view of the concept of no cause is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with these wonderful teachings that the World's Honored One lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago. According to Buddhist teaching, the view no cause is a kind of wrong view that denies rewards and punishments. This view claims that cause and effect are independent of morals. Those who follow the theory of no cause believe that all things happen accidentally, there is no cause and effect at all. Sometimes they claim that there exists an existence of an effect without a cause. Attachment to the effect independent of cause, creation without a cause, spontaneous generation. According to Buddhist teachings, this is a kind of theory of Attachment on Eternalism believes in eternalism, believes that man was created by the will of some Deity. He will live his life and act according to his beliefs in order to return to Heaven or to be condemned forever in Hell. This theory does not conform to the Buddhist law of causality. In Buddhist view, men are tied to the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of reincarnation. This cycle turns around and around, compelling men to reincarnate in one of the six realms. Buddhists believe that Nihilism is false because it is based on incomplete understanding of reality. Eternalism is also wrong, because Buddhists cannot accept that there is anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable. In other words, **according to Buddhism, the view of no cause is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with these wonderful teachings that the Buddha lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago.**

Devout Buddhists should always have correct views on the law of cause and effect in Buddhist teachings. In Buddhism, law of cause and effect or the relation between cause and effect in the sense of the

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

To see the law of cause and effect correctly is not only a correct view, but it is also a key point in Buddhist cultivation. As mentioned above, the law of cause and effect or the relation between cause and effect in the sense of the Buddhist law of “Karma”. Cause is a primary force that produces an effect; effect is a result of that primary force. The law of causation governs everything in the universe without exception. The law of causation (reality itself as cause and effect in momentary operation). Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action or effect has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situations. Cause is a primary force that produces an effect; effect is a result of that primary force. The law of causation governs everything in the universe without exception. Devout Buddhists should always remember that the chief cause that lead to all kinds of effect is “Ignorance”. “Ignorance” is a mental factor, or attitude, that obscures our understanding of who we are, and the mode in which all phenomena exist. Not only does ignorance prevent us from realizing how things exist, it also depicts things as existing in a way they do not. By understanding and believing in the law of causality, Buddhists will not become superstitious, or alarmed, and rely passively on heaven authority. He knows that his life depends on his karmas. If

he truly believes in such a causal mechanism, he strives to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If he continues to live a good life, devoting his time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings, he can eliminate all of his bad karmas. He knows that he is the only driving force of his success or failure, so he will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. He will put more effort into performing his duties satisfactorily. Realizing the value of the law of causality, he always cares for what he thinks, tells or does in order to avoid bad karma.

Some religions believe in fatalism that each of us has a fate which we cannot change and about which we can do nothing. They believe that 'Whatever will be will be.' In this philosophy the agent that determines destiny is not a God, but rather a mysterious impersonal power called 'Fate' which transcends our understanding. Still some other people believe the exact opposite, they believe in indeterminism: everything happens by accident. They believe that if man is lucky, he will achieve happiness or success; if he is unlucky, he will suffer or fail, but whatever he receives, he receives not through any process of determination but by accident, by sheer coincidence. In Christianity, the Christian worships God and prays to Him in order to obtain forgiveness from the results his evil actions hold out for him. Buddhism differs from other religions in that it sees the root cause of all evil in "ignorance" and not in "sin", in an act of intellectual misapprehension and not in an act of volition and rebellion. As a practical definition of ignorance, we are offered the four perverted views which make us seek for permanence in what is inherently impermanent, ease in what is inseparable from suffering, selfhood in what is not linked to any self, and delight in what is essentially repulsive and disgusting. According to the Karma Law in Buddhism, the present is a shadow of the past, the future a shadow of the present. Hence our action in the present is most important, for what we do in the present determines the course of our future development. For this reason, Buddhist practitioners should always apply their minds to the present so that they may advance on the way. According to the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth, the causal relation between action and its results holds not only with regard to the present life but also with regard to past and future lives. This universal law of cause and effect is non-negotiable. Just as we cannot run away

from our own shadows, so we cannot run away from the results of our actions. They will pursue us no matter where we hide. Besides, the Buddha also taught that negative or unwholesome mind creates negative or unwholesome thoughts (anger, hatred, harmful thoughts, wrong views, etc), speech (lying, harsh speech, double-tongued, etc), as well as deeds which are the causes of our sufferings, confusion and misery. Unwholesome or negative mind will destroy our inner peace and tranquility.

In Buddhism, no one can forgive a person for his transgression. If he commits an evil deed, he has to reap the bad consequences, for all is governed by universal law and not by any arbitrary creator. According to Buddhism, the pain or pleasure resulting in this life from the practices or causes and retributions of a previous life. Therefore, ancient virtues said: "If we wish to know what our lives were like in the past, just look at the retributions we are experiencing currently in this life. If we wish to know what retributions will happen to us in the future, just look and examine the actions we have created or are creating in this life." If we understand clearly this theory, then in our daily activities, sincere Buddhists are able to avoid unwholesome deeds and practice wholesome deeds. Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise, every resultant action has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situation. Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situation. Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. It's a fundamental principle for all living beings and all things that if one sows good deeds, he will surely reap a good harvest; if he sows bad deeds, he must inevitably reap a bad harvest. Though the results may appear quickly or slowly, everyone will be sure to receive the results that accord with their actions. Anyone who has deeply understood this principle will never do evil.

Devout Buddhists firmly determine not to believe in the view of No Cause for it is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings. According to Buddhism, every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action or effect has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situations. The Moral Causation in Buddhism means that a deed, good or bad, or indifferent, brings its own result on the doer. Good people are happy and bad ones unhappy. But in most cases “happiness” is understood not in its moral or spiritual sense but in the sense of material prosperity, social position, or political influence. For instance, kingship is considered the reward of one’s having faithfully practiced the ten deeds of goodness. If one meets a tragic death, he is thought to have committed something bad in his past lives even when he might have spent a blameless life in the present one. Causality is a natural law, mentioning the relationship between cause and effect. All things come into being not without cause, since if there is no cause, there is no effect and vice-versa. As so sow, so shall you reap. Cause and effect never conflict with each other. In other words, cause and effect are always consistent with each other. If we want to have beans, we must sow bean seeds. If we want to have oranges, we must sow orange seeds. If wild weeds are planted, then it’s unreasonable for one to hope to harvest edible fruits. One cause cannot have any effect. To produce an effect, it is necessary to have some specific conditions. For instance, a grain of rice cannot produce a rice plant without the presence of sunlight, soil, water, and care. In the cause there is the effect; in the effect there is the cause. From the current cause, we can see the future effect and from the present effect we discerned the past cause. The development process from cause to effect is sometimes quick, sometimes slow. Sometimes cause and effect are simultaneous like that of beating a drum and hearing its sound. Sometimes cause and effect are three or four months away like that of the grain of rice. It takes about three to four, or five to six months from a rice seed to a young rice plant, then to a rice plant that can produce rice. Sometimes it takes about ten years for a cause to turn into an effect. For instance, from the time the schoolboy enters the elementary school to the time he graduates a four-year college, it takes him at least 14 years. Other

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

Chapter Twenty-Three

Devout Buddhists Do Not Believe in the View of the Concept of A Soul For It Is Not In Accordance With Buddhist Teachings

According to Buddhism, the concept of a soul is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with the World's Honored One's wonderful teachings. Externalists believe that there exists a so-called Soul, but in Buddhist thought, there is no so-called "Soul". Birth precedes death, and death also precedes birth, so that the pair follow each other in bewildering succession. There is no so-called "Soul", "Self", or "Fixed entity" that passes from birth to birth. Though man comprises a psycho-physical unit of mind and matter, the "psyche" or "mind" is not a soul or self, in the sense of an enduring entity, something ready-made and permanent. It is a force, a dynamic continuum capable of storing up memories not only of this life, but also of past lives. The mind or psyche is no more a fixed entity. The Buddha stressed that the so-called "being" or "individual" is nothing but a combination of physical and mental forces, or energies, a change with continuity. Someone may ask, if there is no transmigrating permanent soul or self to reincarnate, then what is it that reborn? According to Buddhism, there is no permanent substance of the nature of Self or Soul that reincarnates or transmigrates. It is impossible to conceive of anything that continues without change. All is in a state of flux. What we call life here is the functioning of the five aggregates of grasping, or the functioning of mind and body which are only energies or forces. They are never the same for two consecutive moments, and in the conflux of mind and body we do not see anything permanent. The grown-up man is neither the child nor quite a different person; there is only a relationship of continuity. The conflux of mind and body or mental and physical energy is not lost at death, for no force or energy is ever lost. It undergoes change. It resets, reforms in new conditions. With regard to the psychological question, Buddhism does not admit the existence of a soul that is real and immortal. Anatma or non-self

refers to all things (sarva-dharma), organic and inorganic. In the case of human beings, Buddhism believes that there will accordingly to be no soul, no real self that is immortal. While in the case of things in general, there will be no noumenon, no essence which is unchangeable. Because there is no real self spatially, i.e., no substance, there will be no permanent, i.e., no duration. Therefore, no bliss, is to be found in the world. In short, **devout Buddhists firmly determine not to believe in the concept of a soul, for it is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with these wonderful teachings that the Buddha, an Enlightened One lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago.**

Chapter Twenty-Four

Devout Buddhists Do Not Believe in the View of the Concept of First Cause For It Is Not In Accordance With Buddhist Teachings

Buddhism firmly believes that everything is being dependent on everything else; therefore, one is in all and all is in one. Dependent Arising is an essential corollary to the second and third of the Four Noble Truths, and is not, as some are inclined to think, a later addition to the teaching of the Buddha. This Dependent Arising, this doctrine of conditionality, is often explained severely practical terms, but it is not a mere pragmatism, though it may appear to be so, owing to the shortness of the explanations. Those conversant with the Buddhist Canon know that in the doctrine of Dependent Arising is found that which brings out the basic principles of knowledge and wisdom in the Dhamma. In this teaching of the conditionality of everything in the world, can be realized the essence of the Buddha's outlook on life. This conditionality goes on uninterrupted and uncontrolled by self-agency or external agency of any sort. The doctrine of conditionality can not be labelled as determinism, because in this teaching both the physical environment and the moral causation (psychological causation) of the individual function together. The physical world influences man's mind, and mind, on the other hand, influences the physical world, obviously in a higher degree, for as the Buddha taught in the Samyutta-Nikaya: "The world is led by the mind." If we fail to understand the real significance and application to life of the Dependent Arising, we mistake it for a mechanical law of causality or even a simple simultaneous arising, a first beginning of all things, animate and inanimate. As there is no origination out of nothing in Buddhist thought, Dependent Arising shows the impossibility of a first cause. The first beginning of existence, of the life stream of living beings is inconceivable and as the Buddha says in the Samyutta-Nikaya: "Notions and speculations concerning the world may lead to mental derangement. O Monks! This wheel of existence, this cycle of

continuity is without a visible end, and the first beginning of beings wandering and hurrying round, wrapt in ignorance and fettered by craving is not to be perceived.” In fact, it is impossible to conceive of a first beginning. None can trace the ultimate origin of anything, not even of a grain of sand, let alone of human beings. It is useless and meaningless to seek a beginning in a beginningless past. Life is not an identity, it is a becoming. It is a flux of physiological and psychological changes.

According to Buddhism, the view of the concept of the first cause is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with these wonderful teachings that the World's Honored One lectured almost twenty-six centuries ago. If one posits a first cause, one is justified in asking for the cause of that “First Cause”, for nothing can escape the law of “condition and cause” which is patent in the world to all but those who will not see. However, a man who attributes beings and events to an omnipotent Creator-God would emphatically say: “It is God’s will, it is sacrilege to question the Authority.” Does not this God-idea stifle the human liberty to investigate, to analyze, to scrutinize, to see what is beyond this naked eye, and so retards insight. It is important to understand that craving is not regarded as the First Cause; for according to Buddhism, there is not First Cause, but beginningless causes and effects and nothing else ruling the universe. Things are neither due to one single cause nor are they causeless, but according to the formula of Dependent Arising, things are multiple caused. Craving, like all other things, physical or mental, is also conditioned, interdependent and relative. It is neither a beginning nor an end in itself. Though craving is cited as the proximate cause of suffering, it is not independent, but interdependent. Dependent on feeling or sensation arises craving, feeling dependent on contact and so forth. In short, **devout Buddhists firmly determine not to believe in the concept of the first cause, for it is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with these wonderful teachings that the Buddha, an Enlightened One once lectured.**

Chapter Twenty-Five

Not to Believe in the Five View Attachments

The Buddha always reminded his disciples: “You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it.” The Buddha taught us not to blindly believe in the view attachments, but try to recognize the truth of right views, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. The Buddha teachings preached by the Buddha are methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment without any exceptions. According to Buddhist teachings, view attachment means to be attached to his or her own views, maintaining that the knowledge he or she presently possesses is absolute and unchanging, refuses to open to receive the viewpoints and insights of others. This is called ‘view-attachment’. There are five sharp wrong views in Buddhist teachings. These are Panca-drstayah or five views: view of there is a real and permanent body, extreme views, perverse or wrong views, stubborn perverted views, and rigid views in favor of rigorous ascetic prohibitions. **According to Buddhism, practitioners should not believe in all these view-attachments for they are useless for Buddhist practitioners; and they are considered worse than wrong views.** These five view-attachments include: *First, view of the body:* The view that there is a real and permanent body or view of egoism, the view that there is a real self or ego, or view of mine and thine, the view that there is a real mine and thine. Illusion of the body includes believing in the existence of an ego-substance (holding to the idea of the existence of a permanent ego). The erroneous doctrine that the ego or self composed of the temporary five skandhas, is a reality and permanent. Thought of an ego, one of the three knots. There are two ways in which one comes to conceive the real existence of an ego, the

one is subjective imagination and the other the objective conception of reality. Believe that our self is our greatest and most precious possession in a nix in our eyes. We try by all means to satisfy to our self, irrespective of others' interest of rights. Holding to the idea of the existence of a permanent ego. According to the T'ien-T'ai scet, there are sixty-two views on personality. First, four views of Form or Rupa as its basis and consider each of the five skandhas under four aspects: rupa, the organized body, as the ego; the ego as apart from the rupa; rupa as the greater, the ego the smaller or inferior, and the ego as dwelling in the rupa; the ego as the greater, rupa the inferior, and the rupa in the ego. The same process applies to Sensation, Perception, Volition, and Consciousness in the present, past and future to make 60 views. The sixty-first view on personality is Impermanence. The sixty-second view on personality is Permanence. In the Four Noble Truth, Sakyamuni Buddha taught that "attachment to self" is the root cause of suffering. From attachment springs grief; from grief springs fear. For him who is wholly free from attachment, there is no grief and much less fear. If you don't have attachments, naturally you are liberated.

Second, extreme view: View of extinction and/or permanence. Being prejudiced to one extreme or another. One-sided standpoint also means the state of clinging to one of the two extremes in the world of relativity, such as clinging to permanence, impermanence, being or non-being, etc. One-sided views are also the two extreme views of annihilation and personal immortality, one of the five sharp wrong views. This is a biased viewpoint tending to favor one side. Those who conceive this way think that practicing Buddha's teachings is equivalent to not practicing it. Another biased one claims that, after death man will be reborn as man, beast as beast, or that there is nothing left after death. The last view belongs to a materialistic philosophy that rejects the law of causality.

Third, Perverse Views: Wrong views deny cause and effect (deviant views). In Buddhism, perverted views means holding to the real existence of material things or viewing the seeming as real and the ego as real, or not recognizing the doctrine of causality and karma. Perverted (wrong) views or opinions, not consistent with the dharma, one of the five heterodox opinions and ten evils. "Wrong views" are attitudes and doctrines that are antithetical to the teachings and practices of Buddhism. In Indian Buddhism, seven false views are

commonly enumerated: 1) belief in a truly existent self (atman); 2) rejection of the working of cause and effect (karma); 3) eternalism or belief that there is a soul that exists after death; 4) annihilationism or belief that the soul perishes after death; 5) adherence to false ethics; 6) perceiving negative actions as good; and 7) doubt regarding the central tenets of Buddhism. There were at least sixty-two heretical views (views of the externalist or non-Buddhist views) in the Buddha's time. *Fourth, the view of grasping at views:* Stubborn perverted views, viewing inferior thing as superior, or counting the worse as the better. Attachment to views means clinging to heterodox views. Stubborn perverted views include wrong views caused by attachment to one's own erroneous understandings (to hold heterodox doctrines and be obsessed with the sense of the self). That is the tendency of those who maintain their point of view or resist and oppose change. *Fifth, view of grasping at precepts and prohibitions:* Rigid view in favor of rigorous ascetic prohibitions. The fetter of attachment to rite and ritual or clinging to rules and ritual (rigid views in favor of rigorous ascetic prohibitions), clinging to heterodox ascetic views, i.e. those of ultra-asceticism, one of the four attachments (catuh-paramarsa). In India there are still people who still uphold heterodox beliefs such as pressing the belly with a stone or throwing oneself from a high position into a fire in order to enjoy blessings. This is a biased viewpoint tending to favor one side. Those who conceive this way think that practicing Buddha's teachings is equivalent to not practicing it. Another biased one claims that, after death man will be reborn as man, beast as beast, or that there is nothing left after death. The last viewpoint belongs to a materialistic philosophy that rejects the law of causality.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Devout Buddhists Do Not Believe in Deviant & Heterodox Masters

Devout Buddhists should always remember that the goal of a Buddhist is the development of self-dependency, the ability to set oneself free of sufferings and afflictions. Buddhism is strongly against a blind belief on other forces of salvation with no basic factors. The Buddha always reminded his disciples: “You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it.” The Buddha taught us to try to recognize the truth of right views, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. The Buddha teachings preached by the Buddha are methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment without any exceptions. Besides the core teachings, do not get involved in evil deeds, do whatever benefits others, always keep the mind pure, that is all the Buddha’s teaching, Buddhist teachings still have a lot of other teachings that will surely guide practitioners from the illusive bank to the shore of enlightenment, among them, we have to first mention on not believing deviant and heterodox masters.

In Buddhist teachings, master is an honorific title for a monk of maturity and high standing. Dharma master is a title of respect used to address a Buddhist Bhiksu (monk) or Bhiksuni (nun). It implies that the person so addressed has mastered the Dharma and is qualified to teach it. A Dharma Master is a Buddhist teacher, a Master of the Law (Teacher of the Law). The teachings that the Buddha taught were not for the sake of displaying knowledge to others, but to help them. Therefore, a real master is the one who is able to preach definitive dharmas which are not damaged by reasoning. The Buddha taught in the Miscellaneous Agama: “Monks and scholars! You should accept

my words not out of respect, but on analyzing it.” Thus, sincere Buddhists should not determine that a master is a reliable source of refuge by the fact that his body was adorned with good marks, or with his good voice, but because his preaching for the achievement of higher status and definite goodness are reliable. Dharmakirti taught: “A master must be one who is skilled in which behavior is to be adopted and which discarded. One should not accept a master because that person performs miracles, has the supernatural power, or psychic power to see things in the distance, or is able to create certain physical emanations. Whether one can see far in the distance or not, does not matter. If it were sufficient to be able to see things at a distance, then one should go for refuge to a vulture. So, what matters here is whether one knows the techniques for achieving happiness.” It should be noted that “teachers of the Law” in Buddhism are not limited to monks and nuns, but include any persons who have the ability and devote themselves to spreading the teachings of the Buddha, whether monks, nuns, lay devotees, either men or women. In the process of cultivation, if we believe and discern the teaching after hearing it, and if we raise the mind of joyful acceptance of it, we would keep it firmly, then, reading and reciting the sutra, to inscribe it on our memory. As a personal discipline, this practice is done to establish the foundation of our faith. When our faith reaches a high level, we cannot help transmitting the teaching to others. As a result, we expound the sutra or teaching and copy it in different forms, such as video tapes, and DVD, etc.

There are five improper ways of gaining a livelihood for a monk or five kinds of deviant livelihood. First, changing his appearance theatrically, or displaying an unusual appearance. Second, advertise his own power or virtue, or using low voice in order to appear awesome. Third, fortune-telling, or performing divination and fortune telling. Fourth, hectoring and bullying. Fifth, praising the generosity of another to induce the hearer to bestow presents. There are also six heretical masters, or the six tirthikas or heterodox teachers in India at the time of the Buddha. These six always sought to rival Buddha. First, Purana Kasyapa, who negated the effects of action, good or evil. Second, Maskarin-Gosaliputra, who taught a theory of randomness, negating causality. Third, Sanjaya-Vairatiputra, who was agnostic in refusing to

maintain any opinion about anything. Fourth, Ajita-Kesakambala, who taught a more extreme nihilism regarding everything except the four main elements. Fifth, Kakuda-Katyayana, who taught a materialism in which there was no such things as killer or killed, but only transformations of elements. Sixth, Nirgrantha-Jnatiputra, known as Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, who taught the doctrine of interdeterminism, considering all things in term of “maybe.”

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Regarding Metaphysical Issues, Neither Believing Nor Non-Believing, But Not Paying Attention to Them

According to Buddhism, regarding metaphysical issues, the Buddha emphasized: "It's neither believing nor non-believing, but not wasting the time to pay attention to them. As a matter of fact, devout Buddhists should neither paying attention nor being interested in the elements comprising human beings, nor in metaphysical theories of existence. He was more concerned about how he himself existed in this moment. That was his point. Bread is made from flour. How flour becomes bread when put in the oven was for Buddha the most important thing. How we become enlightened was his main interest. The enlightened person is some perfect, desirable character, for himself and for others. Buddha wanted to find out how human beings develop this ideal character, how various sages in the past became sages. In order to find out how dough became perfect bread, he made it over and over again, until he became quite successful. That was his practice.

According to the Buddha, such metaphysical issues only confuse man and upset his mental equilibrium. Their solution surely will not free mankind from misery and ill. That was why the Buddha hesitated to answer such questions, and at times refrained from explaining those which were often wrongly formulated. The Buddha was a practical teacher. His sole aim was to explain in all its detail the problem of Dukkha, suffering, the universal fact of life, to make people feel its full force, and to convince them of it. He has definitely told us what he explains and what he does not explain. Even questions relating to the past and the future, the Buddha's answers were very clear: "Let be the past, let be the future, I will teach you the Dhamma." The Buddha always emphasized: "When this is, that comes to be. With the arising of this, that arises. When this is not, that does not come to be. With the cessation of this, that ceases." This in a nutshell is the Buddhist doctrine of conditionality or Dependent Arising (paticca samuppada). And this forms the foundation of the Four Noble Truths, the central conception of Buddhism.

However, in Zen, it has a supernatural and mystic side which is an essential part of its nature. Without this it could not be the religion that basically it still is, and it would lose its position as the most humorous actor in the Buddhist play. In many Zen antics we can see the Zen way of performing miracles and its cynical manner of poking fun at them. Tao-tsung was the teacher of Yun-mên. It was he who opened the mind of Yun-mên by hurting his leg. Later Tao-tsung returned to his native town of Mu-chou, as his mother was very old and needed someone to take care of her. From then on he stayed with his mother and earned a living by making straw sandals. At that time a great rebellion broke out, led by a man called Huang-Tsao. As the insurgent army approached Mu-chou, Tao-tsung went to the city gate and hung a big sandal upon it. When Huang-Tsao's army reached the gate they could not force it open, no matter how hard they tried. Huang-Tsao remarked resignedly to his men: "There must be a great sage living in this town. We had better leave it alone." Saying so, he led his army away and Mu-chou was saved from being sacked. Zen master Mu-kuang She, name of a Chinese Zen master in the ninth century. We do not have detailed documents on this Zen Master; however, there is a dialogue between him and Zen master Huang-po in *The Records of the Transmission of the Lamp (Ch'uan-Teng-Lu)*, Volume IX. While on his journey to Mount T'ien-T'ai, Mu-kuang She met Zen master Huang-Po. They talked and laugh, just as though they were old friends who had long known one another. Their eyes gleamed with delight as they then set off traveling together. Coming to the fast rapids of a stream, they removed their hats and took up staffs to walk across. Mu-kuang She tried to lead Huang-Po across, saying: "Come over! Come over!" Huang-Po said: "If Elder Brother wants to go across, then go ahead." Mu-kuang She then began walking across the top of the water, just as though it were dry land. Mu-kuang She turned to Huang-Po and said: "Come across! Come across!" Huang-Po yelled: Ah! You self-saving fellow! If I had known this before I would have chopped off your legs!" Mu-kuang She cried out: "You're truly a vessel for the Mahayana, I can't compare with you!" And so saying, he vanished. Despite all their mockery and dislike of wonder-working acts and supernatural powers, the accomplished Zen masters were by no means incapable of performing them. They could do so if they deemed

it necessary for a worthwhile purpose. These miracle powers are simply the natural by-products of true Enlightenment. A perfectly enlightened being must possess them, otherwise his Enlightenment can at most be considered as only partial. The story of Zen master P'u Hua is another typical example of supernatural and mystic side of the nature of Zen.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Buddhists Always Know That We Are Responsible for Our Own Karmas

In Buddhist teachings, the Buddha still has a lot of teachings that will surely guide practitioners from the illusive bank to the shore of enlightenment, but for what reasons He always emphasized the core teachings: do not get involved in evil deeds, do whatever benefits others, always keep the mind pure, that is all the Buddha's teaching? Because the Buddha wanted to remind his devout disciples that they should believe that no one else but they themselves are responsible for their own karmas. Some people say "I am not responsible for what I am because everything, including my brain, nature, and physical constitution, partake of the nature of my parents." It's no doubt that our parents and ancestors must be responsible for some of the nature of their descendants, but those who have correct views on Buddhist laws of cause and effect and retributions always know that we are responsible for our own karmas, and no one else can take that responsibility for us, not even the Buddha. As a matter of fact, the majority of other characteristics is the responsibility of the descendants themselves because beings coming into existence with their own karma that they have produced in their past lives. Moreover, the self that exists after one's childhood is the effect of the karma that one has produced oneself in this world. So the responsibility of one's parents is very limited. The idea of karma teaches us clearly that one will reap the fruits of what he has sown. Supposed that we are unhappy at present; we are apt to lose our temper and express discontent if we attribute our unhappiness to others. But if we consider our present unhappiness to be the effect of our own deeds in the past, we can accept it and take responsibility for it. Besides such acceptance, hope for the future wells up strongly in our hearts: "The more good karma I accumulate, the happier I will become and the better recompense I will receive. All right, I will accumulate much more good karma in the future." We should not limit this idea only to the problems of human life in this world. We can also feel hope concerning the traces of our

lives after death. For those who do not know the teachings of the Buddha, nothing is so terrible as death. Everyone fears it. But if we truly realize the meaning of karma-result, we can keep our composure in the face of death because we can have hope for our next life. When we do not think only of ourselves but realize that the karma produced by our own deeds exerts an influence upon our descendants, we will naturally come to feel responsible for our deeds. We will also realize that we, as parents, must maintain a good attitude in our daily lives in order to have a favorable influence or recompense upon our children. We will feel strongly that we must always speak to our children correctly and bring them up properly and with affection.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Believe That Births & Deaths Are Brought Forth Because Of False Thinking

Besides the core teachings, do not get involved in evil deeds, do whatever benefits others, always keep the mind pure, that is all the Buddha's teaching, Buddhist teachings still have a lot of other teachings that will surely guide practitioners from the illusive bank to the shore of enlightenment, among them, we have to first mention the Buddha's teaching on births and deaths are brought forth only because of false thinkings. As a matter of fact, the Buddha always reminded his disciples: "You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it." The Buddha taught us not to blindly believe in the view attachments; on the contrary, we should listen to correct dharmas on births and deaths that are only brought forth because of false thinkings, so that we will have the abilities to recognize the truth of right views, so we can understand our fear, to lessen our desires, to eliminate our selfishness, and to calmly and courageously accept things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with blindly and irrational belief but with rational understanding which corresponds to the truth. The Buddha teachings preached by the Buddha are methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment without any exceptions.

It should be reminded that improper views or Wrong views in Buddhism means not recognizing the doctrine of normal karma. Perverted (wrong) views or opinions, not consistent with the dharma, one of the five heterodox opinions and ten evils. In fact, there is no specific definition for the term "wrong views" (micchaditthi) in Buddhism. "Wrong views" are attitudes and doctrines that are antithetical to the teachings and practices of Buddhism. According to Buddhism, false or erroneous thinking is no better than the act of wrong views; it is not in accordance with Buddhist teachings, nor does it tally with the wonderful teachings that the World's Honored One lectured

almost twenty-six centuries ago. Deluded conceptualization or erroneous thought means the mental processes of living beings on greed, hatred and stupidity. Polluted thoughts comprise a wide range of thoughts. If we are greedy for delicious food, we have polluted thoughts on food. If we wish to listen to fine sounds, we have polluted thoughts on sounds. If we wish to experience sensual pleasures, we have polluted thoughts on sensual pleasures, and so on. If we practice meditation we can stop our idle thoughts and cultivate the Way with our true mind, then our merit and virtue will be measureless and boundless. But if we do not take time to cultivate, there is no use just talking dharma. According to the Study of Mind-Only, false thoughts are simply the objects of the six senses. If we understand this, we can reject false thoughts as soon as they appear. As a matter of fact, if we are determined to keep our mind clear of any thought, false thoughts automatically disappear. This is the simplest way of practicing meditation. When we are walking, standing, sitting or lying down, whenever a thought arises, we recognize it, but do not follow it, that is practicing of meditation. We do not have to wait for the time to sit down in meditation to practice meditation. Thus, for Zen practitioners, we can practice Zen at any time, anywhere, while at work or at home, just realize the truth. Zen practitioners should always remember that it is very crucial that we maintain a clear mind to gain wisdom and remove ignorance. We must use our perfect wisdom to realize that delusions are false, illusory, and they will automatically disappear. Illusive thoughts the unenlightened thoughts results in complexity and confusion in this world. In the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha reminded Mahamati: “Oh Mahamati, maya is not the cause of confusion, for it does not produce errors, as errors come from wrong discrimination.”

In the Surangama Sutra, book Ten, having heard the Buddha’s instruction on the five skandhas, Ananda arose from his seat. He bowed and respectfully asked the Buddha: “The Buddha has told us that in the manifestation of the five skandhas, there are five kinds of falseness that come from our own thinking minds. We have never before been blessed with such subtle and wonderful instructions as the Tathagata has now given. Further, are these five skandhas destroyed all at the same time, or are they extinguished in sequence? What are the boundaries of these five layers? We only hope the Tathagata, out of

great compassion, will explain this in order to purify the eyes and illuminate the minds of those in the great assembly, and in order to serve as eyes for living beings of the future.” The Buddha told Ananda, “the essential, true, wonderful brightness and perfect purity of basic enlightenment does not admit birth and death, nor any mundane defilements, nor even empty space itself. All these are brought forth because of false thinking. The source of basic enlightenment, which is wonderfully bright, true, and pure, falsely gives rise to the material world, just as Yajnadatta became confused about his head when he saw his own reflection in the mirror. The falseness basically has no cause, but in your false thinking, you set up causes and conditions. But those who are confused about the principle of causes and conditions call it spontaneity. Even empty space is an illusory creation; how much more so are causes and conditions and spontaneity, which are mere speculations made by the false minds of living beings. Ananda! If you perceive the arising of falseness, you can speak of the causes and conditions of that falseness. But if the falseness has no source, you will have to say that the causes and conditions of that falseness basically have no source. How much the more is this the case for those who fail to understand this and advocate spontaneity. Therefore, the Tathagata has explained to you that the fundamental cause of all five skandhas is false thinking.” First, the false thinking of the form skandha: Your body’s initial cause was a thought on the part of your parents. But if you had not entertained any thought in your own mind, you would not have been born. Life is perpetuated by means of thought. As I have said before, when you call to mind the taste of vinegar, your mouth waters. When you think of walking along a precipice, the soles of your feet tingle. Since the precipice doesn’t exist and there isn’t any vinegar, how could your mouth water at the mere mention of vinegar, if it were not the case that your body originated from falseness. Therefore, you should know that your present physical body is brought about by the first kind of false thinking, which is characterized by solidity. Second, the false thinking of the feeling skandha: As described earlier, merely thinking about a high place can cause your body to tingle and ache. Due to that cause, feelings arise and affect your body, so that at present you pursue pleasant feelings and are repelled by unpleasant feelings. These two kinds of feelings that compel you are

brought about by the second kind of false thinking, which is characterized by illusory clarity. Third, the false thinking of the thinking skandha: Once your thoughts arise, they can control your body. Since your body is not the same as your thoughts, why is it that your body follows your thoughts and engages in every sort of grasping at objects. A thought arises, and the body grasps at things in response to the thought. When you are awake, your mind thinks. When you are asleep, you dream. Thus, your thinking is stirred to perceive false situations. This is the third kind of false thinking, which is characterized by interconnectedness. Fourth, the false thinking of the formation skandha: The metabolic processes never stop; they progress through subtle changes: your nails and hair grow, your energy wanes; and your skin becomes wrinkled. These processes continue day and night, and yet you never wake up to them. If these things aren't part of you, Ananda, then why does your body keep changing? And if they are really part of you, then why aren't you aware of them? Your formations skandha continues in thought after thought without cease. It is the fourth kind of false thinking which is subtle and hidden. Fifth, the false thinking of the consciousness skandha: If you are pure, bright, clear, and unmoving state is permanent, then there should be no seeing, hearing, awareness, or knowing in your body. If it is genuinely pure and true, it should not contain habits or falseness. How does it happen, then, that having seen some unusual things in the past, you eventually forget it over time, until neither memory nor forgetfulness of it remain; but then later, upon suddenly seeing that unusual thing again, you remember it clearly from before without forgetting a single detail? How can you keep track of the permeation that goes on in thought after thought in this pure, clear, and unmoving consciousness? Ananda, you should know that this state of clarity is not real. It is like rapidly flowing water that appears to be still on the surface. Due to its speed you cannot perceive the flow, but that does not mean it is not flowing. If this were not the source of thinking, then how could one be subject to false habits? If you do not open and unite your six sense faculties so that they function interchangeably, this false thinking will never cease. That's why your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are presently strung together by subtle habits, so that within the profound clarity, existence and non-existence are both unreal. This is the fifth kind of upside-down, minutely subtle thinking.

Chapter Thirty

The Faith On the Principle of True Reality

Thusness is the ultimate foundation of Buddhist thought concerning the real state of all that exists. It is natural for people to seek first the innermost essence among the outward appearance of all things or to seek an unchanging fact among many changing things. Failing in this, people try to distinguish the unknowable from the knowable, the real from the apparent, or the thing-in-itself from the thing-for-us. This effort, too, will end in failure, for what they select as the real or the thing-in-itself is utterly beyond human knowledge. Such efforts may be called the search for the world-principle or for the life-principle. The method of search and the resulting theories are various. Some are monistic or pantheistic, while others are dualistic or pluralistic. Against all these views Buddhism stands aloof by itself. Buddhism is atheistic, there is no doubt about it. When questioned about the First Cause or Principle, the Buddha always remained reticent. . As to the life-principle, he denied the existence of an ego or soul or any kind of thing which one may call the real self, as we have discussed. To see the true nature or the true state of all things is not to find one in many or one before many, nor is it to distinguish unity from diversity or the static from the dynamic. The true state without any special condition. It is, in fact, the true reality without a reality, i.e., without any specific character or nature. It is very difficult for the human mind to understand this idea of reality in which there is no substance at all. The idea of an abiding substance with changing qualities is very deeply rooted in our habits of thought. Buddhist schools, no matter what they are, Hinayana or Mahayana, realistic or idealistic, are utterly free from such a habit of thought and all maintain the theory of pure change without substratum. When any Buddhist speaks of the true state of reality he means the state without a specific nature. According to the general views of the Hinayana, the state without any specific condition is Nirvana, because Nirvana is perfect freedom from bondage. The Realistic School (Sarvastivada), belonging to the Hinayana, goes a step further and assumes that selflessness, impermanence and Nirvana (flamelessness) are the true state of all things. Nihilistic School

(Satyasiddhi) holds that all things, matter and mind, are void or unreal and that nothing exists even in Nirvana. The Mahayana teaches, on the other hand, that the truth can be discovered only by negative views of becoming, and, on the other hand, holds that true perfection can be realized negatively in the denial of the illusory and causal nature of existence. The Wreath School of the Mahayana thinks that the ideal world, or the World One-and-True, is without any independent individual. The Lotus School identifies the manifested state as it is and the true entity immanent-in-nature. On the whole, to see only the fact that a flower is falling is, after all, a one-sided view according to the theory of impermanence. We ought to see that immanent in the fact of a flower's falling there lies the fact of a flower's blooming, and also immanent in the blooming of the flower there is the fact of its falling. Thus the opposition of falling (extinction) and blooming (becoming) is synthesized and we form the view of reciprocal identification which is an unbiased view of the mean, or Middle Path. This amounts to saying that we see inaction in action and action in inaction, immotion in motion and motion in inmotion, calm in wave and wave in calm. We thus arrive at the true state of all things, i.e., the Middle Path. And this is what is meant by Thusness or Suchness. When the view is negatively expressed it indicates the true negation or Void, because any special state of thing is denied altogether. Such is considered to be the ultimate idea of Buddhist philosophy. When the ultimate principle is considered from the universal point of view, it is called "the Realm of Principle" (Dharmadhatu), but when it is considered from the personal point of view, it is named "the Matrix of Thus-come or Thus-gone" (Tathagatagarbha). Other ways of expressing this same idea are: the Buddha-nature (Buddhata or Buddha-svabhava), and the Spiritual or Law-body (Dharmakaya). These are all practically synonymous. And this is the very true state of all things which is meant by Thusness or Suchness. Without knowing the principle of Thusness or Void in the highest sense of the word, one can in no way understand the Mahayana doctrine. The word 'void' in its highest sense does not mean 'nothingness,' but indicates 'devoid of special conditions,' or 'unconditioned'.

Chapter Thirty-One

Believe That Cultivation Is the Foundation for Stopping Evil Actions and Increasing Good Actions

Besides the core teachings, do not get involved in evil deeds, do whatever benefits others, always keep the mind pure, that is all the Buddha's teaching, Buddhist teachings still have a lot of other teachings that will surely guide practitioners from the illusive bank to the shore of enlightenment, among them, we have to first mention the Buddha's teaching on not blindly believing in anything until it's clearly verified. As a matter of fact, the Buddha always reminded his disciples: "You should reject blind belief. Do not judge by hearsay, not on mere assertion, not on authority of so-called sacred scriptures. Do not hurriedly judge according to appearances, not believe anything because an ascetic or a teacher has said it." The Buddha taught us not to blindly believe in the view attachments; on the contrary, we should listen to correct dharmas and firmly believe that cultivation is the foundation for stopping evil actions and increasing good actions before we can advance to purifying our mind. Devout Buddhists should always remember that teachings preached by the Buddha are methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment without any exceptions.

Devout Buddhists should always believe that cultivation is the foundation for stopping evil actions and increasing good actions. In other words, those who cultivate always obey and practice in accordance with the Buddha's teachings in the Dharmapada Sutra, verse 183: Not to do evil, to do good, to purify one's mind, this is the teaching of the Buddhas." Good karma created by wholesome path such as practicing of the five precepts and the ten wholesome deeds, which will result in happiness. Good karmas are deeds that lead to birth in better realms. According to The Path of Purification, ten unwholesome deeds are both unprofitable action and courses that lead to unhappy destinies: killing living things, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, gossip, covetousness, ill-will, and wrong view. Zen Master Philip

Kapleau wrote in the *Awakening to Zen*: "In classical Buddhism, actions are not termed 'good' or 'bad,' but rather 'skillful' or 'unskillful.' Skillful actions are those that arise from an awareness of Unity, or nonseparation. Such actions, not overly bound by attachment to thoughts of self and other, are spontaneous, wise, and compassionate. In Buddhist teachings, kusala karma (good karma, good deeds, skillful action) means volitional action that is done in accordance with the Aryan Eightfold Noble Path. So, Kusala karma is not only in accordance with the right action, but it is also always in accordance with the right view, right understanding, right speech, right livelihood, right energy, right concentration and right samadhi. Kusala karmas or good deeds will help a person control a lot of troubles arising from his mind. Inversely, if a person does evil deeds he will receive bad results in this life and the next existence which are suffering. A good man, an honest man, especially one who believes in Buddhist ideas of causality and lives a good life. There are two classes of people in this life, those who are inclined to quarrel and addicted to dispute, and those who are bent to living in harmony and happy in friendliness. The first class can be classified wicked, ignorant and heedless folk. The second class comprised of good, wise and heedful people. The Buddha has made a clear distinction between wickedness and goodness and advises all his disciples not to do evil actions, to perform good ones and to purify their own heart. He know that it is easy to do evil action. To perform meritorious one far more difficult. But His disciples should know how to select in between evil and good, because wicked people will go to hell and undergo untold suffering, while good ones will go to Heaven and enjoy peaceful bliss. *There are ten meritorious deeds, or the ten paths of good action according to the Mahayana Buddhism: First, to abstain from killing, but releasing beings is good. Second, to abstain from stealing, but giving is good. Third, to abstain from sexual misconduct, but being virtuous is good. Fourth, to abstain from lying, but telling the truth is good. Fifth, to abstain from speaking double-tongued (two-faced speech), but telling the truth is good. Sixth, to abstain from hurtful words (abusive slander), but speaking loving words is good. Seventh, to abstain from useless gossiping, but speaking useful words. Eighth, to abstain from being greedy and covetous. Ninth, to abstain from being angry, but being gentle is good. Tenth, to abstain*

from being attached (devoted) to wrong views, but understand correctly is good. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, chapter ten, the Buddha of the Fragrant Land, Vimalakirti said to Bodhisattvas of the Fragrant Land as follows: “As you have said, the Bodhisattvas of this world have strong compassion, and their lifelong works of salvation for all living beings surpass those done in other pure lands during hundreds and thousands of aeons. Why? Because they achieved ten excellent deeds which are not required in other pure lands.” What are these ten excellent deeds? They are: *First*, using charity (dana) to succour the poor. *Second*, using precept-keeping (sila) to help those who have broken the commandments. *Third*, using patient endurance (ksanti) to subdue their anger. *Fourth*, using zeal and devotion (virya) to cure their remissness. *Fifth*, using serenity (dhyana) to stop their confused thoughts. *Sixth*, using wisdom (prajna) to wipe out ignorance. *Seventh*, putting an end to the eight distressful conditions for those suffering from them. *Eighth*, teaching Mahayana to those who cling to Hinayana. *Ninth*, cultivation of good roots for those in want of merits. *Tenth*, the four Bodhisattva winning devices for the purpose of leading all living beings to their goals (in Bodhisattva development).

Unskillful actions, on the other hand, grow out of the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred or anger, and delusion. As the primary delusion is that of self and other, thoughts and actions that arise from such condition of separation, of separateness we might say, tend to be reactive and self-protective. They can hardly form the basis of skillful life, that is, creative and fulfilling. For example, think of the first item of good character: not to kill but to cherish all life. It is not possible to commit murder unless the thought to take a life has arisen. One must have already seen a person as separate from oneself and one's own self-interest to conceive of him or her as someone to be killed. Out of this seed of separation, this thought in the mind, the deed can happen. Killing is the outward expression of a mind dominated by separation, specifically by anger or hatred. Deeds are thoughts made manifest. From unskillful thoughts, unskillful or pain-producing acts arise. Almost all action proceeds from thought." Talking about evil deeds, from the earliest period, Buddhist thought has argued that immoral actions are the result of ignorance (avidya), which prompts beings to engage in actions (karma) that will have negative consequences for them. Thus

evil for Buddhism is a second-order problem, which is eliminated when ignorance is overcome. Thus the definition of sin and evil is pragmatic: evil actions are those that result in suffering and whose consequences are perceived as painful for beings who experience them. All karmas are controlled by the threefold deed (body, speech, and mind). Three deeds of the body, four deeds of the mouth, and three deeds of the mind. Unwholesome karmas are harmful actions, or conducts in thought, word, or deed (by the body, speech, and mind) to self and others which leads to evil recompense. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: As rust sprung from iron eats itself away when arisen, just like ill deeds lead the doer to a miserable state (Dharmapada 240).

There are ten Evil Actions: All karmas are controlled by the threefold deed (body, speech, and mind). Three deeds of the body, four deeds of the mouth, and three deeds of the mind. Three in Action of Body (Kaya Karma (skt): *First*, killing, taking the life of any beings, including human or animal. We do not free trapped animals; but, in contrast, we continue to kill and murder innocent creatures, such as fishing, hunting, etc. *Second*, stealing, all forms of acquiring for oneself that which belongs to another. We do not give, donate, or make offerings; but, in contrast, we continue to be selfish, stingy, and stealing from others. *Third*, sexual misconduct, all forms of sex-indulgence, by action or thoughts wants. We do not behave properly and honorably; but, in contrast, we continue to commit sexual misconduct or sexual promiscuity. Four in Action of Mouth (Vac Karma (skt). The evil karma of speech is the mightiest. We must know that evil speech is even more dangerous than fire because fire can only destroy all material possessions and treasures of this world, but the fierce fire of evil speech not only burns all the Seven Treasures of Enlightened beings and all virtues of liberation, but it will also reflect on the evil karma vipaka in the future. *Fourth*, false speech or telling lies or using obscene and lewd words or speech. We do not speak the truth; but, in contrast, we continue to lie and speak falsely. *Fifth*, insulting or coarsing abusive language or abusive slandering. We do not speak soothingly and comfortably; but, in contrast, we continue to speak wickedly and use a double-tongue to cause other harm and disadvantages. *Sixth*, useless gossiping and frivolous chattering. We do not speak kind and wholesome words; but, in contrast, we continue to

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

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: The evil-doer grieves in this world and in the next; he grieves in both. He grieves and suffers when he perceives the evil of his own deeds (Dharmapada 15). The virtuous man rejoices in this world, and in the next. He is happy in both worlds. He rejoices and delights when he perceives the purity of his own deeds (Dharmapada 16). The evil man suffers in this world and in the next. He suffers everywhere. He suffers whenever he thinks of the evil deeds he has done. Furthermore he suffers even more when he has gone to a woeful path (Dharmapada 17). The virtuous man is happy here in this world, and he is happy there in the next. He is happy everywhere. He is happy when he thinks of the good deeds he has done. Furthermore, he is even happier when he has gone to a blissful path (Dharmapada 18). Even an evil-doer sees good as long as evil deed has not yet ripened; but when his evil deed has ripened, then he sees the evil results (Dharmapada 119). Even a good person sees evil as long as his good deed has not yet ripened; but when his good deed has ripened, then he sees the good results (Dharmapada 120). Do not disregard small good, saying, "it will not matter to me." Even by the

falling of drop by drop, a water-jar is filled; likewise, the wise man, gathers his merit little by little (Dharmapada 122).” Some are born in a womb; evil-doers are reborn in hells; the righteous people go to blissful states; the undefiled ones pass away into Nirvana (Dharmapada 126). Neither in the sky, nor in mid-ocean, nor in mountain cave, nowhere on earth where one can escape from the consequences of his evil deeds (Dharmapada 127). A fool does not realize when he commits wrong deeds; by his own deeds the stupid man is tormented, like one is lighting fires wherein he must be burnt one day (Dharmapada 136).

Chapter Thirty-Two

Wanting to Advance to the Buddhahood One Must Have Faith & Cultivate Buddha's Teachings

During the time of the Buddha always confirmed his disciples that He was only a guide who showed the Way of Enlightenment and Liberation; and He could never be able to liberate anyone. Those who listen to the Buddha's Teachings on methods of cultivation, then follow these teachings to cultivate will lead to enlightenment. In other words, **those who want to advance to the Buddhahood, everybody should study, understand, believe, and then practice to become a Buddha.** The birth of the Buddha's teachings is the pinnacle of the Buddha's achievement. The Buddha's enlightenment was in some respects the pinnacle of his achievement, but it was his subsequent teaching of Dharma (Truth) that laid the foundation for his enduring legacy. The community of monks and nuns that he established ensured the transmission of this doctrine to future generations, and in the 3rd century B.C. the reign of the emperor Asoka played an instrumental role in the dissemination of Buddhism in India. After he had attained enlightenment, the Buddha remained for seven weeks at the site of the Bodhi Tree and enjoyed great bliss. During this period he realized that what he had come to understand was a profound and difficult truth, which other people relished worldly attachment, would find hard to grasp. According to the Buddha, the Buddha-dharma is simply worldly dharma in which we turn ourselves around. It is the dharma that most ordinary people are unwilling to use. Worldly people are sinking and floating in the worldly dharma; they are always busy running here and there, constantly hurried and agitated. The source of all these activities is invariably selfishness, motivated by a concern to protect their own lives and properties. Buddha-dharma, on the other hand, is unselfish and public-spirited, and springs from a wish to benefit others. Sincere cultivators always think of others' welfare. Sincere cultivators always forget their own "Ego". They always give up their own interests in service to others, and never bring uncomfortable circumstances and afflictions to others. However, most people fail to clearly understand

the basic ideas that the Buddha once preached. As a result as we can see now, within Buddhist circles we find struggle and contention, troubles and hassles, quarrels and strife. These problems seem to be no different from that of ordinary people, if we do not want to say worst than what we can find in worldly life. The Buddha predicted all these problems, thus He concluded that it would be pointless to try to teach others about his enlightenment, but the great god Brahma Sahampati intervened and implored the Buddha to share his discoveries with humankind.

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

For the next forty-five years, until his ultimate extinction, the Buddha taught Dharma. The number of his followers increased steadily and the community of monks, the Sangha, began to form. The Buddha himself continued wandering and begging for his food. He taught indiscriminately, talking to kings and paupers alike, and ceased traveling only in the three months of the rainy season. The Buddha did not appoint a successor. When his disciples asked who would lead them

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

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

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

Chapter Thirty-Three

Zen Practitioners Always Have Great Faith in Cultivation

In Buddhism, belief or faith should serve as the foundation, one of the five roots or organs producing a sound moral life. Faith plays an extremely important role in Buddhism. It is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharmas (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). The mind of faith. Faith in a religion, unlike intellectual learning, does not enable a believer to have the power to save others as well as himself if he understands it only in theory. When he believe from the depths of his heart, his belief produces power. His faith cannot be said to be true until he attains such a mental state. Great faith or great root of faith is the first step in the three factors making for success in the cultivation of Zen. When we undertake the practice of Zen, we have to arouse great faith in the capacity of our mind at the very beginning, and we have to maintain this great faith throughout our entire practice of meditation. But the kind of faith called for in Zen Buddhism differs from the kind of faith required in other religions. Other religions demand that we place faith in a supreme being and that we give our assent to various propositions concerning his nature, attributes, and deeds; we can call this kind of faith "faith in others." In contrast, faith in Zen Buddhism means faith in ourselves. According to the Buddha's teaching, every living being has a Buddha nature. We are not yet Buddha because we have not discovered that Buddha nature. The great faith in Buddhism, especially in Zen Buddhism means faith that the Buddha nature is present within us and that by cultivating the Way taught by the Buddha, we can come to a realization of that Buddha nature. To realize our Buddha nature is not easy. It calls for relentless work, a long and difficult struggle within ourselves. Because of its difficulty many people who begin abandon the way; therefore, there are not many Buddhas in the world. This is why faith is so necessary. The first and most important thing is that we believe in our own capacity, that we believe in the seed of enlightenment within us and that we do not abandon this faith no matter

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

Chapter Thirty-Four

Faith in the Pure Land School

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

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

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

Buddhas, showing them the Self-Nature directly so that they might attain Buddhahood in one lifetime, as in the case of Sudhana in the Avatamsaka Sutra or the Dragon Princess in the Lotus Sutra. To those of more modest capacities, the Buddha taught the Bodhisattva, Pratyeka Buddha and Arhat paths, so that they might reach Buddhahood through step-by-step cultivation. To those of still lower capacities, the Buddha taught the Five Precepts and the Ten Virtues. In 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang said: "These methods, high or low, some leading to swift liberation, others to gradual liberation, are all different. However, they all require self-power and deep cultivation to escape from the cycle of Birth and Death and reach the Self-Nature. If even a trace delusion of views or delusion of thought remains, the root of Birth and Death cannot be extirpated. This being the case, even if the cultivator's powers of concentration and wisdom are profound, he will continue to revolve in the cycle of Birth and Death. Only at the level of the Arhats are the roots of Birth and Death completely severed. However, transcending Birth and Death is merely the small fruit of the Arhats; the cultivator must still aim for the path of Great Bodhi, relying on his Vow to be reborn in the worlds of the ten directions. He may then cultivate the six paramitas and the ten thousand conducts, in order to achieve Buddhahood and rescue sentient beings. In this manner, he will gradually achieve the fifty-two stages of Bodhisattvahood, up to the level of Wonderful Enlightenment, before finally reaching Buddhahood." Pure Land practitioners should always keep in mind that in the midst of this Dharma-Ending Age, there are very few good spiritual advisors, while the capacities of sentient beings are limited. It is difficult enough to find someone who is awakened to the Way, not to mention one who has truly attained Enlightenment? Knowing that sentient beings would find it extremely difficult to achieve liberation by relying on self-power alone, Sakyamuni Buddha taught, in addition to other methods, the special approach of Pure Land. With this method, as long as their Faith and Vows are true and earnest, even those who have committed the Five Grave Offenses or the Ten Evil Acts, may, on the verge of death, when the mark of the hells appear, follow the advice of a good spiritual advisor and recite the Buddha's name one to ten times; then, thanks to the compassionate power of Amitabha Buddha, even they will be received and guided to

the Pure Land, not to mention those who practice wholesome deeds and do not commit transgressions! To repeat the name of a Buddha audibly or inaudibly, or visualization of the Buddha's auspicious marks. The intermediate goal of Buddha Recitation is to achieve one-pointed mind; from one-pointed mind gradually one can see one's own nature or to achieve the ultimate goal of Buddhahood. In the Great Heap Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha predicted: "In the Dharma-Ending Age, among multitude of practitioners, very few will attain the Way. The most they can expect is to rely on the Pure Land method to escape Birth and Death. Besides, in the Long Amitabha Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha made the following prediction: "In the days to come, the paths of the sutras will come to extinction. I, with compassion and mercy, will purposely make this sutra survive for a hundred years. Anybody who encounters this sutra will, according to his wish, surely attain Enlightenment." In 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang said: "To receive true benefits in this very life, the practitioner should follow the Pure Land method, reciting the Buddha's name with Faith and Vows, seeking rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Escape from the realms of Birth and Death will then be assured. Otherwise, not only will those who have not received the true transmission of the Dharma fail to achieve liberation, even those who have received it will have no hope of achieving liberation! This is because to receive the true transmission of the Dharma is to awaken to the Way, but not to attain Enlightenment. Only by attaining Enlightenment, at the Arhat level or above, will you escape the cycle of Birth and Death. Awakening to the Way is still within that cycle. Cultivating other methods requires severance of karmic obstructions and attainment of the Truth before you can escape Birth and Death. With the Pure Land method, you need only recite the Buddha's name with deep Faith and earnest Vows, while ceasing transgressions and performing good deeds, thus engaging simultaneously in the main and subsidiary practices in order to be assured of rebirth in the Western Pure Land. In fact, the highest level of rebirth will be achieved. Not only are those who have perfected Pure Land practice assured of rebirth, even those guilty of the Five Grave Offenses and the Ten Evil Acts can also achieve it, as long as, on the verge of death, they awaken, become utterly ashamed of their transgressions, grow

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

According to the Pure Land School, Buddha recitation means to repeat the name of a Buddha audibly or inaudibly, or visualization of the Buddha's auspicious marks. It is to say to depend upon or dependence on the Amitabha Buddha, who confers his strength on all who seek it and upholds them; it implies prayer, because of obtaining the Buddha's power and transferring it to others. In general it means to aid or to support. By the aid of Buddha to enter the Pure Land. Sentient beings are reborn in the Pure Land owing to the assistance of the following Buddhas; the guidance of our original teacher, Sakyamuni Buddha, and his teachings, and the welcoming and escorting of

Amitabha Buddha. Great Master Ying-Kuang reminded Buddhist followers to singlemindedly recite the Buddha's name if they wish for their mind not to be attaching and wandering to the external world. Do not forget that death is lurking and hovering over us, it can strike us at any moment. If we do not wholeheartedly concentrate to practice Buddha Recitation, praying to gain rebirth to the Western Pureland, then if death should come suddenly, we are certain to be condemned to the three unwholesome realms where we must endure innumerable sufferings and sometime infinite Buddhas have in turn appeared in the world, but we are still trapped in the evil paths and unable to find liberation. Thus, cultivators should always ponder the impermanence of a human life, while death could come at any moment without warning. We should always think that we have committed infinite and endless unwholesome karmas in our former life and this life, and the sufferings awaiting for us in the unwholesome realms. Upon thinking all these, we will be awakened in every moment, and we no longer have greed and lust for the pleasures of the five desires and six elements of the external world. According to the "Uninterrupted Cultivation" method of the the Second Patriarch of Chinese Pureland Buddhism, the Great Venerable Master Sen-Tao, in order for recitation to be considered a "Singlemindedness Buddha Recitation," it is necessary to have the following criteria: body must often prostrate to Amitabha Buddha, and not prostrate in a random or disorderly way; mouth must often recite the virtuous name of Amitabha Buddha, and not recite in a random and disorderly way; and mind must often think of Amitabha Buddha, and not think in a random and disorderly way. There are many different methods of Buddha Recitation, such as oral recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name; visualization or contemplation of Amitabha Buddha's auspicious marks and those enlightening beings of the Pure Land); cultivation of Practices of the ten great vows of Samantabhadra, and so on. In fact, Buddha Recitation is one of the most important koans for Buddhist cultivators. The koan of Buddha Recitation uses the invocation of Amitabha Buddha as a koan. At the very moment the name is uttered, it must be the focal point in respect to which all doubts and delusions are laid aside. At the same time you ask "Who is this person reciting the Amitabha's name?" When you rely steadily on the koan, all illusions and confused thoughts will be broken down the way

knotted threads are cut. When there is no longer any place for them to reappear, it is like the shining sun in the sky. When illusion does not arise and delusions disappear, the mind is all calm and transparent. The intermediate goal of Buddha Recitation is to achieve one-pointed mind; from one-pointed mind gradually one can see one's own nature or to achieve the ultimate goal of Buddhahood. In the Long Amitabha Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha made the following prediction: "In the days to come, the paths of the sutras will come to extinction. I, with compassion and mercy, will purposely make this sutra survive for a hundred years. Anybody who encounters this sutra will, according to his wish, surely attain Enlightenment." Elder Zen Master T'ien-Ju, having attained the Way, also admonished: "In the Dharma-Ending Age, all sutras will disappear, and only the words 'Amitabha Buddha' will remain to bring liberation to sentient beings." This is because, in the distant future, deep in the Degenerate Age, when all sutras have disappeared and people's capacities are at a low level, they will not be aware of any method other than Buddha Recitation. If they do not believe in and practice Pure Land, they will certainly remain mired in the cycle of Birth and Death. Within that cycle, good actions are difficult to perform while bad deeds are easy to commit. Thus sooner or later they are bound to sink into the hellish realms. The Patriarch Yin Kuang, a Chinese Pure Land Master of recent times, also said: "The magnificence and extraordinary nature of the Buddha Recitation dharma can only be fully understood among the Buddhas. For those who look down on this dharma door of Buddha Recitation, not only will they belittle the 'old men and elderly women' who are practicing Pureland, they will also belittle the Buddhas and the Maha-Bodhisattvas such as Manjusri, Samantabhadra, Asvaghosha, and Nagarjuna. In the current Dharma-Ending Age, sentient beings bear heavy karma and their minds are deluded. If they practice other methods rather than Buddha Recitation, they can expect to sow the seeds of merit, virtue and wisdom but not to escape the cycle of Birth and Death in their present lifetimes. Although there are a few instances of great monks exhibiting extraordinary achievement, they are in reality transformation Bodhisattvas. In accordance with their vows, they act as examples for sentient beings in the Dharma-Ending Age, as is taught in the Surangama Sutra (a key Zen text). Even then, these

Bodhisattvas, adapting themselves to people's capacities, can only take the expedient appearance of having awakened to the Way, but not having attained Enlightenment. In the specific case of Pure Land, very few sentient beings can achieve the Buddha Recitation Samadhi these days, compared to earlier times. However, through Buddha Recitation, they can take their residual karma along with them to the Pure Land by relying on their own vows and those of Amitabha Buddha. Once there, they have escaped Birth and Death, achieved non-retrogression, and can progress in cultivation until they reach the stage of Non-Birth.”

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

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

We are to believe when the writing doctrine or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness. In other words, everything should be carefully weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected immediately, but left for further consideration.”

III. Practitioners and Faith in Buddha Recitation:

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

2) *Six Elements in Faith*: According to Most Venerable Thích Thiệu Tâm in *The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism*, he emphasized that to have Faith is to believe in the following six elements: **First**, Self-Faith or faith in self. What is self-faith or faith in one's self? This is to have faith that everything is created within one's mind; therefore, if a practitioner recites Buddha, then, absolutely, Buddha will receive him or her. **Second**, Faith in Others or trust others. What is faith in others? This is to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. **Third**, Faith in Causation or to believe in the cause. What is it to have faith in causation? This is to believe that reciting Buddha is the action or cause for gaining rebirth and enlightenment. **Fourth**, Faith in Effect or faith in the result. What is it to believe in effect? To believe in effect means to believe that in the matter of gaining rebirth and attaining Buddhahood as the end result, or the consequence of reciting Buddha. **Fifth**, Faith in Practice. What is it to have faith in practice? To faith faith in practice means to believe in the existence of the Western Pureland and that the forms and characteristics in the Ultimate Bliss World that the Buddha spoke of it in the sutras are all true. It exists just as this Saha World really exists. **Sixth**, Faith in Theory. What is it to have faith in theory? This is to believe that "all theories are within the mind;" thus, the mind encompasses all the infinite Buddha Lands in the ten directions.

3) *Faith-Interpretation-Performance-Evidence*: All Buddhist teachings are expedient. Thus, it can be said that rebirth in the Pure Land depends on four conditions of Faith-Interpretation-Performance-Evidence, or on two conditions of Faith and Vows, or even one condition of Faith, as the one contains all and all is contained in the one. The formula to be used depends on the audience and the time. The aim is to enable sentient beings to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land as a middle point toward Buddhahood. Faith, interpretation, performance, and evidence or realization of the fruit of Buddha's doctrine. The Pure Land Sect believes that during this Dharma-Ending Age, it is difficult to attain enlightenment and emancipation in this very life if one practices other methods without following Pure Land at the same time. If emancipation is not achieved in this lifetime, one's

crucial vows will become empty thoughts as one continues to be deluded on the path of Birth and Death. Devoted Buddhists should always be very cautious, not to praise one's school and downplay other schools. Devoted Buddhists should always remember that we all are Buddhists and we all practice the teachings of the Buddha, though with different means, we have the same teachings, the Buddha's Teachings; and the same goal, emancipation and becoming Buddha. Faith (belief) regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. *Faith* means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. *Interpretation* means the awakening is to achieve a level of insight and understanding equal to that of the Buddha through Zen meditation or Buddha recitation. Awakening is to see one's nature, to comprehend the true nature of things, or the Truth. However, only after becoming a Buddha can one be said to have attained Supreme Enlightenment or attained the Way. According to the Pureland Buddhism, *practice* means one must recite the Amitabha Buddha with the utmost sincerity to the point of achieving one-mind or single-minded recitation in order to establish the unimaginable connections and having the Buddha rescue and deliver the cultivator to the Western Pureland after death. Great Master Shan-Tao taught: "If you wish to study meaning to understand the Dharma, you should study all Dharmas, from the mundane level to the level of the Buddhas. However, if you want to engage in 'practice,' you should choose a method compatible with the Truth as well as your own capacities and level and then concentrate on it earnestly. Only then can you reap benefits swiftly. Otherwise, even if you spend many eons, you will not be able to escape Birth and Death." Knowledge derived from any sources but memory, i.e., knowledge from perception, from feelings, from sensing, etc. Devoted cultivators should always remember that to have "*proof of rebirth in the Pure Land*" does not mean that you know the day and time you will die, or see some so-called auspicious signs

for externalists can guess such thing. Real “proof of rebirth in the Pure Land” is that from now on we must be earnest in our cultivation, practicing Zen in the morning, performing good deeds at noon, and reciting Amitabha Buddha’s name at night.

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

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

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

assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our own teachers or masters. We are to believe when the writing doctrine or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness. In other words, everything should be carefully weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected immediately, but left for further consideration.” Faith plays an extremely important role in Buddhism. It is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharmas (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. In Buddhism, doubt means having no faith that is directed towards the Four Truths, the Three Jewels, cause and effect, and so on. When we are in doubt in the Three Jewel, we cannot advance in our path of cultivation. When we doubt the law of cause and effect, we will not hesitate to create karmas. When we are in doubt in the four truths, it is extremely difficult for us to attain liberation. According to The Pureland Buddhism, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name. While practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. And vow means to wish to attain Buddhahood or to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiên Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, with point of view from the Pureland, practice means to take action or make application of the teaching. This means to recite often the virtuous name “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without distraction and without chaos throughout one’s life. The Pure Land followers believe that “Vow” is with each thought that arises, there is a “love and yearning” to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World, and with each thought, there is a “wish and prayer” To achieve a place in the nine-levels of Golden Lotus. In these three components of faith, practice, and vow, it is absolutely essential for the Pureland cultivator

to have all three; however, vow is the most important. The Great Master Ou-I, the Ninth Patriarch of Pureland Buddhism taught: “If Faith and Vow are solidified, when nearing death, it is possible to gain rebirth by reciting the Buddha’s name in ten recitations. In contrast, no matter how much one recites Buddha, if Faith and Vow are weak and deficient, then this will result only in reaping the merits and blessings in the Heavenly or Human realms.” However, this teaching only applies to beings with higher faculties. As for us, beings with low faculties, thin blessings and heavy karmas; if we wish to gain rebirth to the Ultimate Bliss World, we must have Faith, Practices and Vow. In other words, we must carry out both parts of Theory and Practice. For Pure Land practitioners, faith is believing in the Ultimate Bliss World truly exists just as the Saha World on which we are currently living. Faith means to have faith that Amitabha Buddha is always protecting and will readily rescue and deliver any sentient being who knows to respect and recite sincerely His name.

Chapter Thirty-Five

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

I. Faith in Buddhism:

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

With Buddhism, to believe religion without understanding it thoroughly, it's a blind faith, or it's not different from superstition. Even though understanding but understanding without finding to see if it's right or wrong, in accordance or not in accordance with truth, with reality, it's also a form of superstition or wrong belief. Believe that

when you sow a seed of hot-pepper, you will have a hot-pepper tree and eventually you will reap hot-pepper fruit. However, even though you have already sown the seed of hot-pepper, but you realize that you don't like to eat fruit that is hot, you stop fertilizing and watering the hot-pepper tree, the tree will wither and die, and will not produce any fruit. Similarly, if you know an action is bad and unwholesome, you refuse to act, of course you will not receive any bad or unwholesome consequence. The Buddha refuses to believe that whatever happens to a person, either good or bad, is due to chance, fate or fortune. Everything that happens has a specific cause or causes and there must be some tight relationships between the cause and the effect. Those who want to believe in Buddhism should not rush to become a Buddhist with the wrong understanding or blind belief in Buddhism. You should take your time to do more researches, to ask questions, and to consider carefully before making your final decision. Religions that worship god have always considered reason and wisdom as the enemy of faith and dogma for them there exist only "believe" or "not believe" and nothing else. In fact, if we accept that there exists a so-called almighty god, we cannot accept any of the findings of modern science; neither Darwin's science of biological evolution nor the theories of the nature and evolution of the universe coming from modern physics. They believe that a so-called creator god invented humankind and the universe all at once and that these three realms of god, man and universe, all are separate. However, modern science agrees with what the Buddha taught almost twenty-six centuries ago, and proves that the universe as one infinite process of change. Furthermore, the belief of salvation by god caused a serious danger to the whole world, especially from the first century to the end of the nineteenth century, for those who believe in the salvation of god believe that they must impose salvation on others. For this reason, Catholic countries sent their troops and priests all over the world to save others by force. And as a result, millions of people got killed or slaughtered and subjugated in the name of god. Buddhism is in contrast with other religions that believe in god. Buddhism teaches that one must develop wisdom. However, wisdom in Buddhism is not simply believing in what we are told or taught. True wisdom is to directly see and understand for ourselves. With this wisdom, people will have an open mind that listens to others' points of

view rather than being closed-minded; people will also carefully examine facts that contradict their belief rather than blindly believing. Sincere Buddhists never believe in the law of eternity. The Buddha accepts the law of impermanence or change and denies the existence of eternal substances. Matter and spirit are false abstractions that, in reality, are only changing factors or dharmas which are connected and which arise in functional dependence on each other. Thus, Buddhist faith means that the devotee accepts the Buddha as a Teacher and a Guide, His doctrine as way of life, and the Sangha community as the exemplars of this way of life. According to Buddhist point of view in faith, everyone is completely free to make his own choice in faith, no one has the right to interfere with other people's choice. Let's take a close look in the Buddha's teaching in the Kalama Sutra: "Nothing should be accepted merely on the ground of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. Everything should be weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one's own true benefits. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected but left for further considerations." Therefore, we see clearly that Buddhism is based on personal experience, rationalism, practice, morality, and insight. There is no need to propitiate gods or masters. There is no blind adherence to a faith, rigid dogmas, rituals, scriptures, or myths. The Buddha always confirmed his disciples that a salvation can only be gained by man and by man only during his life without the least help from a so-called god or gods.

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

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

Buddhism considers human's liberation the priority. Once the Buddha was asked by a monk named Malunkyaputta, whether the world was eternal or not eternal, whether the world was finite or infinite, whether the soul was one thing and the body another, whether a Buddha existed after death or did not exist after death, and so on, and so on. The Buddha flatly refused to discuss such metaphysics, and instead gave him a parable. "It is as if a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and yet he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know by what man I was wounded,' or 'I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know of what the arrow with which I was wounded was made.'" As a practical man he should of course get himself treated by the physician at once, without demanding these unnecessary details which would not help him in the least. This was the attitude of the Buddha toward the metaphysical speculation which do not in any way help improve ourselves in our cultivation. The Buddha would say, "Do not go by reasoning, nor by argument." Besides, Buddhism does not accept such practices as fortune telling, wearing magic charms for protection, fixing lucky sites for building, prophesying and fixing lucky days, etc. All these practices are considered useless superstitions in Buddhism. However, because of greed, fear and ignorance, some Buddhists still try to stick to these superstitious practices. As soon as people understand the Buddha's teachings, they realize that a pure heart can protect them much better

than empty words of fortune telling, or wearing nonsense charms, or ambiguous chanted words and they are no longer rely on such meaningless things. In Buddhism, liberation is a motto which heightens (elevates) the unfettered spirit beyond the irrational wall of conventional restriction in which the faith of each individual must be chosen by that individual and by no one else. However, the Buddha always emphasized “Try to understand thoroughly before believing, even with my teachings, for acting freely and without knowing the real meaning of whatever you act sometimes you unintentionally destroy valuable traditions of yourselves. This is the same as a diamond being thrown into the dirt.” The Buddha continued to advise: “When you do anything you should think of its consequence.” Nowadays, more than 2,500 years after the Buddha’s time, all scientists believe that every event that takes place in the world is subject to the law of cause and effect. In other words, cause is the activity and effect is the result of the activity. The Buddha described the world as an unending flux of becoming. All is changeable, continuous transformation, ceaseless mutation, and a moving stream. Everything exists from moment to moment. Everything is recurring rotation of coming into being and then passing out of existence. Everything is moving from formation to destruction, from birth to death. The matter of material forms are also a continuous movement or change towards decay. This teaching of the impermanent nature of everything is one of the most important points of view of Buddhism. Nothing on earth partakes of the character of absolute reality. That is to say there will be no destruction of what is formed is impossible. Whatever is subject to origination is subject to destruction. Change is the very constituent of reality. In daily life, things move and change between extremes and contrasts, i.e., rise and fall, success and failure, gain and loss, honor and contempt, praise and blame, and so on. No one can be sure that a “rise” does not follow with a “fall”, a success does not follow with a failure, a gain with a loss, an honor with a contempt, and a praise with a blame. To thoroughly understand this rule of change or impermanence, Buddhists are no longer dominated by happiness, sorrow, delight, despair, disappointment, satisfaction, self-confidence and fear.

In the noble teachings of the Buddha, it is honesty, kindness, understanding, patience, generosity, forgiveness, loyalty and other

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

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

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

According to Buddhism, "Faith" regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. The question is to what place, faith is placed in Buddhism? Faith in Buddhism is totally different from faith in other religions.

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

According to Most Venerable Thích Thiên Tâm in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, he emphasized that to have Faith is to believe in the following six elements: 1) What is self-faith or faith in one’s self ? This is to have faith that everything is created within one’s mind; therefore, if a practitioner recites Buddha, then, absolutely, Buddha will receive him or her. 2) What is faith in others? This is to have faith that Sakyamuni Buddha would never speak falsely and Amitabha Buddha did not make empty vows. Therefore, if cultivators practice according to Pureland teachings, then Amitabha Buddha will deliver them to the Ultimate World. 3) What is it to have faith in causation? This is to believe that reciting Buddha is the action or cause

for gaining rebirth and enlightenment. 4) What is it to believe in effect? To believe in effect means to believe that in the matter of gaining rebirth and attaining Buddhahood as the end result, or the consequence of reciting Buddha. 5) What is it to have faith in practice? To faith faith in practice means to believe in the existence of the Western Pureland and that the forms and characteristics in the Ultimate Bliss World that the Buddha spoke of it in the sutras are all true. It exists just as this Saha World really exists. 6) What is it to have faith in theory? This is to believe that “all theories are within the mind;” thus, the mind encompasses all the infinite Buddha Lands in the ten directions. In the Kalama Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Do not have Faith (believe) in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Do not believe in anything because it is spoken or rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found in religious books. Do not believe in anything only because it is taught by your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that everything agrees with reason and is for the benefit of all beings, then accept it and live accordingly.” In short, practitioners should believe that the Saha World is filled with sufferings; believe that the Western Pure Land is filled with immense joy; believe that ordinary beings full of evil karma, you cannot, realistically, rely on own strength or your self-power alone to eliminate delusion completely, realize the Truth and escape Birth and Death in this very lifetime; believe that Amitabha Buddha has made a profound and lofty Vow: any sentient being who recites His name with utmost faith and sincerity, seeking rebirth in His land will, at the time of death, be received and guided to the Pure Land.

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

Faith (Sradha-skt) plays an extremely important role in Buddhism. It is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharmas (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and

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

Chapter Thirty-Six

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

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

If you adhere to them and practice them uninterruptedly, is it not the same as if my Dharma-body (Dharmakaya) remained here forever?" In spite of these thoughtful instructions some of his disciples were expressing a dissenting idea even before his funeral. It was natural, therefore, for the mindful elders to think of calling a council of elders in order to preserve the orthodox teaching of the Buddha. They consulted King Ajatasatru who at once ordered the eighteen monasteries around his capital to be repaired for housing the members of the coming Council of Rajagriha. When the time arrived five hundred selected elders met together. Ananda rehearsed the Dharmas (sutras) while Upali explained the origin of each of the Vinaya rules. There was no necessity of rehearsing the Vinaya rules themselves since they had been compiled during the Buddha's lifetime for weekly convocation for confessions. At the council a fine collection of the Dharma and the Vinaya was made, the number of Sutras was decided, and the history of the disciplinary rules was compiled. The result of the elders' activity was acknowledged as an authority by those who had a formalistic and realistic tendency. There were, however, some who differed from them in their opinion. Purana, for instance, was skilled in preaching. Purana was in a bamboo grove near Rajagriha during the council, and, being asked by some layman, is said to have answered: "The council may produce a fine collection. But I will keep to what I heard from my teacher myself. So we may presume that there were some who had idealistic and free-thinking tendencies.

In the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, the Buddha said: "Those who follow the Way are like floating pieces of woods in the water flowing above the current, not touching either shore and that are not picked up by people, not intercepted by ghosts or spirits, not caught in whirlpools, and that which do not rot. I guarantee that these pieces of wood will certainly reach the sea. I guarantee that students of the Way who are not deluded by emotional desire nor bothered by myriad of devious things but who are vigorous in their cultivation or development of the unconditioned will certainly attain the way." For left-home people, basically speaking, all teachings of the Buddha are aimed at releasing human beings' troubles in this very life. They have a function of helping an individual see the way to make arise the wholesome thoughts to release the opposite evil thoughts. For example, meditation

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

Appendices

Appendix A

Five Sense Organs

According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five roots or faculties (indriyani), or five organs of the senses or five spiritual faculties. *The first organ is the Eyes:* This is one of the six senses on which one relies or from which knowledge is received. *The second organ is the Ears:* According to Buddhism, this is one of the six unions of the six sense organs with the six objects of the senses, the ears is in union with sound heard. *The third organ is the Nose:* Nose is in union with the smell smelt, this is one of the six unions of the six sense organs with the six objects of the senses. *The fourth organ is the Tongue:* Tongue is in union with the taste tasted, this is one of the six unions of the six sense organs with the six objects of the senses. *The fifth organ is the Body:* Body is in union with the thing touched, this is one of the six unions of the six sense organs with the six objects of the senses. There are four causes that cause the eye-sense to be awakened. Other sense organs are also awakened in the same manner. There are still five more faculties: Pleasant bodily feeling (Sukha (p), Pain (Dukkha (p), Gladness (Somanassa (p), Sadness (Domanassa (p), and Indifferent feeling (Upekha (p). The five sense-organs can be entrances to the hells; at the same time, they can be some of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with them, we create karmas and sins, but also with them, we can practise the right way.

There are still five more faculties. The first faculty is the faith or virtue of belief (Sraddhendriya or Saddha p). Sense of belief in the Triple Gem and the Four Noble Truths. The second faculty is the energy (vigor) or virtue of active vigor (Viriyendriya). Sense of endeavor or vigor to cultivate good deeds. The third faculty is the sense of memory means right memory or mindfulness. The mind that always focuses upon the Buddha. Practically speaking, of course, it is impossible for us to completely forget the Buddha for even a moment. When a student devotes himself to his studies or when an adult is entirely absorbed in his work, he must concentrate on one object.

Doing so accords with the way to Buddhahood. While devoting ourselves to a particular object, we reflect, "I am caused to live by the Buddha." When we complete a difficult task we feel relieved, we thank the Buddha, saying, "How lucky I am! I am protected by the Buddha." When an evil thought flashes across our mind or we suddenly feel angry, we instantly examine ourselves, thinking, "Is this the way to Buddhahood?" The mind that thus keeps the Buddha in mind at all times is "sense of memory." Mindfulness recognizes, is aware of its presence, accepts and allows it to be there. Mindfulness is like a big brother who does not suppress his younger brother's suffering. He simply says: "Dear brother, I'm here for you." You take your younger brother in your arms and you comfort him. This is exactly our practice. Mindfulness does not fight anger or despair. Mindfulness is there in order to recognize. To be mindful of something is to recognize that something is the capacity of being aware of what is going on in the present moment. According to Most Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh in "Anger," the best way to be mindful of anger is "when breathing in I know that anger has manifested in me; breathing out I smile towards my anger." This is not an act of suppression or of fighting. It is an act of recognizing. Once we recognize our anger, we are able to take good care of it or to embrace it with a lot of awareness, a lot of tenderness. The fourth faculty is the visionary meditation. Visionary meditation means samadhi, or virtue of concentration. The sense of meditation implies a determined mind. Once we have faith in a religion, we are never agitated by anything, whatever may happen. We bear patiently all persecution and temptation, and we continue to believe only in one religion. We must constantly maintain such firm determination, never becoming discouraged. We cannot be said to be real people with a religious faith unless we have such a mental attitude. The fifth faculty is the virtue of wisdom or awareness (Prajñendriya). Sense of wisdom or thinking of the truth. The wisdom that people of religion must maintain. This is not a self-centered wisdom but the true wisdom that we obtain when we perfectly free ourselves from ego and illusion. So long as we have this wisdom, we will not take the wrong way. We can say the same thing of our belief in religion itself, not to mention in our daily lives. If we are attached to a selfish, small desire, we are apt to stray toward a mistaken religion. However, earnestly we may believe

in it, endeavoring to practice its teaching, keeping it in mind, and devoting ourselves to it, we cannot be saved because of its basically wrong teaching, and we sink farther and farther into the world of illusion. There are many instances around us of people following such a course. Although “sense of wisdom” is mentioned as the last of the five organs leading man to good conduct, it should be the first in the order in which we enter a religious life.

Appendix B

The Eight Beliefs in Buddhism

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

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

Appendix C

Ten Indestructible Faiths In the Avatamsaka Sutra

I. An Overview of the Avatamsaka Sutra:

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

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

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

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

Appendix D

Ten Grades of Bodhisattva Faith in the Surangama Sutra

I. An Overview of the Surangama Sutra:

Surangama-samadhi-nirdesa is also called the Sutra of the Heroic One. The sutra emphasizes the power of samadhi, through which enlightenment can be attained and explained the various methods of the meditation on emptiness through the practice of which everyone can realize enlightenment. This profound writing, originally in sanskrit, written in the first century A.D. The sutra was brought to China by Paramartha and translated into Chinese with the assistance of Wang Yung about 717 A.D. (some said that it was angered the T'ang Emperor that this had been done without first securing the permission of the government, so Wang-Yung was punished and Paramartha was forced to return to India). It is widely developed and venerated in all the Mahayana Buddhist countries. Among other things, the sutra helps Buddhist followers exercising Bodhisattva magga. It deals at length with the successive steps for the attainment of supreme enlightenment. It also emphasizes the power of samadhi, through which enlightenment can be attained. In addition, the sutra also explains the various methods of the meditation on emptiness through the practice of which everyone can realize enlightenment. The sutra also emphasizes the power of samadhi, through which enlightenment can be attained, and explained the various methods of emptiness meditation through the practice of which everyone can realize enlightenment. It describes the tranquilizing (pacifying) of the mind by exclusion of concepts arising directly or indirectly from sensory experiences, the nature of truth realized in samadhi or deepest contemplation, and the transcendental virtues and powers resulting. The Surangama Sutra was spoken for Ananda's sake, precisely because he didn't have sufficient samadhi-power. He had not done the work of meditation required to develop it. When people were in sitting meditating, Ananda would go to read a book or write something else instead. He thought since he was the Buddha's cousin, the Buddha could certainly help him realize

Buddhahood too, and so it did not really matter whether he cultivated or not. He ended up wasting a lot of time. One day, Ananda went out begging for food by himself. He took his bowl and went from house to house. While he was alone on the road he encountered the daughter of Matangi. Ananda was particularly handsome, so when Matangi's daughter saw him, she was immediately attracted to him. But she did not know how to snare him. So, she went back and told her mother, 'You should absolutely have to get Ananda to marry me. If you do not, I will die.' The mother, Matangi, belonged to the religion of the Kapilas, the 'tawny haired', and she used that religion's mantras and dharma devices to delude Ananda's mind, which were extremely effective. Because Ananda did not have any samadhi-power, he could not control himself. At that time Ananda was confused as if he had drunk or taken drugs. He followed the mantra and went to Matangi's daughter's house, where he was on the verge of breaking one of the precepts, the precept against sexual misconduct. The Buddha knew about it as it was happening. Realizing his cousin was in trouble, he quickly spoke the Surangama Mantra to break up the mantras of the Kapila and the power of the Surangama mantras woke Ananda up from his confusion, and then he wondered how he had gotten himself into such a situation. When he returned, he knelt before the Buddha, and cried out in distress. "I have relied exclusively on erudition and have not perfected any strength in the Way. I have no samadhi-power. Please tell me how the Buddhas of the ten directions cultivated so that they were able to obtain samadhi-power." In reply, the Buddha spoke the Surangama Sutra. Thus the sutra is said to describe the tranquilizing of the mind by exclusion of concepts arising directly or indirectly from sensory experiences, the nature of truth realized in samadhi or deepest contemplation, and the transcendental virtues and powers resulting. The sutra was translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva.

II. Ten Grades of Bodhisattva Faith in the Surangama Sutra:

In the Surangama Sutra, book Eight, the Buddha reminded Ananda about the ten grades of Bodhisattva faith. First, the mind that resides in faith and faith which destroys illusions. With the mind centered in the middle, they enter the flow where where wonderful perfection reveals

itself. From the truth of that wonderful perfection there repeatedly arise wonders of truth. They always dwell in the wonder of faith, until all false thinking is completely eliminated and the middle way is totally true. This is called the mind that resides in faith. The second Bodhisattva's faith is the remembrance, the unforgetfulness or the mind that resides in mindfulness. When true faith is clearly understood, then perfect penetration is total, and the three aspects of skandhas, places, and realms are no longer obstructions. Then all their habits throughout innumerable kalpas of past and future, during which they abandon bodies and receive bodies, appear to them now in the present moment. These good people can remember everything and forget nothing. This is called "The mind that resides in mindfulness." The third Bodhisattva's faith is the zealous progress or the mind that resides in vigor. When the wonderful perfection is completely true, that essential truth brings about a transformation. They go beyond the beginningless habits to reach the one essential brightness. Relying solely on this essential brightness, they progress toward true purity. This is called the mind of vigor. The fourth Bodhisattva's faith is the wisdom or the mind resides in wisdom. The essence of the mind reveals itself as total wisdom; this is called the mind that resides in wisdom. The fifth Bodhisattva's faith is the settled firmness on concentration or the mind that resides in samadhi. As the wisdom and brightness are held steadfast, a profound stillness pervades. The stage at which the majesty of this stillness becomes constant and solid. This is called the mind that resides in samadhi. The sixth Bodhisattva's faith is the non-retrogression or the mind that resides in irreversibility. The light of samadhi emits brightness. When the essence of the brightness enters deeply within, they only advance and never retreat. This is called the mind of irreversibility. The seventh Bodhisattva's faith is the protection of the Truth or the mind that resides in protecting the Dharma. When the progress of their minds is secure, and they hold their minds and protect them without loss, they connect with the life-breath of the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions. This is called the mind that protects the Dharma. The eighth Bodhisattva's faith is the reflexive powers or the mind that resides in Making Transferences. Protecting their light of enlightenment, they can use this wonderful force to return to the Buddha's light of compassion and come back to

stand firm with the Buddha. It is like two mirrors that are set facing one another, so that between them the exquisite images interreflect and enter into one another layer upon layer. This is called the mind of transference. The ninth Bodhisattva's faith is the nirvana mind in effortlessness or the mind that resides in precepts. With this secret interplay of light, they obtain the Buddha's eternal solidity and unsurpassed wonderful purity. Dwelling in the unconditioned, they know no loss or dissipation. This is called the mind that resides in precepts. The tenth Bodhisattva's faith is the action at will in anything in anywhere or the mind that resides in vows. Abiding in the precepts with self-mastery, they can roam throughout the ten directions, going anywhere they wish. This is called the mind that resides in vows.

Appendix E

Sense of Belief

In Buddhist teachings, faith means an attitude of belief in the Buddha and his teachings, and devote oneself to cultivate those teachings. Faith regarded as the faculty of the mind which sees, appropriates, and trusts the things of religion; it joyfully trusts in the Buddha, in the pure virtue of the Triratna and earthly and transcendental goodness; it is the cause of the pure life, and the solvent of doubt. Faculty of faith (Sradhendriya-skt, Saddhacarita-p) or sense of faith should serve as the foundation, one of the five roots or organs producing a sound moral life. Faith plays an extremely important role in Buddhism. It is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharmas (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). The mind of faith. Faith in a religion, unlike intellectual learning, does not enable a believer to have the power to save others as well as himself if he understands it only in theory. When he believe from the depths of his heart, his belief produces power. His faith cannot be said to be true until he attains such a mental state.

Appendix F

Faith-Endurance

In Buddhist teachings, perseverance means patience. Endurance is an especially important quality in Buddhism. The Buddha always teaches his disciples: “If you try to rub two pieces of wood together to get fire, but before fire is produced, you stop to do something else, only to resume later, you would never obtain fire. Likewise, a person who cultivates sporadically, e.g., during retreats or on weekends, but neglects daily practice, can never achieve lasting results. Meanwhile, transcendental tolerance means abiding in the tolerance and forbearance characteristic of the enlightened. Endurance-paramita, or forbearance paramita, patience paramita, or ksanti-paramita is the third of the six paramitas. It means to bear insult and distress without resentment, It is also a gate of Dharma-illumination; for with it, we abandon all anger, arrogance, flattery, and foolery, and we teach and guide living beings who have such vices. In cultivation of the Pure Land, faith-patience or faith tolerance means: 1) To abide patiently in the faith and repeat the name of Amitabha. 2) To believe in the Truth and attain the patient faith. According to the T’ien-T’ai sect, the differentiated teaching means the unperturbed faith of the Bodhisattva that all dharma is unreal. 3) Faith Tolerance from the stage of Joy, to the Land of Purity and the Land of Radiance. The cultivator purely believes that good deeds will result good consequences.

Appendix G

Inscribed on the Believing Mind

According to the history of the Chinese Zen School, *Inscribed on the Believing Mind* was composed by the Third Patriarch Seng-Ts'an in the end of the sixth century. Seng-Ts'an (?-608), name of the Third Patriarch of the Chinese Zen Sect. According to *The Transmission of the Lamp Records*, when Seng-Ts'an came to see Hui-K'o he as a lay man of forty years old. He came and bowed before Hui-K'o and asked: "I am suffering from feng-yang, please cleanse me of my sins." The Patriarch said: "Bring your sins here and I will cleanse you of them." He was silent for a while but finally said: "As I seek my sins, I find them unattainable." The Patriarch said: "I have then finished cleansing you altogether. From now on, you should take refuge and abide in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha." Seng-Ts'an said: "As I stand before you, O master, I know that you belong to the Sangha, but please tell me what are the Buddha and the Dharma?" The Patriarch replied: "Mind is the Buddha, Mind is the Dharma; and the Buddha and the Dharma are not two. The same is to be said of the Sangha (Brotherhood). This satisfied the disciple, who now said: "Today for the first time I realize that sins are neither within nor without nor in the middle; just as Mind is, so is the Buddha, so is the Dharma; they are not two." He was then ordained by Hui-K'o as a Buddhist monk, and after this he fled from the world altogether, and nothing much of his life is known. This was partly due to the persecution of Buddhism carried on by the Emperor of the Chou dynasty. It was in the twelfth year of K'ai-Huang, of the Sui dynasty (592 A.D.), that he found a disciple worthy to be his successor. His name was Tao-Hsin. His whereabouts was unknown; however, people said that he passed away around 606 A.D.

According to Buddhist teachings, mind of faith means a believing mind which receives without doubting. Usually, bodhisattvas have the mind of faith. *Inscribed on the Believing Mind* is a verse of 146 lines traditionally attributed to Seng-ts'an (?-606), the Third Patriarch of Chinese Zen Buddhism. The verse is an early example of Zen poetry and includes many famous lines quoted in subsequent Zen literature.

According to Zen master D.T. Suzuki in the *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Book I, the third patriarch lived most of his life as a hermit (obscure), his thought is gleaned from a metrical composition known as Hsin-Hsin-Ming or 'Inscribed on the Believing Mind'. This famous great work does not only offer its own justification for poetry by declaring that once enlightenment is attained, our dancing and songs are the voice of the Dharma; but this also shows us handwritings of the great Zen master who did contribute his valuable parts of commentaries on Zen teachings:

The Perfect Way knows no difficulties
 Except that it refuses to make preference:
 Only when freed from hate and love,
 It reveals itself fully and without disguise.

A tenth of an inch's difference,
 And heaven and earth are set apart:
 If you want to see it manifest,
 Take no thought either for or against it.

To set up what you like
 Against what you dislike.
 This is the disease of the mind:
 When the deep meaning of the Way is not understood.
 Peace of mind is disturbed and nothing is gained.

The Way is perfect like unto vast space,
 With nothing wanting, nothing superfluous:
 It is indeed due to making choice
 That its suchness is lost sight of.

Pursue not the outer entanglements,
 Dwell not in the inner void;
 When the mind rests serene
 In the oneness of things,
 The dualism vanishes by itself.

And when oneness is not

thoroughly understood,
 In two ways loss is sustained.
 The denial of reality may lead to its absolute negation,
 While the upholding of the void
 may result in contradicting itself.

Wordiness and intellection

The more with them the further astray we go away; therefore, with wordiness and intellection, there is no place where we cannot pass freely.

When we return to the root, we gain the meaning. When we pursue the external objects, we lose the reason. The moment we are enlightened within; we go beyond the voidness of a world confronting us.

Transformations going on in an empty world which confronts us. Appear real all because of ignorance: Try not to seek after the true, only cease to cherish opinions.

Tarry not with dualism, carefully avoid pursuing it; as soon as you have right or wrong, confusion ensues, the mind is lost.

The two exists because of the one, but hold not even to this one; when the one mind is not disturbed, the ten thousand things offer no offence.

When no offence is offered by them, they are as if not existing; when the mind is not disturbed, it is as if there is no mind. The subject is quieted as the object ceases, the object ceases as the subject is quieted.

The object is an object for the subject, the subject is a subject for an object: Know that the relativity of the two; rests ultimately on the oneness of the void.

In the oneness of the void the two are one, and each of the two contains in itself all the ten thousand things: When no

discrimination is made between this and that, how can one-sided and prejudiced view arise?

The Great Way is calm and large-minded,
 Nothing is easy, nothing is hard:
 Small views are irresolute,
 The more in haste the tardier they go.

Clinging never keeps itself within bounds,
 It is sure to go in the wrong way:
 Let go loose, and things are as they may be,
 While the essence neither departs nor abides.

Obey the nature of things,
 And you are in concord with the Way.
 Calm and easy and free from annoyance;
 But when your thoughts are tied,
 You turn away from the truth.
 They grow heavier and duller
 And are not at all sound.

When they are not sound, the soul is troubled;
 What is the use of being partial and one-sided then? If you want to walk the course of the One Vehicle, be not prejudiced against the six sense-objects.

When you are not prejudiced against the six sense-objects, you in turn identify yourself with enlightenment; the wise are non-active, while the ignorant bind themselves up.

While the Dharma itself there is no individuation, they ignorantly attach themselves to particular objects. It is their own minds that create illusions. It is not the greatest of self-contradictions?

Ignorance begets the dualism of rest and unrest, the enlightened have no likes and dislikes: All forms of dualism are ignorantly contrived by the mind itself.

They are like unto visions and flowers in the air: Why should we trouble ourselves to take hold of them? Gain and loss, right and wrong, away with them once for all!

If an eye never falls asleep, all dreams will by themselves cease: If the mind retains its oneness, the ten thousand things are of one suchness.

When the deep mystery of one suchness is fathomed, all of a sudden we forget the external entanglements: When the ten thousand things are viewed in their oneness, we return to the origin and remain what we are.

Forget the wherefore of things, and we attain to a state beyond analogy: Movement stopped is no movement, and rest set in motion is not rest. When dualism does no more obtain, even oneness itself remains not as such.

The ultimate end of things where they cannot go any further, is not bound in harmony with the Way is the principle of identity in which we find all doings in a quiescent state.

Irresolutions are completely done away with, and the right faith is restored to its native straightness; nothing is retained now, nothing is to be memorized. All is void, lucid, and self-illuminating, There is no stain, no exertion, no wasting of energy.

This is where thinking never attains, this is where the imagination fails to measure. In the higher realm of True Suchness, there is

neither 'other' nor 'self.'

When a direct identification is asked for, we can only say 'not two.' In being not two all is the same, all that is comprehended in

it: The wise in the ten quarters, they all enter into this absolute faith.

This absolute faith is beyond quickening time and extension space. One instant is ten thousand years; no matter how things are conditioned, whether with 'to be' or 'not to be.' It is manifest everywhere before you.

The infinitely small is as large as large can be, when external conditions are forgotten; the infinitely large is as small as small can be, when objective limits are put out of sight.

What is is the same with what is not, what is not is the same with what is: Where this state of things fails to obtain, be sure not to tarry.

One in all, all in one. If only this is realized, no more worry about your not being perfect!

The believing mind is not divided, and undivided is the believing mind. This is where words fail, for it is not of the past, future, or present.

Appendix H

The Mind of Faith

In Buddhist teachings, mind of faith means a believing mind which receives without doubting. Usually, Bodhisattvas have the mind of faith. According to Buddhism, a Bodhisattva must cultivate the devotion and practice all paramitas for at least eight asankheyas before he can achieve Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. Devotional Bodhisattvas are less energetic and more faithful. It takes a Devotional Bodhisattva longer time to attain Buddhahood than an Intellectual Bodhisattva. In cultivation of Bodhisattvas' Path, the mind of faith is the mind that resides in faith and faith which destroys illusions. With the mind centered in the middle, they enter the flow where wonderful perfection reveals itself. From the truth of that wonderful perfection there repeatedly arise wonders of truth. They always dwell in the wonder of faith, until all false thinking is completely eliminated and the middle way is totally true. This is called the mind that resides in faith.

Appendix I

Mind of Faith Is the Basis

Mind of faith is the basis. One day, Zen master Lin-chi entered the hall and addressed the monks, saying, "Friends, the ancient masters all had their way of helping others; as to my method, it consists in keeping others away from being deceived. If you want to use what you have in yourselves, use it, do not stand wavering. What is the trouble with students these days that they are unable to reach realization? The trouble lies in their not taking their *Mind of faith* as the basis in cultivation, that is to say they do not believe themselves enough. As you are not believing enough, you are buffeted about by the surrounding conditions in which you may find yourselves. Being enslaved and turned around by objective situations, you have no freedom whatever, you are not masters of yourselves. If you cease from running after outward things all the time, you will be like the old masters. Do you wish to know what the old masters were like? They were no other than those who are right before you listening to my discourse. Where faith is lacking, there is constant pursuing outward objects. And what you gain by this pursuing is mere literary excellence which is far from the life of old masters. O friends! As far as I can see, my insight into Reality and that of Sakyamuni himself are in perfect agreement. As we move along, each according to his way, what is wanting to us? Are we not all sufficient unto ourselves? The light emanating from each one of our six senses knows no interruptions, no obstructions. When your insight is thus penetrating enough, peaceful indeed is your life! Make here no mistake, O my friends, take care!"

Appendix J

The Buddha's Teachings of Wrong View & Having No Wrong Views in Buddhist Scriptures

The Buddha's Teachings on "Wrong Views" in the Dharmapada Sutra: In the untruth the foolish see the truth, while the truth is seen as the untruth. Those who harbor such wrong thoughts never realize the truth (Dharmapada 11). Those who embrace the wrong views, are ashamed of what is not shameful, and are not ashamed of what is shameful, will not be able to avoid the hell (Dharmapada 316). Those who fear when they should not fear, and don't fear in the fearsome, embrace these false views, will not be able to avoid the hell (Dharmapada 317). Those who perceive faults in the faultless, and see no wrong in what is wrong; such men, embracing false doctrines, will not be able to avoid the hell (Dharmapada 318). He who cuts off five: lust, hatred, ignorance, egoism, doubt; renounces five: attachment to form, to formless, to conceit, to restlessness, and ignorance; cultivates five more: faith, effort, watchfulness, concentration, wisdom. A monk who escapes from the five fetters: lust, hate, delusion, pride, false views; is called one who has crossed the flood (Dharmapada 370).

The Buddha's Teachings of Having No Wrong Views: What is truth regarded as truth, what is untruth regarded as untruth. Those who harbor such right thoughts realize the truth (Dharmapada 12). Those who perceive wrong as wrong and what is right as right, such men, embracing right views and go to the blissful state (Dharmapada 319). According to the Simile of the Snake in the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha taught about someone who does not have wrong views as follows: "Here Bhikkhus! Someone who hears the Tathagata or a disciple of the Tathagata teaching the Dharma for the elimination of all standpoints, decisions, obsessions, adherences, and underlying tendencies, for the stilling of all formations, for the relinquishing of all attachments, for the destruction of craving, for dispassion, for cessation, for Nirvana. He thinks that he will be annihilated, he will be perished; he will have no more sorrow, grieve,

and lament; he does not weep beating his breast and become distraught.”

Appendix K

Buddhists Should Not Believe In Erroneous Way of Developing the Bodhi Mind

In Buddhism, the supreme state of enlightenment is called “Bodhi”. Bodhi is the highest state of Samadhi in which the mind is awakened and illuminated. The term “Bodhi” is derived from the Sanskrit root “Budh,” meaning “knowledge,” “Understanding,” or “Perfect wisdom” and the practice of the four noble truths to eliminate sufferings. Bodhi is derived from the Sanskrit root “Budh,” meaning “knowledge,” “Understanding,” or “Perfect wisdom.” A term that is often translated as “enlightenment” by Western translators, but which literally means “Awakening.” Like the term BUDDHA, it is derived from the Sanskrit root buddh, “to wake up,” and in Buddhism it indicates that a person has “awakened” from the sleep of ignorance in which most beings spend their lives. According to Buddhist legend, the Buddha attained bodhi in the town of BODHGAYA while sitting in meditation under the Bodhi Tree or Bodhi-Vrksa. The word ‘Bodhi’ means ‘Perfect Wisdom’ or ‘Transcendental Wisdom,’ or ‘Supreme Enlightenment.’ Bodhi is the state of truth or the spiritual condition of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. The cause of Bodhi is Prajna (wisdom) and Karuna (compassion). The highest state of Samadhi in which the mind is awakened and illuminated. According to the Hinayana, bodhi is equated with the perfection of insight into and realization of the four noble truths, which means the cessation of suffering. According to the Mahayana, bodhi is mainly understood as enlightened wisdom. As mentioned above, Bodhi is the highest state of Samadhi in which the mind is awakened and illuminated. The term “Bodhi” is derived from the Sanskrit root “Budh,” meaning “knowledge,” “Understanding,” or “Perfect wisdom.” A term that is often translated as “enlightenment” by Western translators, but which literally means “Awakening.” Like the term BUDDHA, it is derived from the Sanskrit root buddh, “to wake up,” and in Buddhism it indicates that a person has “awakened” from the sleep of ignorance in which most beings spend their lives. According to Buddhist legend, the Buddha attained bodhi in the town of

BODHGAYA while sitting in meditation under the Bodhi Tree or Bodhi-Vrksa. According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, Bodhi (enlightenment) belongs to living beings. Without living beings, no Bodhisattva could achieve Supreme, Perfect Enlightenment. According to the Mahayana, bodhi is mainly understood as enlightened wisdom. The word 'Bodhi' also means 'Perfect Wisdom' or 'Transcendental Wisdom,' or 'Supreme Enlightenment.' Bodhi is the state of truth or the spiritual condition of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. The cause of Bodhi is Prajna (wisdom) and Karuna (compassion). According to the Hinayana, bodhi is equated with the perfection of insight into and realization of the four noble truths, which means the cessation of suffering.

According to Buddhist teachings, to develop Bodhicitta also means resolve on supreme bodhi and develop a supreme motivation to cultivation to achieve full enlightenment or Buddhahood in order to be of the most benefit to others. Only owing to the Bodhicitta we are able to dedicate ourselves to working for the happiness of all beings. The dedicated attitude of Bodhicitta is the powerful energy capable of transforming our mind fully and completely. In Zen, "arousing the mind of enlightenment" means to resolve to reach supreme enlightenment through actualization of the Bodhisattva path. An inner attitude made up of great faith and great doubt. Erroneous way of developing the Bodhi Mind is one of the eight ways of developing the Bodhi Mind. Erroneous way of developing the Bodhi Mind is one of the four improper ways for Buddhist cultivators. Some individuals cultivate without meditating on the Self-Nature. They just chase after externals or seek fame and profit, clinging to the fortunate circumstances of the present time, or they seek the fruits of future merits and blessings. In life there are cultivators who cultivate only according to the "Practice form characteristics," refusing to reflect internally to "Examine the True Nature." The above is truly the way the majority of cultivators, lay and clergy, develop their minds in the present day Dharma Ending Age. They are everywhere similar to the abundance of sands of the Ganges. Such development of the Bodhi Mind is called "Erroneous," or "False"; devout Buddhists should never believe in such erroneous way of developing the Bodhi Mind.

Appendix L

Buddhism and Faith in Ancestor Worship

According to our old customs, Buddhists worship ancestors to show our appreciations. According to Buddhism, worshipping ancestors, with the hope of relieving their karma, is not a bad custom. Buddhism always promotes ancestor worship by the practice of chanting sutras for the dead, hoping to relieve their karma. Buddhists diligently cultivate is the best way to show our appreciations to our ancestors. However, some Buddhists misunderstand about Buddhism and consider the worshipping the most important issue in Buddhism. Vietnamese people have long believed in the existence of the soul or consciousness after death. Ancestors are thought to watch over and to support their living descendants. Thus, living descendants always worship their ancestors with ultimate respect. Vietnamese people celebrate death anniversary, not only for their deceased parents, but also for their grand-parents, great grand-parents, and great-great grand-parents. They can celebrate with a party or with the simplest ancestral ritual of burning incense and bowing before their ancestors' altars or before their ancestors' portraits. In some families, beside placing offerings of food and drink in front of the altar, they also have the custom to burn paper money for their ancestors. In addition, in some areas in Central Vietnam, there still exist some Clan Temples which worship ancestors of the same surnames. It is no doubt that ancestor worship has helped our people maintain unity and continuity (maintaining generations). Buddhism always promotes ancestor worship by the practice of chanting sutras for the dead, hoping to relieve their karma.

Appendix M

Buddhist Practitioners Always Believe That Attachments Will Surely Lead to Circling in the Six Ways

I. An Overview and Meanings of Grasping:

Attachment or Love growing from thinking of others. Love also means the mind of affection attached to forms, which binds us with the ties of worldly passions and desires. Attachments are what keep us continuing the cycle of rebirth. According to the Buddha, becoming enlightened is nothing other than cutting off all attachments. We can become attached to either people, things, experiential states, our own thoughts, or preconceptions. According to the Buddha Birth Story, there is a story about the Trapper and the Monkey. How does a trapper catch a monkey? He takes a coconut and makes a small hole in it. He then puts some peanuts inside and outside the coconut. Before long, a monkey will come and eat the peanuts on the ground. Then he will put his hand in the coconut to reach the peanuts inside. Holding the peanuts makes his hand bigger, so now he cannot pull it out through the hole. He cries and gets angry, but will not open his hand and let the peanuts go. Finally, the trapper comes and catches him. We are like the monkey. We want to be free from suffering, but we will not let go our desires. In this way we remain caught in Samsara because of our own attachments. In a letter to Li Hsien Shen, Zen Master Tsung Kao Ta Hui wrote: "The Buddha says: 'He who wants to know the Realm of Buddha, should purify his own mind like the void space.' You must know that this Realm is not gained through any exalted religious practice. What he should do is to cleanse the defilements of passion and delusion that have hidden in the roots of his own mind from the time of no-beginning. His mind should be vast and expansive like space itself, far away from mere psychic notions. All wild and distracting thoughts are illusory, unreal, and void-like. Practicing in this manner, the wonder of the effortless mind will then naturally and spontaneously react to all conditions without any obstacle."

Attachment or Love growing from thinking of others. Love also means the mind of affection attached to forms, which binds us with the ties of worldly passions and desires. Attachments are what keep us continuing the cycle of rebirth. Devout Buddhists, who vow to follow the Buddha's path of cultivation, will not act like ordinary people who cannot see through or renounce things. If you cannot get rid of attachments to self, mine, and dharmas; and if you continue to have the marks of self, others, sentient beings, and life span, then you will surely encounter a lot of trouble. If you know how to get rid of attachments and step back to consider things calmly, then no matter what happens, you will always be able to see things as they really are, not as their outside appearances. According to the Buddha, becoming enlightened is nothing other than cutting off all attachments. We can become attached to either people, things, experiential states, our own thoughts, or preconceptions. In the Four Noble truths, Buddha Shakyamuni taught that attachment to self is the root cause of suffering. From attachment (craving) springs grief and fear. For him who is wholly free from attachment, there is no grief and much less fear. The more attachments one has, the more one suffers). According to Buddhism, attachment means to cling to things as real. Attachment also means tenet or to cling to, to adhere or to stick or attach one's self (grasping, clinging, attaching) on the belief of the reality of ego and things. In the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha reminded Mahamati: "Oh Mahamati, there are innumerable signs of close attachments to the world by taking letters as exactly corresponding to meaning." The holding on to the reality of self and things and the consequent hindrance to entrance into nirvana. If we have even a particle of attachment, we have obstructions. With obstructions, we are not able to escape the Triple Realm. Therefore, it is necessary for any sincere Buddhist to break through all attachments. When we reach the point of having no attachments, we regain our true being. Right now, no matter how much we want, nothing we can obtain. When we reach the point of not wanting anything, everything will be ours. According to the Buddha Birth Story, there is a story about the Trapper and the Monkey. How does a trapper catch a monkey? He takes a coconut and makes a small hole in it. He then puts some peanuts inside and outside the coconut. Before long, a monkey will come and eat the peanuts on the ground.

Then he will put his hand in the coconut to reach the peanuts inside. Holding the peanuts makes his hand bigger, so now he cannot pull it out through the hole. He cries and gets angry, but will not open his hand and let the peanuts go. Finally, the trapper comes and catches him. We are like the monkey. We want to be free from suffering, but we will not let go our desires. In this way we remain caught in Samsara because of our own ATTACHMENTS.

II. Different Kinds of Attachments:

Attachment of Love: Attachment or Love growing from thinking of others. Love also means the mind of affection attached to forms, which binds us with the ties of worldly passions and desires. Attachment includes the strong attachment of love; the bondage of desire. However, from this bond of love can also arise pity, which is fundamental to Buddhism. The Buddha's teachings on "Attachment of love" in the Dharmapada Sutra: Death carries off a man who gathers flowers of sensual pleasures, whose mind is distracted, as a great flood sweeps away a sleeping village (Dharmapada 47). The destroyer brings under his way the man who gathers flowers of sensual pleasures, whose mind distracted, and who is insatiate in his desires (Dharmapada 48). *Attachment on Nihilism:* Some people believe in nihilism, claims that after death there is nothing left. Man born from dust will return to dust. This is what scientists believe. They say every person conceived by the fusion of a sperm and egg, will live his life and will die, thus terminating his existence on earth. This theory does not conform to the Buddhist law of causality. In Buddhist view, men are tied to the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of reincarnation. This cycle turns around and around, compelling men to reincarnate in one of the six realms. Buddhists believe that Nihilism is false because it is based on incomplete understanding of reality. Eternalism is also wrong, because Buddhists cannot accept that there is anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable. *Attachment to the Ego:* Some people hold to the concept of the reality of the ego, holding to permanent personality, or holding to the atman. This holding is an illusion. The false tenet of a soul, or ego, or permanent individual, that the individual is real, the ego an independent unit and not a mere combination of the five skandhas produced by cause and effect

disintegrating. This attachment is developed as the result of erroneous reasoning for they attach to the idea of permanent self. In the Four Noble Truth, Sakyamuni Buddha taught that “attachment to self” is the root cause of suffering. From attachment springs grief; from grief springs fear. For him who is wholly free from attachment, there is no grief and much less fear. If you don’t have attachments, naturally you are liberated. *Attachment on Eternalism*: This theory believes in eternalism, believes that man was created by the will of some Deity. He will live his life and act according to his beliefs in order to return to Heaven or to be condemned forever in Hell. This theory does not conform to the Buddhist law of causality. In Buddhist view, men are tied to the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of reincarnation. This cycle turns around and around, compelling men to reincarnate in one of the six realms. Buddhists believe that Nihilism is false because it is based on incomplete understanding of reality. Eternalism is also wrong, because Buddhists cannot accept that there is anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable.

III. Why Do We Have Attachments?:

Abhinivesa or graha means to grasp, hold, or cling to anything or to cling to things as real. Grasping means to cling, to adhere, or to stick or attach one’s self to. Holding (grasping, clinging, attaching) on the belief of the reality of ego and things. Attachment or Love growing from thinking of others. Love also means the mind of affection attached to forms, which binds us with the ties of worldly passions and desires. Attachments are what keep us continuing the cycle of rebirth. Devout Buddhists, who vow to follow the Buddha’s path of cultivation, will not act like ordinary people who cannot see through or renounce things. If you cannot get rid of attachments to self, mine, and dharmas; and if you continue to have the marks of self, others, sentient beings, and life span, then you will surely encounter a lot of trouble. If you know how to get rid of attachments and step back to consider things calmly, then no matter what happens, you will always be able to see things as they really are, not as their outside appearances. According to the Buddha, becoming enlightened is nothing other than cutting off all attachments. We can become attached to either people, things, experiential states, our own thoughts, or preconceptions. Grasping of love or the strong

attachment of love; the bondage of desire. However, from this bond of love can also arise pity, which is fundamental to Buddhism.

The holding on to the reality of self and things and the consequent hindrance to entrance into nirvana. If we have even a particle of attachment, we have obstructions. With obstructions, we are not able to escape the Triple Realm. Therefore, it is necessary for any sincere Buddhist to break through all attachments. When we reach the point of having no attachments, we regain our true being. Right now, no matter how much we want, nothing we can obtain. When we reach the point of not wanting anything, everything will be ours. In the Four Noble truths, Buddha Shakyamuni taught that attachment to self is the root cause of suffering. From attachment (craving) springs grief and fear. For him who is wholly free from attachment, there is no grief and much less fear. The more attachments one has, the more one suffers). If you don't have attachments, naturally you are liberated. In the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha reminded Mahamati: "Oh Mahamati, there are innumerable signs of close attachments to the world by taking letters as exactly corresponding to meaning." In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught on "Attachment of love": Death carries off a man who gathers flowers of sensual pleasures, whose mind is distracted, as a great flood sweeps away a sleeping village (Dharmapada 47). The destroyer brings under his way the man who gathers flowers of sensual pleasures, whose mind distracted, and who is insatiate in his desires (Dharmapada 48).

According to Buddhism, there are many different kinds of grasping. *We have Attachment because of love growing from thinking of others:* love also means the mind of affection attached to forms, which binds us with the ties of worldly passions and desires. *We have Attachment because of clinging to the idea of self (Atma-graha):* cling to the idea of self, or the natural or instinctive cleaving (clinging) to the idea of self or soul. Holding to the concept of the reality of the ego, holding to permanent personality, or holding to the atman. This holding is an illusion. The false tenet of a soul, or ego, or permanent individual, that the individual is real, the ego an independent unit and not a mere combination of the five skandhas produced by cause and effect disintegrating. This attachment is developed as the result of erroneous reasoning. *We have Attachment because of clinging to existence or*

(clinging) to emptiness (non-existence): Some sects believe that “It is better to be attached to existence, though the attachment may be as big as Mount Sumeru, than to be attached to emptiness, though the attachment may be as small as a grain of dust.” However, once we thoroughly understand the Buddha’s teachings, we will not be attached to any extreme. *We have Attachment because of clinging to the ideas of human impersonality, not unreality of things*: Insiders who hold the Abhidharma or Sarvastivada tenet, which recognizes human impersonality, but not the unreality of things. *We have Attachment because of clinging to idea of Nihilism*: This theory believes in nihilism, claims that after death there is nothing left. Man born from dust will return to dust. This is what scientists believe. They say every person conceived by the fusion of a sperm and egg, will live his life and will die, thus terminating his existence on earth. This theory does not conform to the Buddhist law of causality. In Buddhist view, men are tied to the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of reincarnation. This cycle turns around and around, compelling men to reincarnate in one of the six realms. Buddhists believe that Nihilism is false because it is based on incomplete understanding of reality. *We have Attachment because of clinging to the idea of things as real*: Abhinivesa or graha or to grasp, hold, or cling to anything. A tendency for settling down in the mind. *We have Attachment because of clinging to our own views (Lagna-samkhya)*: Adhering or clinging to one’s interpretation or views obstinately held, with consequent delusion, bigoted. *We have Attachment because of grasping to the past*: The third of the six coarser stages in The Awakening of Faith, retention of memories of past joys and sorrows as if they were realities and not illusions. *We have Attachment because of clinging to Eternalism*: This theory believes in eternalism, believes that man was created by the will of some Deity. He will live his life and act according to his beliefs in order to return to Heaven or to be condemned forever in Hell. This theory does not conform to the Buddhist law of causality. In Buddhist view, men are tied to the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of reincarnation. This cycle turns around and around, compelling men to reincarnate in one of the six realms. Buddhists believe that Eternalism is also wrong, because Buddhists cannot accept that there is anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable.

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IV. Buddhist Practitioners Always Believe That Ignorance Leads to Attachments & The Front Paths Will Surely Be Circling in the Six Ways:

Ignorance Leads to Attachments: We are born from the desires of our father and mother. Then, when we emerge into this world, we become infatuated with many things, and become ourselves well-springs of desire. We relish physical comforts and the enjoyments of the senses. Thus, we are strongly attached to the body. But if we consider this attachment, we will see that this is a potential source of sufferings and afflictions. For the body is constantly changing. We wish we could remain alive forever, but moment after moment the body is passing from youth to old age, from life to death. We may be happy while we are young and strong, but when we contemplate sickness, old age, and the ever present threat of death, anxiety overwhelms us. Thus, we seek to elude the inevitable by evading the thought of it. The lust for life and the fear of death are forms of attachment. We are also attached to our clothes, our car, our storied houses, and our wealth. Besides, we are also attached to memories concerning the past or anticipations of the future. *According to Buddhism, all these attachments originated from Ignorance.* In Buddhism, ignorance (Avidya) is noncognizance of the four noble truths, the three precious ones (triratna), and the law of karma, etc. Avidya is the first link of conditionality (pratityasampada), which leads to entanglement of the world of samsara and the root of all unwholesome in the world. This is the primary factor that enmeshes (làm vướng víu) beings in the cycle of

birth, death, and rebirth. In a Buddhist sense, it refers to lack of understanding of the four noble truths (Arya-satya), the effects of actions (karma), dependent arising (pratitya-samutpada), and other key Buddhist doctrines. In Madhyamaka, “Avidya” refers to the determination of the mind through ideas and concepts that permit beings to construct an ideal world that confers upon the everyday world its forms and manifold quality, and that thus block vision of reality. “Avidya” is thus the nonrecognition of the true nature of the world, which is empty (shunyata), and the mistaken understanding of the nature of phenomena. Thus “avidya” has a double function: ignorance veils the true nature and also constructs the illusory appearance. “Avidya” characterizes the conventional reality. For the Sautrantikas and Vaibhashikas, “Avidya” means seeing the world as unitary and enduring, whereas in reality it is manifold and impermanent. “Avidya” confers substantiality on the world and its appearances. In the Yogachara’s view, “avidya” means seeing the object as a unit independent of consciousness, when in reality it is identical with it.

Ignorance means Unenlightened, the first or last of the twelve nidanas. Ignorance is Illusion or darkness without illumination, the ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Ignorance of the way of escape from sufferings, one of the three affluences that feed the stream of mortality or transmigration. Sometimes ignorance means “Maya” or “Illusion.” It means complete darkness without illumination. The ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Ignorance is the main cause of our non-enlightenment. Ignorance is only a false mark, so it is subject to production, extinction, increase, decrease, defilement, purity, and so on. Ignorance is the main cause of our birth, old age, worry, grief, misery, and sickness, and death. Ignorance is one of the three fires which must be allowed to die out before Nirvana is attained. The erroneous state of mind which arises from belief in self.

In Zen, ignorance is not seeing things as they really are. It is failing to understand the truth about life. As long as we have not developed our minds to obtain wisdom, we remain ignorant of the true nature of things. According to Buddhism, ignorance means regarding the self as real. Due to ignorance, people do not see things as they really are, and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. They become blind under

the delusion of self, clinging to things which are impermanent, changeable, and perishable. Once anger arises, one has nothing but “ignorance.” In order to eliminate “ignorance,” you should meditate on causality. All of our psychological problems are rooted in ignorance, in delusion. Ignorance is the crowning corruption for ignorance itself leads us to attachments. Besides attachments, our greeds, hates, conceits and a host of other defilements also go hand in hand with our ignorance. The solutions are to be found in the problems themselves and hence we should not run away from our problems. Analyze and scrutinize the problems, and you will see that they are human problems, so do not attribute them to non-humans. Our real problems can be solved only by giving up illusions and false concepts and bringing our lives into harmony with reality and this can be done only through meditation. Ignorance is also thoughts and impulses that try to draw us away from emancipation. If we wish to liberate ourselves from these hindrances, we should first recognize them through meditation. Just as the Buddha described in His discourses how He would exclaim, “Mara! I see you.” Zen practitioners should remember that the purpose of disciplined meditation practice is to eliminate ignorance, to open the essential nature of mind, and to stabilize awareness. Through meditation, we concentrate on things with an undistracted awareness. We are not thinking about anything, not analyzing, not getting lost in flux of things, but just seeing the nature of what is happening in the mind. Through practices of meditation, our mind becomes clearer and clearer; it is to say ‘ignorance’ is gradually eliminated through the course of meditation. If you think that your mind can only be opened by a certain master out there, you are never cultivating in accordance with Buddhism at all. If you think someone out there can eliminate ignorance for you, you are not a devout Buddhist. In short, we, devout Buddhists should turn inside and try our best to destroy ignorance. If we destroy a little ignorance, we will have a little more wisdom. If we destroy a lot of ignorance, we will have a lot more of wisdom. If we destroy ignorance completely, we will have a complete wisdom. At that time, our life is a life with complete wisdom at all times. At that time, what is our life if we don't want to say it is a life of peace, mindfulness, enlightenment, and complete happiness.

Sentient Beings Are Living With Attachments In Ignorance and Suffering in the Six Paths of Samsara: According to Buddhism, sentient beings in the three realms (the realm of desire, of form, and of formlessness) are living with attachments in ignorance and suffering in the six paths of Samsara. In Buddhism, ignorance or Avidya is noncognizance of the four noble truths, the three precious ones (triratna), and the law of karma, etc. Avidya is the first link of conditionality (pratityasampada), which leads to entanglement of the world of samsara and the root of all unwholesome in the world. This is the primary factor that enmeshes (làm vướng víu) beings in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In a Buddhist sense, it refers to lack of understanding of the four noble truths (Arya-satya), the effects of actions (karma), dependent arising (pratitya-samutpada), and other key Buddhist doctrines. In Madhyamaka, “Avidya” refers to the determination of the mind through ideas and concepts that permit beings to construct an ideal world that confers upon the everyday world its forms and manifold quality, and that thus block vision of reality. “Avidya” is thus the nonrecognition of the true nature of the world, which is empty (shunyata), and the mistaken understanding of the nature of phenomena. Thus “avidya” has a double function: ignorance veils the true nature and also constructs the illusory appearance. “Avidya” characterizes the conventional reality. For the Sautrantikas and Vaibhashikas, “Avidya” means seeing the world as unitary and enduring, whereas in reality it is manifold and impermanent. “Avidya” confers substantiality on the world and its appearances. In the Yogachara’s view, “avidya” means seeing the object as a unit independent of consciousness, when in reality it is identical with it. Ignorance means Unenlightened, the first or last of the twelve nidanas. Ignorance is Illusion or darkness without illumination, the ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Ignorance of the way of escape from sufferings, one of the three affluences that feed the stream of mortality or transmigration. Sometimes ignorance means “Maya” or “Illusion.” It means complete darkness without illumination. The ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Ignorance is the main cause of our non-enlightenment. Ignorance is only a false mark, so it is subject to production, extinction, increase, decrease, defilement, purity,

and so on. Ignorance is the main cause of our birth, old age, worry, grief, misery, and sickness, and death. Ignorance is one of the three fires which must be allowed to die out before Nirvana is attained. The erroneous state of mind which arises from belief in self. It is due to ignorance, people do not see things as they really are, and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. They become blind under the delusion of self, clinging to things which are impermanent, changeable, and perishable.

Six miserable states (sentient beings revolve in the cycle of Birth and Death, along the six paths, life after life. These are paths of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, titanic demons or asuras, human beings and celestials). Some say these are objective, geographic realms, places to which we can go. Others say they are subjective states that come about through psychological experience. But it may be that they are neither places nor psychological states; perhaps they belong to a kind of intermediate zone which is neither subjective nor objective. In any case, Zen master Hakuin says that as long as our inherent enlightenment remains unrealized, no realm of existence grants immunity from ignorance or suffering. According to the Records of the Transmission of the Lamp (Ch'uan-Teng-Lu), Volume XVII, a monk asked, "How does one escape the Three Realms?" Qianfeng said, "Call the temple director and have him chase this monk out of here!" Qianfeng asked the monks, "The six tendencies of the turning wheel of transmigration have what eye?" The monk didn't answer.

V. Cultivation of Non-Attachment to Escape from Going Up and Down in the Cycle of the Sixth Paths:

The Cycle of the Sixth Paths of Birth and Death Keeps Going Endlessly: In the traditional cosmology of Buddhism, the six miserable states (sentient beings revolve in the cycle of Birth and Death, along the six paths, life after life. These are paths of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, titanic demons or asuras, human beings and celestials). Some say these are objective, geographic realms, places to which we can go. Others say they are subjective states that come about through psychological experience. But it may be that they are neither places nor psychological states; perhaps they belong to a kind of intermediate zone which is neither subjective nor objective. Zen practitioners should

always remember that as long as our inherent birthright remains unrealized, no realm of existence grants immunity from ignorance or suffering. The cycle of the six paths of birth and death keeps going endlessly around the five turbidities of the evil world, where beings repeat cycles of birth and death according to the law of karma. In Buddhism these planes are depicted as the spokes or segments of the “wheel of life.” This wheel is set in motion by actions stemming from our basic ignorance of the true nature of existence and by karmic propensities from an incalculable past, and kept revolving by our craving for the pleasures of the senses and by our clinging to them, which leads to an unending cycle of births, deaths, and rebirths to which we remain bound. What happens to us after death? Buddhism teaches that we remain for some time in the state of intermediate existence in this world after death, and when this time is over, in accordance with the karma that we have accumulated in our previous life, we are reborn in another appropriate world. Buddhism also divides this other world into the following realms: hell, hungry ghosts, animals, demons, human beings, heavens, sravakas, pratyeka-buddhas, bodhisattvas, and buddhas. If we die in an unenlightened state, our minds (consciousnesses) will return to the former state of ignorance, and we will be reborn in the six worlds of illusion and suffering, and will again reach old age and death through the stages mentioned above. And we will repeat this round over and over to an indefinite time. This perpetual repetition of birth and death is called “Transmigration.” But if we purify our minds by hearing the Buddha’s teachings and practicing the Bodhisattva-way, the state of ignorance is annihilated and our minds can be reborn in a better world. So, whether the world is Samsara or Nirvana depends entirely on our state of mind. If our mind is enlightened, then this world is Nirvana; if our mind is unenlightened, then this world is Samsara. Thus the Buddha taught: “For those who strive to cultivate, samsara is Nirvana, Nirvana is samsara.” For devout Buddhists, whether the world is Samsara or Nirvana depends entirely on our state of mind. If our mind is enlightened, then this world is Nirvana; if our mind is unenlightened, then this world is Samsara. As a matter of fact, for those who strive to cultivate, samsara is Nirvana, Nirvana is samsara. Devout Buddhists should also always remember that born and reborn endlessly around

the six paths of birth and death, when impermanence surges we must let go everything.

Cultivation of Non-Attachment to Escape from Going Up and Down in the Cycle of the Sixth Paths: Our world is a world of desire. Every living being comes forth from desire and endures as a combination of desires. We are born from the desires of our father and mother. Then, when we emerge into this world, we become infatuated with many things, and become ourselves well-springs of desire. We relish physical comforts and the enjoyments of the senses. Thus, we are strongly attached to the body. But if we consider this attachment, we will see that this is a potential source of sufferings and afflictions. For the body is constantly changing. We wish we could remain alive forever, but moment after moment the body is passing from youth to old age, from life to death. We may be happy while we are young and strong, but when we contemplate sickness, old age, and the ever present threat of death, anxiety overwhelms us. Thus, we seek to elude the inevitable by evading the thought of it. The lust for life and the fear of death are forms of attachment. We are also attached to our clothes, our car, our storied houses, and our wealth. Besides, we are also attached to memories concerning the past or anticipations of the future. Buddhist practitioners should always have this attitude ‘Looking but not seeing, hearing but not listening, smelling but not noticing the scent.’ Why is it described as ‘looking, but not seeing?’ Because the person is returning the light to shine within, and introspecting. Why is it ‘hearing, but not listening?’ Because he is turning the hearing to listen his own nature. Why does it say, ‘smelling, but not noticing the scent?’ Because he has gathered back his body and mind, and is not disturbed any longer by scent. At this time, the cultivator’s eyes contemplate physical forms, but the forms do not exist for him. His ears hears sounds, but the sounds do not exist for him. His nose smells scents, but those scents do not exist for him. His tongue tastes flavors, but for him, those flavors do not exist. His body feels sensations, but does not attach itself to those sensations. His mind knows of things, but does not attach to them. If we can sit in meditation until our state is such that ‘inside we have no body and mind,’ ‘outside we have no world,’ and ‘afar there are no objects’, then we reach the stage of nonattachment, or the state of “no trace of self, no trace of others, no trace of living beings, and no trace of life

span.” This is also the stage described as, “Thoughts of the past cannot be obtained, thoughts of the present cannot be obtained, and thoughts of the future cannot be obtained.” This is also called the wonderful stage of lightness and ease in meditation. If we continue to meditate profoundly, we will approach wonderful stages in meditation: the stage of happiness that leaves living beings behind; it means that we have reached a stage of happiness beyond that which living beings enjoy. The stage of happiness that brings concentration, it means happiness in concentration which is completely unparalleled and indescribable. The stage of bliss beyond happiness, it means we leave coarse happiness behind and reach a level of subtle bliss that is most wonderful. The pure stage free of thoughts, where the mind is totally pure without any thoughts. According to the Sutra in Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 18, the Buddha said: “My Dharma is the mindfulness that is both mindfulness and no-mindfulness. It is the practice that is both practice and non-practice. It is words that are words and non-words. It is cultivation that is cultivation and non-cultivation. Those who understand are near to it; those who are confused are far from it indeed. The path of words and language is cut off; it cannot be categorized as a thing. If you are off (removed) by a hair’s breadth, you lose it in an instant.” The Vajra Sutra taught:

“All things born of conditions are like dreams,
Like illusions, bubbles, and shadows;
Like dewdrops, like flashes of lightning;
Contemplate them in these ways.”

Anything with shape or form is considered a “dharma born of conditions.” All things born of conditions are like dreams, illusory transformations, bubbles of foam, and shadows. Like dewdrops and lightning, they are false and unreal. By contemplating everything in this way, we will be able to understand the truth, let go of attachments, and put an end to random thoughts. According to the Sutra In Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 18, the Buddha said: “My Dharma is the mindfulness that is both mindfulness and no-mindfulness. It is the practice that is both practice and non-practice. It is words that are words and non-words. It is cultivation that is cultivation and non-cultivation. Those who understand are near to it; those who are confused are far from it indeed. The path of words and language is cut off; it cannot be categorized as a thing. If you are off (removed) by a hair’s breadth, you lose it in an instant.”

Appendix N

Buddhist Practitioners Always Believe That Letting Go Is Synonymous With Escaping From Circling in the Six Ways

I. An Overview of Letting Go:

In Buddhism, we have always been hearing about letting go and not clinging to anything. What does the Buddha mean on letting go? He means in daily activities, no way we can let go everything. We have to hold on things; however, try not to cling to them. For example, we try to make money for our living expenses, but not try to cling on making a lot of money to accumulate regardless of the means of making the money. Practitioners do everything with a mind that lets go. Do not expect any praise or reward. If we let go a little, we will have a little peace. If we let go a lot, we will have a lot of peace. If we let go completely, we will know complete peace and freedom. Equanimity is one of the chief Buddhist virtues, that of renunciation, leading to a state of indifference without pleasure or pain, or independence of both. It is defined as the mind in equilibrium, i.e. above the distinction of things or persons, of self or others; indifferent, having abandoned the world and all things, and having no affections or desires. Upeksa is one of the seven Bodhyangas. The Buddha taught: "If one wishes to penetrate into the profound realm of liberation of the Maha-Bodhisattvas, Buddhists must first be able to let go of all of the five desires of ordinary people." According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, when Manjusri Bodhisattva called on to enquire after Upasaka Vimalakirti's health, Manjusri asked Vimalakirti about "Upeksa". Manjusri asked Vimalakirti: "What should be relinquish (upeksa) of a Bodhisattva?" Vimalakirti replied: "In his work of salvation, a Bodhisattva should expect nothing (i.e. no gratitude or reward) in return." Finally, in Buddhism, abandonment is one of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, we can turn away from the five desires. There are seven abandonments or riddances.

Upekṣa is one of the seven Bodhyangas. The Buddha taught: “If one wishes to penetrate into the profound realm of liberation of the Maha-Bodhisattvas, Buddhists must first be able to let go of all of the five desires of ordinary people.” According to the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, when Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva called on to enquire after Upasaka Vimalakīrti’s health, Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti about “Upekṣa”. Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti: “What should be relinquish (upekṣa) of a Bodhisattva?” Vimalakīrti replied: “In his work of salvation, a Bodhisattva should expect nothing (i.e. no gratitude or reward) in return.” In Buddhism, abandonment is one of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, we can turn away from the five desires. Equanimity is one of the chief Buddhist virtues, that of renunciation, leading to a state of indifference without pleasure or pain, or independence of both. It is defined as the mind in equilibrium, i.e. above the distinction of things or persons, of self or others; indifferent, having abandoned the world and all things, and having no affections or desires. Once we have fully developed Upekṣa, we will feel true compassion for all beings, and we will have the ability to eliminate any partiality from our daily attitudes toward other people. Usually, our view of others dominated by various kinds of discriminating emotions. We always feel closeness and sympathy toward loved ones. In contrast, toward strangers we always feel distant and indifferent, and for those we dislike we feel aversion or contempt. That is to say we always classify friends and enemies clearly. However, we should always remember that our sympathy, closeness and/or hatred have no effect on others, these feelings do not nurture or harm others. It is we who will suffer the ill-consequences of our actions. Upekṣa is one of the seven Bodhyangas. The Buddha taught: “If one wishes to penetrate into the profound realm of liberation of the Maha-Bodhisattvas, Buddhists must first be able to let go of all of the five desires of ordinary people.” Detachment is the attitude of those who give up, forget, do not attach any importance for what they have done for the benefit of others. In general, we feel proud, self-aggrandized when we do something to help other people. Quarrels, conflicts, or clashes between men or groups of men are due to passions such as greed or anger whose source can be appraised as self-attachment or dharma-attachment. The Buddha taught that if there is

someone who misjudges us, we must feel pity for him; we must forgive him in order to have peace in our mind. The Bodhisattvas have totally liberated themselves from both self-attachment and dharma-attachment. When people enjoy material or spiritual pleasures, the Bodhisattvas also rejoice, from their sense of compassion, pity, and inner joy. They always consider human beings as their benefactors who have created the opportunities for them to practice the Four Immeasurable Minds on their way to Enlightenment. In terms of the Immeasurable Detachment, the Bodhisattvas consider all men equal, the clever as the stupid, themselves as others, they do everything as they have done nothing, say everything as they have said nothing, attain all spiritual levels as they have attained nothing. Immeasurable Equanimity, a mind of great detachment, or infinite equanimity. Limitless indifference, such as rising above all emotions, or giving up all things. Here a monk, with a heart filled with equanimity. Thus he stays, spreading the thought of equanimity above, below, across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with equanimity, abundant, magnified, unbounded, without hatred or ill-will. Equanimity is also considered as a divine abode. It is the state of mind that regards others with impartiality, free from attachment and aversion. An impartial attitude is its chief characteristic, and it is opposed to favouritism and resentment.

II. Who Binds Us?:

Bindings mean Fetters or Bondages or Illusions which chain men to the cycle of birth and death. Bindings or Fetters also mean bondages. The bondage and instigators of the passions, two other names for afflictions. The fetters are the ten states beginning with greed for the fine-material, so called because they fetter aggregates in this life to aggregates of the next, or karma to its fruit, or beings to suffering. For as so long the ones exist there is no cessation of the others. There are three kinds of bindings: *The tie of false views of permanent ego*, *the tie of wrong discipline* or taking hold of the merit accruing from the observance of the rules of morality, and *the tie of doubt on correct teachings*. In the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha said: “Srota-apanna though has cut off innumerable illusions; however, the three ties are so

serious that if he is able to cut off these three ties, he can cut off all other ties.

Our world is a world of desire. Every living being comes forth from desire and endures as a combination of desires. We are born from the desires of our father and mother. Then, when we emerge into this world, we become infatuated with many things, and become ourselves well-springs of desire. We relish physical comforts and the enjoyments of the senses. Thus, we are strongly attached to the body. But if we consider this attachment, we will see that this is a potential source of sufferings and afflictions. For the body is constantly changing. We wish we could remain alive forever, but moment after moment the body is passing from youth to old age, from life to death. We may be happy while we are young and strong, but when we contemplate sickness, old age, and the ever present threat of death, anxiety overwhelms us. Thus, we seek to elude the inevitable by evading the thought of it. The lust for life and the fear of death are forms of attachment. We are also attached to our clothes, our car, our storied houses, and our wealth. Besides, we are also attached to memories concerning the past or anticipations of the future.

According to the Vajra Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Anything with shape or form is considered a “dharma born of conditions.” All things born of conditions are like dreams, illusory transformations, bubbles of foam, and shadows. Like dewdrops and lightning, they are false and unreal. By contemplating everything in this way, we will be able to understand the truth, let go of attachments, and put an end to random thoughts.” According to the Sutra In Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 18, the Buddha said: “My Dharma is the mindfulness that is both mindfulness and no-mindfulness. It is the practice that is both practice and non-practice. It is words that are words and non-words. It is cultivation that is cultivation and non-cultivation. Those who understand are near to it; those who are confused are far from it indeed. The path of words and language is cut off; it cannot be categorized as a thing. If you are off (removed) by a hair’s breadth, you lose it in an instant.”

In order to let go and cut off of all affairs, we have no other choice but cultivating on the Buddha's Path. According to the Potaliya Sutta in the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, there are eight things in

the Noble One's Discipline that lead to the cutting off of affairs. *First*, "with the support of the non-killing of living beings, the killing of living beings is to be abandoned." So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? Here a noble disciple considers thus: 'I am practicing the way to abandoning and cutting off of those fetters because of which I might kill living beings. If I were to kill living beings, I would blame myself for doing so; the wise, having investigated, would censure me for doing so; and on the dissolution of the body, after death, because of killing living beings an unhappy destination would be expected. But this killing of living beings is itself a fetter and a hindrance. And while taints, vexation, and fever might arise through the killing of living beings, there are no taints, vexation, and fever in one who abstains from killing living beings.' So it is with reference to this that it was said: "With the support of the non-killing of living beings, the killing of living beings is to be abandoned." *Second*, "with the support of taking only what is given, the taking of what is not given is to be abandoned." (the rest remains the same as in 1). *Third*, "with the support of truthful speech, false speech is to be abandoned." (the rest remains the same as in 1). *Fourth*, "with the support unmalevolent speech, malevolent speech is to be abandoned." (the rest remains the same as in 1). *Fifth*, "with the support of refraining from rapacious greed, rapacious greed is to be abandoned." (the rest remains the same as in 1). *Sixth*, "with the support of refraining from spiteful scolding, spiteful scolding is to be abandoned." (the rest remains the same as in 1). *Seventh*, "with the support of refraining from angry despair, angry despair is to be abandoned." (the rest remains the same as in 1). *Eighth*, "with the support of non-arrogance, arrogance is to be abandoned." (the rest remains the same as in 1). There are also ten actions of let go and cut off of all affairs which produce no regrets, they are: First, not killing. Second, not stealing. Third, not committing sexual misconduct. Fourth, not lying. Fifth, not telling a fellow-Buddhist's sins. Sixth, not drinking wine. Seventh, not praising oneself and discrediting others. Eighth, not being mean to other beings. Ninth, not being angry. Tenth, not defaming the Triratna.

Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. Every action which is a cause will have a result or an

effect; every resultant action has its cause. Likewise there is a cause of binding on something, there must be a result of attachments and sufferings and affliction on the so-called something. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situations. Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. It's a fundamental principle for all living beings and all things that if one sows good deeds, he will surely reap a good harvest; if he sows bad deeds, he must inevitably reap a bad harvest. Though the results may appear quickly or slowly, everyone will be sure to receive the results that accord with their actions. Anyone who has deeply understood this principle will never do evil.

According to Buddhism, every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action or effect has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situations. The Moral Causation in Buddhism means that a deed, good or bad, or indifferent, brings its own result on the doer. Good people are happy and bad ones unhappy. But in most cases "happiness" is understood not in its moral or spiritual sense but in the sense of material prosperity, social position, or political influence. For instance, kingship is considered the reward of one's having faithfully practiced the ten deeds of goodness. If one meets a tragic death, he is thought to have committed something bad in his past lives even when he might have spent a blameless life in the present one. Causality is a natural law, mentioning the relationship between cause and effect. All things come into being not without cause, since if there is no cause, there is no effect and vice-versa. As so sow, so shall you reap. Cause and effect never conflict with each other. In other words, cause and effect are always consistent with each other. If we want to have beans, we must sow bean seeds. If we want to have oranges, we must sow orange seeds. If wild weeds are planted, then it's unreasonable for one to hope to harvest edible fruits. Likewise it is impossible for us to plant the cause of bindings to things in life and wish to reap a result of emancipation.

If we really know who binds us, there will be opportunities for us to cultivate to unbind these knots and attachments, then we will see that to unbind these and to experience the escape of sufferings and

afflictions in order to have peace, mindfulness and happiness does not mean that we have to be in a place where there is no noise, no trouble, or no hard work. As a matter of fact, peace is really to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in our heart. For devout Buddhists, once you make up your mind to cultivate to unbind these knots and attachments, should persevere and never have the intention of retreat; step by step, you should try your best to practice on a daily basis. Over the times, this will help us form habits which make our life to be untied on many aspects in a better and better way. Devout Buddhists should always remember that according to Buddhism, the mind is the root of all dharmas. The mind can give rise to karma, it can also destroy it. If the mind binds us; only it can unbind us, and no-one else can do this. In Contemplation of the Mind Sutra, the Buddha taught: "All my tenets are based on the mind that is the source of all dharmas." The mind has brought about the Buddhas, the Heaven, or the Hell. It is the main driving force that makes us happy or sorrowful, cheerful or sad, liberated or doomed. Therefore, only our mind can bind us and only this very mind can unbind us, no one else can do this.

III. What Would We Let Go?:

Letting-go in Buddhism means to renounce things that belong to the worldly world. Basically, renunciation is the recognition that all existence is permeated by suffering. When you realize this, it leads to what we might call a turning point. That is to say, the realization that all of common life is permeated by suffering causes us to look for something more or something different, something which is absent of sufferings and afflictions. In Buddhism, we have always been hearing about letting go and not clinging to anything. What does the Buddha mean on letting go? He means in daily activities, no way we can let go everything. We have to hold on things; however, try not to cling to them. For example, we try to make money for our living expenses, but not try to cling on making a lot of money to accumulate regardless of the means of making the money. A basic teaching of the Buddha on how to calm and rein in the "monkey" mind. When we feel asleep, just lie down in a quiet place, put the lights out and let go our minds and bodies. Practitioners do everything with a mind that lets go. Do not expect any praise or reward. If we let go a little, we will have a little

peace. If we let go a lot, we will have a lot of peace. If we let go completely, we will know complete peace and freedom. Buddhism goes a little further to encourage its devotees to practice 'Equanimity,' or 'Upeksa', for this is one of the most important Buddhist virtues.

Upeksa refers to a state that is neither joy nor suffering but rather independent of both, the mind that is in equilibrium and elevated above all distinctions. In fact, after a short period of time of practicing renunciation, we are able to eliminate the troublesome and illusory "I" as well as all artificial worries. Practitioners should always have this attitude 'Looking but not seeing, hearing but not listening, smelling but not noticing the scent.' Why is it described as 'looking, but not seeing?' Because the person is returning the light to shine within, and introspecting. Why is it 'hearing, but not listening?' Because he is turning the hearing to listen his own nature. Why does it say, 'smelling, but not noticing the scent?' Because he has gathered back his body and mind, and is not disturbed any longer by scent. At this time, the cultivator's eyes contemplate physical forms, but the forms do not exist for him. His ears hears sounds, but the sounds do not exist for him. His nose smells scents, but those scents do not exist for him. His tongue tastes flavors, but for him, those flavors do not exist. His body feels sensations, but does not attach itself to those sensations. His mind knows of things, but does not attach to them. Equanimity is not an intellectual concept, nor is it another thought to play with in our mind. It is a state of mind, a specific quality of consciousness or awareness to be attained through cultivation. In order to obtain equanimity, we have to exert a great deal of effort to cultivate on it, we have to train our mind and transform our basic attitude towards others. Equanimity does not only mean to renounce the material world, but it also means not to develop attachment, nor aversion towards anybody. There is no room for biased views or inequality in the mind of equanimity. A person with the mind of equanimity will take this unbiased views and equality that he has towards both friends and unknown people. If after a period of time of cultivation on the mind of equanimity, our feeling of attachment to our friends, aversion to our enemy and indifferent to unknown people will gradually fade away. This is the sign of progress in our cultivation. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the

mind of equanimity does not mean becoming indifferent to everyone, but it is a mind of equality and unbiased views towards anyone.

Equanimity, or letting go, or Upekṣa is one of the seven Bodhyangas. The Buddha taught: “If one wishes to penetrate into the profound realm of liberation of the Maha-Bodhisattvas, Buddhists must first be able to let go of all of the five desires of ordinary people.” According to the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, when Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva called on to enquire after Upasaka Vimalakīrti’s health, Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti about “Upekṣa”. Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti: “What should be relinquish (upekṣa) of a Bodhisattva?” Vimalakīrti replied: “In his work of salvation, a Bodhisattva should expect nothing (i.e. no gratitude or reward) in return.” Abandonment is one of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, we can turn away from the five desires. Equanimity is a basic teaching of the Buddha on how to calm and rein in the “monkey” mind. When we feel asleep, just lie down in a quiet place, put the lights out and let go our minds and bodies.

Zen masters Ekido and Tanzan were on a journey to Kyoto. When they approached the river side, they heard a girl’s voice calling for help. When they arrived they saw a young pretty girl, stranded in the river. Ekido immediately jumped down the river and carried the girl safely to the other side where, together with Tanzan, he continued his journey. As the sun began to set, and they made arrangements to settle down for the night, Tanzan could no longer contain himself and blurted out: “How could you pick up that girl? Do you remember that we are not allowed to touch women?” Ekido replied immediately: “I only carried the girl to the river bank, but you are still carrying her.” Equanimity, one of the most important Buddhist virtues. Upekṣa refers to a state that is neither joy nor suffering but rather independent of both, the mind that is in equilibrium and elevated above all distinctions. On the contrary, to give rein to one’s emotion means to surrender one’s heedlessnesses. In Buddhism, we have always been hearing about letting go and not clinging to anything. What does the Buddha mean on letting go? He means in daily activities, no way we can let go everything. We have to hold on things; however, try not to cling to them. For example, we try to make money for our living expenses, but not try to cling on making a lot of money to accumulate regardless of

the means of making the money. Practitioners do everything with a mind that lets go. Do not expect any praise or reward. If we let go a little, we will have a little peace. If we let go a lot, we will have a lot of peace. If we let go completely, we will know complete peace and freedom. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Craving grows like a creeper which creeps from tree to tree just like the ignorant man wanders from life to life like a fruit-loving monkey in the forest (Dharmapada 334). Self-conquest is, indeed, better than the conquest of all other people. To conquer oneself, one must be always self-controlled and disciplined one’s action. By sustained effort, earnestness, temperance and self-control, the wise man may make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm (Dharmapada 25).”

Detachment is the attitude of those who give up, forget, do not attach any importance for what they have done for the benefit of others. In general, we feel proud, self-aggrandized when we do something to help other people. Quarrels, conflicts, or clashes between men or groups of men are due to passions such as greed or anger whose source can be appraised as self-attachment or dharma-attachment. The Buddha taught that if there is someone who misjudges us, we must feel pity for him; we must forgive him in order to have peace in our mind. The Bodhisattvas have totally liberated themselves from both self-attachment and dharma-attachment. When people enjoy material or spiritual pleasures, the Bodhisattvas also rejoice, from their sense of compassion, pity, and inner joy. They always consider human beings as their benefactors who have created the opportunities for them to practice the Four Immeasurable Minds on their way to Enlightenment. In terms of the Immeasurable Detachment, the Bodhisattvas consider all men equal, the clever as the stupid, themselves as others, they do everything as they have done nothing, say everything as they have said nothing, attain all spiritual levels as they have attained nothing.

A basic teaching of the Buddha on how to calm and rein in the “monkey” mind. When we feel asleep, just lie down in a quiet place, put the lights out and let go our minds and bodies. The state of mental equilibrium in which the mind has no bent or attachment, and neither meditates nor acts, a state of indifference. Equanimity, one of the most important Buddhist virtues. Upeksa refers to a state that is neither joy

nor suffering but rather independent of both, the mind that is in equilibrium and elevated above all distinctions. In Buddhism, we have always been hearing about letting go and not clinging to anything. What does the Buddha mean on letting go? He means in daily activities, no way we can let go everything. We have to hold on things; however, try not to cling to them. For example, we try to make money for our living expenses, but not try to cling on making a lot of money to accumulate regardless of the means of making the money. Practitioners do everything with a mind that lets go. Do not expect any praise or reward. *If we let go a little, we will have a little peace. If we let go a lot, we will have a lot of peace. If we let go completely, we will know complete peace and freedom.*

According to Buddhist tradition, there are seven abandonments or riddances: First, cherishing none and nothing. Second, no relations with others. Third, riddance of love and hate. Fourth, riddance of anxiety about the salvation of others. Fifth, riddance of the clinging of form. Sixth, giving to others. Seventh, benefitting others without hope of return. According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 27, there are ten kinds of nonattachment of Great Enlightening Being. Great enlightening beings abide in the concentration of the differentiated bodies of all sentient beings can attain ten kinds of non-attachment: *First*, non-attachment in all lands. *Second*, non-attachment in all places. *Third*, non-attachment in all times. *Fourth*, non-attachment in respect to all beings. *Fifth*, non-attachment in respect to all phenomena. *Sixth*, non-attachment in respect in respect to all Enlightening Beings. *Seventh*, non-attachment in respect to all Enlightening Beings' vows. *Eighth*, non-attachment in respect to all concentrations. *Ninth*, non-attachment in respect to all Buddhas. *Tenth*, non-attachment in respect to all the stages of enlightenment. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can quickly overturn all concepts and attain supreme pure wisdom: Non-attachment to all worlds; non-attachment to all sentient beings; non-attachment to all phenomena; non-attachment to all actions; non-attachment to all roots of goodness; non-attachment to all place of birth; non-attachment to all vows; non-attachment to all practices; non-attachment to all Enlightening Beings; non-attachment to all Buddhas. Also according to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of equanimity of Great Enlightening Beings:

First, Equanimity in accumulating all virtues. *Second*, Equanimity in undertaking all different vows. *Third*, Equanimity in regard to all living beings. *Fourth*, Equanimity in regard to the consequences of actions of all living beings. *Fifth*, Equanimity in regard to all phenomena. *Sixth*, Equanimity in regard to all pure and defiled lands. *Seventh*, Equanimity in regard to understandings of all sentient beings. *Eighth*, Equanimity in regard to nonconceptualization of all practices. *Ninth*, Equanimity in regard to the nondifference of all Buddhas' powers. *Tenth*, Equanimity in regard the wisdom of all Buddhas. Enlightening beings rest in these will attain the supreme great equanimity of Buddhas.

IV. Always Learn the Teachings So We Know What Should Be Ridden of:

In order to know what we should let go, we must first learn the teachings. Besides, through learning the teachings we also see so many other benefits, for owing to our study the teachings, we understand Dharma; owing to our study the teachings, we stop committing wrong doings; owing to our study the teachings, we abandon the meaningless behaviors; owing to our study the teachings, we eventually achieve nirvana. In other words, by virtue of our study the teachings, we will know all the key points for modifying our behavior. Owing to study the teachings, we will understand the meaning of the Vinaya Basket and, as a result, will stop committing sins by following the high training of ethics. Owing to study the teachings, we will understand the meaning of the Sutra Basket, and as a result, we will be able to abandon such meaningless things as distractions, by following the high training in single-pointed concentration. Also owing to study the teachings, we understand the meaning of the Abhidharma Basket, and so come to abandon delusions by means of the high training in wisdom. Study the teachings is the lamp to dispel the darkness of ignorance. It is the best of possession that thieves cannot rob us of it. As a matter of fact, if we destroy a little ignorance, we will have a little more wisdom. If we destroy a lot of ignorance, we will have a lot more of wisdom. If we destroy ignorance completely, we will have a complete wisdom. At that time, our life is a life with complete wisdom at all times. At that time, what is our life if we don't want to say it is a life of peace, mindfulness, enlightenment, and complete happiness? Study the

teachings is also a weapon to defeat our enemies of blindness to all things. It is our best friend who instructs us on the means. Study the teachings is a relative who will not desert us when we are poor. It is a medicine against sorrow that does us no harm. It is the best force that dispatches against our misdeeds. Devout Buddhists should always remember that when we know one more letter, we get rid of ourselves a bit of ignorance around that letter. So, when we know the other letters, we have dispelled our ignorance about them too, and added even more to our wisdom. The more we study the teachings the more light of wisdom we gain that helps us decrease ignorance. A Bhiksu or Bhiksuni should not study the teachings without applying the basic and essential practices of Buddhism in order to transform his or her afflictions and habit energies. A Bhiksu or Bhiksuni who is studying teachings of a profound, metaphysical, and mystical nature, should always ask himself or herself how he or she may apply these teachings in his or her daily life to transform his or her suffering and realize emancipation.

Should we read worldly books and magazines? A Bhiksu or Bhiksuni who reads worldly books and magazines, including videos, video discs, television and internet programs, as well as conversations on telephone and other images or sounds that have toxic effect, watering the seeds of sexual desire, fear, violence, sentimental weakness, and depression, commits an Expression of Regret Offence. However, in addition to reading books on Buddhism, he or she can read books on the history of civilizations of the world, general history and teachings of other religious faiths, applied psychology, and most recent scientific discoveries because these areas of knowledge can help him or her to understand and share the teachings to people in a way that is appropriate to their situation. However, laypeople, especially those who are practicing mindfulness, can read healthy and useful books and magazines for their living.

V. Rejection of Means of Life or Rejection of Pleasures?:

Most of us want to do good deeds; however, we are always contradictory ourselves between pleasure and cultivation. A lot of people misunderstand that religion means a denial or rejection of happiness in worldly life. In saying so, instead of being a method for

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

VI. Buddha's Examples of Renunciation:

Detachment is the attitude of those who give up, forget, do not attach any importance for what they have done for the benefit of others. In general, we feel proud, self-aggrandized when we do something to help other people. Quarrels, conflicts, or clashes between men or groups of men are due to passions such as greed or anger whose source can be appraised as self-attachment or dharma-attachment. The Buddha taught that if there is someone who misjudges us, we must feel pity for him; we must forgive him in order to have peace in our mind. The Bodhisattvas have totally liberated themselves from both self-attachment and dharma-attachment. When people enjoy material or spiritual pleasures, the Bodhisattvas also rejoice, from their sense of compassion, pity, and inner joy. They always consider human

beings as their benefactors who have created the opportunities for them to practice the Four Immeasurable Minds on their way to Enlightenment. In terms of the Immeasurable Detachment, the Bodhisattvas consider all men equal, the clever as the stupid, themselves as others, they do everything as they have done nothing, say everything as they have said nothing, attain all spiritual levels as they have attained nothing. Renunciation in Buddhism means to renounce the worldly world. Basically, renunciation is the recognition that all existence is permeated by suffering. When you realize this, it leads to what we might call a turning point. That is to say, the realization that all of common life is permeated by suffering causes us to look for something more or something different, something which is absent of sufferings and afflictions. For the Buddha, after realizing all nature of life and human suffering in life; all living beings kill one another to survive, and that is a great source of suffering, Crown Prince Siddhattha stopped enjoying worldly pleasures. Furthermore, he himself saw an old man, a sick man, and a corpse, that led him to ponder why it was, he also felt unsettled by these sights. Clearly, he himself was not immune to these conditions, but was subject to the inevitable succession of old age, sickness and death. Thus He thought of leaving the world in search of truth and peace. In the silence of that moonlit and breezy night (it was the full-moon day of July) such thoughts as these arose in him “Youth, the prime of life ends in old age and man’s senses fail him at a time when they are most needed. The health is weakened when diseases suddenly creeps in. Finally death comes, sudden perhaps and unexpected, and puts an end to this brief span of life. Surely there must be an escape from this unsatisfactoriness, from aging and death.” Then, at the age of twenty-nine, in the flower of youthful manhood, on the day Princess Yasodara had given birth to Rahula, Prince Siddhartha Gotama, discarding and disdaining the enchantment of the royal life, scorning and spurning joys that most young people yearn for, the prince renounced wife and child, and a crown that held the promise of power and glory. He cut off his long locks of hair with his sword, doffed his royal robes, and putting on a hermit’s robe retreated into forest solitude to seek solution to those problems of life that so deeply stirred his mind. He became a penniless wandering ascetic to struggle for enlightenment. First He sought

guidance from two famous sages at the time, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, hoping that they, being famous masters of meditation, would teach him all they know, leading him to the heights of concentrative thought. He practiced concentration and reached the highest meditative attainments, but was not satisfied with anything less than a Supreme Enlightenment. These teachers' range of knowledge and experience, however, was insufficient to grant him what he so earnestly sought. Though both sages asked him to stay to teach their followers, he declined and left. He continued to practice many penances and underwent much suffering. He practiced many forms of severe austerity. However, he got no hope after six years of torturing his body so much that it was reduced to almost a skeleton. He changed his method as his penances proved useless. He gave up extremes and adopted the Middle Path and became a Buddha at the age of 35. It is extremely important to remember that renunciation in Buddhism is never caused by despair in the ordinary course of life. As for the Buddha, he enjoyed the greatest possible happiness and privilege known in his day; however, he recognized the suffering inherent in sentient existence, and realized that, no matter how much we may indulge ourselves in pleasures of the sense, eventually we must face the realities of old age, sickness, and death. In short, renunciation in Buddhism means to renounce the worldly pleasures (which will eventually cause sufferings and afflictions) to seek the truth of life which is absent of greed, anger and ignorance, so that we can obtain a life of eternal happiness.

VII.Cultivation of Letting Go or Relaxation In Buddhist Point of View:

An Overview of Cultivation of Letting Go or Relaxation: Our world is a world of desire. Every living being comes forth from desire and endures as a combination of desires. We are born from the desires of our father and mother. Then, when we emerge into this world, we become infatuated with many things, and become ourselves well-springs of desire. We relish physical comforts and the enjoyments of the senses. Thus, we are strongly attached to the body. But if we consider this attachment, we will see that this is a potential source of sufferings and afflictions. For the body is constantly changing. We wish

we could remain alive forever, but moment after moment the body is passing from youth to old age, from life to death. We may be happy while we are young and strong, but when we contemplate sickness, old age, and the ever present threat of death, anxiety overwhelms us. Thus, we seek to elude the inevitable by evading the thought of it. The lust for life and the fear of death are forms of attachment. We are also attached to our clothes, our car, our storied houses, and our wealth. Besides, we are also attached to memories concerning the past or anticipations of the future. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, when Manjusri Bodhisattva obeyed the Buddha's command to call on Vimalakirti to enquire after his health, Vimalakirti reminded that a Bodhisattva should not tie himself up (with wrong views). What is tying and what is untying? Clinging to serenity (dhyana) is a Bodhisattva's bondage, but his expedient rebirth (for the salvation of others) is freedom from bondage. Further, he is held in bondage by wisdom which lacks expedient methods (upaya), but is liberated by wisdom supported by expedient device; he is (also) held in bondage by expedient methods which are not upheld by wisdom but is liberated by expedient methods backed by wisdom. What is bondage by wisdom unsupported by expedient methods? It is bondage caused by the Bodhisattva's desire to embellish the Buddha land (with merits) in order to bring living beings to perfection while practicing for his self-control (the three gates to nirvana, namely,) voidness, formlessness and inactivity. This is called bondage by wisdom unsupported by expedient methods (upaya). What is liberation by wisdom backed by expedient methods? It is liberation achieved in the absence of desire to embellish the Buddha land (with merits) in order to bring living beings to perfection, while practicing unremittingly for his self-control (the three gates to nirvana, namely) voidness, formlessness and inactivity. This is called liberation by wisdom supported by expedient methods (upaya). What is bondage by expedient methods unsupported by wisdom? It is bondage caused by a Bodhisattva's lack of determination to keep from desire, anger, perverse views and other troubles (klesa) while planting all wisdom roots. This is called bondage by expedient methods which lack wisdom. What is liberation by expedient methods sustained by wisdom? It is liberation won by a Bodhisattva who keeps from desire, anger, perverse views and other troubles (klesa) while planting all

virtuous roots which he dedicates to his realization of supreme enlightenment. This is called liberation by expedient methods sustained by wisdom.

To Cultivate to Let Go Greed, Anger, and Jealousy: The defilements we call lust or greed, anger and delusion, are just outward names and appearances, just as we call a house beautiful, ugly, big, small, etc. These are only appearances of things. If we want a big house, we call this one small. We create such concepts because of our craving. Craving causes us to discriminate, while the truth is merely what is. Look at it this way. Are you a person? Yes. This is the appearance of things. But you are really only a combination of elements or a group of changing aggregates. If the mind is free it does not discriminate. No big and small, no you and me, nothing. We say 'anatta' or 'not self', but really, in the end, there is neither 'atta' nor 'anatta'.

Meanwhile, envy is generated by one's feeling of inferiority, while pride, haughtiness, and arrogance are born from a false sense of superiority. These kinds of pride and arrogance are caused by looking at things from a distorted, self-centered point of view. Those who have truly understood the Buddha's teachings and been able to obtain a right view of things will never succumb to such warped thinking. Jealousy means to be jealous of another person, thinking he or she has more talent than we do (to become envious of the who surpass us in one way or other). Jealousy can be a consuming fire in our mind, a state of suffering. If we want to let go jealousy, practitioners should see and feel it without judgment or condemnation for judgment and condemnation only nourish jealousy in our mind.

To let go greed, anger, jealousy, and other evil thoughts to which people are subject, we need strength of mind, strenuous effort and vigilance. When we are free from the city life, from nagging preoccupation with daily life, we are not tempted to lose control; but when we enter in the real society, it becomes an effort to check these troubles. Meditation will contribute an immense help to enable us to face all this with calm. There are only two points of divergence between the deluded and the enlightened, i.e., Buddhas and Bodhisattvas: purity is Buddhahood, defilement is the state of sentient beings. Because the Buddhas are in accord with the Pure Mind, they

are enlightened, fully endowed with spiritual powers and wisdom. Because sentient beings are attached to worldly Dusts, they are deluded and revolve in the cycle of Birth and Death. To practice Pure Land is to go deep into the Buddha Recitation Samadhi, awakening to the Original Mind and attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, if any deluded, agitated thought develops during Buddha Recitation, it should be severed immediately, allowing us to return to the state of the Pure Mind. This is the method of dropping afflictions with the meditating mind. Devout Buddhists, even though seeing that letting go of greed-anger-ignorance is not an easy thing to do; this is not easy to do in one or two days, but when we want to follow the Buddha's Path, we have no other choice but to let them go.

Cultivation of Letting Go Through Meditation: Buddhist practitioners should always have this attitude 'Looking but not seeing, hearing but not listening, smelling but not noticing the scent.' Why is it described as 'looking, but not seeing?' Because the person is returning the light to shine within, and introspecting. Why is it 'hearing, but not listening?' Because he is turning the hearing to listen his own nature. Why does it say, 'smelling, but not noticing the scent?' Because he has gathered back his body and mind, and is not disturbed any longer by scent. At this time, the cultivator's eyes contemplate physical forms, but the forms do not exist for him. His ears hears sounds, but the sounds do not exist for him. His nose smells scents, but those scents do not exist for him. His tongue tastes flavors, but for him, those flavors do not exist. His body feels sensations, but does not attach itself to those sensations. His mind knows of things, but does not attach to them. If we do our sitting meditation for a considerable time, we may feel fatigued, we may need to ease our aching limbs a little bit. Then we can start our walking meditation. Walk slowly mindful of the movements, now we need not think of the breath but become aware of the walk. If our mind wanders give attention to our walking without getting involved in other thoughts. If we stop, turn or look around, be mindful and apply clear comprehension. When our foot touches the earth we get the sensation, become aware of it. Walking is also an exercise in mindfulness. When we are following a meditation course let us try to be mindful always everywhere. When sitting, standing, walking, working, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, wearing clothes, or even when we are silent, etc., let

us be always mindful. If our limbs get numbed while in meditation, rub and stretch them. We can also relax in a lying down position; however, this we may do at the end of a sitting meditation. Lie on our back on a flat surface, and try to avoid using a pillow or cushion under our head. Keep our legs stretched out slightly apart and arms loosely by our sides, keep our eyes shut, do not go to deep thinking, but allow your mind to relax, and not wander. Relax each muscle, be completely relaxed for a few minutes. At times, we may slightly fall asleep for a couple of minutes, at the end of the relaxation, get up feeling fit. We could do this type of relaxation, not only during the meditation hours, but also at any time we feel fatigued or when we have the inclination to relax.

A basic teaching of the Buddha on how to calm and rein in the “monkey” mind. When we feel asleep, just lie down in a quiet place, put the lights out and let go our minds and bodies. In Buddhism, we have always been hearing about letting go and not clinging to anything. What does the Buddha mean on letting go? He means in daily activities, no way we can let go everything. We have to hold on things; however, try not to cling to them. For example, we try to make money for our living expenses, but not try to cling on making a lot of money to accumulate regardless of the means of making the money. Practitioners do everything with a mind that lets go. Do not expect any praise or reward. If we let go a little, we will have a little peace. If we let go a lot, we will have a lot of peace. If we let go completely, we will know complete peace and freedom. In Zen, this 'abandonment' means the moral courage of taking risks; it helps practitioners plunging into the unknown which lies beyond the topography of relative knowledge. This 'abandonment' may seem an easy thing to do, but after all it is the last thing any practitioner can do, for it is done only when we are most thoroughly convinced that there is no other way to meet the situation. We are always conscious of a tie, which we thought it's slender, but we will see how strong it is when we try to cut it off. It is always holding us back when we wish to let go. Zen practitioners should always be careful!

VIII. Buddhist Practitioners Always Believe That Letting Go Means Closing More Doors Leading to the Path of Birth-Death & Rebirth & Is Also Synonymous With Escaping From Circling in the Six Ways:

Letting-go (Equanimity) in Buddhism means to renounce things that belong to the worldly world. Basically, renunciation is the recognition that all existence is permeated by suffering. When you realize this, it leads to what we might call a turning point. That is to say, the realization that all of common life is permeated by suffering causes us to look for something more or something different, something which is absent of sufferings and afflictions. In Buddhism, we have always been hearing about letting go and not clinging to anything. What does the Buddha mean on letting go? He means in daily activities, no way we can let go everything. We have to hold on things; however, try not to cling to them. For example, we try to make money for our living expenses, but not try to cling on making a lot of money to accumulate regardless of the means of making the money. A basic teaching of the Buddha on how to calm and rein in the “monkey” mind. When we feel asleep, just lie down in a quiet place, put the lights out and let go our minds and bodies. Practitioners do everything with a mind that lets go. Do not expect any praise or reward. If we let go a little, we will have a little peace. If we let go a lot, we will have a lot of peace. If we let go completely, we will know complete peace and freedom. Buddhism goes a little further to encourage its devotees to practice ‘Equanimity,’ or ‘Upeksa’, for this is one of the most important Buddhist virtues.

Upeksa refers to a state that is neither joy nor suffering but rather independent of both, the mind that is in equilibrium and elevated above all distinctions. In fact, after a short period of time of practicing renunciation, we are able to eliminate the troublesome and illusory “I” as well as all artificial worries. Zen practitioners should always have this attitude ‘Looking but not seeing, hearing but not listening, smelling but not noticing the scent.’ Why is it described as ‘looking, but not seeing?’ Because the person is returning the light to shine within, and introspecting. Why is it ‘hearing, but not listening?’ Because he is turning the hearing to listen his own nature. Why does it say, ‘smelling, but not noticing the scent?’ Because he has gathered back his body and

mind, and is not disturbed any longer by scent. At this time, the cultivator's eyes contemplate physical forms, but the forms do not exist for him. His ears hears sounds, but the sounds do not exist for him. His nose smells scents, but those scents do not exist for him. His tongue tastes flavors, but for him, those flavors do not exist. His body feels sensations, but does not attach itself to those sensations. His mind knows of things, but does not attach to them. Equanimity is not an intellectual concept, nor is it another thought to played with in our mind. It is a state of mind, a specific quality of consciousness or awareness to be attained through cultivation. In order to obtain equanimity, we have to exert a great deal of effort to cultivate on it, we have to train our mind and transform our basic attitude towards others. Equanimity does not only mean to renounce the material world, but it also means not to develop attachment, nor aversion towards anybody. There is no room for biased views or inequality in the mind of equanimity. A person with the mind of equanimity will take this unbiased views and equality that he has towards both friends and unknown people. If after a period of time of cultivation on the mind of equanimity, our feeling of attachment to our friends, aversion to our enemy and indifferent to unknown people will gradually fade away. This is the sign of progress in our cultivation. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the mind of equanimity does not mean becoming indifferent to everyone, but it is a mind of equality and unbiased views towards anyone.

Zen masters Ekido and Tanzan were on a journey to Kyoto. When they approached the river side, they heard a girl's voice calling for help. When they arrived they saw a young pretty girl, stranded in the river. Ekido immediately jumped down the river and carried the girl safely to the other side where, together with Tanzan, he continued his journey. As the sun began to set, and they made arrangements to settle down for the night, Tanzan could no longer contain himself and blurted out: "How could you pick up that girl? Do you remember that we are not allowed to touch women?" Ekido replied immediately: "I only carried the girl to the river bank, but you are still carrying her." Equanimity, one of the most important Buddhist virtues. Upeksha refers to a state that is neither joy nor suffering but rather independent of both, the mind that is in equilibrium and elevated above all distinctions.

On the contrary, to give rein to one's emotion means to surrender one's heedlessnesses. In Buddhism, we have always been hearing about letting go and not clinging to anything. What does the Buddha mean on letting go? He means in daily activities, no way we can let go everything. We have to hold on things; however, try not to cling to them. For example, we try to make money for our living expenses, but not try to cling on making a lot of money to accumulate regardless of the means of making the money. Practitioners do everything with a mind that lets go. Do not expect any praise or reward. If we let go a little, we will have a little peace. If we let go a lot, we will have a lot of peace. If we let go completely, we will know complete peace and freedom. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Craving grows like a creeper which creeps from tree to tree just like the ignorant man wanders from life to life like a fruit-loving monkey in the forest (Dharmapada 334). Self-conquest is, indeed, better than the conquest of all other people. To conquer oneself, one must be always self-controlled and disciplined one's action. By sustained effort, earnestness, temperance and self-control, the wise man may make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm (Dharmapada 25)."

Detachment is the attitude of those who give up, forget, do not attach any importance for what they have done for the benefit of others. In general, we feel proud, self-aggrandized when we do something to help other people. Quarrels, conflicts, or clashes between men or groups of men are due to passions such as greed or anger whose source can be appraised as self-attachment or dharma-attachment. The Buddha taught that if there is someone who misjudges us, we must feel pity for him; we must forgive him in order to have peace in our mind. The Bodhisattvas have totally liberated themselves from both self-attachment and dharma-attachment. When people enjoy material or spiritual pleasures, the Bodhisattvas also rejoice, from their sense of compassion, pity, and inner joy. They always consider human beings as their benefactors who have created the opportunities for them to practice the Four Immeasurable Minds on their way to Enlightenment. In terms of the Immeasurable Detachment, the Bodhisattvas consider all men equal, the clever as the stupid, themselves as others, they do everything as they have done nothing,

say everything as they have said nothing, attain all spiritual levels as they have attained nothing.

A basic teaching of the Buddha on how to calm and rein in the “monkey” mind. When we feel asleep, just lie down in a quiet place, put the lights out and let go our minds and bodies. The state of mental equilibrium in which the mind has no bent or attachment, and neither meditates nor acts, a state of indifference. Equanimity, one of the most important Buddhist virtues. Upeksa refers to a state that is neither joy nor suffering but rather independent of both, the mind that is in equilibrium and elevated above all distinctions. In Buddhism, we have always been hearing about letting go and not clinging to anything. What does the Buddha mean on letting go? He means in daily activities, no way we can let go everything. We have to hold on things; however, try not to cling to them. For example, we try to make money for our living expenses, but not try to cling on making a lot of money to accumulate regardless of the means of making the money. Practitioners do everything with a mind that lets go. Do not expect any praise or reward. If we let go a little, we will have a little peace. If we let go a lot, we will have a lot of peace. If we let go completely, we will know complete peace and freedom.

After the Buddha realized all nature of life and human suffering in life; all living beings kill one another to survive, and that is a great source of suffering, Crown Prince Siddhattha stopped enjoying worldly pleasures. Furthermore, he himself saw an old man, a sick man, and a corpse, that led him to ponder why it was. he also felt unsettled by these sights. Clearly, he himself was not immune to these conditions, but was subject to the inevitable succession of old age, sickness and death. Thus He thought of leaving the world in search of truth and peace. In the silence of that moonlit and breezy night (it was the full-moon day of July) such thoughts as these arose in him “Youth, the prime of life ends in old age and man’s senses fail him at a time when they are most needed. The health is weakened when diseases suddenly creeps in. Finally death comes, sudden perhaps and unexpected, and puts an end to this brief span of life. Surely there must be an escape from this unsatisfactoriness, from aging and death.” Then, at the age of twenty-nine, in the flower of youthful manhood, on the day Princess Yasodara had given birth to Rahula, Prince Siddhartha Gotama,

discarding and disdaining the enchantment of the royal life, scorning and spurning joys that most young people yearn for, the prince renounced wife and child, and a crown that held the promise of power and glory. He cut off his long locks of hair with his sword, doffed his royal robes, and putting on a hermit's robe retreated into forest solitude to seek solution to those problems of life that so deeply stirred his mind. He became a penniless wandering ascetic to struggle for enlightenment. First He sought guidance from two famous sages at the time, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, hoping that they, being famous masters of meditation, would teach him all they know, leading him to the heights of concentrative thought. He practiced concentration and reached the highest meditative attainments, but was not satisfied with anything less than a Supreme Enlightenment. These teachers' range of knowledge and experience, however, was insufficient to grant him what he so earnestly sought. Though both sages asked him to stay to teach their followers, he declined and left. He continued to practice many penances and underwent much suffering. He practiced many forms of severe austerity. However, he got no hope after six years of torturing his body so much that it was reduced to almost a skeleton. He changed his method as his penances proved useless. He gave up extremes and adopted the Middle Path and became a Buddha at the age of 35. It is extremely important to remember that renunciation in Buddhism is never caused by despair in the ordinary course of life. As for the Buddha, he enjoyed the greatest possible happiness and privilege known in his day; however, he recognized the suffering inherent in sentient existence, and realized that, no matter how much we may indulge ourselves in pleasures of the sense, eventually we must face the realities of old age, sickness, and death. In short, renunciation in Buddhism means to renounce the worldly pleasures (which will eventually cause sufferings and afflictions) to seek the truth of life which is absent of greed, anger and ignorance, so that we can obtain a life of eternal happiness.

Notes:

- (1) To turn the spotlight to ourselves means to turn back and reflect ourselves, or turn back and examine ourselves. We, devoted Buddhists, must examine ourselves so that we are able to know who we are. Know our body and mind by simply watching. In sitting, in sleeping, in eating, know our limits. We will be able to see suffering, its cause, and its end. To turn within means all the twenty-four hours and in every situation, to pierce one by one through

the layers covering the self, deeper and deeper, to place that cannot be described. It is when thinking comes to an end and making distinctions ceases, when wrong views and ideas disappear of themselves without having to be driven forth, and without being sought the true action."

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