

# ENTRANCE TO BUDDHISM

compiled by **Chien, Feng-wen**  
translated by **Chien, Su-cheng**



NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMĀ SAMBUDDHASSA

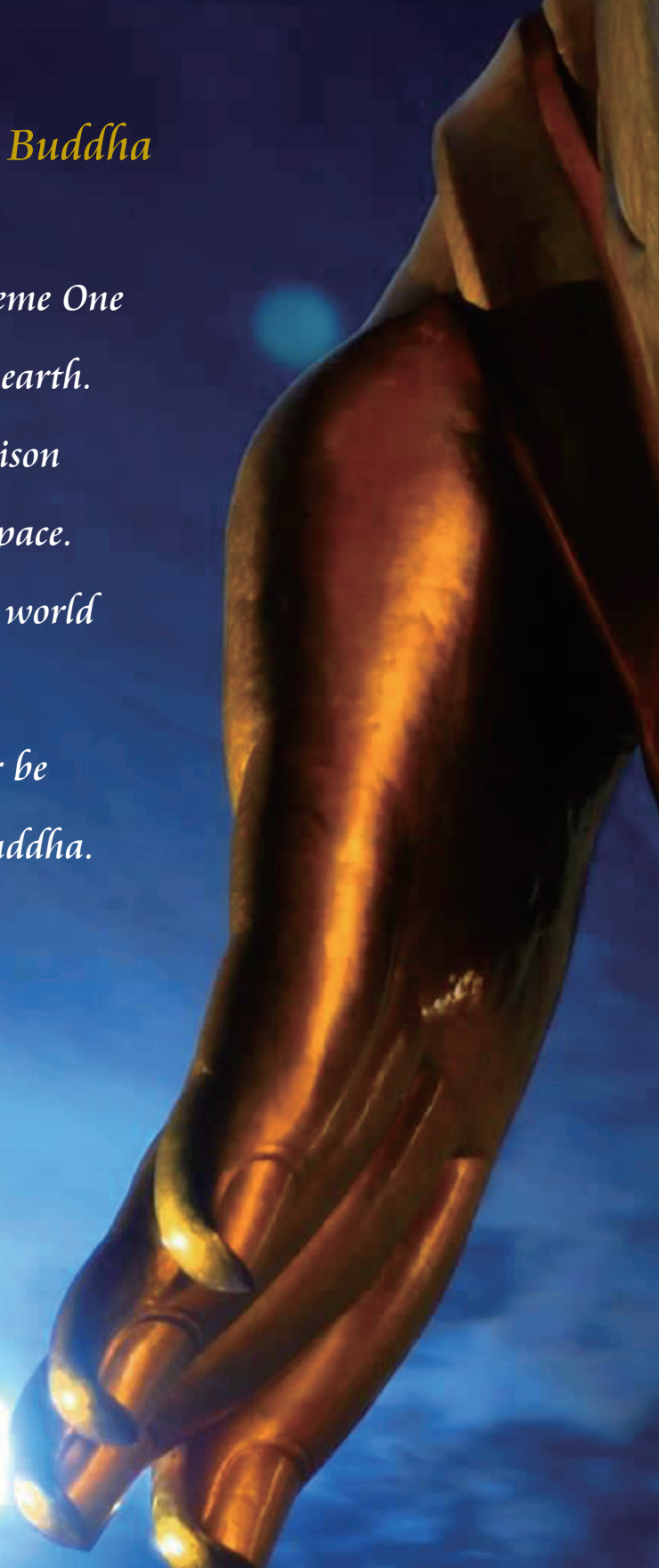
**NAMO SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA**

南無本師釋迦牟尼佛



## *Verse of Praising the Buddha*

*The Buddha is the Supreme One  
Both in heavens and on earth.  
So is he without comparison  
In the ten directions of space.  
Among all things in the world  
That I can possibly see,  
No other beings can ever be  
Comparable with the Buddha.*



# An Illustration of Buddha's speaking of the Ten Dharma Realms



## Explaining in words the Illustration of Buddha's speaking of the Ten Dharma Realms

<b>The Realm of Buddhas—</b>	Knowing that dharmadhātu is one mind, and having accomplished the three kinds of enlightenment with tens of thousands of virtues is the mind of a next Buddha.
<b>The Realm of Bodhisattvas—</b>	Keeping altruism in mind, broadly cultivating the six paramitas, and practicing the Middle Path is the mind of a bodhisattva.
<b>The Realm of Sravakas—</b>	Practicing in the way of the four noble truths, knowing what suffering is and how to end its aggregation, being eager for nirvana and cultivating the Way to reach it is the mind of an arhat.
<b>The Realm of Pratyekabuddhas—</b>	Apprehending the twelve nidanas, keeping substance of things in mind, being awakened to Void, and enjoying being alone and quiet is the mind of a pratyekabuddha.
<b>The Realm of Deities—</b>	Observing five precepts and ten forms of good action, being merciful, cultivating virtues, and protecting lands and people is the mind of a deity in the Heaven Realm.
<b>The Realm of Asuras—</b>	Observing the same precepts and good deeds as those in the Heaven Realm, and being high-minded, jealous and quarrelsome is the mind of an Asura.
<b>The Human Realm—</b>	Following five precepts, becoming rich and noble if doing it faithfully or becoming poor and underprivileged if failing to do it, is the mind of a sentient being in the Human Realm.
<b>The Animal Realm—</b>	Being ignorant and unenlightened for not following the right path, being without any courtesy and respect, and acting irrationally and forcefully is the mind of an animal.
<b>The Realm of Hungry Ghosts—</b>	Being miserly and greedy, taking things not belonging to them, being unrighteous and stealing things entrusted to them, and depleting all blessings and luck is the mind of a hungry ghost.
<b>The Realm of Hell—</b>	Being tyrannical and ignorant, disobeying one's superiors and bullying his subordinates, and acting violently and irrationally is the mind of a sentient being in Hell.

### Ten Forms of good (wicked) action:

1. No killing, protecting animals and releasing them. And this is the virtue of kindheartedness.
2. No stealing or taking possession of ill-gotten gains with greediness. And this is the virtue of righteousness.
3. No adultery, following pure practice without being promiscuous. And this is the virtue of courtesy.
4. No lying, saying honest words and being faithful. And this is the virtue of faith.
5. No sexual talks or dirty words. Speak in good language. And this is a real gentleman.
6. Don't be double-tongued and cause quarrels. Always promote harmony among people. And this is a seed of goodness.
7. No hateful speech. Don't speak ill of others and always be gentle when speaking. This is the virtue of speaking properly.
8. No greediness. Be merciful and give alms to accumulate blessings. This is the basis of becoming rich.
9. No wrath and no hatred for others. Don't be angry with people because of unenlightened illusion and ignorance.
10. No foolishness and ignorance. Correctly believe in the truth of causality and don't take heterodox teachings for real.



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# Entrance to Buddhism

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by **Chien, Feng-wen**  
translated by **Chien, Su-cheng**

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PREFACE.....	5
PREFACE TO TRANSLATION.....	6
1. A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA.....	9
2. EIGHT ASPECTS OF VENERABLE SAKYAMUNI'S LIFE.....	23
3. A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE BUDDHA'S CLAN NAME .....	26
4. AN EXPLANATION OF THE BUDDHA'S HOLY TITLE .....	28
5. BUDDHIST HOLY PLACES IN INDIA.....	29
6. BUDDHIST CALENDAR AND BUDDHIST FLAGS.....	32
7. THE MEANING OF VESAK DAY OR BUDDHA DAY .....	34
8. A DIAGRAM OF THE THREE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FORMING BUDDHISM .....	36
9. THINGS WE SHOULD BE ALERT TO.....	37
10. TRISARANA OR TAKING REFUGE IN THE THREE JEWELS .....	42
11. AN OUTLINE OF BUDDHA-DHARMA.....	44
12. THE GENERAL MEANING OF BUDDHISM.....	46
13. A LIFE AND UNIVERSE ARISING FROM CONDITIONAL CAUSATION.....	48
14. THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT OF KARMAS.....	50
15. HETUPRATYAYA AND RETRIBUTION FOR GOOD OR EVIL DEEDS .....	52
16. A SURVEY OF SENTIENT BEINGS IN THE UNIVERSE.....	56
17. A SURVEY OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD OF THE UNIVERSE.....	71
18. THE EXPEDIENT MEANS OF THE FIVE VEHICLES OF BUDDHISM.....	79
19. VEHICLES FOR HUMANS AND DEVAS AND FIVE PRECEPTS AND TEN FORMS OF GOOD ACTION.....	85
20. A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF EIGHT PRECEPTS.....	93
21. THE SIX PRIMARY AFFLICTIONS .....	96



22. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE SRAVAKA VEHICLE.....	101
23. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS.....	102
24. A DIAGRAM OF THE THIRTY-SEVEN CONDITIONS LEADING TO BUDDHAHOOD.....	106
25. A GENERAL EXPLANATION OF FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS.....	110
26. PUTTING THE EIGHTFOLD NOBLE PATH INTO PRACTICE .....	115
27. A SIMPLE INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE SKANDHAS.....	119
28. THE PRATYEKABUDDHA VEHICLE AND THE TWELVE NIDANAS.....	122
29. THE BODHISATTVA VEHICLE AND THE SIX PARAMITAS .....	128
30. THE FOUR INFINITE BUDDHA-STATES OF MIND .....	134
31. THE FOUR METHODS OF WINNING OVER AND THE FOUR GREAT VOWS .....	137
32. THE BASIC DOCTRINES OF BUDDHISM.....	141
33. THE FOUR ASSEMBLIES OF COLLECTING AND FIXING BUDDHIST CANONS.....	156
34. THE THREE PERIODS OF BUDDHA-DHARMA IN INDIA.....	160
35. THE INTRODUCTION OF BUDDHA-DHARMA TO CHINA.....	164
36. REASONS WHY BUDDHISM IS DIVIDED INTO VARIOUS SECTS .....	168
37. DIFFERENT TYPES OF BUDDHISTS .....	171
38. GUIDELINES OF LIFE FOR A BUDDHIST ORDER.....	173
39. BELIEF IN SERVING OTHERS OF BUDDHISM.....	176
40. THE PURPOSE AND MISSION OF LEARNING BUDDHISM .....	178
41. BUDDHISM AS THE BUDDHA'S PERFECT AND WHOLLY COMPLETE EDUCATION.....	182
42. A GLOSSARY OF BUDDHIST TERMS AND COMMON KNOWLEDGE OF BUDDHISM .....	193

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## PREFACE

The content of this book is mainly derived from *Manual of Entrance to Buddhism* written and edited by Malaysian Buddhist Association and Master Taixu's (太虛大師) series of books, and partly from *Knowing Buddhism* by Venerable Master Ching Kung (淨空大師) as well as *Fourteen Lectures on Buddhism* written and edited by Li, Pingnan Bodhisattva (李炳南菩薩) and the teaching materials of Buddhism edited by Fang, Lun Bodhisattva (方倫菩薩). These materials were re-edited, retyped and recomposed, and then meticulously proofread by Ms. Chiu, Shuchen (邱淑貞居士) to ensure that all the words printed are clear and easy to read so that this book can help beginners to learn Buddhism. Here we respectfully give our thankfulness to them all.

The content of the book is arranged as follows. Chapters 1 to 8 are explanations of the origin of Buddhism. Chapters 9 to 12 advise and encourage people to arouse the mind of intention to achieve enlightenment and industriously cultivate the supreme Buddha-way, and they also give an outline of what and how to cultivate. Chapters 13 to 32 are lectures on doctrines of Buddhism. Chapters 33 to 36 are explications of the evolution of Buddha-dharma and the primary and secondary causes of the introduction of Buddha-dharma to China. Chapters 37 to 41 are about how Buddha-dharma is practiced in the world without leaving the awareness of the world; it is about an enlightened life condition rather than a religious belief which leads to passivity, escape, and superstition. Chapter 42 is an explanation of easy and simple Buddhist terms included in this book and common knowledge of Buddhism.

It is our hope that with these categories, this book can help beginners to gain correct knowledge on Buddhism through a correct introduction to it. Moreover, we hope that all sentient beings will arouse their minds of intention to obtain Bodhi and witness to the supreme way of the Buddha.

*A Preface by Chien, Feng-wen (簡豐文)*  
*Director of the Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation*  
*September 26th, 1997*



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## PREFACE TO TRANSLATION

Since its publication in 1997, *Entrance to Buddhism* (佛學入門) has been widely read throughout Taiwan and other Chinese-speaking areas of the world, benefitting hundreds of thousands of people, both those just beginning to practice Buddhism and those having trodden the Path for some time, for the book covers almost all aspects of Buddhism and helps not only beginners but also those who have practiced the Way for some years to gain correct knowledge on Buddhism and thus are able to faithfully tread the Path in the right way. To further benefit English-speaking Buddhist learners, from 2019 to 2020, this book was translated into English under the request of Mr. Chien, Feng-wen (簡豐文 居士), the present Supervisor of the Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation. And the mission of doing the English translation work was assumed and accomplished by Ms. Chien, Sucheng (簡素琤 居士) and then proofread by this translator herself, while it was painstakingly edited, given illustrations and graphs, and typeset time and again by Mr. Jiang, Huangjheng (江鳳正 居士) until the English version was ready for publication. Jhu, Yicun (朱益村 居士), Chief Executive Officer of the Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation and Mr. Jhang, Yinyue (張銀嶽 居士) also gave valuable advice on the editing and typesetting of the English version of the book. Here we respectfully give our deep appreciation to them all. Hopefully, this book can help beginners in the English-speaking world to gain correct knowledge on Buddhism and furthermore arouse their minds of intention to attain enlightenment and witness to the supreme way of the Buddha eventually.

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*October 21rst, 2020*

Entrance to  
**Buddhism**



# 1.

## A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA

[1. to 8. explain the origin of Buddhism]

### (1) The birth of the prince of the Sakya clan

Sakyamuni Buddha was born in 623 BC, begotten by Suddhodana, the wise and kind king of Kapilavastu, and mothered by Sri Maya, a virtuous and intelligent Koliyan princess. At forty-five when Maya was 10 months pregnant and the prince was due, on her way to her parents' home, she gave birth to the prince at Lumbini Park, which was five miles away from the capital. Already at birth the prince could walk for seven steps and where his feet touched the ground there appeared seven lotuses. Then he looked around, one hand pointing at the skies and the other at the ground, talking to himself, "Above and below the skies, there is only me." It is said that at that time fragrant flower petals floated down from the skies and nine dragons spewed out water for the prince to shower.

The parents were immensely happy to have the son in their old years. When the prince was brought back to the palace, people all over the country celebrated his birth. The hermit seer Asita<sup>1</sup> came to visit and announced that the prince looked solemn and dignified and prophesized that one day he would be either the wheel-turning-holy-king<sup>2</sup> that conquered and ruled the whole world or an omniscient Buddha. His father had great expectations for his

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1 Asita was a hermit ascetic of Brahmanism. Before Prince Siddhartha was born, in Asita's meditative concentration practice, there appeared an auspicious sign that devakanyas were getting ready for scattering flower petals at the birth of the prince.

2 The wheel-turning-holy-kings are the most blessed people in the world. They have four kinds of blessings: one, they have great riches, treasures, belongings, land and property unrivaled by anyone else in the world; two, they have solemn and dignified looks with the thirty-two physical marks of a Buddha; three, they are healthy, safe and happy without any sicknesses; four, they have a long life span unrivaled by anyone else in the world. When a wheel-turning-holy-king appears in the world, the world is peaceful and people live happily without natural disasters and man-made misfortunes. This is because in their past lives, they strove for blessings instead of cultivating the correct wisdom and thus they can only become great kings with the blessings to rule the world, but they are incapable of awakening to the truth and attaining to the fruits of enlightenment.

son so he fetched famed Brahmins to give him a name. The prince was given the name Siddhartha, which means being auspicious and fulfilling all merits and virtues.

## (2) Childhood and Teenage Years

Seven days after Prince Siddhartha was born, his mother passed away. His mother's younger sister, Mahapajapati, became the next queen of Suddhodana and raised the prince. She loved and took care of him like her own flesh and blood and let the prince still grow up in happiness and comfort.

When the prince was seven, he started his education. Suddhodana fetched master teachers to teach him Sanskrit and lead him to study the five sciences of Ancient India<sup>3</sup> and the four Vedas<sup>4</sup> step by step. The bright prince was able to relate one new thing he learned to ten other things he had not been taught before and so within just a few years, at twelve, he had already mastered all the branches of knowledge of his times. Later, he studied the art of war and martial arts and soon mastered them both as well. Once at a contest in martial arts among descendants of the royal family, he showed excellent physical strength for wrestling and superb martial art of archery. He was the best of all the princes because, with one arrow, other princes could shoot through just three drums, while he could shoot through seven.

At sixteen, his father ordered him to marry Yasodhara, a princess of a neighboring country, and later they had a son named Rahula. At the time when Rahula was born, the prince sighed, saying: "A rahu is born, a fetter has arisen," meaning that Rahula would impede his search for enlightenment like a fetter put around his neck. Suddhodana loved Prince Siddhartha very much and

3 The five sciences of India are: one, science of language (sabda vidya) ; two, science of fine arts and crafts (silpa-karma-sthana vidya) ; three, science of medicine (cikitsa vidya) ; four, science of logic (hetu vidya) ; five, science of spirituality (adhyatma vidya) .

4 The four Vedas (in Sanskrit, veda means wisdom) are: one, the Rig Veda, which is comprised of ten books of religious hymns; two, the Sama Veda, a book of chants and songs which were sung during ceremonial sacrifices and various rituals of worship; three, the Yajur Veda, a book of lyrics and instructions for rituals and ceremonies used by priests; four, the Atharva Veda, which includes all the incantations, spells and charms circulated among people in the world.

wanted him to succeed the throne. To let him live a happy life, Suddhodana specially built for the prince respective palaces for cold, hot and warm seasons and chose many courtiers and beautiful women to serve him. However, Prince Siddhartha did not take interest in these worldly riches and pleasures.

### **(3) Renunciation**

Though born as a prince, when seeing the unfairness of the four-class caste system in India<sup>5</sup> of his time, Prince Siddhartha was immensely sorrowful. He often wondered, “Why are Shudras slaves? Aren’t they humans, too? Are there ways to make them live free and equal lives?”

One day, Prince Siddhartha went with his father to play in the countryside. He saw that under the scorching sun, the farmers were tilling the land without clothes on their upper bodies, sweating and panting, with mud covering their whole bodies. The oxen driven to plow the land were tied with ropes on their necks, which were wounded and bleeding, and they were being whipped by the farmers. After the land was plowed, many little worms and insects surfaced from under the ground while sparrows and other birds flew over and fought to peck at them. In the heart of Prince Siddhartha, there arose feelings of compassion and sympathy. He thought of how miserable poor people were because they had to struggle for survival and what a tragic scene it was for living creatures to kill one another in order to stay alive. He quietly reflected on it under a big tree, thinking: “What should I do to save them and let all living creatures live a reasonable life?” He was so absorbed in thinking that he almost forgot to return to the palace.

Later, he traveled to four cities and both witnessed the miserable states of the old, the sick and the dead and saw the happy faces of the ascetics who had left home to cultivate themselves. He pondered on all the scenes he had seen and understood that nobody could escape the suffering of aging, illness and death and that to

<sup>5</sup> The four classes in the caste system were: the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras.



struggle for survival, all sentient beings would commit sins of all kinds, even killing one another and causing various tragedies, only to end in the path of aging, illness, and death. So, how to get rid of suffering in this miserable, conflicting and unreasonable life?

These questions prevented the prince from living in the palace to enjoy honor and riches with a peaceful mind. And finally, at 29, on a moonlit night with a bright full moon, he made the greatest determination to discard his throne, riches, parents, wife and son and leave everything behind except for the company of his attendant, Chandaka. He rode his white horse Kanthaka, quietly left the palace, crossed the River Anoma<sup>6</sup>, and went to the deep mountains and wilderness to seek ways to get rid of suffering in life and find the truth.

#### **(4) Seeking Enlightenment**

After Prince Siddhartha left home to renounce secular life, on the riverside of Anoma, he shaved his hair, put on the monk's robe, and asked Chandaka to bring his clothing and white horse back to the palace. Chandaka wept and the white horse neighed sadly, unwilling to leave the prince.

When Suddhodana saw Chandaka returning without the prince, he was immensely sorrowful and immediately dispatched his ministers to bring the prince back. However, the prince's will to leave home to be a monk was unshakeable. He said to the ministers going after him, "I swear never to return to the palace if I do not awaken to the truth." The king could not do anything but choose five young men from the royal clan to follow the prince to seek enlightenment.

The prince headed for the wilderness and entered the forest where Bhargava practiced asceticism. There he saw the ascetics, who practiced various austerities so as to go to heavens. He did not think it was the right way, so he wanted to leave right away.

<sup>6</sup> River Anoma is a small river, which, after two thousand years' accumulation of mud and sand, now there is no river water at all if it does not rain. When Prince Siddhartha left the palace, he passed the river, walked along the river bank, and then crossed the river to the south to seek the Way.

Seeing how determined he was to seek enlightenment, the ascetics told him to go to the south of the Ganges river and there in a forest inhabited by world-renunciant religious practitioners, he could find master teachers and would certainly fulfill his wish. So, he went south, crossed the southern bank of the Ganges river to Magadha, and begged for alms in Rajagaha. After that, he walked to Pandava hill cave. When King Bimbisara knew about it, he went to Pandava hill cave to visit the prince and invited him to the palace, where he would offer the prince all the foods and drinks and he also yielded the throne to him, wanting to give him half of the land in his country and riches to make him return to lay life. Nevertheless, because of his strong determination to cultivate the Way, the prince would not accept the king's offers, which made King Bimbisara admire him greatly. He said to the prince, "If you reach Buddhahood, don't forget to ferry me across the sea of transmigration to the other shore." The prince replied, "Great king, I will do as you wish." Then, he bid farewell to the king and headed for the path to the forest of ascetics to look for master teachers.

The prince continued his way to seek enlightenment with his five attendants and visited two famous master teachers at that time, Alara Kalama and Udaka Ramaputta. However, their teachings were not complete and could not satisfy the prince's wish, so he left them and continued his search elsewhere.

The prince practiced asceticism in Uruvela near Neranjara River. After six years of extremely ascetic life, he ended in eating a single sesame seed and one grain of wheat each day. So, he became very thin and his body was weak and languid. Later, however, he realized that the extreme bitterness of asceticism would not lead to the Truth, and therefore, he gave up ascetic practices, accepted the offering of a bowl of rice milk by a shepherd girl called Sujata, and recovered his health. The five attendants thought the prince had lost his determination of seeking the Way, so they did not follow him anymore. The prince went to Neranjara River to have a bath. He washed away all the dirtiness of the six years, and was determined

to obtain the most complete truth.

### **(5) Attaining supreme enlightenment**

The Sakya Prince crossed Neranjara River alone to Bodh Gaya near Mount Gaya. At that time, a child made a straw seat under a Bodhi tree with the grass he had cut. The prince then meditated on the seat, vowing firmly, “I will never get up from the seat before I reach Sambodhi.” (In Buddhist sutras, this seat is called the Diamond Throne.)

It is said that after the mid-night of the seventh day, in the prince’s meditative concentration practice, there appeared disturbances of mara conditions. Papiyan, the king of maras, sent his daughters to seduce him and launched his forces to intimidate him. With his unshakeable will, however, the prince was unmoved and subdued the king of maras instead. The legend is actually a description of how the prince subdued his sexual desires and fear of threatening power.

After subduing maras, the prince concentrated his mind on the problems of sentient beings with the highest wisdom, and finally at the age of 35 (588 B.C.) , as he saw the bright stars appear in the night skies one mid-night, he clearly understood all the truth and attained supreme Sambodhi. From then on, the world respectfully called him the Buddha, with the holy title Sakyamuni Buddha.

What is the truth that the Buddha awakened to? The most important common essence he awakened to is that everything arises from conditions and has no separate and independent nature. The universe and life exist because of dependent origination. All things depend on one another and originate from the interaction of hetupratyaya (causes and conditions) . For example, our physical bodies come into being because of the condition of our parents’ giving birth to us, while life itself originates from the cause of our karmas. It is our karmas of ignorance and afflictions we have accumulated in the previous lives that incur our retribution bodies. Along with the birth of this retribution body, there unavoidably

come old age, illnesses, and death. To be liberated from the suffering of life, old age, illnesses, and death, one can only cultivate the Way to terminate the primal ignorance which causes the six primary afflictions.

When the Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, he said, “How amazing it is that all sentient beings on earth are endowed with the mental and moral wisdom and virtues of Tathagata; but with their illusions and attachment to things, they cannot realize the truth.” This means that all sentient beings have innate Buddha-nature and are capable of becoming Buddhas and the reason why they do not become Buddhas is that their Buddha-nature is being hidden by ignorance and defilement of carnal desires. Therefore, the Buddha attained the Way by realizing that everything arises from conditions and has no separate and independent nature, terminating ignorance accordingly, and letting the light of wisdom shine and Buddha-nature emerge; and eventually the purity of mind kindled the light of the truth and illuminated all over the human world.

#### **(6) The work of speaking the Dharma and saving sentient beings**

After the Buddha attained enlightenment, he proceeded with his work of speaking the Dharma and saving sentient beings.

In the beginning, he arrived at Sarnath, the Deer Park, and taught Ajanata Kaundinya and four others, who reached enlightenment after listening to the Buddha’s expounding the law of the Four Truths and became Five Bhikshus. This was the first Sangha in the history of Buddhism.

Also, Yasa, the son of a rich elder in Benares, as well as his fifty companions followed the Buddha to leave home and become monks<sup>7</sup>. Yasa’s father and mother also went to the Buddha and

<sup>7</sup> The causes and conditions of Yasa’s converting to the Buddha are as follows. Yasa was the son of a very rich householder in Kasi. He lived a rich and hedonistic lifestyle, but was greatly afflicted because of his excessive drinking and debauchery. One night, after a luxury feast, he was drunk and went back to his room to sleep. Later, he woke up from a nightmare at mid-night, went out of his room, and witnessed the dancing girl he doted on flirting with a musician. He was furious

converted to him, becoming the first upasaka<sup>8</sup> and upasika<sup>9</sup>.

Afterward, the Buddha traveled alone to Mount Gaya and converted the three ascetic Kasyapa brothers<sup>10</sup>. The three Kasyapa brothers were the leaders of a group of fire worshippers. The oldest brother, Uruvilva Kasyapa, had five hundred disciples. The second brother, Kaya Kasyapa, had two hundred fifty disciples. And the youngest brother, Nadi Kasyapa, also had two hundred fifty disciples. At the same time, the three Kasyapa brothers and their one thousand disciples left home and became monks together, which greatly boosted the reputation of the Buddha.

After that, the Buddha led the three Kasyapa brothers and the one thousand followers to Magadha, and King Bimbisara respectfully received the Buddha, devoutly converted to him<sup>11</sup>, and built Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery for the Buddha and the Bhikshus. This was the first monastery in the history of Buddhism and the place where the Buddha spoke the Dharma in the south of

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to the point of becoming delirious. He left home, running blindly and muttering “Distressed am I, oppressed am I” along the way until dawn. He went near the Deer Park and there he encountered the Buddha, whose expounding the law finally salved his suffering. Because of these causes and conditions, he and his parents converted to the Buddha. Soon, Yasa left home and became a monk, with his fifty friends also following Buddha and becoming monks.

8 Upasaka – a Buddhist layman who engages to observe the first five commandments.

9 Upasika – a female lay disciple who engages to observe the first five commandments.

10 The story of how the Buddha converted the three Kasyapa brothers is as follows. When the Buddha arrived at Mount Gaya, he first converted Uruvilva Kasyapa. In the mountain, there was a cave inhabited by a fire dragon. As the dragon often harmed people, these non-Buddhists dared not get close to it. Nevertheless, the Buddha asked for the permission of Uruvilva Kasyapa to rest in the cave for the night. The next morning, when Uruvilva Kasyapa went to see the Buddha, he found that the fire dragon had already been tamed by the Buddha. He was awed and thus respectfully converted to the Buddha and his five hundred disciples also reached the various stages of attainment after listening to the Buddha’s teaching of the Dharma. So into the river they dumped their ritual implements, which floated down the water and as Kaya and Nadi, who inhabited the downstream area, saw the implements, they were shocked and feared that their older brother had been killed. They led their disciples to his brother’s place and after seeing the Buddha and listening to the Dharma, they left home and became monks. Their disciples, two hundred and fifty for each, also left home and became monks.

11 The story of how the Buddha converted King Bimbisara is as follows. When the Buddha led the three Kasyapa brothers and their one thousand disciples to Magadha, King Bimbisara respectfully received him and his queen Vaidehi and his subordinates also converted to him. The Buddha expounded five laws for them: one, almsgiving—giving away one’s possessions and belongings can benefit him/herself as well as others, which is especially true because the merits and virtues of almsgiving bring blessings, riches and nobility; two, taking precepts—one should take precepts to keep their deed, word, and thought pure and clean; three, retribution for good deeds—the merits and virtues of almsgiving and taking precepts can make one be reborn in heavens; four, the cause of a bad fate—doing wicked things due to greed and desires prevents one from ridding him/herself of suffering; five, cultivating oneself in the right practice—one should learn three vehicles of learning—discipline, meditation, wisdom so that he/she may leave bitterness to get joy.

ancient India.

When the Buddha spoke the Dharma at Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery, together with their two hundred disciples, two famed non-Buddhists in Rajagaha, Sariputra and Maudgalaputra<sup>12</sup>, followed the Buddha and entered the Buddhist monastic system because they adored the truth of conditioned genesis taught by the Buddha. Sariputra was noted for his wisdom and Maudgalaputra for his ubiquitous supernatural power. They both assisted the Buddha in turning the wheel of dharma.

Soon after that, Mahakasyapa<sup>13</sup>, the son of a very rich elder in Magadha, came to the Buddha and converted to him, becoming the most important disciple to cleave to dhuta<sup>14</sup> asceticism, the ascetic practices designed to eliminate one's attachment to food, clothing and shelter. He took over the Buddha's almsbowl after the Buddha entered final nirvana.

The elder Sudatta<sup>15</sup> converted to the Buddha and built Jetavana in the city of Sravasti in the kingdom of Kosala, which was dedicated to the Buddha to speak the Dharma. This monastery was

12 Sariputra and Maudgalaputra—Sari is the name of the Indian myna bird and Putra means son. Sariputra was given the name because his mother's eyes were beautiful like Sari and was thus named Sari; so he was named Sariputra, the son of Sari. Originally, he was a non-Buddhist. He encountered Asvajit Bhikshu on the road, who taught him about the law of causes and conditions, and he invited his good friend Maudgalaputra to follow the Buddha with him and become monks. Sariputra and Maudgalaputra were two very important disciples of the Buddha. They both entered final nirvana before the Buddha.

13 Mahakasyapa—Maha means great, so Mahakasyapa means the great Kasyapa. He was one of the ten most important disciples of the Buddha. His body shed golden lights and kept other lights from being seen, which earned him the name "the Great Devourer of Lights." Before he became a monk, he came from a very rich family. But because of his virtuous roots of many former existences, he resolved to cultivate the Way early in his life. Although his parents found him a beauty to be his wife, he and his wife both wanted to be a nominal couple. After he heard the Buddha preach the Dharma at Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery and converted to him, he clove to dhuta asceticism, becoming the most important disciple to practice it. Afterward, at the assembly held in the great Gijjhakuta Mountain, the Buddha held a lotus in his hand to show the Dharma, Mahakasyapa perceived the message and smiled, obtained the Treasure of Correct Dharma Eye, and passed down the Buddha-mind, which can seal the truth. He became the first patriarch of Chan sect.

14 Dhuta—meaning asceticism. In Chinese, it is translated into "抖擞," which literally means shaking off, implying that dhuta can help people shake off any defiled direct mental perceptions.

15 The elder Sudatta—was a minister of Prasenajit. He enjoyed doing good deeds and giving alms, kindly helping the poor, the orphaned, the solitary, and the widowed. He was thus called the "Benefactor Elder of Orphans." When he visited a friend in Rajagaha, he specially went to the Buddha and invited him to speak the Dharma in the city of Sravasti. For this, he specially bought a garden from Prince Jeta and built Jetavana as the place for the Buddha to speak the Dharma. Because Prince Jeta donated the trees in the garden, Jetavana had another name—The Benefactor Elder's Garden with Jeta's Trees.

more spacious and magnificent than Bamboo Grove monastery and was the place where the Buddha spoke the Dharma in the north. King Prasenajit and his queen Mallika of the kingdom of Kosala also converted to the Buddha<sup>16</sup>, becoming Buddhists who faithfully protected the Dharma.

Six years after the Buddha entered Sambodhi, he went back to his homeland to visit his old father. His aunt Prajapati, Ananda<sup>17</sup> as well as other cousins, and Rahula converted to him and later renounced the secular life and entered the Buddhist monastic system<sup>18</sup>.

When Siddhodana was ninety-three, he became seriously ill and was dying. The Buddha specially went back to his homeland to speak the Dharma for his father at his dying bed, and then after his father's death carried his father's casket toward the cremation site and gave alms to the poor to show his filial piety for his father.

The Buddha was the comforter and saver of the public. He loved and protected all people like his own parents and children, cleaning pus and blood for a sick bhikshu, threading a needle to sew torn clothes for a blind bhikshu, etc. When the Sakya and the

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16 How King Prasenajit converted to the Buddha—King Prasenajit of the kingdom of Kosala learned that his son Prince Jeta had sold his garden in the capital, the city of Sravasti, to the elder Sudatta, who built Jetavana to offer and sustain the Buddha. Therefore, King Prasenajit had long been filled with admiration for the Buddha. One day, he brought all his ministers and subordinates to Jetavana to visit him. King Prasenajit said, "I've heard that you are a Buddha having attained to the highest stage of enlightenment and so I specially came to visit you. But many cultivators of the Way live in deep mountains and forests to practice until they are old and weak and yet they are still unenlightened. Young as you are, how could you attain to Sambodhi?" The Buddha replied, "Four things in the world cannot be slighted: one, a young prince, who will be a great king to rule the country; two, a newly-born dragon, which will grow to be a powerful dragon; three, sparks of fire, which can burn down the whole piece of land; four, young monks, all of whom can attain to Sambodhi despite their age and social status as long as they keep their mind clean and pure, protect their karmas leading to Buddhahood, and spread the Dharma to benefit sentient beings. The four things mentioned above cannot be slighted indeed."

Then, the Buddha spoke to King Prasenajit about the equal Buddha-nature, saying that as long as one cultivates goodness and stops bad karmas, turning delusions into enlightenment, he can become a Buddha. After hearing this, King Prasenajit was deeply convinced and so he converted to the Buddha, becoming a great faithful protector of Buddhism.

17 Ananda—The name literally means joy. He had majestic looks and a perfect memory and attended on the Buddha for twenty-five years. He was noted as the most widely-learned disciple of the Buddha.

18 Several princes renounced the secular life when the Buddha went back to his homeland—Several princes: Ananda, Devadatta, Aniruddha, Bhadraka, and Vajra, followed the Buddha and entered the Buddhist monastic system. The Buddha's brother, Nanda, and the Buddha's son, Rahula, also followed him to renounce the secular life in different times.

Koliya clans fought for the water of the Rohini river, to prevent a bloody war, regardless of hardships of travelling, he specially went all the way to where the two clans were about to have a battle. When a plague broke out in Vaisali, the Buddha, fearless of being infected, went inside the city to comfort and teach the patients and instructed them how political affairs could be run democratically.

With his merciful and fearless attitude, the Buddha stayed with the folk to spread the truth of the Middle Path. All of the people who had ever got close to him and heard him speak the Dharma were deeply touched and whole-heartedly believed in him.

Believers of the Buddha included people from all ranks of life, from kings, queens and ministers to poor people, beggars and slaves. The fact that his believers can be widely found in every level of social stratum shows the great power of his advocating mercy, equality, and the saving of all sentient beings.

### **(7) Entering Final Nirvana (Perfect Rest)**

The Buddha spoke the Dharma tirelessly for forty-five years<sup>19</sup>, travelling to and fro the two banks of the Ganges without ever taking a good rest. When he was eighty years old, he travelled from Magadha to Vaisali and gave his last sermon at Maha-vana in Vaisali. At that time, the Buddha was diseased and knew that he would enter into nirvana<sup>20</sup> in three months. Despite that, he slowly walked forward. In every village he passed by, he took advantage of the time of rest to teach the villagers the Dharma. He received the last food offering of a blacksmith named Cunda in Pava Village and got more seriously ill. So he walked to a sala grove outside the city of Skusinara and chose the space between two sala trees to be the place of his final nirvana.

As the Buddha lay down on his right side on the sanghati that Ananda had spread on the ground for him, he was already exhausted. But when a non-Buddhist named Subhadra came to

<sup>19</sup> The Chinese generally believe that the Buddha spoke the Dharma for forty-nine years and expounded the sutras in more than three hundred assemblies.

<sup>20</sup> The Sanskrit "nirvana" is translated into Chinese as "圓寂," meaning "perfect rest." It refers to the completion of all wisdom and virtues and the extinguishing of all delusions.



see him, the Buddha again spoke the Dharma to him energetically. Subhadra became the last disciple that the Buddha converted. Ananda, who had long attended on the Buddha, saw that the Buddha was seriously ill and was immensely sad. The Buddha said to Ananda and the others, “Don’t be sad. Trust yourself, tightly hold on to the light of the truth, and seek liberation in the truth.” Three times Ananda asked the Buddha to stay in the world, but the Buddha replied, “The self-nature of all laws is ultimate nothingness. When there is a birth, there will naturally be death in the end. So how can my physical body exist forever? This period of my life must naturally follow dharma-nature and end in calmness and extinction.” When Ananda, Aniruddha, Rahula and others heard him, they could not help but shed tears. The disciples elected Ananda to ask four questions of the Buddha on their behalf:

“First, when you live in the world, we all rely on you as our teacher. But after you enter nirvana, who can we rely on as our teacher?

Second, when you live in the world, we abide with you. But after you enter nirvana, where should we abide?

Third, when you live in the world, you can pacify wicked bhikshus. But after you enter nirvana, how can we pacify wicked bhikshus?

Fourth, when you live in the world, people are likely to believe in your sermons. But after you enter nirvana, how can we make people believe in the Buddhist canons collected and fixed through assemblies?”

The Buddha replied, “Now, I will answer the four questions of yours. Do bear my answers in mind. After I enter nirvana, rely on monastic precepts as your teacher. After I enter nirvana, abide in the four bases of mindfulness. After I enter nirvana, silently reject wicked bhikshus (neither getting along nor talking with them) . After I enter nirvana, begin every Buddhist canon with the phrase ‘Thus have I heard’ to testify to its authenticity.”

As Ananda and all other disciples silently shed tears by the side

of the Buddha, he comforted them like a loving mother, “Don’t be sad. In my lifetime, I have already given you a lot of instructions for your liberation from afflictions and the cycle of life and death. As long as you faithfully follow them, my dharmakaya will exist in the world forever.” Then, he continued, “All sentient beings have innate Buddha-nature and can become Buddhas. Even an icchantika who has cut off his good roots of meritorious practice can become a Buddha.” At a midnight with a full moon in the fifth month of this year (543 BC) , the Buddha calmly and peacefully entered nirvana.

The king of Skusinara and the disciples of the Buddha cremated the Buddha with the most solemn and dignified ceremonies. After that, the sarira (relics and ashes) of the Buddha<sup>21</sup> were cordially brought by eight kings to be put in stupas they built to venerate them. These pagodas for the Buddha’s relics still exist in the world today. And the Buddha’s merciful spirit to save the world shown during his lifetime will always be admired and worshipped by all people.

### **(8) The Most Wholly Complete Truth**

The Buddha spoke what spiritual reality he had comprehended and instructed us how to behave as a human and then reach Buddhahood after that. This is the so-called “Buddha-dharma.”

After the Buddha attained the Way, he incessantly spoke and spread the Buddha-dharma until he entered nirvana. From the time he first spoke the Dharma to Five Bhikshus at the Deer Park to the time he last spoke the Dharma to Subhadra in Skusinara, he spoke the Buddha-dharma for a total of forty-five years from thirty-five to eighty years old.

In the year when the Buddha entered nirvana (actually ninety days after his entering nirvana) , five hundred great arhats elected Mahakasyapa to preside over the first council for the compilation

<sup>21</sup> The Sanskrit “sarira” is translated into Chinese as “靈骨” or “堅固子.” After a holy one is cremated, pearl-like sarira are formed because of his/her merits and virtues of cultivating discipline, meditation and wisdom.

of the Buddha's sermons at the Pippala cave of the Seven-Leaf Crag in Gijjhakuta Mountain outside Rajagaha. First, Upali, Keeper of the Laws, chanted Vinaya-pitaka, and then the most learned Ananda chanted the sutra-pitaka. Through the approval of all those attended, the first collection and fixing of Buddhist canons was completed.

Later, through several more assemblies, Buddhist sutras were compiled, translated into a variety of languages and spread to different countries in the world. The Buddhist sutras translated into Chinese have been handed down and circulated till now, collected as Dazangjing, i.e. the Tripitaka, which are valuable cultural documentations of the world.

The content of Buddha-dharma explains the truths in the universe, the meaning of life and moral rules. The purpose of Buddha-dharma is to instruct us how to stop wickedness and do good, change delusions into Bodhi, get rid of afflictions to become joyous, and sacrifice oneself to benefit others. Buddha-dharma is indeed the most wholly complete truth in the world and the most needed learning in our lives. If everyone can learn and spread Buddha-dharma, the saha world can be turned into pure land of ultimate bliss.

## 2.

### EIGHT ASPECTS OF VENERABLE SAKYAMUNI'S LIFE

The Eight Aspects of the Buddha's life were the historical traces of his life. The following is a brief description of the Eight Aspects:

(1) Descent from Tusita—The Buddha first abode in the inner department of Tusita heaven. As he wanted to descend into the human world, he waited for the five proper occasions: the time, the place, the country, the family, and the parents, and then descended into the human world.

(2) Entry into his mother's womb—The Buddha rode on a six-tusked elephant, which held a white lotus in the mouth, and entered into his mother's womb.

(3) Birth—On the full-moon night of the fifth month of 623 B.C., the Buddha was born from Queen Maya's right side in Lumbini.

(4) Renouncing the secular world and leaving home—At twenty nine, reflecting on the impermanence of all things in the world, the Buddha wanted to seek the truth in life and the universe to be liberated from afflictions of birth and death. So he left the palace and went to mountains to cultivate the Way.

(5) Subduing maras—After six years' ascetic practice in a forest inhabited by ascetics near Nairanjana River, the Buddha went to a tall Bodhi tree near Mount Gaya. And on the Diamond Throne under the tree, he subdued armies of maras.

(6) Attaining the Way—On the full-moon night of the fifth month of 588 B.C., as the Buddha saw the bright stars in the skies, he clearly understood the Way. At that time, he was thirty-five years old (The place where the Buddha attained the way is Bodh Gaya in India) .

(7) Turning the wheel of dharma—After the Buddha attained

the Way, he spoke the dharma for forty-five years.

(8) Entering final nirvana—At eighty, between two sala trees in the city of Skusinara, the Buddha entered final nirvana.

In *The Sutra of Cause and Effect*, the legends of the Buddha's former existences are recorded as follows:

In the past, countless kalpas ago when Burning Lamp Buddha abode in the world, a rsi named Good and Wise converted to him and bought five lotuses to offer to him. At that time, Burning Lamp Buddha conferred a prediction of the future attainment of Buddhahood on Good and Wise Rsi by saying, "You are going to become a Buddha with the name Sakyamuni Buddha." One day, when Good and Wise Rsi saw Burning Lamp Buddha coming, as the ground was dirty and wet, he spread his garment made of deer skin on the ground and on it he put his hair down for Burning Lamp Buddha to step on. For this, Burning Lamp Buddha further conferred on him the prediction that he was going to be a Buddha in the saha world to save sentient beings. Good and Wise Rsi thus left home to cultivate the practices of the bodhisattva. Several kalpas later, at the time of Kasyapa Buddha, Good and Wise Bodhisattva's merits and virtues were complete and after his lifespan was over, he was reborn in Tusita Heaven.

Tuṣita Heaven is the fourth devaloka in the Realm of Sensuous Desire. It is divided into the inner and outer departments. The outer department is inhabited by immensely happy devas who enjoy blissing, while the inner department is an abode for bodhisattvas who are waiting to become next buddhas. When these bodhisattvas have completed the cultivation of all merits, at the end of their lives in Tusita, they can become buddhas. So the inner department in Tusita is also called "One Enlightenment to Attain to Buddhahood." Good and Wise Bodhisattva had already been speaking the sublime dharma to devas inhabiting Tusita Heaven before he was reborn in the human world. At the time when he knew that sentient beings already had the proper nature and character and that the time had come, he descended to the human world to accomplish

Buddhahood.

When the Bodhisattva descended from Tusita Heaven to the human world, the attendants of devas illuminated heavens with bright light while the Bodhisattva, looking grand and magnificent, rode on a six-tusked elephant which held a white lotus in its mouth and, when bright stars appeared, descended into his mother's womb to manifest his body in the world. These are the first two of the Buddha's eight aspects of life.

# 3.

## A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE BUDDHA'S CLAN NAME

The following are brief explanations of the family name and the clan name of Sakyamuni, four castes, and ethnicity of Sakyamuni Buddha:

(1) In Pali, the Buddha's name is Siddhartha Gotama and in Sanskrit, Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha was the name given to the Buddha when he was little, meaning good luck and the accomplishment of all merits and virtues. Gautama was the family name of the Buddha. So he can also be called Gautama, which was the surname of Prince Siddhartha. Some people translate Gautama into Chinese as "瞿曇" instead of "喬達摩."

(2) Sakyamuni Buddha has been the holy title of the Buddha since he attained the Way. This is to use the name of the Sakya clan instead of the family name "Gautama." That's why we say that Sakya is the Buddha's surname and Muni is his given name.

(3) Sakyamuni belonged to the second class of the four castes in ancient India, the Kshatriyas, who were rulers, administrators and warriors.

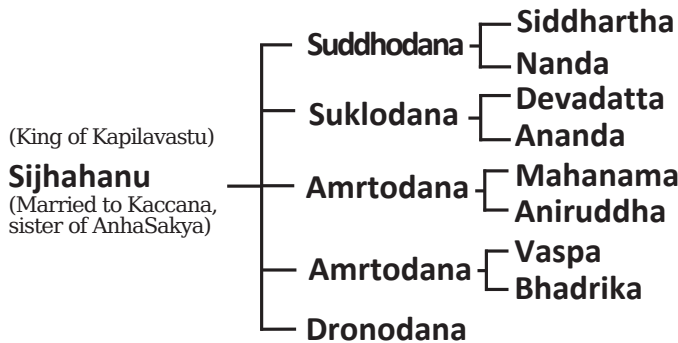
(4) Judging from the distribution of the ethnic groups in the world, in about 2000 BC, Aryans invaded India and conquered the native Dravidians and established a country of Indo-Aryan peoples. Thus Sakyamuni Buddha must have been Indo-Aryan. But there are people who maintain that the Buddha belonged to the Sakyamuni clan of Sino-Tibetan origin, not Indo-Aryan origin.

(5) Among the four castes of Ancient India, the highest and noblest one was composed of priestly people called the Brahmins, who enjoyed privileges, and whose mission was to instruct Vedas and carry out priestly duties. The second caste was called the

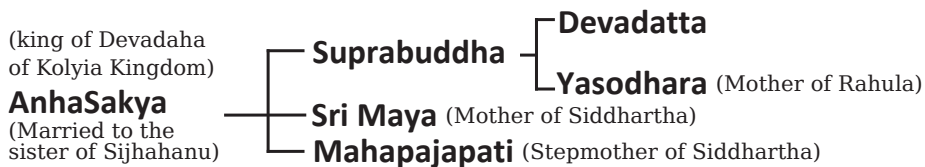
Kshatriyas, who were composed of noble people, warriors and rulers that enjoyed privileges as well, and whose mission was to rule the country. The third caste was called the Vaishyas, who were composed of artisans, merchants, tradesmen and farmers that enjoyed no privileges, and whose mission was to farm and do businesses. The lowest caste was called Shudras, who were composed of slaves and laboring classes that did not even have the rights of humans, and whose mission was to serve the other three castes. However, after Sakyamuni Buddha attained the Way, he proved that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature and are capable of becoming Buddhas. At that time, for his advocating mercy and equality, Sakyamuni Buddha could thus convince believers of Brahmanism and converted them to Buddhism.

**Notes:**

**(1) Family tree of Sakyamuni Buddha on his father's side:**



**(2) Family tree of Sakyamuni Buddha on his mother's side:**







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## 4.

### AN EXPLANATION OF THE BUDDHA'S HOLY TITLE

After Prince Siddhartha Gautama attained the Way, he was given the holy title “Sakyamuni Buddha.” Sakya was the surname of the Buddha, meaning being benevolent. Muni was the given name of the Buddha, meaning being seclusive and quiet. Being benevolent is an indication that the Buddha had the virtue of mercifully and selflessly sacrificing himself to save the world and benefiting others. Being seclusive and quiet indicates that the Buddha had gained the insight into the truth of the universe and life; it is to show that the Buddha had supreme wisdom and could benefit himself.

The word “Buddha” is Sanskrit, meaning “the awakened one,” a prophet and holy person. Being awakened means three things: one, obtaining Supreme Enlightenment himself; two, according to Mahayanism, leading all beings into the same enlightenment; and three, wholly completing the attainment of enlightenment for self and others. Therefore, the Buddha was a great holy man who had wholly attained the three kinds of enlightenment and fulfilled all virtues.

# 5.

## BUDDHIST HOLY PLACES IN INDIA

### **An explanation of Buddhist holy places in India:**

(1) Sakyamuni Buddha was the son of Suddhodana, the king of Kapilavastu.

(2) Lumbini Park was the place where Sakyamuni Buddha was born.

(3) Bodh Gaya was the place where the Buddha attained the Way.

(4) Sarnath, the Deer Park, in Benares was the place where the Buddha first turned the wheel of dharma and spoke the law of the Four Truths to Ajanata Kaundinya and others. In the history of Buddhism, the dharma that he first spoke was called Pravarta Sutra.

(5) Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery in Rajagaha, constructed by King Bimbisara of Magadha for the Buddha to expound the law, was the first great temple in the history of Buddhism.

(6) Sravasti, the capital of the kingdom of Kosala, was the place where the elder Sudatta built Jetavana, the second great temple in the history of Buddhism, for the Buddha to expound the law.

(7) Skusinara, the capital of the kingdom of Skusinara, was the place where the Buddha entered final nirvana. After the Buddha entered final nirvana between two sala trees in Skusinara, King Mallas and eminent monks of Skusinara cremated the Buddha's body in the eastern part of the city.

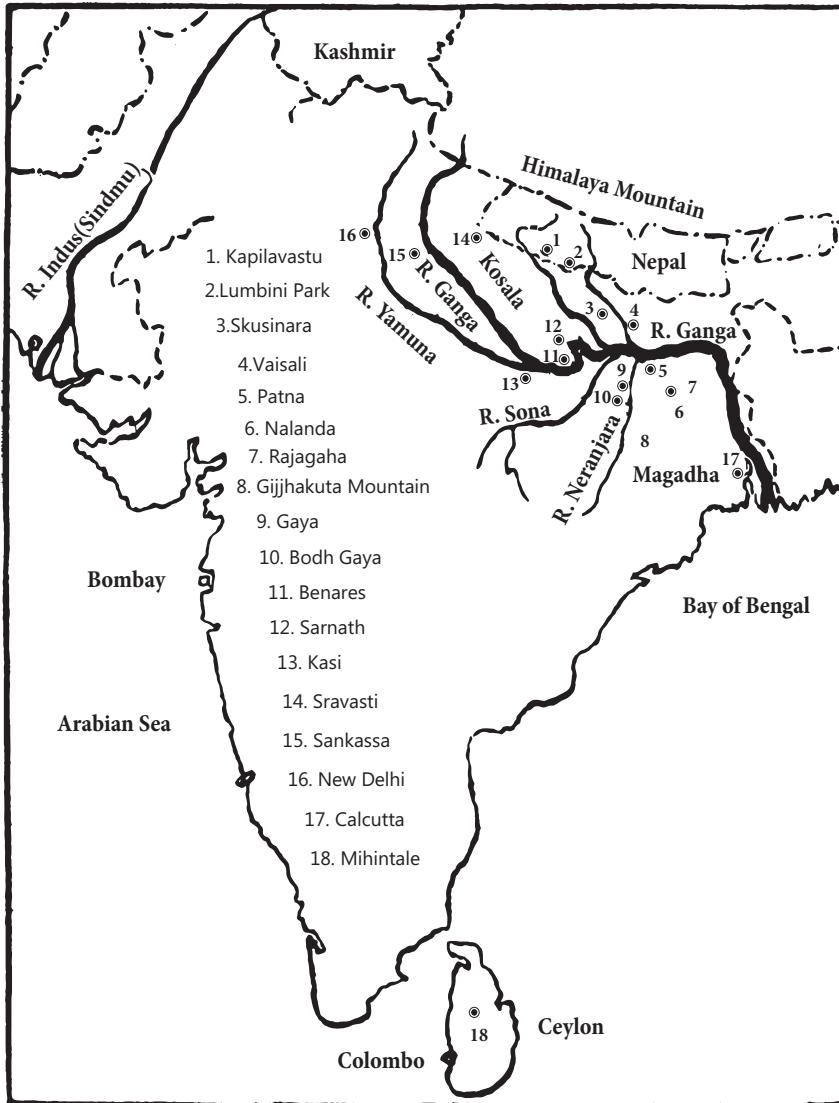
(8) After the Buddha entered final nirvana, five hundred great arhats elected Mahakasyapa to preside over the first council for the compilation of the Buddha's sermons at the Pippala cave of the Seven-Leaf Crag in Gijjhakuta Mountain outside Rajagaha. First, Upali, Keeper of the Laws, chanted Vinaya-pitaka, and then the

most learned Ananda chanted the sutra-pitaka.

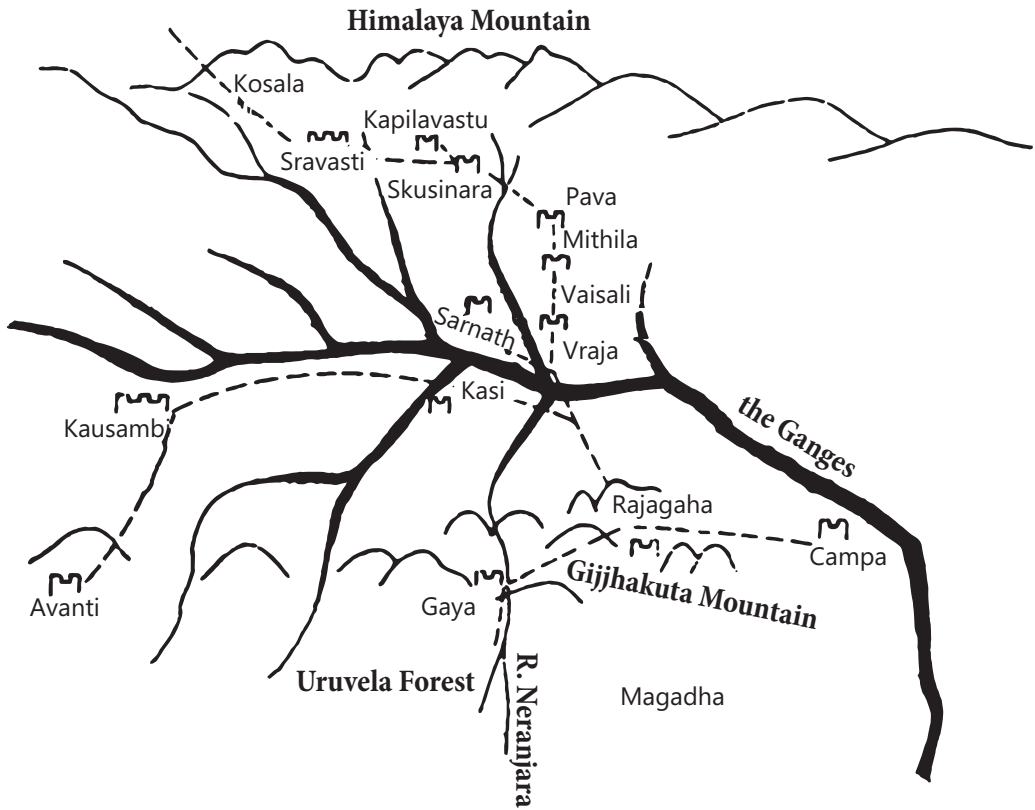
(9) Memorials in the four Buddhist holy sites in India today:

- 1) The stone column built by King Asoka in Lumbini Park
- 2) The Mahabodhi Temple Complex in Bodh Gaya
- 3) The dharma-carkra turning stupas in Sarnath
- 4) Nirvana Stupa in Skusinara

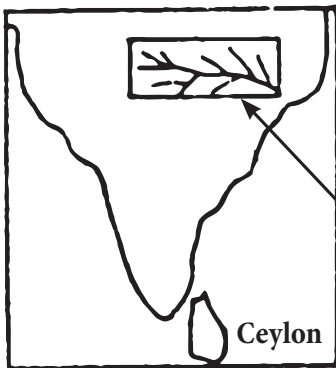
## The Holy Land of The Buddhists



## A Map of the Regions Where Sakyamuni Buddha Traveled



India



• Regions Where Sakyamuni Buddha Traveled

# 6.

## BUDDHIST CALENDAR AND BUDDHIST FLAGS

In 1950, World Fellowship of Buddhists held the first meeting in Colombo, Ceylon to discuss the historical facts and the years of the Buddha's birth, leaving home, attaining the Way, and entering final nirvana. Because what had been recorded in Southern and Northern Buddhism was different, in this meeting they discussed the issue and reached a consensus as follows:

(1) The Buddha was born on the full moon day of the fifth month of the year in 623 BC.

(2) The Buddha left home to become a monk when he was 29 years old and attained the Way at 35. On the night of the full moon day of the fifth month of the year in 588 BC, when the Buddha saw bright stars appear in the skies, he awakened to the truth.

(3) The Buddha had expounded the law for 45 years<sup>22</sup> before he entered final nirvana at 80, at the midnight hour of the full moon day of the fifth month of the year in 543 BC.

(4) Buddhist calendar begins with the Buddha's entering final nirvana.

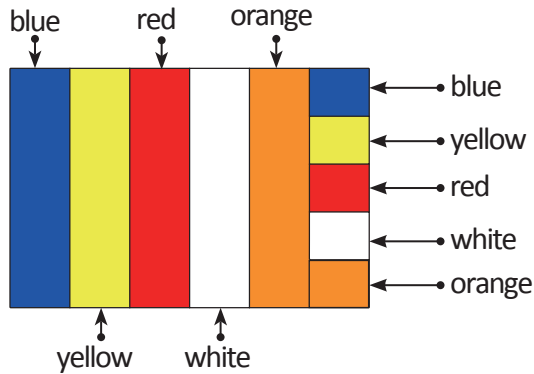
The way the Buddhist calendar is counted: When we subtract eighty years (the length of the Buddha's life) from 623 BC, the year the Buddha was born, 543 BC was the year when the Buddha entered final nirvana. The current year is 2020. When we add 543 years to 2020 years, we get 2563 years. But we should add one more year after the Buddha's birthday of this year. So after the Buddha's birthday of this year, it is the year 2564 in Buddhist calendar. This is how we count Buddhist calendar.

When we count how long it has been since the birth of the Buddha, we add 623 (as the Buddha was born in 623 BC) to 2020 (as

<sup>22</sup> The Chinese generally believe that the Buddha expounded the law for 49 years, holding more than three hundred assemblies for preaching.

the current year is 2020) and get 2643. Add one more year after the Buddha's birthday of this year, and we get 2644 years.

Also in this meeting was a discussion of the design of Buddhist flags: the six colors of Buddhist flags represent the six colors of the aura which emanated from the Buddha's holy body when he attained Enlightenment: blue, yellow, red, white, orange, and a combination of the first five colors like the illustration below:





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# 7.

## THE MEANING OF VESAK DAY OR BUDDHA DAY

Vesak is a shortened name of the fifth month of ancient India called “Vaisakha.” To Buddhists, Vesak does not refer to the month, but a day, the holy full moon day of May (the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the year in the lunar calendar) . Thus, Vesak means “the full moon day.”

In September, 1967, World Fellowship of Buddhists held a meeting of the board of directors in Bangkok, Thailand. In the meeting, it was decided that Vesak Festival would be changed into Buddha Day. In the Ninth Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists held in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, Malaysia, in April, 1968, it was reapproved that Vesak Festival be changed into Buddha Day, though people can still call it Vesak Festival if they prefer the old name. In this way, Buddha Day shows the glorious lights of the Buddha’s wisdom of obtaining Supreme Enlightenment himself, leading all beings into the same enlightenment, and wholly depleting three doubts and having all virtues. Changing Vesak Day into Buddha Day has conveyed the message more clearly that the Buddha’s wisdom will shine throughout the earth to spread the doctrines of mercy and equality and advocate world peace.

Most holidays or holy festivals commemorate one thing only. Sometimes, it is someone’s birthday, the independence day of a country, or the victory of a battle. But Vesak Day, or Buddha Day, is the day to commemorate not just one thing but three things: three most important things in the Buddha’s life—birth, attaining the Way, and nirvana, all of which took place on the full moon day of May. So Vesak Day is actually one common festival for three occasions.

But Buddha Day is also called the Flower Festival because it is said that when the Buddha was born in Lumbini, many fragrant flowers rained down from the skies and again, the same thing happened when the Buddha entered final nirvana. On this day, we often offer flowers, perfumes, and fresh fruits before the Buddha's image. Whatever gifts we may offer to the Buddha, it is just a way to show our respect and admiration for the Buddha.

As to Buddhist groups' organizing committee to celebrate Vesak, especially by parading floats and hanging Buddhist flags, it is but a way to draw people's attention to this festival. All these and almsgiving and intoning sutras are ways to urge Buddhists to do good deeds and cultivate virtues, and not to forget his holy teachings. Therefore, however busy Buddhists are, they never fail to join the celebrations of the Buddha's birthday or participate in the parades. And they do it happily and piously because of the natural and spontaneous enthusiasm and sincerity in their hearts.

In China, people used to celebrate the Buddha's birthday on the eighth day of the fourth month in the lunar calendar each year. But in recent years, to conform to the trend of the times, Buddhist Association of the Republic of China have adopted April eighth as the day of the Buddha's birth<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Chinese people think that the Buddha was born on the eighth day of the fourth month in 1027 BC, the 24th year of King Zhao of the Zhou dynasty in China. According to historical records in China, on the eighth day of the fourth month, the year of jiā-yin, also the 24th year of King Zhao of the Zhou dynasty, flood water overflowed rivers and mountains, and the palaces shook. As five-colored lights shone through Supreme Palace enclosure, the king asked his officials why there were such strange phenomena and Su Yu, the minister in charge of worship ceremonies and code, reported to him: "There was a great holy man born in the west. And a thousand years later, his teachings will spread to this place." The king ordered the message be inscribed on a stone, which was then buried in the southern suburbs of the capital.



# 8.

## A DIAGRAM OF THE THREE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FORMING BUDDHISM





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# 9.

## THINGS WE SHOULD BE ALERT TO

[9. to 12. are advice on arousing the mind of intention to achieve enlightenment and industriously cultivate the supreme Buddha way, and an outline of precepts keeping]

### **(1) All things in the world are impermanent**

Let's talk about the natural environment first: Look around the Three Realms. Everything in them, no matter big or small, rough or refined, is changing constantly following the process of formation, abiding, destruction and annihilation. Formation is the period of something's coming into being from nothing; abiding is the period of the beginning of its existence till its fullness of time; destruction is its deteriorating period after that; and annihilation is the period when it is completely annihilated to nothingness again. Not just do common things like buildings and household utensils go through the process of formation, abiding, destruction and annihilation, but mountains and vast seas also go through this process. Therefore, for several times, vast waters become farmlands and the vice versa. Obviously, all things are impermanent and there is nothing unchanging and can be counted on.

Besides, all sentient beings in the world, no matter rich or poor, in the noble classes or in the lower classes, also have to constantly go through the cycle of the process of arising, abiding, changing and extinction. Being reincarnated is arising; gradually growing up and becoming strong is abiding; becoming old, sick, weak and disabled is changing; and ending a lifespan is extinction. Not only must lower class people like servants, concubines, and beggars go through this process of arising, abiding, changing and extinction, but the noble and the rich also have to. After sentient beings die, following their karmas, they will respectively go to heavens, hells,

the wombs of female horses or donkeys to be reincarnated. Thus, there is the endless cycle of Six Directions of Reincarnation. This is exactly why people in the past remarked: “Birth and death are great concerns that torment people.”

**(2) It is something rare to be reincarnated as a human**

Next, let’s talk about ourselves: It is due to very precious causes and conditions that we have been reincarnated in the form of humans. This is because if we want to get out of the Three Realms to end the cycle of birth and death, we can only achieve the goal by hearing the Way and cultivating ourselves to stop delusions and reach the fruits of the various stages of attainment, which is something difficult for sentient beings of the other five conditions of sentient existence to do. Devas, for example, are indulged in their blissful conditions and therefore, more often than not, neglect to cultivate themselves to be liberated from births and deaths. Asuras, on the other hand, are constantly in rage, which goes against the Way, and they don’t want to cultivate themselves. Sentient beings in the hungry ghosts realm are burning in hunger and are too busy howling for food to cultivate themselves, while those in the animal realm are foolish and ignorant; all they know is eating and sleeping so they don’t know at all what it is to cultivate themselves. As for sentient beings in Naraka, since they are incessantly tortured by all kinds of suffering, they are incapable of cultivating themselves at all. So, only sentient beings in the human realm are close to the Way and are more likely to be enlightened. Though humans also have afflictions in life, they still have the comfort of carrying out religious discipline and reaching the fruits of various stages of attainment. And that is why old sages said, “Only humans can adjust their thinking to advance quickly to Bodhi.”

However, it is not something easy to be reincarnated in a human form. When sentient beings are about to be reincarnated, their alaya-vijnana, or originating intelligence, is confused and dump. As

they follow their karmas to be given a new life form, what they can only see is the conditions of sexual intercourse and they cannot tell whether it is good or bad. Only one or two of them are reincarnated in the human realm, while billions of the rest of them are reborn in the other five realms. That is why when speaking *Nirvana Sutra*, Sakyamuni Buddha told Mahakasyapa that those who are reincarnated as humans are like the dirt held in hands, while those who cannot be reborn with a human body are like the dirt in land. Therefore, once having lost this human body, if a sentient being wants to be reincarnated as a human again, it is just like randomly throwing down a thread from the top of a high mountain to thread it through the eye of a needle; it is also like a piece of floating driftwood in the vast sea with a hole in it through which a blind turtle precisely sticks its head. It is extremely rare for such things to happen. Also, once being reincarnated in the other five paths, whether becoming a god or a demon or being in Naraka, the sentient being has a very long lifespan. And even when the sentient being is reborn in the animal realm and has a short lifespan, he/she has to be reborn numerous times in this realm. For example, the ants that Sariputra saw in Jetavana had already gone through numerous cycles of birth and death through the time of the seven past Buddhas for ninety-one kalpas without being liberated from the bodies of ants. That is why Buddhist sutras taught us that once we lose human bodies, we can hardly recover them in ten thousand kalpas. How frightening it is just to think of it!

### **(3) It is hard to hear Buddha-dharma**

Now, let's talk about Buddha-dharma: The Buddha-dharma we hear is the true treasure. All the gold, silver and property in the world can only help us nourish our bodies, but not our minds, so they are not the true treasure. And though religion and philosophy can nourish our minds, they make us increase our discrimination of phenomena and cannot lead to liberation from afflictions, so they are not the true treasure, either. Only Buddha-dharma can destroy

superstition and enlighten the mind, cultivating our true nature and wisdom. It lets us leave afflictions, get bliss, and ultimately be liberated from the cycle of birth and death. For this, we call it the true treasure.

Nevertheless, it is hard for people to “hear” Buddha-dharma, for they need good causal actions and causes and conditions to hear it. For people living in a borderland, where Buddha-dharma is not taught, they do not have a chance to hear it at all. Or even when people are taught the so called “Buddha-dharma,” it is very likely to be false dharma. This is especially the case in this period of degeneration and extinction of the Buddha-law when all kinds of non-Buddhist teachings overwhelm the world, and although it is easy to tell apart Buddha-dharma and the distinctly different heretical teachings, some heresies are mixed in Buddha-dharma to confuse believers, which makes it extremely difficult for them to tell the difference. Or there are some people who hear the true dharma but cannot understand it. As it is said in sutras, if Buddha-dharma is not expounded, people cannot possibly understand it no matter how clever they are. Or there are people who can understand Buddha-dharma but do not believe in it. As faith is the beginning of right doctrine, there is no means of finding the Way without it. So we cannot say these people have heard Buddha-dharma, either. When we say “hear” Buddha-dharma, we mean encountering the true Buddha-dharma, understanding and believing in it, and being happy and eager to practice it.

#### **(4) A Comparison of Four Horses to Warn People**

Alas! Impermanence comes quickly. It is a matter of just one breath to separate life and death. The sea of births and deaths is very deep, and once a sentient being falls into the three lower realms (animals, hungry ghosts and hell) , it is hard for them to leave these realms within ten thousand kalpas. How fortunate we are to have a human body and hear the correct doctrine of the Buddha! But what can we do to practice Buddha-dharma?

In *Samyuktagama*, there is a comparison that the world has four classes of horses. The first class horses immediately run when they see a whip; they won't wait to run until they are whipped. The second class horses know that they should run as soon as a whip touches the tips of their hairs, while the third class horses run only when they are whipped or hit by a stick. As to the fourth class horses, they will wait until their bones are pierced by an iron piercer and their bodies are hurt before they are willing to move ahead. Thus, whether a horse is good or bad is judged from how alert it is. Someone in the past said, "When seeing other people die, my heart is burning like fire. It is not burning for other people but for the fact that it will soon be my turn." Wasn't this speaker a good horse among practitioners of Buddhism?

Whatever is phenomenal is impermanent, and so we cannot idle away our days. There was a verse chanted by sages in the past: "It is hard to be reincarnated as a human, but I have got a human body now. It is hard to hear Buddha-dharma, but I have heard it now. If this body does not try to find Buddha nature in this life, in which reincarnation can this body be liberated from the cycle of births and deaths?" Let's wish that all people will arouse sincere and earnest intention to cultivate themselves.

# 10.

## TRISARANA OR TAKING REFUGE IN THE THREE JEWELS

Trisarana refers to surrenders to Triratna, or the Three Jewels: Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha<sup>24</sup>. In Chinese, Trisarana is *gui yi* (皈依) in Chinese. *Gui* (皈) means turning black into white and defilement into purity, and keeping the mind abiding in correct remembrance and a clean and pure state. *Yi* (依) means relying on something. Generally, the two Chinese characters *gui yi* (皈依) means reliance on, salvation and respect. Trisarana can be simply put as follows. Converting to Buddhas means that one relies on the instructions of Buddhas, converting to the Dharma means that one relies on the Buddhist doctrine to find the Truth, and converting to the Sangha means that one relies on the guidance of the Sangha to learn the correct Buddha-dharma. In other words, after converting to the Three Treasures, one is saved. It is just like a boat sailing in the sea, which needs a compass to point out the directions, or like a lost child, who can get warmth and comfort from his/her family after returning to the arms of his/her loving mother again. Conversion to the Three Treasures, which shows that a person is now a disciple of the Buddha, is the first step to enter Buddhism. We should know that a faithful disciple of the Buddha has to practice the doctrines of the Buddha. While the Buddha was alive in the world, he told his disciples: “Don’t do any

<sup>24</sup> Trisarana has its symbolic meanings: Buddhas refer to enlightenment, the Dharma refers to correct doctrine, and the Sangha refers to being clean and pure. Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch of the Chan School, said, “Converting to Buddhas, the awakened ones, means converting the mind to Buddhas to rid oneself of wickedness and illusions, and having few desires and being contented with little for staying away from wealth and beauty. Converting to the Dharma, the correct doctrine, means converting the mind to correctness and having no wicked thoughts in every thought-moment, for which there is no mistaken conception of self, arrogance, and covetousness and attachment. Converting to the Sangha (being clean and pure) means converting the mind to cleanness and purity without any afflicted conditions that fatigue the mind, and relying on the undefiled self-nature. This is true conversion to the Three Jewels of self-nature.”

wicked things. Do all the good things. Purify your own mind. This is Buddhism.” This is the essential doctrines of Buddhism. As long as we follow this instruction faithfully, do as many good things as we can and not do any wicked things, we must feel very happy.

Remember this: The Buddha, our great guide, is a model of awakening to true reality. The Buddha’s doctrines show the correct ways of life, and are clear and cool medicines to cure afflictions and suffering. The Sangha, who practice, instruct and spread Buddha-dharma, are the bhikshus that turn the wheel of dharma in the Buddha’s stead and lead sentient beings to learn the Buddha’s wisdom. Actually, we should constantly remember the merits and virtues of the Three Treasures and, in every thought-moment, never forget our most venerable guide (the Buddha) , Buddha-dharma that guides our life, and the Sangha that represent our most venerable instructor. In this way, our thoughts will be pure and correct, our minds will not be defiled, and our deeds will be good. At the same time, we should work hard to benefit others to show Buddha-dharma’s spirit of saving the world and benefiting others so as to complete the full and happy life of a follower of the Buddha’s instruction.



# 11.

## AN OUTLINE OF BUDDHA-DHARMA

The medicines of the Law prescribed by the Buddha to cure afflictions and suffering of sentient beings are summed up to be as many as eighty-four thousand approaches, but they can be simply put into three categories: discipline, meditation, and wisdom, which are called the three studies of liberation from afflictions because they set people free from afflictions and transmigration. They are actually the body of Buddha-dharma, and without them, any instruction claims itself to be Buddha-dharma is not true.

(1) Discipline is precepts. Just as a family needs family rules or a country needs laws, when we practice Buddha-dharma, we need to uphold the Buddha's precepts. This is the basis of practicing Buddhism because only by taking precepts can people prevent wrong doings and purify their deeds, words and thoughts. Among the cannons of Tripitaka, Vinaya Pitika, or rules collection, teaches precepts and that is why there is a saying that Vinaya Pitika regulates people's deeds, words and thoughts. Indeed, what else but precepts can people use to regulate their deeds, words and thoughts? However, not only do precepts prohibit, they also command. While prohibition is a passive way for people to rid themselves of wickedness, commandments are an active way for them to do good deeds. Therefore, discipline includes all commandments of doing good deeds.

(2) Meditation is called chan ding ( 禪 定 ) in Chinese. In Sanskrit, chan ( 禪 ) is dhyana, and ding ( 定 ) is Samadhi, whose basic idea is to pacify all worries and stay in undisturbed conditions without illusions in the mind or randomly laying hold of things in the world (i.e., neither holding to phenomena as realities of the outside world nor being disturbed by illusions in the inner

mind) . This is the pivot of entering the Way. Among the cannons of Tripitaka, Sutra Pitika, or sermons collection, is the study of meditation and that is why we say that sutras interpret spiritual unity. Attaining spiritual unity is meditation and if we can enter into meditation, the merits and virtues in our inherent nature will be spontaneously induced. It is just like water in a basin. When the water is stirred, it becomes unclean and unclear. And when it is calm and quiet, it becomes bright and shiny like a mirror. The mind of a sentient being is also like this. And so meditation also includes all the merits and virtues of ubiquitous supernatural power.

(3) Wisdom is zhi hui ( 智慧 ) in Chinese. Zhi ( 智 ) is decision-making and hui ( 慧 ) is choice-making. This is the ultimate goal of practicing Buddhism — cultivating our wisdom to get rid of delusions and attain to the truth. In other words, with wisdom, we can destroy all kinds of afflictions and have experiential entry into Buddha-truth. Among the cannons of Tripitaka, the Abhidharma Pitika, or philosophical treatises collection, is the study of wisdom and that is why we say that the purpose of arguments is to distinguish correctness from wickedness, for the best way to cultivate our wisdom is to tell the difference between the two. However, there are two kinds of wisdom — knowledge of the fundamental and that of the phenomenal. We employ the former to attain to Buddha-truth and the latter to cleverly and conveniently confer blessings on all the living. Thus, wisdom also includes all the knowledge of the phenomenal.

We should know that the three studies are to be learned step by step. Taking precepts has to come before meditation. And when we can enter into meditation by tranquillizing the body, mouth, and mind, we naturally have wisdom. That is why it is said in *Shurangama Sutra*: “Collecting the mind is taking precepts. Taking precepts begets meditation. And meditation begets wisdom. That is why they are called the three studies after passionless life to escape from transmigration.”



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# 12.

## THE GENERAL MEANING OF BUDDHISM

All the instructions of the Buddha can be summarized into three statements to show the general meaning of Buddhism: “Don’t do any wicked things. Do all the good things. And purify the mind.” These three statements also refer to the effect of Buddha-dharma on believers.

By saying “Don’t do any wicked things,” we mean “We can’t do anything bad to obstruct or hurt sentient beings, whether it is big or small.” By saying “Do all the good things,” we mean “We have to do all the good things to benefit sentient beings, whether they are big or small things.” When the two sentences are put together, we get the main idea of prohibition and commandment of the study of discipline. And by saying “Purify the mind,” we mean “We have to make the functions of the mind clear and clean without contamination (i.e., cultivating a clear and clean mind).” Meditation is the effort we make to purify the functions of the mind, while wisdom is the result of the effort. Thus, the three sentences actually match the body and functions of Buddha-dharma. As it is said in the Nirvana Sutra: “Don’t do any wicked things, do all the good things, and purify the mind; this is Buddhism,” we can see that this is the instruction taught by all Buddhas.

It is recorded in a biography: Bai Xiangshan, a renowned poet and Buddhist layman of Tang Dynasty, once visited Master Niaoke of the Chan school and consulted him about the general meaning of Buddhism. The master replied: “Don’t do any wicked things and do all the good things.” Xiangshan laughed and said, “Even a three-year-old child can say these two sentences.” On hearing it, the master scolded him aloud, “Even though a three-year-old child can

say these two sentences, an eighty-year-old old man may not be able to act them out.” How inspiring this case-record is for people practicing Buddhism!



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# 13.

## A LIFE AND UNIVERSE ARISING FROM CONDITIONAL CAUSATION

[13. to 32. talk about the fundamental principles of Buddhism]

When the Buddha sat under a Bodhi-tree and saw the bright stars, he realized that everything arises from its primary cause and accessory conditions and that there is no exception to this rule. Therefore, “all dharmas originate from their causes and conditions and also become annihilated due to these causes and conditions.” It is an unchanging law, called by the Buddha as Law of Dependent Origination, that everything arises from conditional causation and has an unreal and void nature.

A life and universe arising from conditional causation is an interconnected web of relationships. Let’s take the example of a tree growing in a garden. It takes the causes and conditions of a seed, water, and soil, etc. for a tree to grow up and live. And this is called conditional causation. Actually, the causes and conditions of a seed, water, soil, etc. that let the tree grow also depend on other causes and conditions, which also depend on further causes and conditions. This web of causes and conditions can go on and on till it involves all things. On the other hand, this tree can make a beautiful sight and after it grows tall, its trunk can be cut down for people to make furniture. This tree, which is a product of causes and conditions, can become the causes and conditions of other things. And again, the web of relationships can go on and on till it involves everything. Thus, all things help to bring forth one thing, which in turn can be involved with all things in the universe. And this is how the universe and everything in it are formed as an interconnected web of relationships.

Likewise, in the case of human existence, when we are little, we

depend on our parents, who raise us, and while we are gradually growing up, we receive education at school and rely on our friends for help; all the material things in life we need are supplied by farmers, laborers and merchants; our security in life depends on national organizations and protection by the army and the police. It takes all these causes and conditions for us to survive. At the same time, we have to use all our intelligence and abilities to serve the society and create causes and conditions for other people. Humans are social animals and our society is a combination of people doing a variety of jobs respectively to form an obvious interconnected web of mutual support: some do the farming, others make cloth, and still others build houses for people to live in. In this way, life and society are also an interconnected web of conditional causation.

All things are related to one another due to conditional causation and there is nothing in the universe that can exist alone without other things. There is no one in a society that can live alone without other people. Individuals need the support of other members of a society to survive, and in turn should make contributions to their society and the public to help other people survive. “Everyone helps me and I help everyone.” Since all I have come from people in the society, I have to give them back in turn and can’t think too much of my own benefits to forget the social public I depend on. Indeed, only when we understand the meaning of conditional causation and make ourselves become part of the social public, serving and making benefits for them, can we really become selfless enough to help others and cooperate with them.



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# 14.

## THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT OF KARMAS

Karma is “Kamma” in Bali, meaning behavior or action. Any intentional thoughts, words and deeds can be called karmas. All the good and wicked deeds in people’s eyes can constitute karmas. In other words, karma can be construed as the willpower of morality or immorality — all the actions and reflections of willpower. Also, another meaning of Karma is cause and effect.

Karma is the reflection of willpower, and the seeds of all the good and bad karmas made by willpower are stored in alaya-vijnana, the originating intelligence. In proper conditions, these seeds manifest activities and this is when retribution for good or evil deeds becomes obvious: a good cause results in a good effect while a bad cause results in a bad effect. This is the law of cause and effect of ever-existent karmas. It is said in *Samyuktagama*: “As you sow, so you shall reap. People having sown good seeds will harvest good fruits. People having sown wicked seeds will reap wicked fruits. Whatever seeds you sow, you will taste the fruits they grow into.” This explains the law of cause and effect of karmas: people have to take the consequences of all the things they do and nobody else can do that for them. You get a certain result for a certain cause you have created. This is just as a seed grows into fruit for the fruit comes from the seed. The law of cause and effect is never obscured; a fruit must have come from a seed of cause which grows into blossoms and then fruit.

The Buddha teaches people to believe in the power of karma, cause and effect, and the law of cause and effect based on the dynamics of karma. There are three periods of retribution for good or bad deeds: first, retribution in this life — the karmas created in this life result in retribution in this life; second, retribution in the

next life — the karmas created in this life result in retribution in the next life; third, retribution in two or several lives after this life — the karmas created in this life result in retribution in two or several lives after this life. This is to explicate in terms of past, present, and future life how cause and effect is not to be obliterated. A certain cause creates a certain effect. That good deeds bring forth good rewards and bad deeds bad rewards is the law of cause and effect, which nobody can escape. What we can do only is to keep pure thoughts in mind to make our behavior purely good by cultivating the virtues of mercy, tolerance, forgiveness, and being not quarrelsome or argumentative. If we can work hard to create good karmas that benefit others, the blossoms of blisses will be naturally cultivated and grow in our heart.



# 15.

## HETUPRATYAYA AND RETRIBUTION FOR GOOD OR EVIL DEEDS

That hetupratyaya, meaning causes and conditions, brings forth all laws is an important theory of Buddha-dharma. Due to hetupratyaya, there are retributions for good and bad deeds. Hetu, or causes, refers to the origin of things while pratyaya, or conditions, means favorable forces to help make things happen; and retribution is the end of hetupratyaya. And as causes completely depend on the work of conditions to create effects, the importance of conditions to causes and their close connection cannot be ignored.

Pratyaya refers to the interactive connections among all things. Buddhism studies and analyzes these connections and divides them into the dharma of mental existence and that of material existence to discuss them respectively. The dharma of mental existence comes into being based on four conditions. First, hetupratyaya, also called direct internal cause, which refers to the seeds of activity consciousness in an unenlightened mind and is the major impetus to ripen the dharma of mental existence. Second, samanantara-pratyaya, also called equally incessant conditions because the mind of sentient beings always lays hold of something incessantly, one thought after another, due to its contact with the external world. Third, alambana-pratyaya, which refers to the objects that the minds of sentient beings lay hold of. As what is said in a sutra, “the mind is innately peaceful but is perturbed by conditions in the external world;” actually all conditions in the external world are alambana-pratyaya. Fourth, adhipati-pratyaya, which refers to, except for the above three conditions, all the power assisting to create a mental existence. To illustrate what the four

conditions are, we may take smokers for example. People want to smoke out of the seeds of the force of habit and this is hetu-pratyaya, the direct internal cause. The thought of smoking keeps emerging and this is samanantara-pratyaya. When they have the chance to get a cigarette, this is alambana-pratyaya. When they suddenly have a strong desire to smoke, this is adhipati-pratyaya. And these four conditions lead to the behavior of smoking. The dharma of material existence is based on two conditions. First, hetu-pratyaya. For example, a coconut seed is the cause of a coconut tree and as the seed and the tree have the closest and most direct connections, we call the seed the direct internal cause. Second, adhipati-pratyaya. All the things that help the coconut tree grow up: rich soil, sunshine, air, temperature, water, etc. are called adhipati-pratyaya. All the laws in the world cannot come into being without these four conditions.

When we study retributions, we can put them into three categories: present fruits, coming fruits and later fruits. When the causes of good or bad deeds we do in this life ripen into fruits right in this life, we call them present fruits. Those ripen into fruits in the next life are coming fruits. And those ripen into fruits in several lives to come are later fruits. This is to explain from the prospective of past, present and future that cause and effect is the inevitable development and result of everything. With such a cause, there must be such an effect. The connections may be intricate, but the law is clear and exact. There are roughly two reasons why retributions ripen in this life, future life, or several lives to come. First, the power of cause takes effect at different time just as when we plant a melon seed and a peach seed in the soil at the same time, the former can grow into melons in the same year while the latter will grow into peaches three or four years later. Second, the force of each condition varies. If all the four pratyayas arise just properly, the fruits naturally ripen at an earlier time. On the other hand, if it doesn't have enough power and has only one or two favorable conditions —maybe it has insufficient sunshine and air or bad soil,

then the melons and peaches will naturally ripen later.

Some people don't realize the theorem of the retributions of cause and effect and doubt if cause and effect is really dependable since there are so many good people dying a horrible death or suffering from bitter retributions, while those bad people doing wicked deeds enjoy pleasures from morning till evening and live a rich and free life. But from the prospective of past, present and future, the reason is simple: good people suffer from bitter retributions in this life for the wicked seeds they sowed in the past and due to the ripe conditions, they have to taste the bitter fruits first; and although they do good things in this life, the good cause is still weak and the good conditions have not ripened so they have to wait until the coming life to enjoy the good fruits. This is also the case with wicked people doing wicked things and yet getting good fruits. As the fruits of the good cause they sowed in the past life have ripened, they enjoy blisses first, and since the karma-conditions of the wicked seeds they have sowed in this life have not ripened yet, the inevitable bitter retributions won't come until their coming lives. And there is no escape from those bitter retributions at all. "Cause and effect always ends in retributions. And it is just a matter of time." We should ponder well on this saying.

There are two more points to the law of cause and effect. First, the law of cause and effect can never be destroyed and as long as you create a cause, no matter good or wicked, the seed forever stays in consciousness and won't be destroyed. When it encounters conditions, it will become manifest activities, which in turn incur retributions. There is no escape from wicked retributions if you have sown wicked seeds. The only way to get out of transmigration and rid oneself of the bitterness of receiving retributions is to practice Buddhism to thoroughly deplete afflictions in the Three Realms and obtain nirvana, the holy fruit of leaving the world. Second, good and evil do not cancel each other. As people sow wicked seeds, so they shall receive their fruits. It's impossible to do some good deeds to cancel the bad retributions resulting from bad

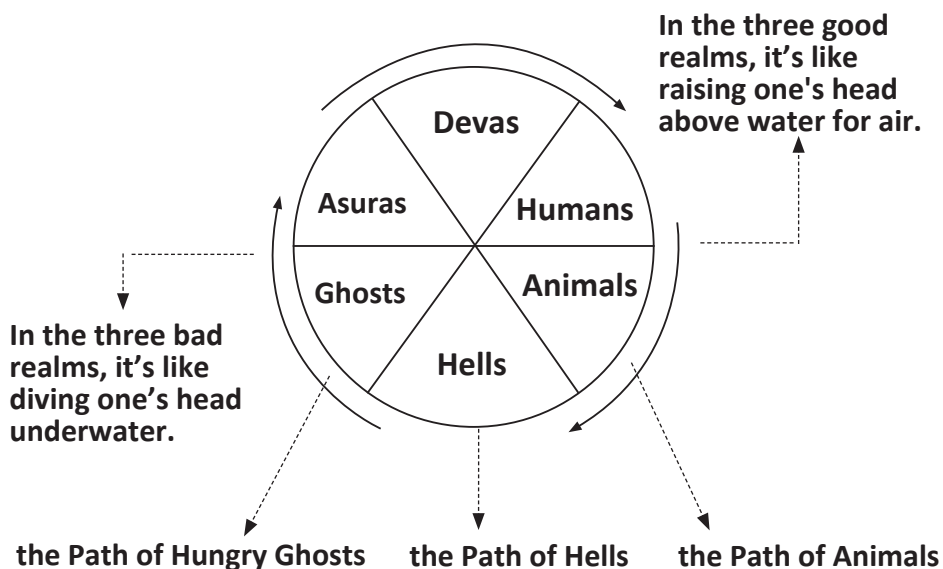
causes, for, as we should know, Buddhas and heavenly principles are selfless and don't take bribes. However, it's still possible to turn heavy retributions into slight ones, the so-called "heavy retributions lessened when receiving," by doing more good deeds and creating more good conditions. At the same time, increasing good conditions and decreasing wicked conditions is also the best way to prompt the good fruits to ripen quickly. Therefore, we can see that if we want to get good results from good causes and conditions, it is essential that we do more good deeds in life.

# 16.

## A SURVEY OF SENTIENT BEINGS IN THE UNIVERSE

Before an introduction to the Five Vehicles of Buddha-dharma suited to different conditions, we should first get a general idea of the direct retribution of previous existence on the body and mind of a sentient being in the universe and the circumstantial rewards he/she is born with owing to the dharma created by causes and conditions. Actually, within the Three Realms there is not a safe dwelling, so we should practice Buddhism to leave the Three Realms to end the great afflictions of births and deaths.

**A diagram of the wheel of transmigration**



**Six States of Existence**



The Buddha says that there are two kinds of world: first, the world of sentient beings, which refers to the environment of fauna; second, the material world, which refers to the environment of flora and minerals.

Let's first learn about the world of sentient beings. Broadly speaking, sentient beings include both unenlightened and holy beings — sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas, but not buddhas. Strictly speaking, however, sentient beings refer only to the unenlightened beings in the six states of existence and this is the definition we use here, for unenlightened people like us cannot really appreciate and enjoy the realm of holy beings and therefore it is not in our environment.

### **(1) The Six States of Existence**

The Buddha put all the sentient beings in the world into six categories: devas, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts and hells and they are the Six Paths. Although many biologists in the world have their own biological classification of animals, they are limited by their wisdom and knowledge and cannot classify animals as fully and completely as the Buddha. This is because the Buddha can't just see what unenlightened beings (e.g., sentient beings in the human and the animal path, who can only see a small part of what the Buddha can see with his physical eyes) can see, but they can also see what unenlightened beings cannot (e.g., devas, asuras, ghosts and hells) . People practicing Buddhism turn to the Buddha's preaching as the basis of their belief and so they cannot dismiss things that the Buddha said as tall tales simply because they cannot see them.

The conditions of the sentient beings in the six states of existence are various and greatly different from one another so it's impossible to describe each of them in detail. Now let's learn about two main points to get a general idea of the conditions of the sentient beings in the six states of existence. First, blisses enjoyed by sentient beings in a path. Sentient beings in each path have their

own kind of direct retribution of previous existence on the body and mind and enjoy their particular circumstantial rewards they are born with. There are many kinds of circumstantial rewards such as a long lifespan, etc. Second, sufferings, which include all the afflictions and disasters experienced by sentient beings in a path. Retribution for good and evil deeds in the six states may be different, but it is always connected with the suffering caused by the knowledge obtained by the senses.

### **1) The Path of Devas in Heavens**

The word “deva” has the connotation of being natural, enjoying rare and extraordinary pleasures, and having a rare and extraordinary body. Sentient beings in this path are in the top position of the Six Paths. They are especially respectable with great dignity and virtues and are able to freely exert ubiquitous supernatural power. For this, they are called devas.

The blisses enjoyed by sentient beings in the path of devas are as follows. There are three realms: Realm of Sensuous Desire, Realm of Form, and Realm of Formlessness (also called Realm of Void) . Counted upwardly, there are altogether twenty-eight heavens. The six heavens in the Realm of Sensuous Desire are like human worlds in that there are still desires for food and sex. The second heaven is Trayastrimsha, which is located on the peak of Sumeru and there are thirty-three heavenly cities in it. On each of the four corners of the peak, there are eight heavenly cities and in the center there dwells Indra, commonly known to the public as Jade Emperor. The sixth heaven is called Parinirmita-vasha-vartin, which is inhabited by Papiyan. In the Realm of Form, there are four dhyana heavens, each of which has several heavens and which add up to eighteen heavens altogether. In these dhyana heavens, there is no longer desire for food and sex and the mind is in silent introspection and meditation. But there are still forms of body, pavilions and other material things. Each of the first three dhyana heavens has three heavens and the fourth dhyana heaven has nine. And there are four heavens in Realm of Formlessness, where the devas are in the four



states represented by the four dhyana heavens with their minds becoming void and vast like the space, their powers of perception and understanding unlimited, their discriminative powers of mind subdued, and the realm of consciousness without thought being reached. The devas there no longer have forms and there is only consciousness left.

All the various pleasures enjoyed by devas are more precious and extraordinary than what we have here in the human world. For example, delicious dishes appear in the same food container. They are prepared by the heavenly kitchens and vary based on a deva's respective blisses. Their seamless clothes are delicately sewn, unlike clothes in the human world which are often mended with stitches and patches of cloth. Their lifespan is also much longer than that of humans. For example, in the first heaven, the Heaven of the Four Heavenly Kings, devas enjoy a lifespan of five hundred years, but each day there equals fifty years in the human world. In the following heavens upward, devas have a several-time longer lifespan, etc. For instance, in the second heaven, Trayastrimsha, devas have a lifespan of one thousand years and each day there equals one hundred years in the human world. In the sixth heaven, Paranirmita-vasha-vartin, devas have a lifespan of sixteen thousand years and each day there equals one thousand six hundred years in the human world. In this way, the lifespan of devas increases. Finally, in the Heaven of Neither Thought Nor No Thought, Naivasamjnanasamjnayatana, devas have a lifespan of eighty thousand kalpas. This is all because of the causes and conditions of ten good deeds in superior order sentient beings have created in their previous existence that enable them to have such rare and extraordinary karma fruits.

The sufferings of sentient beings in the path of devas are as follows. In the heavens of the Realm of Sensuous Desire, devas have five signs of decay when their lifespan is coming to an end: the flowers on their head withering, their armpits sweating, their clothes becoming dirty, their bodies giving unpleasant odors, and

their feeling unhappy in their seats. When their five signs of decay appear, they know they are doomed to die. So they are sad, worried and terrified, anxiously awaiting hells. Furthermore, in the heavens of the Realm of Form, there are three disasters. At first, fire burns and everything in the first dhyana heavens becomes ashes. Next, water floods and everything under the second dhyana heavens is overwhelmed by water. Following that, strong winds blow and everything under the third dhyana heavens, even small dusts, is blown away and no longer exists. Alas, even the material world which sentient beings inhabit cannot exist, not to mention the sentient beings that live in it. How can they forever exist? Even devas in four dhyana heavens have sufferings. Although devas in the four dhyana heavens are deep in meditative concentration practices, once their life is coming to an end, they do not enjoy meditative concentration practices anymore. Winds blow on their bodies, and except for sight-perception, the other five perceptions give afflictions. Furthermore, although devas in the four dhyana heavens do not have grossly manifest afflictions like those found in the two realms under them, in the heavens where their minds become void and vast like the space, they still have minor and tiny afflictions that feel like ulcers. In the heavens where their powers of perception and understanding become unlimited, they have tiny afflictions that feel like tumors. In the heavens where their discriminative powers of mind are subdued, they have tiny afflictions that feel like illnesses. And in the heavens where the realm of consciousness without thought is reached, they have tiny afflictions that feel like arrows shot in bodies. Also, when their life is near the end, the devas lose their ability to overcome all disturbing thoughts and know that they are going to fall down to lower realms. They feel just like falling down from a mountain to an abyss and therefore become very frightened.

## 2) The Path of Humans

In Sanskrit, the word for “human” is “manusya,” which means “mind,” for all the things that sentient beings in this path do

originate from the mind. According to *The Fayuan zhulin* by Tao-shih of the Tang Dynasty, “human” means “endurance.” Even if the outside world is unfavorable, humans should bear adversity with calmness.

The blisses that sentient beings in this path enjoy are as follows. The path of humans exists on four spheres with sentient beings on each sphere different in body shape, lifespan and blisses. For example, the lifespan for sentient beings in Purvavideha in the east is two hundred and fifty years; in Jambudvipa in the south one hundred years; in Aparā-godānīya in the west five hundred years; and in Uttara-kuru in the north one thousand years. As far as Jambudvipa in the south ( i.e., the earth where we live) is concerned, on the seven continents live very different human races with different skin and hair color and with widely different customs and habits and the landscape and resources on the seven continents also vary drastically. However, it is said in Buddhist sutras: “Humans are the lord of all creatures.” And it is also said in *Book of Rites*, “Humans are in the central position of the world and are the essence of the five elements.” This is because humans are likely to get close to the Way and are most capable of stopping illusions in their minds to cultivate themselves in right practice. In their previous existence, they practiced ten good deeds in middle rank so that they have got the retribution of the human body.”

Their sufferings are the three kinds of pain (feeling of suffering, suffering of decay, and suffering of the activity of the Five Skandhas) and the eight distresses (birth, age, sickness, death, parting with what we love, meeting with what we hate, unattained aims, and all the ills of the five skandhas) .

### 3) The Path of Asuras

“Asura” is translated as “bad-looking,” “without wine,” or “not devas.” Male asuras in this path are extremely ugly though females are very beautiful, so sentient beings in this path are called “bad-looking.” Also, although all species of flowers are picked and brewed in the sea to make wine, for the power of karma of fish

and dragons, the wine is never successfully brewed. So asuras are called “without wine.” And as asuras are likely to get furious and jealous, though they enjoy the blisses of devas as well, they do not have devas’ virtues. So they are called “not devas.”

Asuras’ blisses are as follows. Sentient beings in the path exist in the four paths of devas, humans, animals and ghosts. As it is said in *Shurangama Sutra*, there are four kinds of asuras in Three Realms. Take the asuras in the realm of ghosts for example. They are spawn-born in the path of ghosts with the power to protect Buddha-dharma and know the fundamental law of emptiness. If asuras in the path of devas have lesser virtues and get demoted, they will be womb-born in the path of humans living next to the sun and the moon. There are four kings of asuras who rule the world and have great strength and fearlessness. They are capable of rivaling with the kings of Brahma Heavens, Indra, and four guardian gods who protect the four quarters of the universe. These asuras have direct “birth” by metamorphosis and exist in the path of devas. There is another kind of inferior asuras who are born in the middle of the sea or deep down in the water holes. At dawn, they come out to play in the vacant space and in the evening they go back to their dwellings in water. These asuras are moisture-born and exist in the path of animals. As asuras exist in four different paths, their body shapes, lifespans, etc. vary depending on which kind of asuras they are. Generally speaking, although they practice the five constant virtues (codes of ethics for monarchs and subjects, for fathers and sons, for husbands and wives, for brothers, and for friends) , they are jealous and arrogant. The ten good deeds they do are in the lower level and so they incur the body of a sentient being in one of the four paths.

Asuras’ sufferings differ depending on which path they are born in. Take asuras in the path of devas for example. Besides the sufferings that all devas have to experience, because they like to fight with Indra, Asuras’ limbs are frequently broken and they get wounded or even die. If their heart is damaged or their limbs are

broken, they can recover to their former conditions. But if their head is chopped down, they pass away. Asuras in the other three paths suffer even more.

#### 4) The path of animals

In Sanskrit, the word for “animal” is “tiryanc.” Animals are also called “horizontally-growing creatures” for their horizontal body shapes (most of their bodies grow horizontally) and their erroneous behavior (most of them do not have an upright mind) .

Animals’ blisses are as follows. There is a wide range of sentient beings in this path, including all the birds and animals; actually, all creatures with feathers or scales, with four feet or more, with or without feet, living in water, on land, or traveling in the air are included in the path of animals. They can be divided into four categories according to their form of birth: ① womb-born animals like cows, horses, etc., whose lives begin as fetuses in their mothers’ wombs and which are born with potential capabilities; ② egg-born animals like geese, birds, peacocks, etc., which are hatched from eggs; ③ moisture-born animals like clams, worms, flying moths, etc., which are born with the help of moisture, uncleanness and warm air; ④ animals like dragons, which are born through direct metamorphosis out of nothing but their own power of karma. Their lifespans differ greatly. Some are born in the morning and die in the evening, others are born in spring or summer and die in autumn or winter, and still others die after thousands or hundreds of years. The body shapes and pleasures they own also vary widely.

The sufferings of sentient beings in the path of animals are: toil, serving as food, being killed by humans, or devouring one another. And the bitterness is endless. Just like what is maintained by Charles Darwin, the flesh of the preys is devoured by the strong hunting animals and there is the natural selection of species. This is indeed a true statement of the condition which sentient beings in the path of animals are in. Generally speaking, sentient beings that were foolish, ignorant, and greedy and did ten wicked deeds in the lower level in their previous existence have incurred a body in this

path.

### 5) The path of hungry ghosts

In Sanskrit, the word for “hungry ghost” is “preta.” Most of the sentient beings in this path suffer from hunger and terror. In Chinese, “鬼” (ghost) has the implication of fear and “餓” means hunger, so they are called hungry ghosts.

Hungry ghosts can be put into three categories and nine subcategories. The three categories of hungry ghosts are: ① ghosts without any riches, who do not have blisses and virtues and thus have to go without food and drinks; ② ghosts with just a few riches, who can get a little food and drinks; ③ ghosts with a lot of riches, who are offered abundant food and drinks. There are three subcategories of ghosts without any riches: (A) flaming mouths, from whose mouths come the flames of burning fire that burn food and drinks to ashes even when they get any — in the past, even Venerable Maudgalyayana’s mother degenerated into this body; (B) needle mouths, who have bellies vast like mountains and throats small like holes of needles; (C) putrid mouths, whose mouths give off a putrid smell due to retribution of their own wicked deeds. There are also three subcategories of ghosts with just a few riches: (A) ghosts with needle hair, whose bodies are covered with hair sharp like needles that prick their own bodies when they walk; (B) ghosts with putrid hair, whose hair is sharp and putrid and who pull out their own hair and suffer; (C) swollen ghosts, who have large protuberances growing in their throats and consume small bits of pus and blood of their own. We should know that although ghosts with just a few riches get a little food and drinks, the food and drinks they get are not like the clean and delicious food in the human world. If they can ever have the dirty feces in a toilet for food, it is already a fancy dish for them. There are three subcategories of hungry ghosts with a lot of riches: (A) ghosts of

sacrifices, who are often given offerings and live on sacrifices by humans; (B) ghosts of losses, who can often find leftover food in alleys or country paths; (C) ghosts of great power, who are awe-inspiring and virtuous and are often worshipped by humans. Gods and goddesses worshipped by humans, like town gods, earth gods, Wang Ye, and other commonly-seen deities, belong to this subcategory of ghosts of great power. Different kinds of hungry ghosts dwell in different paths and have different body shapes, with some inhabiting isles and others mountains and forests, some looking like humans and others animals; they all are different. Hungry ghosts have a lifespan of five hundred years, but in this path one day equals one month in the human world.

Their sufferings are as follows. Because of the cause and condition of their karmas, they have never heard of the word “water,” and clean water becomes pus and blood in their eyes and is thus undrinkable so they are always extremely hungry and thirsty. Furthermore, they are often driven and threatened by knives and sticks so that they are constantly in great fear. This is all caused by their insidious minds to set up and cheat others in their previous existence; they have done ten wicked deeds of middle rank and thus incurred the body of a sentient being in this path.

### **6) The path of hells**

In Sanskrit, the word for “hell” is “Naraka.” “Hells” is translated as “tools of torture,” for they are the tools to torture sentient beings having done wicked deeds. As they are located underground, in Chinese, hells are called “underground prisons.”

The conditions of hells are as follows. There are three kinds of hells: ① the central hells, i.e., the eight cold Narakas and the eight hot Narakas; ② the adjacent hells, i.e., the sixteen additional Narakas outside the four sides of the central hells; ③ the isolated hells, i.e., hells in mountains, water, and the wild. The body shapes,

lifespans, and level of suffering of sentient beings in this path vary depending on what hell they are in. Among the hells, Avici Naraka is the one where sentient beings are most severely tortured. Sentient beings have incurred a body in this hell because they have committed five heinous crimes and done ten wicked deeds of the highest rank.

Avici means “without intermittence.” Avici Naraka is one of the eight central hells and a sentient being in it has five things without intermittence: ① immediately falling to this hell directly after death without going through the intermediate state between death and rebirth into another path; ② non-stop suffering without intermittent joy and pleasures; ③ a period of time of a middling kalpa without intermittence; ④ living through a lifetime without intermittence: during the lifespan of a middling kalpa ( a period of 336, 000, 000 years) , though being skinned, cut, cooked, and stewed again and again, because of the cause and condition of his/her karma, a sentient being here is repetitively revived by cold winds and has to live through a full lifetime without intermittence; ⑤ a body form as vast as this hell and is tortured as much as what is offered here without intermittence: though this hell is as wide as eighty thousand yojanas, the body form of a sentient being in it is as vast as this hell without intermittence and be it only one sentient being or many in this hell, the body form is as vast and fills the hell.

As far as length of life is concerned, in Samjiva-naraka, the first of the eight hot Narakas, a sentient being has a lifespan of five hundred years, which is the same as that of a deva in heaven of the four deva kings. But since one day in this hell equals five hundred years in the heaven of the four deva kings, one day and night here actually equals more than nine million years in the human world. And in Kaslasutra-naraka, the second of the eight hot Narakas, a sentient being has a lifespan of one thousand years, which is



the same as that of a deva in Trayastrimsha. But one day in this hell equals one thousand years in Trayastrimsha, so one day and night here equals more than thirty-six million years in the human world. Likewise, just as the lifespans of devas in Six Heavens of the Desire Realm increase, so do the lifespans of sentient beings in hells. And finally in Avici Naraka, their lifespans increase up to one middling kalpa. What an unimaginably long lifetime of extremely bitter suffering without intermittence! Is it possible not to fear it?

Their sufferings are as follows. There are uncountable tools to torture: fire pits, hard ice, knife mountains, sword trees, grinders, big cooking pots, burning feces, closing mountains, etc. Take burning feces for instance. A sentient being here is driven into a big river of burning feces with sharp-mouthed maggots inside, which enter his/her body through nostrils and come out from foot soles or enter his/her body through foot soles and come out from the mouth. It is so terribly foul, stinky, hot and thorny that the suffering is hard to bear.

## **(2) The Wheel of Transmigration**

The six categories of sentient beings are called six “paths” because they are just like different roads, which can lead to one another, for sentient beings to walk on. Sentient beings in the six paths constantly transmigrate in the Three Realms in four forms of birth (womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and metamorphosis) and they are reborn in the six paths depending on their karma. This is what is generally called “transmigration in the six paths.” Sentient beings transmigrate by following their own power of karma; some humans become ghosts or ascend to heavens. As the old saying goes, “Going inside the womb of a horse, becoming the fetus of a donkey, for how many times has a sentient being gone to and fro sticky mire and burning coal? Sometimes, he/she goes to the palace of a deva king and at other times, he/she goes inside the pot of Yama.” There is no telling which path a sentient being will go to.

As it is mentioned in *Dharmapadavadana Sutra*, in the past, even Indra, Lord of Trayastrimsha, was almost reborn as a donkey in the home of a potter, not to mention ordinary beings under him.

In Buddhist writings, the reason why there is transmigration in the six paths is best explicated with Twelve Nidanas. Just like what is said in *Book of Changes*, a Confucian Classic, “Energy in the universe becomes material things, and roaming ghosts become different sentient beings;” “Human beings form groups with others with similar dispositions and animals also flock together with their own species.” These two statements can somewhat explain the reason why there is transmigration in the six paths. But only the ones with the psychic power of the heavenly eye and the psychic power regarding past lives can clearly see the fact of transmigration in the six paths and know which path each sentient being comes from and will go to. If one does not possess these two psychic powers, as long as he/she widely reads historical writings, he/she can find many proofs of it. Only people who, besides disbelieving in the words of the Buddha and saints, neither study Buddhist sutras nor read historical writings will doubt about and deny the fact of transmigration in the six paths without good reasons.

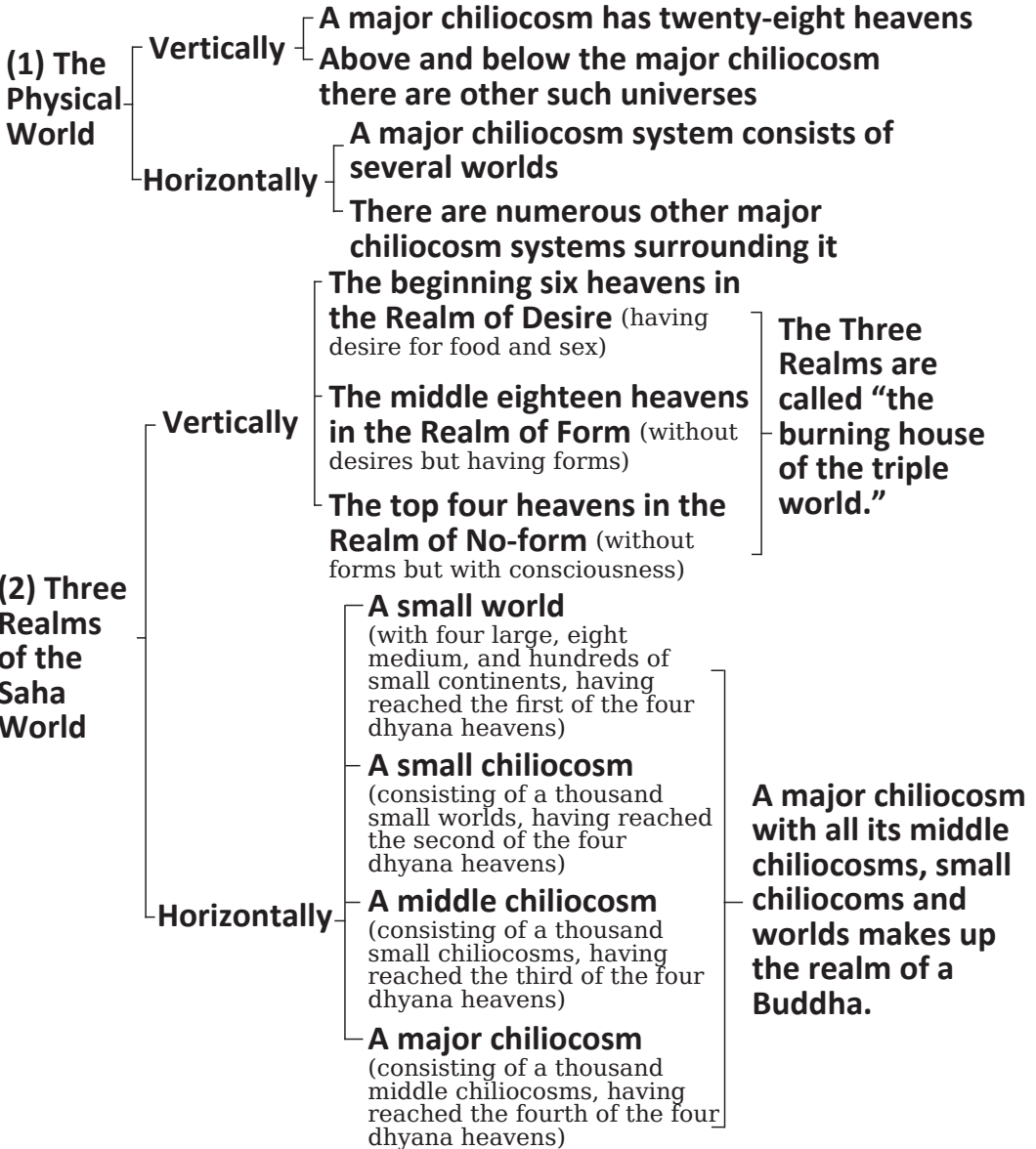
Among the six paths, sentient beings in the three paths of devas, humans and asuras obtain good rewards because they have done many good deeds in their previous existence. So, these three paths are called Three Good Paths. Sentient beings in the three paths of ghosts, animals and hells obtain bad rewards because they have done many wicked deeds in their previous existence. So, these three paths are called Three Evil Paths, or Three Sticky Mires. “Mire” has two implications: first, it means sticky mire and burning coal to torture, for sentient beings in Three Evil Paths are mostly tortured; second, it means a muddy path, for Three Evil Paths are the paths for sentient beings having done wicked deeds to go to. Three Evil Paths are: 1) the path of knife, i.e., the path of hungry ghost, for sentient beings here are often driven and threatened with a knife or a stick; 2) the path of blood, i.e., the path of animal, for an animal

is doomed to bleed to death; 3) the path of fire, i.e., the path of hell, for hells are surrounded by immense fires in all directions.

Ordinary beings in the Six Paths sometimes ascend to Three Good Paths and fall down to Three Evil Paths at other times. And there is a comparison for this in Buddhist sutras: “raising one’s head above water for air and diving one’s head under water again.” The whole Three Realms and Six Paths are just like a vast sea of bitterness, with karma waves churning and surging. As soon as one wave pushes our heads above the surface of the sea for us to get a breath of fresh air, the wave after that comes and pulls us down to the seafloor without waiting for us to get enough air. In this way, sometimes the head is above water and sometimes below but we never leave this vast sea of bitterness. This is the environment for us sentient beings.

# 17.

## A SURVEY OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD OF THE UNIVERSE



The physical world refers to the land sentient beings dwell in and the material things they can use. It is also called the natural world or the world of matter where people live.

Be it land or material things, actually the physical world is transformed by and rests on alaya-vijnana, the eighth consciousness, of sentient beings. But as there are numerous kinds of sentient beings who are in widely different spheres of cognition, the physical world transformed and relied upon by the alaya-vijnana of each kind of sentient beings, therefore, is widely different as well. For instance, the rivers and streams to humans are fierce fires and foul feces in the eyes of hungry ghosts. In the eyes of devas, however, they are gold, silver, and lapis lazuli. And in the eyes of fish and shrimps, they are smoke, fog and air. Likewise, in the path of humans, though all humans are in the same class, have similar fruits of karma and see things in the similar way, yet they still interpret things differently according to times, places, customs, theories, etc. Therefore, since long time ago people have been instructing Buddhism in various ways and argued among themselves about Buddhist teachings, which is likely to arouse doubts about Buddhism.

In fact, the Buddha spoke the Dharma to let sentient beings awaken to the truth of the absolute fundamental reality, which is unspeakable and can only be instructed expediently according to the cognition of each kind of sentient beings so that the Buddha's instructions include remarks volunteered by the Buddha, those made according to appropriate situations, and those made both voluntarily by the Buddha and according to appropriate situations. If we know the device of the four siddhantas, or modes, whereby the Buddha preached the originally inexpressible dharma to all sentient beings, then we won't be surprised to find disagreement between the Buddha's remarks made according to the appropriate situations of two thousand years ago and the secular learning of today, and very naturally, all our arguments and doubts about Buddhist teachings will be resolved. In addition, the secular

learning today is not the unshakeable Truth. If the Buddha appeared today to teach sentient beings, there would be other remarks made according to different appropriate situations. All in all, the purpose of the Buddha's remarks made according to the time, the place, and the kind of sentient beings to whom he spoke the Dharma is to expediently guide sentient beings to awaken to the absolute fundamental reality. And this is exactly where Buddha-dharma is profound and extraordinary.

As long as people practicing Buddhism single-mindedly rely on the fundamental basis of holy words and deeply believe in it without doubts, they may as well properly adapt it to suit today's secular learning so as to naturally obtain the benefit of joy from worldly siddhanta, or mundane modes of expression, the benefit of arousing goodness from siddhanta for each individual, the benefit of resolving doubts from special application siddhanta, and the benefit of awakening to the absolute fundamental reality from siddhanta of supreme truth. Thus, they will not take the erroneous action of doubting or revising Buddhist sutras and consequently commit the wicked sins of defaming the Buddha and the Dharma. Now, following this principle, we will give a general description of the world of matter that the Buddha spoke to the human world.

### **(1) The space of the physical world**

In brief, vertically, a world of major chiliocosm has twenty-eight heavens, and above and below it there are numerous other such worlds. Horizontally, a world of major chiliocosm is made up of several smaller worlds and there are countless other major chiliocosms surrounding it.

For instance, the major chiliocosm we inhabit is called saha, meaning patiently enduring because the sentient beings in this world patiently endure the afflictions of the three poisons (wrong desires, resentment and ignorance) and do not want to leave this world. Originally, it does not have directions but we may as well base on the connection between the sun and the earth to imagine

the four quarters of the compass: East, West, South, and North, and the four half points of the compass: Southeast, Northeast, Southwest, and Northwest. These eight points of the compass and the nadir and zenith make up the ten directions of space. In the ten directions of space, there are countless worlds like Saha Land, and each of them has its own name. For example, there is the world of Akshobhya Buddha in the east, the world of Amitabha Buddha in the west, the world of Ratnasambhava Buddha in the south, and the world of Amoghasiddhi Buddha in the north. According to “The Book of the World” in *Avatamsaka Sutra*, there is a system of worlds called Blazing Light Illuming the Ten Directions, which is composed of twenty layers of Buddha-fields. Saha, the land where we inhabit, is the world in the center of the thirteenth layer and is surrounded by thirteen Buddha-fields of worlds as many as atoms. And such a system of worlds with twenty layers of Buddha-fields is again surrounded in the ten directions by worlds as many as atoms. All these worlds are different: they can be pure or defiled, big or small, or good or bad, and it is impossible to describe them all as a whole. However, one thing we can be sure of is that the physical worlds in the void are boundless, limitless and countless. Today, with the advanced development of astronomy, we can infer that there are countless solar systems, galaxies, and star clusters in the universe and this can explain Buddhist cosmology. If there is any difference between Buddhist cosmology and modern astronomy, it is that the most part of the latter is still assumptions based on inferences and the former is what was clearly seen by the Buddha via seed consciousness.

Now, to further understand a general condition of world systems, we may take Saha Land, where we dwell, for instance and base on what is stated in Buddhist sutras to give a general description of it.

## **(2) A general statement of the Three Realms in Saha**

Vertically, the twenty-eight heavens in Saha are in the Three

Realms: the Desire Realm, the Realm of Form, and the Formless Realm of Pure Spirit. From the lowest to the highest, the beginning six heavens in the Desire Realm are: the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, Trayastrimsa Heaven, Yama Heaven, Tusita Heaven, Nirmanarati Heaven, and Parinirmitavasavartin Heaven. According to Buddhist sutras, the Heaven of the Four Great Kings is located on the mountainside of Sumeru and Trayastrimsa Heaven is on the mountaintop of Sumeru, while sentient beings of the five paths dwell in the various spheres at the foot of Sumeru. This is the region of the Desire Realm, where all sentient beings living in it have desires for food and sex. As the old saying goes, “Desires for food and sex are inborn,” and that is why the region is called the Desire Realm. In the middle is the Realm of Form, including the eighteen heavens of the Four Dhyanas. The three heavens in the first dhyana heaven are the Heaven of Brahma’s Retinue (Brahmakayika) , the Heaven of Brahma’s Aide (Brahmapurohita) , and the Heaven of Great Brahma (Mahabrahman) . The three heavens in the second dhyana heaven are the Minor Light Heaven (Parittabha) , the Infinite Light Heaven (Apramanabha) , and the Light Sound Heaven (Abhasvara, also known as the Utmost Light and Purity Heaven) . The three heavens in the third dhyana heaven are the Minor Purity Heaven (Parittashubha) , the Boundless Purity Heaven (Apramanashubha) , and the All Pure Heaven (Shubhakritsna) . The nine heavens in the fourth dhyana heaven are the Cloudless Heaven (Anabhraka) , the Bliss Increasing Heaven (Punyaprasava) , the Large Fruitage Heaven (Brihatphala) , the Heaven of No Thought (Asamjnin) , the Heaven of No Vexations (Avriha) , the Heaven of No Heat (Atapa) , the Reward Appearing Heaven (Sudrishā) , the Heaven of Clear Perception (Sudarshana) , and the Akanishtha Heaven. Sentient beings in this region are in various levels of meditation and although there are still bodily forms and material things in this realm, sentient beings there are born through direct metamorphosis for their karma fruits and have no gender difference. They nourish their bodies and minds with



the joy of meditation and no longer have desires for food and sex so that this region is called the Realm of Form. On top of this realm are the four heavens of the Formless Realm of Pure Spirit: the Realm of Boundless Empty Space (Akashanantyayatana) , the Realm of Boundless Consciousness (Vijnananantyayatana) , the Realm of Nothingness (Akimchanyayatana) , and the Realm of Neither Thought Nor No Thought (Naivasamjnanasamjnyayatana) . Sentient beings in this region rely on the four states of the four dhyana heavens so that, except for the manifest form of meditation, they have neither desires for food and sex nor bodily forms born via metamorphosis or material things because of their karma fruits. For this fact, this region is called the Formless Realm of Pure Spirit. We should know that in the first two realms, there are forms and materials and in the Formless Realm of Pure Spirit, there are no longer forms or physical things, which is actually the void permeating the first two realms. And the three realms together are called the Three Realms of Saha, which is also the foul and wicked place where ordinary beings of the six paths live and forever transmigrate between birth and death. For this, in *Lotus Sutra*, the Three Realms are compared to a burning house, for they are unstable and unsafe.

Next, horizontally, the surroundings of the three realms are as follows. First, there is a Sumeru world, whose center is Mount Sumeru, which is surrounded by seven concentric mountain ranges made of gold, alternating with seven concentric seas of fragrant water. These mountain ranges and seas, in turn, are bounded by the Iron Encircling Mountains. In the seas are four continents (Purvavideha in the East, Aparagodaniya in the West, Jambudvipa in the South, and Uttarakuru in the North) , eight subcontinents, and hundreds of small continents.

We may make use of the terms of secular learning today to explain the Sumeru world. The continents mentioned in Buddhist sutras and philosophical treatise collections actually refer to spheres in the space; and Jambudvipa in the South, where we

inhabit, refers to the earth. (The earth's land is surrounded by the seas, which satisfies the definition of the word "continent.") And the Sumeru World stated in the *Abhidharmakosakarika* is like what we call today "the solar system." The seven concentric gold mountain ranges seem to refer to the orbits of spheres, for when human beings on earth look up at the sun and stars in the skies, they see the concentric orbits of these heavenly bodies just like layers and layers of mountains. As to the seven concentric seas of fragrant water, they seem to refer to the void, or ether, between orbits. This Sumeru World is actually the region where the light and heat of the sun can reach and is governed by Trayastrimsa Heaven. Beyond this region are areas which the light and heat of the sun cannot reach and thus no longer belong to Indra's heaven; they are the heavenly regions.

Beyond Trayastrimsa Heaven, the territory of a natural world doubles that of the heaven right below it in both height and width. For instance, the territory of the natural world of Yama Heaven doubles that of Trayastrimsa Heaven in height and width. Likewise, the heavens in the Desire Realm double in height and width one above the other until the territory becomes as high and as wide as the natural world of the first dhyana heaven. Until the territory of each heaven doubles one above the other up to the Heaven of Great Brahma, all the territories of these heavens together form a small world. The territories of one thousand such small worlds double in height and width one heaven above the other up to the second dhyana heaven to form a small chiliocosm. Likewise, the territories of one thousand such small chiliocosms double in height and width one heaven above the other up to the third dhyana heaven to form a middle chiliocosm. And again, the territories of one thousand such middle chiliocosms double in height and width one heaven above the other up to the fourth dhyana heaven to form a major chiliocosm. A major chiliocosm is also called Tri-sahasra-maha-sahasra-lokadhatu because it is made up of one thousand middle chiliocosms with one thousand small chiliocosms in each of them,

and in each of the small chiliocosms there are also one thousand small worlds. This is the territory governed by Mahesvara in the Akanishtha Heaven, and is also the realm called “the realm of a Buddha,” where one Buddha guides and edifies sentient beings. Altogether, there should be one billion suns, i.e., one billion Sumeru worlds in it. Saha Land is the realm where Sakyamuni Buddha guides and edifies and it is only one world in the thirteenth layer of its twenty layers in the system of worlds of the pure land of Vairocana.



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# 18.

## THE EXPEDIENT MEANS OF THE FIVE VEHICLES OF BUDDHISM

### **(1) Giving alms opportunely according to the spiritual abilities of the receivers**

Buddhist sutras are scriptures for opportune occasions, for not only do they have to opportunely respond to the fundamental essence of tathagata, but they also have to opportunely instruct sentient beings according to their spiritual abilities. Just like what eminent monks in the past said, “If expounding the law inopportune, it is just like gossiping.” Therefore, it is especially important to be opportune when learning or teaching Buddhism.

Due to the different degrees of endeavor to cultivate their virtues in the previous existence, in this life, sentient beings have different spiritual abilities for cultivation of their minds. Some have dull faculties. Their minds are dull and confused and even when they hear Buddha-dharma, mostly they cannot respond to it. Besides, they cannot see the benefits of leaving the burning house of the Three Realms but just see the benefits before them. The best way to receive and lead this kind of people is to instruct them “the world law” to expediently lead them to the Way, for they cannot respond to high dharma, which is why we say that we cannot teach high dharma to sentient beings of medium spiritual abilities or below. Sentient beings having sharp faculties, however, are quick-minded and can infer ten things from one thing they have learned. They have great vision to see the cause and effect of the past and the future. Therefore, it is advisable to instruct this kind of people transmundane dharmas to enable them to be ultimately released from the wheel of transmigration, for they will be dissatisfied if

they are taught low dharma, which is why we say that we can teach high dharma to sentient beings of above average spiritual abilities. In this way, we should speak the Dharma opportunely according to the spiritual abilities of the receivers just like prescribing medicine for patients with different illnesses: instructing some to plant virtuous roots, helping some to grow and mature the virtuous roots, leading others to be ultimately released from the wheel of transmigration, etc., and not missing any single individual.

**(2) The world law—the human vehicle and the deva vehicle**

The world law includes the human vehicle and the deva vehicle. Sentient beings of the duller of dull faculties should be instructed the human vehicle, while those of the sharper of dull faculties should be taught the deva vehicle. A vehicle, for instance, a boat or a car, is originally a means of transportation. Here, it refers to all Buddha-dharma, for it can carry ordinary beings to the holy stage of enlightenment like a vehicle carrying passengers from one place to another.

The human vehicle is just like the toddler class and preschool in the educational system of today and it only focuses on the most basic things to do as a human. Wanting only to pursue blisses in this life, like longevity, riches, a high social status, and peacefulness, etc., sentient beings of the duller of dull faculties are instructed how to behave as a human by keeping the first five of the ten commandments and by having the character of an upright human so as to ensure rebirth as a human in the future.

The deva vehicle is like the pre-kindergarten or kindergarten of the educational system today, for it teaches the ways to ascend to heavens as well. For those sentient beings who desire to get the extraordinary and wonderful blisses in heavens like clothing and food coming naturally, treasures and palaces, etc., it is advisable to instruct them the ways to ascend to heavens, teaching them to practice ten good deeds and dhyanas of the world (the four dhyanas and the eight concentrations) to let them ascend to various heavens

according to how well they have carried out ten good deeds and dhyanas.

We should know that in Tripitaka (Sutra Pitika, Vinaya Pitika, and Abhidharma Pitika) , any dharma that teaches people to keep five precepts, do ten good deeds, get blisses by almsgiving, or practice the four dhyanas and the eight concentrations is what the Buddha expediently instructed sentient beings of dull faculties to prevent them from going down to the Three Sticky Mires. Therefore, such dharma does not teach them to leave the Three Realms and is not the Dharma for true liberation because even though sentient beings may ascend to the Heaven of Neither Thought Nor No Thought and have an unimaginably long lifespan of eighty thousand kalpas, when the time comes, they still have to be turned by the wheel of transmigration. That is why the lyrics of “The Song of Enlightenment” by Master Yung-chia go like this: “Giving alms with earthly contamination allows one to get the bliss of ascending to heavens. But it is like shooting up an arrow into the Void. When the motive power is gone, the arrow falls down and this actually incurs the misfortunes of the future life.” Thus, all these blisses are but small fruits to slightly comfort sentient beings in the world of births and deaths, and therefore, the human vehicle and the deva vehicle should not be mistaken for the supreme doctrine.

### **(3) Transmundane dharmas—the sravaka vehicle, the pratyekabuddha vehicle, and the bodhisattva vehicle**

Transmundane dharmas refer to the utmost learning of surpassing the Three Realms to forever leave births and deaths. And they include the sravaka vehicle, the pratyekabuddha vehicle, and the bodhisattva vehicle. To sentient beings of the nature and character of small vehicle, it is advisable to speak the sravaka vehicle. To those of the nature and character of middle vehicle, it is advisable to speak the pratyekabuddha vehicle. And to those of the nature and character of great vehicle, it is advisable to speak the bodhisattva

vehicle.

1) The sravaka vehicle is like the primary school in the educational system today. It is called the sravaka vehicle, or the vehicle of the hearers, because sentient beings practicing this vehicle attain to the state of full attainment of arhatship by first hearing the vocal teaching of the Buddha, understanding the bitter, void and impermanent nature of existence, then practicing the four noble truths, and finally ending the two kinds of afflictions developed from view and deliberation. These two kinds of afflictions are actually the source of births and deaths in the Three Realms; one kind of afflictions is developed from the view produced when the mind sense is aroused by a mental object, and the other kind of afflictions is deliberation aroused when a sentient being perceives the objects of the five senses (this will be further explicated later in [21] The Six Primary Afflictions) . Arhatship is the utmost enlightenment stage of the sravaka vehicle and it has three meanings: ① killing enemy, for arhats have destroyed all the wickedness in the body and the mouth and have terminated all the enemy of nirvana — the two kinds of afflictions developed from view and deliberation; ② one who deserves offerings, for arhats have rid themselves of all delusions and are in a high stage of enlightenment and thus they deserve offerings by humans and devas; ③ not to be reborn, for arhats have forever entered into nirvana and will no longer go through transmigration with a predetermined lifespan and body. We should know that sravakas are adherents of Hinayana because they only aspire to end their own afflictions without having the wish to save others.

2) The pratyekabuddha vehicle is like the middle high school in the educational system today. Sentient beings practicing this vehicle have a sharper nature and character. They cultivate the Way and become enlightened by following the Buddha's instruction of the twelve nidanas to end the afflictions developed from view and deliberation and furthermore spoil habit energies to attain to the enlightenment of pratyekabuddhas, the holy beings who become

enlightened through reasoning on the riddle of life, the twelve nidanas. As stated above, the word “pratyekabuddha” is translated as “a holy being becoming enlightened through reasoning on twelve nidanas.” It is also translated as “a holy being becoming enlightened alone” because pratyekabuddhas are born in the times when there are no Buddhas and thus have no ways to hear Buddhas’ instructions. But because of their power of cultivation in previous existence, they awaken to the truth on their own by watching flowers drifting in the wind and leaves falling to the ground and that is why they are called “holy beings becoming enlightened alone.” Habit energies refer to the energies of the habit of afflictions and are just like the stinky smell still left in a container though the smelly thing in it has been removed. And that is why it is said in *Nirvana Sutra*: “Sravakas and pratyekabuddhas have afflictions and habit energies called ‘my clothing’ and ‘my almsbowl.’” This statement refers to the habit energies of afflictions developed from view. And as what is illustrated in *A Commentary on the Mahaprajna Paramita Sutra*, the resentment of Sariputra, the pride of Pilinda-vatsa, and the greed of Nanda are examples of the habit energies of afflictions developed from deliberation. We should know that although pratyekabuddhas do not benefit the world, they still guide and benefit their retinues and subjects, and thus the pratyekabuddha vehicle is the middle vehicle to nirvana.

3) The bodhisattva vehicle is like the university in the educational system of today. Sentient beings practicing this vehicle have the sharpest nature and character. Ever since they have the initial determination to seek enlightenment, they have already made the broad and vast vows to cultivate the six paramitas with all actions of salvation to help all sentient beings. With their vows, they keep cultivating for three great incalculably long kalpas and eventually attain to Buddhahood, and that is why the bodhisattva vehicle is called Mahayana. The word “bodhisattva” is actually coined by two words: “Bodhi,” which means “perfect wisdom,” and “sattva,” which literally means “a being that exists” and here



it refers to a human or a sentient being. So, the word “bodhisattva” implies both awakening to the truth oneself and helping all other sentient beings awaken to the truth.

We should know that although we say there are five vehicles, three vehicles (the sravaka vehicle, the pratyekabuddha vehicle, and the bodhisattva vehicle) , or two vehicles (Mahayana and Hinayana) for Buddha-dharma, they are but the Buddha’s expedient instructions, and there is actually just one-Buddha vehicle. That is why *The Lotus Sutra* says, “There is only one vehicle method, not two or three.” Despite the fact that all sentient beings have the Buddha-nature and can become Buddhas, due to their different nature and character, Sakyamuni Buddha could not but speak two, three, and five vehicles for sentient beings, using these vehicles as ladders or boats to help all sentient beings ultimately reach Buddhahood. In his forty-five years of expounding the law, the Buddha again and again patiently taught sentient beings of different natures and characters in various ways and finally in the assembly preaching *The Lotus Sutra*, seeing that sentient beings present in the assembly had the right potentialities and conditions, the Buddha immediately opened up and revealed the truth to them by combining the three vehicles into one and making each dharma become Buddha-dharma. Thus, when we study Buddhism, we should keep the real intention of the Buddha in mind and realize the expedients of the Buddha. In the next section, we will elaborate on the practice methods of the five vehicles one after another.

# 19.

## VEHICLES FOR HUMANS AND DEVAS AND FIVE PRECEPTS AND TEN FORMS OF GOOD ACTION

In the five vehicles for Buddha-dharma, vehicles for humans and devas teach the law of this world, but they are the basis of the transmundane dharma. It is just like the nursery school of today; though not being a part of formal education, it gives the basis of primary school, middle school and university education. That is why the Buddha first spoke the five precepts of Human Vehicle Buddha-dharma and the ten forms of good action of Deva Vehicle Buddha-dharma.

- Five precepts**
- (1) **No killing**
  - (2) **No stealing**
  - (3) **No adultery**
  - (4) **No lying**
  - (5) **No consumption of alcohol**

- Ten Forms of Good Action**
- Three good karma precepts of the body**
    - No killing**—No taking away the life of an animal
    - No stealing**—No taking possession of ill-gotten gains
    - No adultery**—No debauchery or incest
  - Four good karma precepts of the mouth**
    - No lying**—No lying or cheating
    - No double tongue**—Don't be double-tongued and cause quarrels
    - No hateful speech**—No curses or hateful speech
    - No idle talks**—No talking imaginary or unreal things
  - Three good karma precepts of the mind**
    - No greed**—No indulgence in the five desires
    - No resentment**—No ire or impatience
    - No illusion**—No foolishness or ignorance

### **The way of five precepts and ten forms of good action—the true dharma of Human and Deva Vehicle**

In Buddhism, there are five vehicles to teach: the human vehicle, the deva vehicle, the sravaka vehicle, the pratyekabuddha vehicle, and the bodhisattva vehicle. But basically, the basis of Buddha-dharma is the human vehicle and the deva vehicle, which can then be changed into Mahayana and reach the Buddha vehicle directly. Therefore, the human vehicle and the deva vehicle are the initial stage of the Buddha vehicle. And as Buddha-dharma spreads widely in the world, naturally the focus must be on humans and opportune teaching methods have to be given. The first teaching method is five precepts, which are the true dharma of the human vehicle. Those who can keep five precepts can be reborn as humans and not go down through transmigration to evil paths. Going further, five precepts can be made into ten forms of good action, i.e., the deva vehicle. Those who can cultivate up to the superior order of ten forms of good action can enjoy blisses in heavens in the future life.

Five precepts are: (1) No killing, (2) No stealing, (3) No adultery, (4) No lying, and (5) No consumption of alcohol. These five precepts are included in ten forms of good action and the meanings of their content are not very much different. The only difference is that five precepts emphasize conduct and behavior, while ten forms of good action emphasize not only conduct and behavior but the activities of the mind. Therefore, we can say that no lying, the fourth precept of the five commandments, is developed into four more precepts: no hateful speech, no double tongue, no lying, and no idle talks. And no consumption of alcohol, the fifth of five precepts, is developed into no greed, no resentment, and no illusion. Thus, five precepts are developed into: (1) No killing, (2) No stealing, (3) No adultery, (4) No hateful speech, (5) No double tongue, (6) No lying, (7) No idle talks, (8) No greed, (9) No resentment, and (10) No illusion. They are ten precepts leading to goodness, or ten forms of good action. The following is a brief

explanation of ten forms of good action.

(1) No killing and have a compassionate heart—it means not killing and taking away the life of sentient beings. In other words, we should treat all sentient beings equally and not kill them. This is because Buddhism maintains that the Buddha-nature of all sentient beings is equal. Buddhism advocates being compassionate and saving the world so that the World-Honored Sakyamuni Buddha used the doctrine of equality and compassion to call for saving the life of all sentient beings as they all have the Buddha-nature. Mencius also said, “Hearing the crying of animals, we feel sorry for them and can’t bear eating their meat.” Though he did not mention the Buddha-nature, he also said it out of a compassionate heart and took pity on sentient beings being killed. From this, we can see that if we can have a heart of compassion and kindness and do not kill sentient beings, then the natural world of all sentient beings can go on its natural course and things like fighting and hatred can be exterminated. And when this happens, won’t we have a peaceful world?

(2) No stealing or robbing, get benefits in a righteous manner, and be thrifty—Stealing refers to scamming or stealthily taking things away from others’ dwellings, while robbing means taking things away from others against their will by force and violence. Not taking people’s possessions stealthily and by force is no stealing and robbing. The rights to things have to be given and taken with justice. If we take away things that others don’t want to give us, things that don’t belong to us, or things that we don’t deserve to own, these are all acts of stealing and robbing. Things that can support life and satisfy desires are called benefits, and they should be properly given and taken in the righteous way. We should know that we must benefit others if we want to benefit ourselves, so benefiting others in order to benefit ourselves is getting benefits in a righteous manner. If all people get benefits in a righteous manner and thriftily spend them on daily expenses, they can support their parents and family and enjoy their family life; and if all people can

carefully deal with money matters with their friends, there will not be any acts of stealing and robbing. Consequently, not only will the society become peaceful, but individuals and their family will be blessed.

(3) No adultery and chastely observe manners—Except with one's spouse, one should not have sex with any other people. If one has sex with women other than his wife, this is adultery. We should regulate sexual desires and chastely observe manners. After getting married and having a family, a couple should respect each other and not have sex with others. In this way, they may get along well and have a happy family.

(4) No lying and be honest—Fooling people with tricks, scamming people with words, being fond of telling lies, saying things that are untrue, and so on are lying. No lying is to speak honestly and not speak hypocritically to cheat. If we can totally avoid lying, we can become honest and there will be trust between us and our parents, siblings, relatives, friends, and all other people we contact. This is indeed the way to attain to joy.

(5) No double tongue and cause quarrels—No double tongue means not gossiping to arouse ill feelings among people. People in the world do not work on purifying their speeches and often cause trouble for being double-tongued. As the old saying goes, we get sick for what comes in through our mouths and get into trouble for what goes out through our mouths, disasters caused by double tongue can bring about trouble, arguments, and afflictions out of nowhere. It brings disorder to our bodies and minds and even makes us use violence to hurt others and is indeed the original source of bloody crimes. So if we can avoid being double-tongued and speak with integrity, will there be any cause of quarrels?

(6) No hateful speech and speak kindly and gently—No hateful speech means not saying rude and hateful words to insult others or using vicious words to curse them. People generally have the fault of cursing others and even cursing other people's parents and ancestors, which is actually the worst hateful speech. As it is said

in Buddhist sutras: “Those who commit the sin of making hateful speech will get the retribution of being reborn as animals.” So if we can speak kindly and gently instead of hatefully, little by little we can become virtuous and good and be respected by others.

(7) No idle talks and speak politely—Idle talks refer to rhetorical, frivolous, impolite and insincere words that bring forth wicked thoughts in people. And teasing others or talking nonsense to have fun is also another form of idle talks. Making idle talks not just does no good to the speakers themselves but also hurts others. The retribution these people have for making idle talks is to fall down into the evil path, and even if they are reborn as humans, they will forever be in low social status. Therefore, we have to say true and serious things in proper and polite ways, and when we can do this, we are not talking idly. In conclusion, if we can avoid idle talks, we will have an upright mind and can speak properly and politely with solemnity and dignity, and will be admired and respected.

(8) No greed and give alms kindly—Not giving away one’s possessions to others is being miserly, and wanting to own other people’s possessions is being greedy. People who are miserly and greedy pursue after the five desires of wealth, sex, fame, food and drinks, and sleep<sup>25</sup> without knowing when to stop and will thus create a variety of sins and crimes. Therefore, we should avoid being miserly and greedy, neither miserly about giving away our possessions nor greedy about getting others’ possessions. Besides using the money we properly get from work to support our parents, educate our children, and spend on family expenses, we should compassionately and kindly spend money in helping the poor, the sick, the orphaned, and other sufferers or donate money to social welfare businesses. This is kind-hearted almsgiving. As it goes in

<sup>25</sup> The five desires refer to the desires for wealth, sex, fame, food and drinks, and sleep. They originate from a greedy mind that always wants to have more, and so they are also called greedy desires. But there are actually two kinds of desires: desires for dharma and worldly desires. Desires for dharma make one seek the truth of Buddha-dharma, while worldly desires lead people to indulge themselves in the pleasures of the worldly five desires. As a Buddhist, we would rather have desires for dharma than indulge ourselves in worldly desires.

Buddhist sutras: “Those who can give alms will get riches and a high social status.” But when we give alms, there should not be any greed in our mind. As what the Buddha said, “When there is more greed, there are more karmas created. Get less, and we will create fewer karmas. All things that cause afflictions will be gone when we rid ourselves of greed.” People suffer in life because of greed. And Buddhism advises people to give alms out of kindness to contain their greed.

(9) No resentment and be kind and patient to get more blisses—Resentment refers to having ire at heart and appearing angry when things go against one’s expectation. It even leads to bursts of temper and gets people killed. As the saying goes, “Fires of fury burn up the woods of merits and virtues.” No matter how many good things people have done, when they fly into a fury and fight with others, which causes a variety of misfortunes, the good things they have done and the merits and virtues they have had will be burned up to ashes. Therefore, we should remove our resentment and wrath with kindness, compassion and tolerance. This is just as the saying goes, “Having patience is important when we are insulted and bullied. If we do not face the situation patiently, we may bring disasters to ourselves. If we can bear insults and bullying acts without resentment for the time being, after that, we will know that being patient is a better solution.” In the past, in the province of Shandong in China, a man surnamed Chang got gold and blisses by patiently bearing one hundred insults or bullying acts without resentment<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, we should diligently cultivate the virtue

26 The story of getting gold for bearing one hundred insults without resentment—In Shandong, a man surnamed Chang had a family of five generations living together and his family became prosperous and rich because he had patiently endured one hundred insults. It is said that he had vowed to bear one hundred severe insults in his life. After doing that for 99 times, on the wedding day of his grandson, there came a Taoist priest who wanted to test if Chang could really have the patience to endure a serious insult by asking to spend the night in the room of the bride. This made Chang feel awkward and hesitant, but then he thought generously: “I have already endured all kinds of insult, so why can’t I endure this one for the last time?” Therefore, he persuaded his grandson to bear the insult and help him fulfill his vow of enduring one hundred severe insults. Later, the Taoist priest kept jumping about in the bride’s room, saying repeatedly, “If seeing things through, you can jump over them all.” He jumped about till dawn and suddenly fell down to the ground and died. The bride screamed in fright and when people rushed into the room, the Taoist priest had become a gold man. With the gold man, Chang became rich. This is the story of how Chang got gold for bearing one hundred serious insults. Now in Shandong there is a tall and magnificent hall, The Hall of Bearing One hundred Insults, in memory of his virtue of patiently bearing insults.

of compassion and patience so as to avoid the error of becoming resentful. If we can do this, we will be able to achieve the great goal of benefiting ourselves and others.

(10) No illusion and gain broad knowledge to become wiser— Having illusions refers to being unenlightened and ignorant, being without wisdom and not being able to understand phenomena and the underlying principle, not being able to tell right from wrong, not believing in the law of cause and effect and obstinately sticking to heterodox views, and being without right views and right belief so as to do whatever bad things they want. If we can hear more right fundamental law (Buddha-dharma) to become wiser, then we can have right views to become good people who know what is right and what is wrong. As it is said in Buddhist sutras, people should cultivate prajna wisdom to correct illusion and stay away from heterodox views so as not to be ignorant.

In summary, no killing, no stealing, and no adultery are three good karmas of the body. No lying, no double tongue, no hateful speech and no idle talks are four good karmas of the mouth. No greed, no resentment, and no illusion are three good karmas of the mind. The mind refers to the seat of thought of intelligence, which is called “the mind” when it is contaminated with illusion and afflictions.

Ananda once asked World-Honored Sakyamuni Buddha which is more important among the three karmas of the body, the mouth and the mind. The Buddha replied, “The function of the mind is the most important. The mouth is the next, and then the body.” This is because if we can purify our mind, then the action and speech of our body and mouth will be correct, and what we do will be good. There is a chant in *Agama Sutra*, “Don’t do any wicked things, do all the good things, and purify the mind. This is Buddhism.” From this chant, we know that the most important thing is to purify the mind and make it correct.

The Buddha said that the impetus of creating karmas in life originates from an individual’s mind and cognition. Therefore,



everyone can change his/her karmas by cultivating the mind. While karmas are made via the body, the mouth, and the mind, as long as we constantly make sure that we create good, instead of bad, karmas of the body, the mouth, and the mind, we can both benefit ourselves and others. On the contrary, if we create bad, rather than good, karmas of the body, the mouth, and the mind, we may create Ten Evil Deeds to harm people and society and end in being put in prison. All the karmas are created by sentient beings themselves and they have to take the consequences themselves. This is the law of cause and effect of the power of karma in Buddhism.

Master Taixu once said, “Our only example is the Buddha. Our accomplishment is shown in our character. Once our character is perfected, it’s time when we reach Buddhahood and find the Truth.” This means that the true meaning of learning Buddhism is to depend and rest upon the truth of the Buddha and cultivate the virtue of wisdom to have a wholesome character. The true dharma of Deva and Human Vehicles is to instruct sentient beings how to have a wholesome character and perfect virtues. Everyone should follow the way of karma of abiding by five precepts and ten forms of good action<sup>27</sup> to both stop doing wicked deeds and purify the mind in order to do good deeds. In this way, we may create pure land in the human world. This is the real purpose of practicing Buddhism in life, and this is the Buddhism we need in the modern times.

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<sup>27</sup> There are three classes respectively for ten forms of good action and ten forms of wicked action. Sentient beings transmigrate in the six paths based on the classes of their action: those practicing the superior class of ten forms of good action are reborn as devas; those practicing the middle class of ten forms of good action are reborn as humans; and those practicing the lower class of ten forms of good action are reborn as asuras. Those practicing the superior class of ten forms of wicked action, however, are reborn in hells; those practicing the middle class of ten forms of wicked action are reborn in the realm of hungry ghosts, and those practicing the lower class of ten forms of wicked action are reborn as animals. In this way, sentient beings in the six paths are created by their own karmas of the body, the mouth and the mind. Whatever we think and do, we should be prudent about our deeds, words, and thoughts, carefully protecting them from wickedness and diligently cultivating goodness.



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# 20.

## A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF EIGHT PRECEPTS

### **Eight Precepts**

Eight precepts are also called eight precepts and fasting. It is said in *Sutra of Accepting the Ten Good Karmas as Precepts*, “eight precepts are the law of monks and nuns that Buddha Tathagatas of the past and present have made for lay Buddhists at home.” From the statement, we know that eight precepts are convenient doctrines specially made for lay Buddhists at home to help them learn the precepts of monks and nuns according to the limit of their abilities due to the qualities and capabilities they were born with. Eight precepts consist of five precepts, the true dharma of the human vehicle, and another three precepts:

(1) The precept of no killing—According to *Sutra of Accepting the Ten Good Karmas as Precepts*, be it as respectable as a Buddha, a holy being, a master, a monk, and a parent, or as insignificant as a flying or wriggling creature like a tiny insect, as long as it is a living being, people should not kill it. The ways of killing include using a weapon like a knife, a gun, etc. themselves, using their hands or feet, asking others to kill for them, and feeling happy when seeing living creatures being killed, all of which violate the precept of no killing.

(2) The precept of no stealing—According to sila and vinaya, be it something valuable like gold and silver or a small thing like a needle or a blade of grass, people should not take it away without permission. They violate the precept of no stealing when taking away things without permission. No matter if it is stuff used by triratna in Buddhist temples or items used in a household, if people take things away by force, stealing, or scamming, they violate the precept of no stealing. Avoiding the sin and crime of stealing and

robbing is called the precept of no stealing.

(3) The precept of abstinence from unchastity—This is to completely forbid sexual intercourse, which is the same as the precept of monks and nuns and different from the precept of no adultery in five precepts. That is why it is said in *Sutra of Accepting the Ten Good Karmas as Precepts* that “eight precepts are the law of monks and nuns that Buddha Tathagatas of the past and present have made for lay Buddhists at home.” The meaning of this statement is obviously seen in the precept of abstinence from unchastity.

(4) The precept of no untrue words—This refers to forbidding lying and following the precept of four good karmas of speech (no lying, no double tongue, no hateful speech, and no idle talks) .

(5) The precept of no consumption of alcohol—This is abstinence from drinking alcohol because when getting drunk, people become unclear-headed and are likely to do foolish things like killing, stealing, having sexual intercourse, saying untrue words, etc.

(6) The precept of no wearing make-up, perfume, flower decorations, and fancy clothes and no indulging oneself in songs, dances and theatrical performances—In other words, people should not wear make-up on their faces, perfume on their bodies, and decorations like garlands and gold, and should wear one-color clothing (usually grey, but monks and nuns wear cassocks whose color is not necessarily grey) ; they should not go watching performances of songs, dances and plays (including TV shows) , or go to places for entertainment and recreations.

(7) The precept of no sleeping in tall and big beds—This refers to abstinence from the pleasure and comfort of sleeping or lying in tall and big luxurious beds.

(8) The precept of no eating food at the wrong time—When it is not meal time, people should not eat meals. In other words, people should not eat meals after noontime.

Among the eight precepts explained above, the first seven

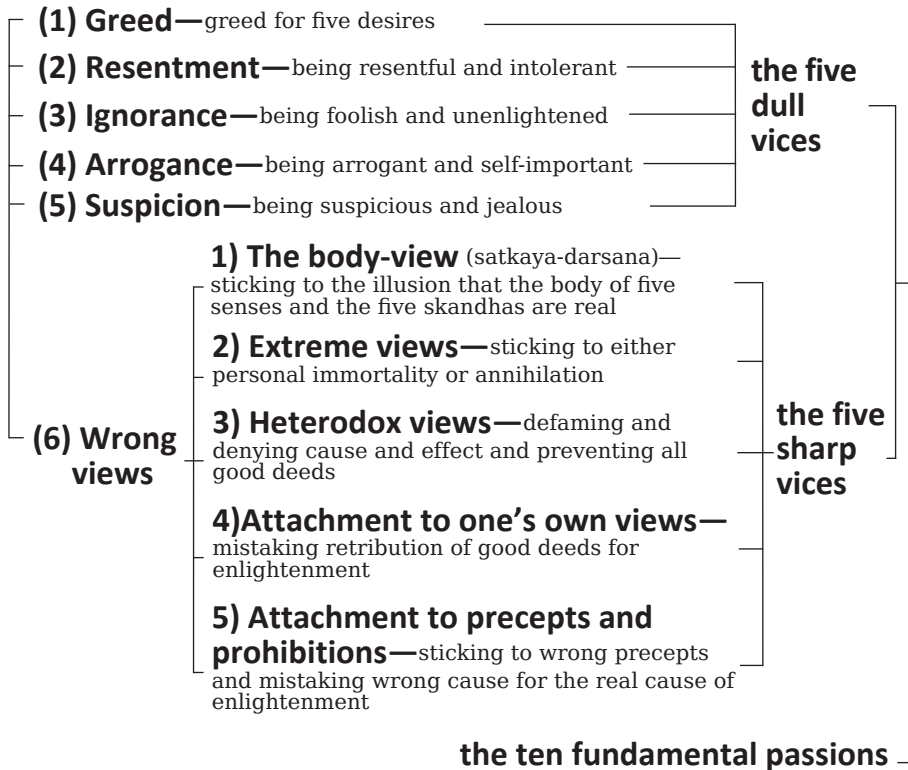
belong to sila (discipline) dharma and the last one is about fasting. Therefore, as a whole, it is called eight precepts and fasting. And the eight precepts and fasting are actually the sila dharma for laymen and laywomen practicing Buddhism at home to conveniently uphold for one day and night.

# 21.

## THE SIX PRIMARY AFFLICTIONS

Sentient beings in the sravaka vehicle reach arhathood by getting rid of the two kinds of affliction developed from view and thought<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, before the introduction of the sravaka vehicle, we should first know what six primary afflictions are.

### Six Primary Afflictions



Afflictions refer to delusions. Humans create all kinds of bad

<sup>28</sup> Greed, resentment, ignorance, arrogance, and suspicion are afflictions caused by illusion of thought. And the five wrong views are conceptual errors. When removing these two kinds of afflictions caused by views and thought, sentient beings can attain to arhatship.

karmas because of delusions and thus suffer from afflictions of all kinds. The source of sufferings is actually the six primary afflictions, which will be briefly explained as follows:

(1) Greed—It connotes excessive love, attachment, and pursuit of the five desires, stealing things, and being stingy about giving away one’s possessions or teaching others the dharma and disciplines one has learned. Out of selfishness, people may hurt others and create severe crimes. And the retribution is just as what is said in Buddhist sutras: “After these greedy people die, they become hungry ghosts and suffer the retribution of thirst and hunger.”

(2) Resentment—When things are in people’s way and are hard for them to bear, they may become so resentful or furious as to hurt others. Or when people feel hungry, thirsty, cold or hot, they may lose their patience and become resentful. As it is said in *Avatamsaka Sutra*, “Once there is resentment in the mind, the door to millions of obstacles will be opened.” The afflictions and damage caused by resentment are that after one dies, he/she will receive the retribution of being reborn in hells and becoming ugly.

(3) Ignorance—It means being foolish, deluded, and ignorant. When this happens, people shut down their wisdom and cannot tell right from wrong, maintaining that there is no law of cause and effect and having a variety of heterodox views instead, which is why this condition is called ignorance. Due to ignorance, people become greedy and want to get things that do not belong to them. And when they cannot get what they want, they become resentful. Thus, ignorance is actually the fundamental root of the three poisons (greed, resentment, and ignorance) , which can cause people to commit cruel and unforgivable crimes, and, after they die, make them be reborn in the animal path to be driven about and killed by humans.

(4) Arrogance—It means being proud and self-important, thinking of oneself as better than anyone else, and despising others. No matter if others are inferior, superior, or equal to them, these

people treat them with a contemptuous and arrogant attitude, which brings forth their affliction of not being able to get along with others.

(5) Suspicion—It means being doubtful and unable to believe. These people doubt about the truth of Buddhism, the power of good and bad karmas, and all the things and laws in the world. They cannot faithfully believe in the truth and thus shut the door to goodness, bringing forth heterodox views and creating bad karmas of all kinds.

The five afflictions of greed, resentment, ignorance, arrogance, and suspicion mentioned above are caused and cannot be removed due to the defilement and illusion of the mind. They are called the illusion of thought, or the delusions and mistakes of thought. Their essence is dull and is hard to subdue, especially because it is not easy to get rid of the illusion arising from primal ignorance. And for this quality, they are called the five dull vices.

(6) Wrong views—They are views caused by wrong thinking. And there are five wrong views as follows:

1) Satkaya-darsana—In Chinese, it is translated into “the body-view,” or “the self-view,” for this view wrongly sticks to the illusion that there is a real self in the body. But in fact, the body is a product of the five skandhas (matter, sensation, recognition, volition, and consciousness) and Four Great Elements (earth, water, fire, and wind, of which all things in the world are made) , temporarily produced by the gathering of causes and conditions. In essence, it is something impermanent and deteriorating. But people ignorantly stick to the view that there is a true self that dominates and exists in wholeness, permanence and universality. This view is Satkaya-darsana.

2) Extreme views—also called views of attachment to extremes. Here, the word “extremes” connotes being inferior or incomplete. In other words, it means that the knowledge and views one has got are inferior and incomplete, for they stick to the extreme views of either personal immortality or annihilation. Those with extreme

knowledge and views of personal immortality maintain that personal immortality is forever unchanging and after humans die, they will still be reborn as humans. And to them, animals will always be reborn as animals, poor people will always be reborn poor, and rich and noble people will always be reborn rich and noble. On the other hand, those with extreme knowledge and views of annihilation maintain that after people die, they will be forever gone and that there are no such things as birth and death and transmigration in the six paths of existence. So, since there is no good and bad or cause and effect, why fear doing evil?

3) Heterodox views—They are caused by wrong knowledge and views. Those with heterodox views do not believe in the correct doctrine of the Buddha, thinking that there is no cause and effect, defaming holy beings and sages, and spoiling all good deeds.

4) Attachment to one's own views—The views here refer to the self-view, extreme views, and heterodox views. Attachment means being attached to and unwilling to forgo these three kinds of wrong views, thinking them to be the truth. Therefore, attachment to one's own views is also called “the view of mistaking retribution of good deeds for enlightenment,” for those with this attachment to their own views falsely stick to the illusion that they have obtained the holy fruits while in fact they have not yet witnessed the various stages of attainment.

5) Attachment to precepts and prohibitions—Precepts refer to no killing, no stealing, no adultery, etc. Prohibitions mean prohibiting the habits of drinking, gambling, drug-taking, etc. Taking precepts and following prohibitions is a good thing, and why is that it becomes a wrong view? The mistake is in attachment. Those with this view are stubbornly attached to their precepts and prohibitions, thinking that they are the most excellent and rare ones. For example, in India, there are heretics who take “ox-precepts” or “dog-precepts” and thus eat grass or feces. They practice all kinds of austerities to attain liberation: jumping from high rocks, jumping into waters, being burned by fires, lying on briars, etc. Practicing



all these austerities is in fact not the real cause of attaining to enlightenment. But these people stick to the view that the cause of practicing these austerities brings forth the effect of attaining the supreme wonderful fruit of nirvana. Therefore, this view is also called “the view of mistaking wrong cause for the real cause of enlightenment.”

The five wrong views explained above are illusions of views, and so they are called “conceptually arisen afflictions,” which are brought forth by following heretical teachers, heretical views, and heretical thinking. However, if people hear the correct doctrine of the Buddha, they can instantly abandon their bad views. Due to the fact that it is easy to get rid of bad views, the five wrong views are called the five sharp vices. As it is said in Buddhist sutras, Sariputra had been the disciple of a heretic before he met Asvajit (Horse-breaker) Bhiksu and heard the Buddhist doctrine of causes and conditions<sup>29</sup>. Sariputra immediately gave up his erroneous views and converted to the right views. After personally listening to the Buddha’s speaking dharma for seven days, he knew Buddha-dharma thoroughly and attained to the third of the four fruits of arhatship. And after fifteen more days of practicing the Buddha’s teachings, he removed the ten afflictions and reached the state of full attainment of arhatship. The ten afflictions are greed, resentment, ignorance, arrogance, suspicions, and the five wrong views. They are also called ten messengers, or ten deluders, meaning that they are the ten messengers to make sentient beings be deluded and suffer in the bitter sea of birth and death without ever being able to leave it. The ten deluders bring forth afflictions caused by views and deliberation, and thus they are the fundamental source of afflictions and the cause of suffering from repeatedly passing through birth and death.

<sup>29</sup> Sariputra heard Asvajit said: “All things arise from causes and conditions and also cease to exist due to causes and conditions. My master, the great sramana, often says so.”

# 22.

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE SRAVAKA VEHICLE

When the Buddha spoke the law of the Four Truths at Sarnath, Ajanata Kaundinya and four others reached enlightenment after hearing the Buddha's lectures on it. The Five Bhikshus actually became enlightened by hearing the voice of the Buddha speaking the dharma, so they are also called sravakas, or hearers. And those who have awakened to the truth by practicing the doctrine of the Four Truths are thus called the Sravaka Vehicle as a whole. The word "vehicle" refers to a means of carrying people, and here it is a means, or doctrines, of carrying sentient beings from this shore of afflictions to the other shore of enlightenment. Therefore, a vehicle is a comparison of the doctrines of the Buddha—here it specifically refers to the essence of the Four Noble Truths, by hearing which sentient beings can be carried to the other shore of enlightenment.

The stages of attainment for the sravaka vehicle—There are four stages of attainment for those practicing the Four Truths and becoming enlightened:

(1) The initial fruit<sup>30</sup> — Srota-apanna (preparing to enter the stream of holy living)

(2) The second fruit<sup>31</sup> — Sakradagamin (coming to be born once more)

(3) The third fruit<sup>32</sup> — Anagamin (not being reborn in the world again)

(4) The fourth fruit<sup>33</sup> — Arhat (permanently eliminated)

30 This is the first stage of the arhat, called Srota-apanna in Sanskrit and translated into 預流 in Chinese, meaning preparing to enter the stream of holy living..

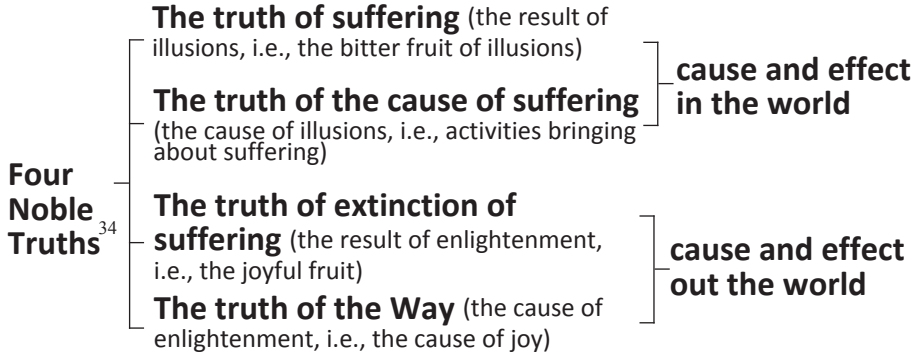
31 The second fruit of arhatship is called Sakradagamin in Sanskrit and translated into 一來 in Chinese, meaning having reached this stage of arhatship; after death one will be reborn as a deva for one lifetime, then be reborn in this world one more time, and, after that, no longer come to the Desire Realm to suffer birth and death.

32 The third fruit of arhatship is called Anagamin in Sanskrit and translated into 無還 in Chinese, meaning that having reached this stage of arhatship, one will not come back again to the world to suffer birth and death.

33 Arhat is the fourth and highest stage of the Sravaka Vehicle. In Sanskrit, the word "Arhat" has three meanings:

# 23.

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS



After the Buddha attained the Way, he first turned the wheel of dharma<sup>35</sup> at Sarnath<sup>36</sup> in Benares, speaking the doctrine of the Four

(1) foe-destroyer—having destroyed all foes causing afflictions

(2) cease of all defilements—having being liberated from life and death and no longer suffering from afflictions

(3) one who deserves offerings—being worthy of respectful offerings of devas and humans.

34 In the law of the four truths, the truth of suffering and the truth of the cause of suffering are the cause and effect of illusions in the world; the truth of the extinction of suffering and the truth of the Way are the cause and effect of attaining enlightenment out of the world. While the truth of suffering explicates the bitter fruit of illusions, the truth of the cause of suffering focuses on elaborating on illusions like greed, resentment, ignorance, etc. as the causes of illusions. And while the truth of the extinction of suffering explicates attaining the fruit of nirvana, the truth of the Way is about the right causes of cultivating the Way.

35 The Buddha's expounding the doctrine is called turning the wheel of dharma. The wheel here has two meanings: (1) Just like the wheel of a mill that grinds rice grains and separates the chaff from them, Buddha-dharma can destroy the five fundamental conditions of passions and delusions. (2) Just like the wheels of a vehicle, which can help people travel to their destinations, Buddha-dharma can help people reach the four transcendental realities in nirvana, eternity, bliss, personality, and purity. "Turning" means sentient beings can change and turn from illusions to enlightenment, from defilement to purity, and from being ordinary to being holy. From the first definition, sentient beings use the wheel of dharma to destroy the five fundamental conditions of passions and delusions: (1) afflictions caused by views in the Three Realms, (2) afflictions caused by deliberation in the Desire Realm, (3) afflictions caused by deliberation in the Realm of Form, (4) afflictions caused by deliberation in the Realm of Formlessness, and (5) afflictions caused by illusions. From the second definition, just like vehicles can carry people to their destinations, hearing Buddha-dharma can help sentient beings reach the shore of the four transcendental realities of nirvana.

36 The Buddha's initial turning the wheel of dharma at Sarnath to ferry over the Five Bhiksus was the first time when there was a Sangha in Buddhism, and the first time when Buddhism had the complete Triratna, the Three Precious Ones. (The first complete Triratna were as follows: Buddha referred to Sakyamuni Buddha; Dharma referred to the law of the four truths; and Sangha referred to the Five Bhiksus.)

Noble Truths for Ajanata Kaundinya and four others<sup>37</sup>. Here, the word “noble” means “right.” The Four Noble Truths are the four right truths of life that the holy beings have witnessed and attested to: the cause and effect of suffering and that of extinction of suffering.

(1) The truth of suffering—It is the truth that explicates all sufferings in life. Besides the unescapable sufferings that no sentient being can avoid: birth, old age, sickness, and death, there are sufferings caused by separating from the loved ones, meeting with the loathed ones, being unable to get what one strongly desires, and the flourishing of the Five Skandhas<sup>38</sup>, all of which are the bitter fruits of karma.

(2) The truth of the cause of suffering—It explicates how sentient beings accumulate all causes of afflictions: greed, resentment, ignorance, etc. to create bad karmas and thus incur all kinds of physical and mental sufferings. So, the cause of suffering is accumulation of causes of afflictions.

(3) The truth of extinction of suffering—It refers to the holy fruit, i.e., Bodhi, that sentient beings have reached after cultivating the Way. It is the truth of extinction of all afflictions to obtain liberation from birth and death.

(4) The truth of the Way—“The Way” refers to the right ways of the three studies of discipline, meditation, and wisdom. There are many right ways, but here the Way mainly refers to cultivating Eightfold Noble Path to gain prajna, the supreme wisdom, and liberation from the suffering of birth and death through constantly cultivating goodness and removing wickedness.

Accumulation of causes of afflictions is the source of suffering. The truth of suffering and the truth of the cause of suffering are the cause and effect of transmigrating again and again in the world. When we know the truth of suffering, we will avoid the accumulation of the causes of suffering to escape from pain. This is

37 In Bali, the names of the Five Bhiksus are Kondanna, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanama, Assaji.

38 The suffering of the flourishing of the Five Skandhas—the desires of the body and the mind are like fires burning and that is why it causes suffering.

the contemplation and accordant action of sravakas, who abhor the world and leave it.

Extinction of suffering is the result of cultivating the Way. These two truths are cause and effect of leaving the world. In order to attain to extinction of suffering, sentient beings cultivate the Way and by constantly cultivating the Way, sentient beings testify to extinction of suffering. This is the deed and result of sravakas, who cultivate the Way to attain to nirvana.

Sravakas attain to the fruit of nirvana by removing the accumulation of two kinds of afflictions developed from view and deliberation, which include ten deluders: 1) greed, 2) resentment, 3) ignorance, 4) arrogance, 5) suspicion, 6) the body-view, 7) extreme views, 8) heterodox views, 9) attachment to one's own views, and 10) attachment to precepts and prohibitions. In order to remove the ten deluders, sentient beings have to practice the three studies of discipline, meditation, and wisdom to destroy the attachment to the notion of an enduring and inherent self, testify to the reality nature that humans are composed of elements and are disintegrated when these are dissolved, and eventually liberate themselves from birth and death.

At that time, the Buddha gave three turnings of the law-wheel of Four Noble Truths<sup>39</sup> to enlighten Ajanata Kaundinya and four others to make them awaken to the truth. The following paragraph is a description of the three turnings of the law-wheel of Four Noble Truths.

There are three turnings of the law-wheel for each of Four Noble Truths. For the truth of suffering, which is about the suffering resulting from evil conduct, the three turnings are: 1) the first turning, which was for demonstration—indicating the phenomena and pressing force of suffering, 2) the second turning, which was for advice—pointing out that the Five Bhiksus should know what suffering is and advising cultivation, 3) the third

<sup>39</sup> The Buddha first turned the wheel of dharma to speak Four Noble Truths by giving each Truth three turnings of the law-wheel, amounting to twelve operations altogether. In Buddhist history, this speaking of dharma by the Buddha is called *The Sutra of Turning the Wheel of Dharma*.

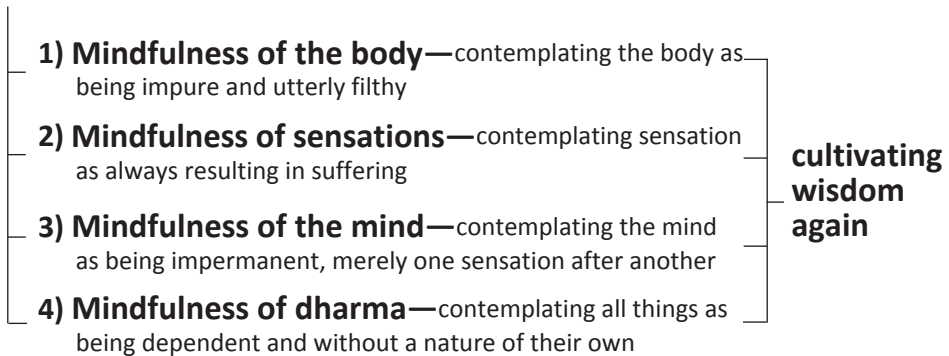
turning, which was for proof—testifying to the Buddha’s having already known what suffering is. For the truth of the cause of suffering, the three turnings are: 1) the first turning, which was for demonstration—indicating the accumulation of suffering and why the cause can incur suffering, 2) the second turning, which was for advice—pointing out what the accumulation of suffering is and advising that the Five Bhiksus should stop the accumulation, 3) the third turning, which was for proof—pointing out what the accumulation of suffering is and testifying to the Buddha’s having already got rid of the accumulation. For the truth of extinction of suffering, which brings about the fruit of joy, the three turnings are: 1) the first turning, which was for demonstration—indicating what extinction of suffering is and that the state of extinction of suffering can be proved, 2) the second turning, which was for advice—pointing out what extinction of suffering is and advising that the Five Bhiksus should testify to it, 3) the third turning, which was for proof—pointing out what extinction of suffering is and that the Buddha had already testified to it. For the truth of the Way, which is the cause of joy, the three turnings are: 1) the first turning, which was for demonstration— indicating what the Way is and that it can be cultivated, 2) the second turning, which was for advice—pointing out what the Way is and advising that the Five Bhiksus should cultivate the Way, 3) the third turning, which was for proof—pointing out what the Way is and that the Buddha had already cultivated it. The three turnings of the Four Noble Truths are also called the three turnings and twelve operations of the wheel of dharma.

# 24.

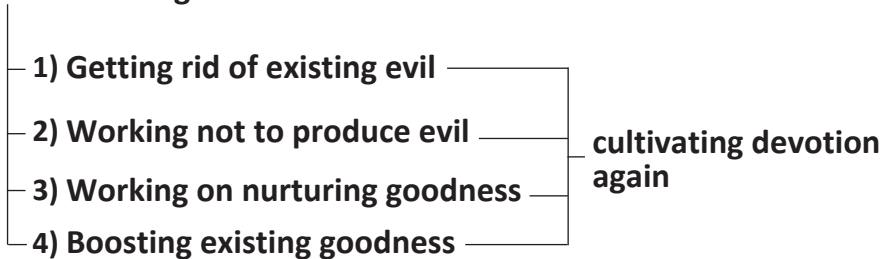
## A DIAGRAM OF THE THIRTY-SEVEN CONDITIONS LEADING TO BUDDHAHOOD

From the truth of the Way of the Four Truths, the Buddha unveiled thirty-seven doctrines, which are divided into seven branches and are also called the thirty-seven conditions leading to Bodhi.

### (1) Four Foundations of Mindfulness<sup>40</sup>



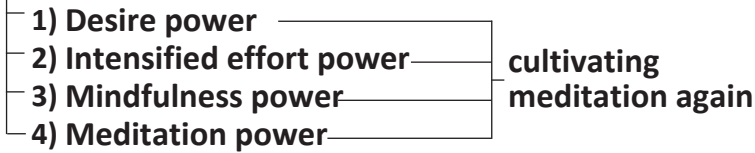
### (2) The Four Right Efforts<sup>41</sup>



40 The essence of the four contemplation methods of Four Foundations of Mindfulness is wisdom. With the power of wisdom contemplation, one constantly focuses the mind on the Way to make it right rather than become wicked.

41 The four right efforts are four methods for one to diligently cultivate himself/herself so as to discipline the body, the mouth, and the mind to make them both get rid of evil and nurture goodness. So they are the most rare and extraordinary and are thus also called the four right excellences. At this stage, one's power of wisdom has increased, while the power of meditation is still weak.

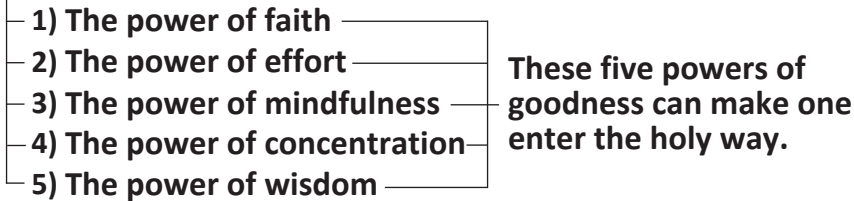
**(3) The Four Bases of Supernatural Power<sup>42</sup>**



**(4) The Five Roots of Goodness Power<sup>43</sup>**



**(5) The Five Powers of Goodness Power<sup>44 45</sup>**



42 The four bases of supernatural power” refer to the four powers of mind control which enables one to link and balance meditation and wisdom, become full of supernatural powers, and fulfill all wishes. Desire power is the power of wishing and envying the joy of obtaining the fruit of cultivating the Way; intensified effort power is the power of uninterrupted diligence; mindfulness power is the power of single-mindedly concentrating on Right Remembrance; and meditation power is the power of the state of dhyana.

43 The five roots of goodness are: (1) the root of faith, having faith-endurance in and desire for pleasure of the correct dogma and fundamental law of all things; (2) the root of effort, believing in all good dharmas and ruling principles and continuously cultivating them vigorously; (3) the root of mindfulness, always keeping in mind the right ways and the correct doctrine of the Buddha; (4) the root of concentration, concentrating the attention on the right ways and ever corresponding to them; (5) the root of wisdom, illuminating wisdom with contemplation, knowing precisely what to choose, and reflecting on the truth.

44 The five powers are: (1) the power of faith, being capable of destroying the obstacles of doubts with ever increasing faculty of faith; (2) the power of effort, being capable of destroying slackness with ever increasing faculty of effort; (3) the power of mindfulness, being capable of destroying drowsiness and forgetfulness with ever increasing faculty of mindfulness; (4) the power of concentration, being capable of destroying distractions with ever increasing faculty of concentration; (5) the power of wisdom, being capable of destroying illusions with ever increasing faculty of wisdom. Both the five roots, or faculties, of goodness and the five powers begin with faith and end in wisdom, which shows that faith is mainly based on wisdom.

45 The difference between the five roots and the five powers of goodness is in degrees of intensity. For example, when the root of faith increases to the point of destroying heterodox beliefs, it becomes the power of faith. Therefore, the five roots of goodness are the bases of creating the holy way, while the five powers of goodness are the major impetus to boost the holy way. As it is said in Buddhist sutras, “They are called roots because they can generate all goodness. And as they can destroy all wickedness, they are called powers.”



**(6) Seven Characteristics of Bodhi<sup>46 47</sup>**

- 1) correctly evaluating the teaching
- 2) undeflected progress
- 3) rejoicing in the truth
- 4) riddance of all grossness or weight of body and mind
- 5) power of remembering the various states passed through in contemplation
- 6) concentration
- 7) detachment of all thoughts from external things

**An ordinary being can turn from the state of being deluded to that of enlightenment, from being unenlightened to becoming enlightened by cultivating these seven characteristics of Bodhi.**

46 The following is an explanation of what seven characteristics of Bodhi are:  
(1) Correctly evaluating the teaching—evaluating the truth or falsity of the teaching by using wisdom  
(2) Undeflected progress—forcefully practicing true dharma with boldness and courage  
(3) Rejoicing in the truth—rejoicing over getting fine means  
(4) Riddance of all grossness or weight of body and mind—having got rid of the grossness and afflictions of body and mind and thus obtained the light and blissful bodily feeling  
(5) power of remembering the various states passed through in contemplation—distinctly remembering meditation and wisdom and equally cultivating the two things  
(6) concentration—concentrating the mind on one thing and not being disturbed  
(7) detachment of all thoughts from external things—getting rid of all delusions and illusions and advancing further

47 Another name for “Seven Characteristics of Bodhi” is “Seven Categories of Awakening.” Among the thirty-seven conditions leading to Buddhahood, they are the only ones referred to as “awakening” or “Bodhi.” This is exactly because practitioners have not been awakened when they practice from four mindfulnesses up to the five roots and the five powers of goodness and when they practice the noble eightfold path, they have already been awakened. Only when they are practicing the seven characteristics of Bodhi are they at the stage of turning from being deluded to being enlightened, from not having been awakened to being awakened. And that is why they are the only ones with the name “awakening.”

## (7) The Eightfold Noble Path<sup>48</sup>

- 1) **Right View**—seeing Four Noble Truths, knowing the truth of the universe and life, and going in the right way.
- 2) **Right Thought**—reflecting on Four Noble Truths, removing all desires for wickedness, and generating right desires.
- 3) **Right Speech**—constantly keeping the precept of good speech and speaking words of kindness and truth
- 4) **Right Action**—constantly keeping the precept of good action and working diligently in a right profession
- 5) **Right Livelihood**—supporting one’s livelihood with a right occupation and avoiding immoral occupations in order not to smear the purity and holiness of one’s life
- 6) **Right Effort**—single-mindedly working toward goodness without a stop
- 7) **Right Mindfulness**—being mindful of the noble path and diligently working on keeping the precept of good action so as not to have wrong thinking and behavior
- 8) **Right Concentration**—pure and clean in body and mind in uncontaminated concentration<sup>49 50</sup>

48 The first way of the Eightfold Noble Path is right view. In other words, right view is the most important one among the eight ways. This is because only with right view can we have the right understanding of reality and get rid of the illusory and mistaken secular knowledge and opinions to become enlightened by the truth.

49 contaminated—having afflictions, also called creative, the processes resulting from the laws of karma

50 uncontaminated—pure and clean without afflictions, also called unconditioned, the processes not arisen on the basis of causes and conditions.



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# 25.

## A GENERAL EXPLANATION OF FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

At the time when Sakyamuni Buddha was about to enter into nirvana, he told Ananda and all the other disciples, “After I enter into nirvana, you and the other bhiksus should abide by Four Foundations of Mindfulness.” In the vast sea of Buddha-dharma, why did the Buddha single out abiding by Four Foundations of Mindfulness? This is because sentient beings have four kinds of upside-down delusive views: (1) relying on the body and sticking to purity, (2) relying on sensation and sticking to joy, (3) relying on the mind and sticking to permanence, (4) relying on dharma and sticking to the concept of an enduring and inherent ego. If we don’t remove the four upside-down delusive views, we will just go with the tide and have endless afflictions. Therefore, the first grades in the thirty-seven conditions leading to Buddhahood<sup>51</sup> are Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which respond to and correct the four upside-down delusive views. What are Four Foundations of Mindfulness? The following is a brief description:

(1) Mindfulness of the body—contemplating the body as being impure and utterly filthy: this is to exert the power of wisdom obtained through the meditation on the uncleanness of the human body of self and others to correct the upside-down delusive view of relying on the body and sticking to purity. Just think about whether our bodies are clean or not. No matter what fancy clothes you are dressed in, when your whole body is sweating and you can smell

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<sup>51</sup> In the thirty-seven conditions leading to Buddhahood, four foundations of mindfulness are the keys to getting out of the suffering of birth and death. Keeping precepts and having intent contemplation in a state of being without greed and desires are the four right efforts and the four bases of supernatural power. Developing true uncontaminated wisdom through intent contemplation is what the five roots of goodness, the five powers of goodness, and the seven characteristics of Bodhi are about. And completely cultivating discipline, meditation and wisdom on the basis of undefiled wisdom is what the Eightfold Noble Path is about.

its stink, you will feel embarrassed, not to mention the unclean saliva, snot, urine and feces. After one dies, people are afraid to see the dead body, which first gets decayed and covered with maggots wriggling through sinews and gnawing bones and in the end becomes a pile of white bones. This body is actually unclean. And if we can contemplate on the uncleanness and impurity of the body, our afflictions caused by lust and desires for beautiful physical appearances will be removed and we may abide by the way to obtain nirvana.

(2) Mindfulness of sensations—contemplating sensation as always resulting in suffering: this is to exert the power of wisdom obtained through looking into suffering to correct the upside-down delusive view of relying on sensation and sticking to joy. Sensation means feeling, i.e., our impressions on experiencing the outside world. When we make contact with an object perceived by the sensory and perceptive organs, no matter we feel bitter, joyful, or indifferent, judging from the truth of impermanence, while a bitter sensation causes suffering, a joyful sensation also unavoidably results in suffering, for after joy there must come sorrow. An indifferent sensation means a feeling that is neither suffering nor joy. However, as sentient beings experience both the constantly changing four forms of arising, abiding, changing and extinction of all existences in the outside world and the ever flowing thoughts and remembrances inside the mind, indifferent sensations also bring about suffering (i.e., the suffering induced by the changes that occur in conditioned existence) . Therefore, life is bitter; the world is full of suffering; and suffering actually results from sensation. When we know this truth, we will not indulge ourselves in desires and pleasures, and then we will no longer be moved by our feelings and sensations. In this way, the mistaken view of relying on sensation and sticking to joy cannot exist anymore.

(3) Mindfulness of the mind—contemplating the mind as being impermanent, just one sensation after another: this is to exert the power of wisdom obtained through contemplating the mind as

being impermanent to correct the upside-down delusive view of relying on the mind and sticking to permanence. Although the mind is the essence of life and the core of sentient beings, it is not something fixed and independent, and it actually comes into being due to the union of causes and conditions. The world of the mind and physical things unified by causes and conditions is that of Five Skandhas, or Five Aggregates (matter, sensation, recognition, volition, and consciousness) . The world of the body and the mind made up of Five Skandhas is impermanent and is doomed to ruin and destruction. In fact, our minds are but the evolutions of the causal and conditional relationships of mentality and thinking and actually don't possess any real essence to be grasped. The phenomena of the mind are constantly arising and becoming extinct in every thought-moment and can never ever abide in any single moment. So how can we rely on it as something permanent? The power of wisdom obtained through contemplating the impermanence of the mind can help the remembrance of the mind stay away from the mistake of having the delusive view of sticking to permanence.

(4) Mindfulness of dharma—contemplating all things as being dependent and without a nature of their own: this is to exert the power of wisdom obtained through contemplating all things as being dependent and without a nature of their own to correct the upside-down delusive view of relying on dharma and sticking to the concept of an enduring and inherent ego. All things in the universe are dependent on one another based on causes and conditions. A physical body is a combination of Five Skandhas and Four Great Elements (earth, water, fire, and wind) and once the four great elements become discordant and the five skandhas disperse, life will come to an end. The Buddha said that the ego made up of Five Skandhas is an empirical and unreal ego and that we should not stick to it as a real and nirvana ego. However, as sentient beings are ignorant, they delusively stick to the concept of an enduring and inherent ego in dharma, which is in fact without a

real ego. This kind of delusive obsession is called “self-view,” and it generates a variety of obsessions and afflictions and stops people from accepting true dharma. Therefore, if we want to settle our minds on the methods to obtain nirvana, we should exert the power of wisdom obtained through contemplating all things as being dependent and without a nature of their own so that we can get rid of the mistake of relying on dharma and sticking to the concept of an enduring and inherent ego.

When we practice Four Foundations of Mindfulness, if we contemplate the four domains separately, it is called separate contemplation. And if we contemplate the rest three domains as well each time we contemplate anyone of the four domains, it is called “holistic contemplation.” For example, when we contemplate all things as being dependent and without a nature of their own, at the same time we also contemplate the body as being impure and utterly filthy, that life is bitter and impermanent, and that there is not an enduring and inherent nature in the body, sensation, and the mind. When we contemplate the body as being impure and utterly filthy, at the same time we also contemplate that this body results in suffering, and is impermanent and without an enduring and inherent ego and that sensation, the mind and dharma are all impure, etc.

Four foundations of mindfulness are also called four stations of mindfulness. And the highlight of cultivating them is wisdom, which creates power for practitioners to exert and is the basis of Four Foundations of Mindfulness. By making use of these four kinds of contemplation on the body, sensation, the mind, and dharma, practitioners can steadily abide by the way of right remembrance to obtain nirvana. Therefore, when practitioners are at the stage of cultivating Four Foundations of Mindfulness, they are already going in the right direction of obtaining real wisdom. And after that, with further enhancement of the causes and conditions, there will be more power of wisdom for them to cultivate the more advanced grades of conditions leading to

Buddhahood. In this manner, step by step, eventually, they will be on the way to Eightfold Noble Path.



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# 26.

## PUTTING THE EIGHTFOLD NOBLE PATH INTO PRACTICE

Generally speaking, Mahayana emphasizes prajna, while Hinayana stresses on right view. This is because practitioners of Mahayana can abide by prajna to obtain liberation, while those of Hinayana can practice based on right view to do the same thing. Starting from right view, practitioners of Hinayana have to eventually cultivate the final grade of the thirty-seven conditions leading to Buddhahood—the Eightfold Noble path. The most important way of the Eightfold Noble Path is right view for it is the key to practicing in the right ways. With it, practitioners can avoid blind cultivation and arriving nowhere in the end.

Actually, not just practitioners of Hinayana cultivate the Eightfold Noble Path. There are two aspects of the Eightfold Noble Path: people who carry out the secular Eightfold Noble Path can become good and gentle people, and those carry out the supra-mundane Eightfold Noble Path will eventually obtain liberation of life, i.e., arhathood, the highest stage of attainment in Hinayana.

The first way of the Eightfold Noble Path is right view, that is, the right insight based on knowledge of the truth of the universe and life by hearing Four Noble Truths, which teach the truths of the universe and life: suffering, voidness, and impermanence without any law to exist independently or forever unchangingly. For this right view, practitioners know that in this short life, they must keep their purity and goodness, never indulged in desires and enslaved by material things and never contaminated by wickedness and going with the tide, and that they must quickly change their deflected and obsessed thoughts to go on the way of right view. As it is said in *A Survey of Buddhism* by Master In-shuen, “To have



right view, the first thing is the wisdom obtained through hearing. In other words, by hearing true dharma, practitioners get the right interpretation of and deep faith in the truth of causality, phenomena and principles, the Four Truths, and the three seals of dharma so that they can understand Buddha-dharma and use it to discern reality on their own.” From the statement above we know that right view is obtained through hearing more Buddha-dharma, applying the truth of Buddha-dharma to tell evil and good, and believing in the law of cause and effect of goodness and wickedness and in the law of retributions of karmas in the past, present and future life, etc. Without any exception, all Buddhists have to cultivate wisdom and get rid of wickedness with their own efforts in order to have the right insight. This is the basis of enhancing virtues and cultivating goodness.

The second way of the Eightfold Noble Truth is right thought, or right desire or right aspiration. Right thought changes right view into ideals. As the saying goes, “Think twice before you leap,” it actually takes deep and thorough thinking for one to put ideals into practice. But why is right thought also called “right desire”? This is because there are two kinds of desires: good and no-good desires. No-good desires refer to selfish desires that are contaminated with afflictions of greed, resentment, ignorance, arrogance, suspicion and wrong views. And good desires, or right desires, are unselfish desires without being contaminated by the six primary afflictions. In other words, right desires are ideals with right and proper desires that all ordinary people should have so that they may work toward their goals. Only when people are able to think correctly at the beginning, plan meticulously, and make a determination can they put their ideals into practice and reach their goals. And the reason why right thought is also called right aspiration is well explained by the following statement in a sutra: “Right aspiration means to tell differences, make determinations independently, understand, make judgement, and set up goals.” Therefore, what we call right thought, right desire or right aspiration refers to the same thing—

the pure and correct thought. All that embodies right thought will not create bad karmas of the body, the mouth, and the mind and can make one avoid the bondage of afflictions.

The third way of the Eightfold Noble Path is right speech, i.e., decent talks. As speech comes out from the mind, it is actually the outer reflection of our inner life. If the mind is wicked, then lying, double tongue, hateful speech, and idle talks will come out of one's mouth to hurt like swords stabbing into people's hearts, embarrassing others, or bringing about trouble and disaster. To put right speech into practice, we should take precepts to get rid of the four evil karmas created by the mouth and speak sincerely, purely and politely and say reasonable and proper things.

The fourth way of the Eightfold Noble Path is right action. This is to keep the three conditions of the body, the mouth, and the mind clean and pure by staying away from all wickedness and illusions: killing, adultery, stealing, etc., and by cutting off no-good desires and living cleanly and purely.

The fifth way of the Eightfold Noble Path is right livelihood. This is to have a decent job or business to earn a living so as to keep a holy and pure life. One mustn't do an immoral job or get profits against the law to contaminate his/her life. In other words, one should have a proper way to make a living.

The sixth way of the Eightfold Noble Path is right effort. This is the great vigor and energy to get one to leave wickedness and move toward goodness. When cultivating any way of the Eightfold Noble Path, it takes effort. Without effort, it is just like rowing a boat upstream; the boat will drift downstream instead if the rowers do not make effort. Therefore, we should make the persevering and greatest effort to advance forward to stop all bad deeds and cultivate all good deeds.

The seventh way of the Eightfold Noble Path is right mindfulness. This refers to not having wicked remembrances emerging in the mind and being always mindful of the Way. As it is said in *The Sutra on the Buddha's Bequeathed Teachings*, "If

the power of mindfulness is strong, we will not be harmed though trapped by the bandits of five desires. It is just like not feeling fearful for having worn armors in a battle.” In other words, only with solid right mindfulness can we resist the temptations of desires for material things in the outside world and not be contaminated in an environment unclean and unclear with five desires. Thus right mindfulness has to be kept and cultivated with great vigor and energy so that there won’t be wicked remembrances emerging in the mind.

The eighth way of the Eightfold Noble Path is right concentration. This refers to reaching uncontaminated intent contemplation single-mindedly and without getting distracted by exterior things so as to obtain freedom and omnipotence. Thus, Hinayana practitioners take the precepts of concentrating the mind to first generate intent contemplation from their precepts-taking, then bring forth wisdom from their intent contemplation, and finally reach the stage of attainment of an arhat. To reach the goal, they have to make a great effort on right concentration, the last way of the Eightfold Noble Path.

The Eightfold Noble Path, which the Buddha elucidated for us to put into practice, has already included the step-by-step cultivation of the three studies of discipline, meditation and wisdom. For instance, right speech, right action, and right livelihood are the study of discipline; right mindfulness and right concentration are the study of meditation; and right view and right thought are the study of wisdom. And the three studies of discipline, meditation and wisdom are accomplished under the supervision and the spur of right effort. The Eightfold Noble Path is the Way in which holy beings obtain liberation from suffering. So, to obtain liberation from suffering, practitioners must also follow the Eightfold Noble Path and make great efforts to put it into practice. If Buddhists at home can cultivate the Eightfold Noble Path, they will purify not just themselves but also the society and make people act out the Way so as to have a good, peaceful and blessed life and society.

# 27.

## A SIMPLE INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE SKANDHAS

Practitioners of the pratyekabuddha vehicle begin their cultivation on the basis of the fundamental law of Twelve Nidanas (the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination) , which is the nature of the Void. Therefore, before we learn about the pratyekabuddha vehicle, we have to know the unreal nature of the fundamental law of Five Skandhas, i.e., the truth of the void nature of Four Great Elements and the non-existence of Six Fields of Senses, as are often spoken in sutras.

### **(1) Five Skandhas<sup>52</sup>**

Five Skandhas are matter, sensation, recognition, volition, and consciousness. “Skandha” means “aggregate.” Five Skandhas are also called Five Obstacles, for they obstruct the real original nature of all dharmas and cause all kinds of afflictions. Below is an explanation of the meanings of Five Skandhas:

1) Matter—this refers to material things, which are made up of the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind.

2) Sensation—this means feeling when encountering something. It includes three states: painful sensation, pleasurable sensation, and sensation of freedom from both. Besides these three states, there are sorrowful sensation and joyful sensation and together they make up five states of sensation.

3) Recognition—this refers to holding to the illusions of life as realities to form ideas, sticking to all kinds of illusions and ideas in various states of goodness, wickedness, love and hate.

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<sup>52</sup> The Skandha of that which has a form in the Five Skandhas is about materials and is also called material dharma. The other four Skandhas of sensation, recognition, volition, and consciousness belong to spirituality and are called mental dharmas.

4) Volition—this refers to taking all kinds of actions because of the endless flowing of thoughts and remembrances. In other words, it means creating good and bad karmas by taking actions.

5) Consciousness—this means discerning the conditions one is in and is faced with through the mind and cognition.

## **(2) The functionality of Four Great Elements and material dharma**

Of the four great elements, the nature of earth is being hard, that of water being wet, that of fire being warm, and that of wind being constantly flowing. The formation of both the physical body with sense organs and the natural world involves the functionality of the combination of these four great elements. For instance, the bones, nails and teeth of our bodies belong to earth; sweat, snot, pus and blood belong to water; body temperature belongs to fire; and our breaths belong to wind. Mountains, rivers, the ground, and all material things in the natural world<sup>53</sup> also have the functionality of these four great elements.

## **(3) Four Great Elements and the body with sense organs**

Four great elements are earth, water, fire and wind and the body with sense organs refers to our physical bodies. The Buddha said that Four Great Elements are elements that form the body with sense organs. In other words, our bodies are but temporarily combined by Four Great Elements and are phenomena without a fundamental nature. When Four Great Elements of the body work inharmoniously, one may get seriously ill and die. And when this body with sense organs decays, the cause and condition of the combination of Four Great Elements will be dispersed. That is why it is said in Buddhist sutras that Four Great Elements are void by nature.

## **(4) Five Skandhas and the body with sense organs**

The functionality of the body with sense organs is within the

<sup>53</sup> The natural world refers to mountains, rivers, land, earth, houses, and all material things.

five aggregates of matter, sensation, recognition, volition, and consciousness. Due to the interactions and combination of Five Skandhas, our physical body with spiritual functions is formed. And when the favorable conditions of these relationships are dispersed, the physical body will decay. That is why it is said in Buddhist sutras that Five Skandhas are illusory.

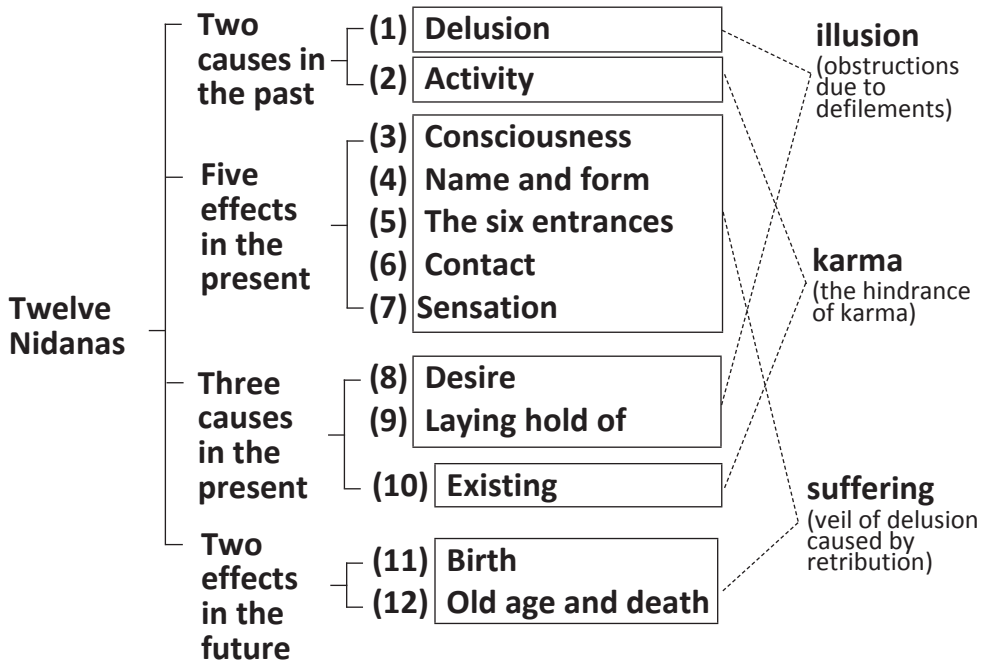
(5)

As it is said in Buddhist sutras: “Four Great Elements are void by nature. Five Skandhas are illusory. Things come into being when conditions aggregate. Things no longer exist when conditions are dispersed.” This means that the body functioning with Five Skandhas and sense organs come into being because of conditions and they are void by nature so that we should not lay hold of it, binding ourselves with afflictions and creating retributions of karmas, which actually originate from this body functioning with Five Skandhas and sense organs.

# 28.

## THE PRATYEKABUDDHA VEHICLE AND THE TWELVE NIDANAS

The Sravaka Vehicle and the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle of Hinayana are often called the two vehicles. Practitioners of the Sravaka Vehicle start cultivation on the basis of the fundamental law of Four Noble Truths, while those of the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle do that on the basis of that of Twelve Nidanas<sup>54</sup>. This is the difference between the two vehicles.



Twelve Nidanas are also called Twelve Links of Dependent

<sup>54</sup> Another name for Twelve Nidanas is all things we can find in twelve limbs of existence, i.e., Three Realms, the five gatis, and everything in the natural world. The transmigration of all births and deaths keeps going on and on due to the endless circulations of these twelve limbs, which are actually the causes and conditions of the transmigration of births and deaths.

Origination. These twelve links of dependent origination explains the origin of birth and death, i.e., the causes and effects of sentient beings' transmigrating in the cycle of birth and death. All the worlds of sentient beings and even the natural world come into being in favorable conditions and are dependent on one another. As it is said in *Agama Sutra*, "That thing exists because of this thing. That thing is born because this thing has been born. Therefore, without this thing, that thing will not exist. And when this thing is gone, that thing will also become non-existent." Therefore, without exceptions, individuals and the society as well as spiritual and material things are dependent on one another.

Twelve Links of Dependent Origination explain how our lives are formed by the twelve limbs in the chain of dependent conditions.

(1) Delusion—this refers to all the afflictions accumulated in the past, meaning ignorance, folly, or illusion without enlightenment. It is through this delusion and ignorant action that sentient beings transmigrate in the world, so it is the origin of birth and death.

(2) Activity—this refers to behavior and action. Three karmas of action, speech, and thought are created based on the delusion or afflictions in the past, and they can be good, bad, or neither good nor bad activities. The "activity" here and the "delusion" mentioned above mean the illusions and karmas created in the past, which together are what the truth of the cause of suffering in the Four Truths is about.

(3) Consciousness—this refers to consciousness of the mind a fetus is endowed with when entering into a mother's womb. Due to the power of karma influence of the past, *alaya-vijnana*<sup>55</sup> receives fruits of karma, becomes a fetus when encountering favorable conditions, and completes its life form of the present.

(4) Name and form—while "name" refers to consciousness of the mind and is spiritual, "form" is the product of the parents'

<sup>55</sup> *Alaya-vijnana* is the main body of the mind. After one dies, *alaya-vijnana* separates from the body and is called the intermediate body. *Alaya-vijnana* is the consciousness of the mind waiting for the conditions to be formed into a fetus again by the right parents.



sperm and blood and is material. They are essential elements that constitute the life form of sentient beings at the initial stage of a fetus, which does not have the six sense-organs yet.

(5) The six entrances—it is the stage when the six sense-organs of a fetus are completed, for its name and form increasingly grow and the six sense-organs of the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind are gradually becoming mature and complete. But at this time, the fetus has just been growing for a few months in the mother's womb and while it has the six sense-organs, these sense-organs can perceive only a little of the outside world and their functions are incomplete and so they are called the six entrances instead of the six sense-organs. This is the fetus stage of a sentient being.

(6) Contact—it refers to the stage when feelings arise after a baby is born and contacts the sphere of cognition; this stage is also the beginning of a sentient being's knowing about the sphere of cognition. From the infancy period<sup>56</sup> before a baby is one year old to the time when the baby becomes a toddler of two years of age, it only has simple feelings and reacts innocently when contacting the outside world, not being able to tell right from wrong, what suffering or joy is, and the difference between love and hate. This is the stage of primordial chaos of contact. From three to five years of age, however, a little child has a better ability of perception when contacting the outside world.

(7) Sensation—this refers to feelings arising when one contacts the outside world, i.e., the three states of sensation: painful sensation, pleasurable sensation, and sensation free from both pain and pleasure. For example, from the time when a little child is four or five years old till his/her childhood (six to twelve years old), and even in his/her teens and young adulthood years (between thirteen

56 According to educational psychology, one's life is divided into six stages as follows:

- (1) the stage of infancy—from birth to one year old
- (2) the stage of early childhood—from one year old to five years old
- (3) the stage of childhood—from six years old to twelve years old
- (4) the stage of teenage years and young adulthood—from thirteen to twenty-three years old
- (5) the stage of adulthood—from twenty-four years old to forty-seven years old
- (6) the stage of old age years—after forty-seven years old

to twenty-three years old) , his/her consciousness of the mind has gradually developed and the scope of his/her perception has also gradually enlarged. At this stage, his/her demands for living, food, studying, playing, and others also become more and more with the years. He/she will feel happy in favorable conditions and painful in unfavorable ones. This is especially true in teenage years, when one has strong love and hate, and that is why teenage years are called “the stage of sensation.”

(8) Desire—this refers to contamination and attachment, which come from sensation because one works on pursuing after the conditions where feelings arise. For instance, in teenage years, one has already had all sorts of strong desire for possessions and sex, laid hold of them in the mind, and kept pursuing them without letting go. For their desire, some become pregnant before getting married. Therefore, at this stage of desire, young men and women had better control their strong sexual desire.

(9) Laying hold of—this refers to attachment to and pursuit of conditions that one desires, in other words, becoming attached to material things, firmly laying hold of them in order to possess them, and creating bad karmas for the sake of satisfying one’s desires. Consequently, one’s three karmas of deed, word, and thought are defiled and these karmas constrain him/her and are accumulated to become the causes of suffering in the future. Thus, all one’s sufferings actually result from “desire” and “laying hold of.”

(10) Existing—this refers to the existence of the karmas one has at present. Because of attachment, one keeps on pursuing after desire and lays old of conditions. For this, in this present life, he/she creates even more bad karmas, which become the potential karmas to bring forth retributions in the future.

(11) Birth—this refers to receiving life in the future. Due to one’s own potential karmas, a sentient being will enter a mother’s womb in preparation for rebirth into this world and receive and complete a new life in the future.

(12) Old age and death—this explains the fact that after being

reborn in the future life, a sentient being is bound to go through old age and death again, for the cycle of cause and effect keeps going on and on. And as there are old age and death in the future, afflictions of birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrows and worries are bound to accompany them. Birth is the cause of the effect of old age and death of the future life. Birth, old age and death are actually the breakdown of the truth of suffering.

Twelve Nidanas explicate how the cycle of birth and death constantly goes on through the twelve links of dependent origination in the past, present, and future life: delusion is the condition of activity; activity is that of consciousness; consciousness is that of name and form; name and form is that of the six entrances; the six entrances is that of contact; contact is that of sensation; sensation is that of desire; desire is that of laying hold of; laying hold of is that of existing; and existing is that of birth, old age and death. This endless cycle is called “the way of transmigration,” whose cause and effect are as follows: delusion and activity, the two branches of cause of the past life, become the conditions of consciousness, name and form, six entrances, contact, and sensation, which are the five branches of effect of the present life; then, desire, laying hold of, and existing, the three branches of cause of the present life, in turn become the conditions of birth, old age, and death, the two branches of effect of the future life. In this way, the cycle of birth and death goes on and on incessantly and this is called transmigration, whose cause is none other than delusions and karmas that cause the physical and mental sufferings of births and deaths. The truth that Sakyamuni Buddha awakened to is this truth of Twelve Links of Dependent Origination. And Sakyamuni Buddha furthermore traced the fundamental origin of Twelve Nidanas to delusion, the real source of transmigration of births and deaths. So, if we can cultivate the Way and get rid of delusion, desire and laying hold of, we can be liberated from birth and death. From the teaching of returning to nirvana of Twelve Nidanas, we know that when we put an end to delusion, activity

will end; when we put an end to activity, consciousness will end; when we put an end to consciousness, name and form will end, etc. If we cultivate in this way, eventually, birth and death of the future life will end as well.

Twelve Nidanas are the doctrines that pratyekabuddhas cultivate as the door to enlightenment. The holy practitioners of the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle have sharper faculties than those of the Sravaka Vehicle. The latter hear the Buddha's expounding of the Four Noble Truths and become enlightened by understanding the truth of suffering, while the former become enlightened by understanding the truth of the cause of suffering. Therefore, the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle is more profound than the Sravaka Vehicle<sup>57</sup>. Pratyekabuddhas observe the origin of Twelve Nidanas by reflecting on delusion as is taught in the truth of the cause of suffering without hearing the Buddha's expounding of the Four Truths. They become enlightened on their own and are thus also called "solitary realizers." And for the fact that the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle is more profound than the Sravaka Vehicle, it is called the middle vehicle, which is below the Buddha Vehicle and the Bodhisattva Vehicle.

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57 Twelve Nidanas and the Four Truths—in the Four Truths, the truth of suffering and that of the cause of suffering are the way of transmigration in Twelve Nidanas, while the truth of extinction of suffering and that of the Way are the way of returning to nirvana in Twelve Nidanas.



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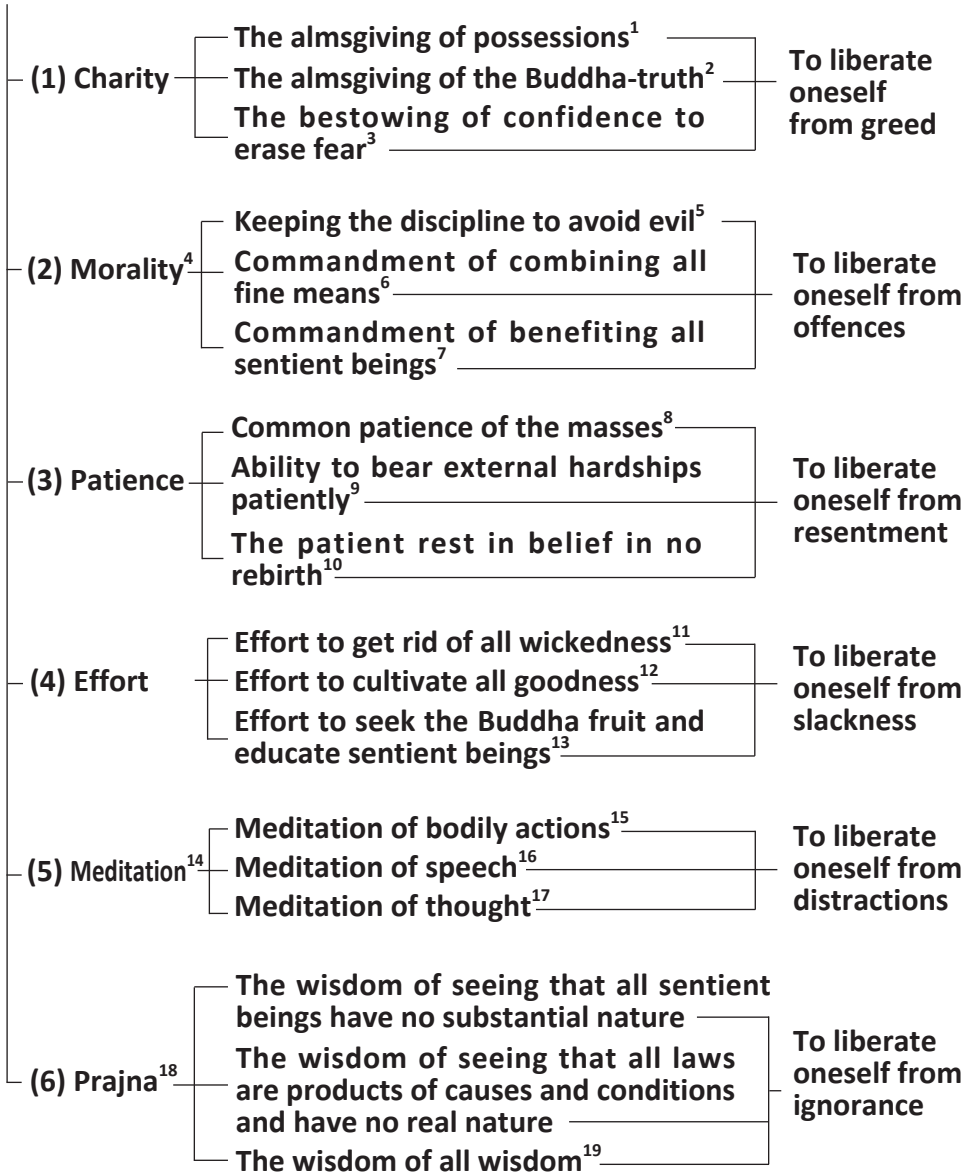
# 29.

## THE BODHISATTVA VEHICLE AND THE SIX PARAMITAS

The word “Bodhisattva” is coined by two words, Bodhi, meaning enlightenment, and sattva, meaning a sentient being. So it can be simply translated as “an enlightened sentient being.” Bodhisattvas not just hope to seek enlightenment and get rid of suffering themselves but they also want to let all other sentient beings do the same as well. Simultaneously, they have set up the goal of seeking the highest enlightenment and becoming Buddhas. In short, Bodhisattvas are enlightened sentient beings, who enlighten both themselves and others, seeking upwardly the way of Buddhahood and tirelessly educating and helping other sentient beings below them.

The dharma-gate that Bodhisattvas practice is the six paramitas, or the six perfections, which are charity, morality, patience, effort, meditation and wisdom as are shown in the diagram on the following page:

### A Diagram of the Six Perfections



Among all the disciplines that Bodhisattvas cultivate, the six perfections, originally called the six paramitas in Sanskrit, are their major dharma gate. “Paramita” is a Sanskrit word, meaning “to reach the shore on the other side.” This is because practitioners

taking a ride on this large vehicle can go from this shore of the afflictions of births and deaths to arrive at the other shore of nirvana and peace and joy. Therefore, the six paramitas are also called the six ways that ferry people across the seas of birth and death<sup>20</sup>.

The six paramitas are: (1) Dana paramita, charity, which is to liberate one from greed; (2) Sila paramita, morality, which is to liberate one from offences; (3) Ksanti paramita, patience, which is to liberate one from resentment; (4) Virya paramita, effort, which is to liberate one from slackness; (5) Dhyna paramita, meditation, which is to liberate one from distractions; (6) Prajna paramita, wisdom, which is to liberate one from ignorance.

The six paramitas are divided into two kinds: the six phenomenal paramitas and the six noumenal paramitas. In other words, there are two kinds of six paramitas that practitioners cultivate: the six paramitas practiced based on phenomena and those practiced based on noumenon. Their difference is that the former cling to forms while the latter do not. Practitioners cultivating the six paramitas based on phenomena keep all the moral principles and good things they do in mind and consequently cling to forms. They practice the moral principles of the world and thus can be rewarded in the secular world. However, they cannot leave the Three Realms: the Realm of Sensuous Desire, the Realm of Form, and the Formless Realm of Pure Spirit. On the other hand, practitioners cultivating the six paramitas based on noumenon contemplate all the good things they do with the understanding that the giver, the receiver, and the gift are no longer existent after an act of almsgiving. Consequently, they do not cling to the forms of things and the illusions that in the Five Skandhas there is a real ego and that humans are different from beings in other paths. This way of cultivation is transmudane and practitioners can leave the Three Realms, end birth and death, and attain to nirvana by practicing it.

Cultivation of the six paramitas based on noumenon can also be referred to as true cultivation. This is because when the practitioners of the way of the Bodhisattva cultivate the six

paramitas based on noumenon, they employ their intelligent contemplation to dismiss the view of seeing the world in a dualistic subject and object way until they reach the unsurpassed mental state of paramitas. Otherwise, we can only call them the six disciplines of almsgiving, morality, patience, effort, meditation, and wisdom rather than the six ways that ferry people across the seas of birth and death, for practitioners cultivating the six paramitas based on phenomena can just obtain the blessed rewards in the stream of births-and-deaths and cannot reach nirvana on the other shore.

As far as charity is concerned, the three wheels refer to the giver, the receiver, and the gift. After an act of almsgiving, if the three-wheel condition is not existent in the mind, this is called “the essence of the three-wheel condition is void.” By employing this contemplation power to see that the original nature of the three objects—the giver, the receiver, and the gift—is actually nothing obtainable, practitioners can reach the state of being formless and attain to the infinite merits and virtues of self-nature.

Each of the six paramitas has three wheels and practitioners of the six paramitas should know that the three wheels are actually void and that they should not cling to the forms of things in order to correspond to prajna. Therefore, while practicing the six ways, only when practitioners do not cling to the forms of humans, ego and dharma are they cultivating paramitas, which can ferry them across the seas of birth and death to the other shore. And this is the six paramitas practiced based on noumenon. If practitioners cultivate with an attachment to the forms of humans, ego and dharma, they can only get the blessedness of humans and devas in the long run but cannot get out of the Three Realms. As it is well written in “A Song of Enlightenment” by Master Yung-chia, “Charity and morality beget blessedness of devas just as an arrow is shot upward to the void. The arrow falls when it loses the momentum. And after blessedness of this life comes the misfortune of the next one.” This song refers to cultivation that clings to the forms of three wheels. In other words, it is the cultivation of the six paramitas based on



phenomena. Though this kind of cultivation begets merits and virtues and can make practitioners be reborn in heavens to enjoy blessedness, however, after the blessedness ends and their doom has come, they have to enter the stream of births and deaths again just like a falling arrow.

### Footnotes

- 1 The almsgiving of possessions: it refers to supporting charities or helping poor and sick sentient beings by giving them money and material things.
- 2 The almsgiving of the Buddha-truth: it refers to advising people with the Buddha-truth to cultivate goodness and rid themselves of wickedness so as to leave suffering and become joyous.
- 3 The bestowing of confidence to erase fear: it refers to sacrificing everything one has to help all sentient beings leave fears and pain.
- 4 Morality means laying hold of the discipline of not committing any crimes and sins of killing, stealing, adultery, delusion, drinking alcohol, gambling, taking drugs, etc.
- 5 Keeping the discipline to avoid evil: it refers to following the discipline set up by the Buddha no matter when one is walking, standing, sitting, or lying and not committing any of the seven categories of sins of actions and speech.
- 6 Commandment of combining all fine means: Bodhisattvas practice self-regulation, cultivate goodness, and skillfully teach dharma to benefit and save crowds of people.
- 7 Commandment of benefiting all sentient beings: it means cultivating all kinds of goodness to benefit sentient beings.
- 8 Common patience of the masses: it means standing people's hatred, defaming, fierce scolding, and hurting without feeling resentment and, with a merciful heart, being able to help people change.
- 9 Ability to bear external hardships patiently: it means taking all external hardships with ease and patience no matter they are blowing of the winds, beating of the rain, hunger, coldness, or heat.
- 10 The patient rest in belief in no rebirth: it means having unshakeable faith in the truth of suffering, voidness, and impermanence without

- clinging to forms as is taught by the Buddha.
- 11 Effort to get rid of all wickedness: it refers to industriously making effort to get rid of all wickedness.
  - 12 Effort to cultivate all goodness: it refers to industriously making effort to cultivate all goodness.
  - 13 Effort to seek the Buddha fruit and educate sentient beings: it refers to industriously making effort to attain Buddhahood and educate and save sentient beings at the same time.
  - 14 Meditation: it is "dhyana" in Sanskrit, meaning calmly thinking and reflecting. Due to calmness, there comes concentration and due to reflection, there comes wisdom.
  - 15 Meditation of bodily actions: it means introspecting oneself so as not to commit crimes and sins.
  - 16 Meditation of speech: it means being tranquil and silent and not making criticisms.
  - 17 Meditation of thought: it means concentrating the attention, being pure and clean without defilement.
  - 18 Prajna: it is a Sanskrit word, meaning the wisdom of knowing all things with an enlightened mind, obtained via abiding of correct mind, observing discipline, doing goodness, and getting rid of wickedness.
  - 19 The wisdom of all wisdom: it refers to the sagely wisdom of Buddhas, with which Buddhas can perceive and understand the phenomenon and the underlying principle of everything in the world and out of the world.
  - 20 The six ways that ferry people across the seas of birth and death are a wholly complete cultivation of both blessedness and wisdom. Charity, morality, and patience are ways to cultivate blessedness. Meditation and prajna are ways to cultivate wisdom. And effort is the way to promote the cultivation of the six paramitas.



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# 30.

## THE FOUR INFINITE BUDDHA-STATES OF MIND

Bodhisattvas must have four infinite Buddha-states of mind: infinite kindness, infinite compassion, infinite joy, and infinite impartiality. What is being infinite? It means that there is no difference between one's own and other people's sphere. When practitioners cultivate the four infinite states of mind of kindness, compassion, joy, and impartiality, they wish everyone in the whole country and all sentient beings in the world, no matter they are humans or other sentient beings, to leave suffering and attain joy as well as get infinite blessed rewards. And that is the meaning of being infinite.

(1) Infinite kindness: Kindness refers to the wish for people to obtain joy. Most people in the world only want to pursue their own happiness and forget the suffering of others. But this is not the case with practitioners cultivating infinite kindness. They wish not just their family and relatives but all sentient beings in the worlds in the ten directions of space to get happiness. In other words, they are infinitely kind and can give happiness to an infinite number of sentient beings.

(2) Infinite compassion: Compassion means the sympathy for other people's suffering. Ordinary people just want to rid themselves of suffering and disregard the suffering of others. But the contrary is true with respect to infinite compassion. Practitioners cultivating infinite compassion only think of saving other people from suffering and forget the suffering of their own. As the saying goes, "If I do not go to hell to help the suffering sentient beings there, who will?" This is the great vow of having compassion as deep as the sea to save other people from suffering. In other words, with infinite compassion, one can save an infinite

number of sentient beings from suffering.

(3) Infinite joy: Joy refers to an infinite and spontaneous joyous feeling when seeing other people leave suffering to attain joy. People in the world have a joyous feeling only when happy things happen to themselves or when their own family and relatives get promoted or make a fortune. And very few of them feel joyous when happy things happen to others. Some people even gloat over the misfortunes of others. When they see other people get happiness, they feel displeased and when they see others suffer, they feel a hidden and secret joy. But infinite joy is completely different. With infinite joy, one feels infinitely joyous when seeing others get happiness or have happy things happening to them, even if they are their enemies.

(4) Infinite impartiality: Impartiality means being without discrimination and attachment in mind. It makes people happy to do good deeds, but some people do not do good deeds without discrimination between self and others and between enemies and friends. Therefore, they should forgo their discrimination. Also, in doing whatever good deeds, one should let go of the elation and self-intoxication of doing good deeds. In this way, one's mind will become immense and broad enough for him/her to save an infinite number of sentient beings with kindness and compassion. Simultaneously, since the mind does not cling to forms, it is as clear as a mirror-like pond in autumn reflecting the moon on the water without leaving a trace. This is called infinite impartiality.

When the Buddha was living in the world, he once gave Devadatta salty soup because Devadatta, being fond of oily and fried foods, had a headache and abdominal bloating, greatly suffering for the unbearable pain, moaning, "I devote myself completely to the Buddha. I devote myself completely to the Buddha." At that time, the Buddha was deep in meditation in his own abode and heard his moaning. With spontaneous kindness, he went to Devadatta's place with his ubiquitous supernatural power, rubbed Devadatta's head and abdomen with his hands and gave him

salty soup to eat so as to help him overcome the illness. Devadatta had betrayed and hurt the Buddha before, but the Buddha saved him without hatred. With kindness, the Buddha made Devadatta get happiness, and with compassion, he rid Devadatta off suffering. He felt joyous when Devadatta recovered from his illness and saved him with a non-discrimination between friends and enemies. What the Buddha showed us here are the four infinite Buddha-states of mind: infinite kindness, infinite compassion, infinite joy, and infinite impartiality, which he fulfilled alone and not with sages of the three vehicles: sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas. With infinite kindness, the Buddha thought of the happiness of sentient beings as his own; with infinite compassion, he thought of the suffering of sentient beings as his own; with infinite joy, he felt joyous when sentient beings could leave suffering and attain joy; with infinite impartiality, he could benefit sentient beings with an impartial mind, which did not dwell in any discrimination.

# 31.

## THE FOUR METHODS OF WINNING OVER AND THE FOUR GREAT VOWS

“Bodhisattva” is a Sanskrit word, meaning an enlightened sentient being, for a bodhisattva can arouse the mind of intention to both seek upwardly to achieve enlightenment and educate and convert sentient beings below. Seeking upwardly to achieve enlightenment is to benefit oneself and educating and converting sentient beings below is to benefit others. Practitioners must learn the four methods of winning over with the four great vows on the basis of the four infinite Buddha-states of mind so that their inner mind can correspond with their action and behavior. We have previously explained the four infinite Buddha-states of mind and here we are going to explain the four methods of winning over followed by the four great vows.

(1) Winning over with gift-giving: There are three kinds of gifts to be given—material things, the Buddha-truth, and the confidence to erase fear. In other words, we can support others with our fortune, knowledge, and encouragement.

If we want to win over other people, we should find ways to do it. When we help others with our fortune, knowledge, and physical strength, they naturally become friendly to us, believe in our words, and listen to us because they have been given favors. Even if we say something a little unreasonable, they will still agree with us, not to mention that what we say is the true dharma. Humans are emotional creatures, so helping others is the best way to get us close to other people. With friendship, we can deal with things easily. Giving compulsory education and doing social welfare and charity work belong to this method of winning over sentient beings with gift-giving. Practitioners making the resolve to cultivate the

six paramitas must be aware of this method and learn it well.

(2) Winning over with affectionate and kind words: This means using very kind words to talk with people to make them feel like listening to us and feel joyous. There are three sorts of kind words: 1) Comforting words. When someone gets sick or encounters misfortunes, we should never gloat over it but should kindly and affectionately comfort him/her with kind words to make them feel better. We may not have much power to help him/her, but our kind and tender words and our sympathetic attitude can make him/her feel grateful and like us. 2) Praising and pleasant words. Everyone, even a bad person, has his/her merits. When we see someone has a strong point, we should praise him/her, encouraging and inspiring him/her to make him/her happy. This will help the person become even better. With this method, we can even help a bad person go in the right way. 3) Words to help others advance to a higher stage. These are words that help others advance to a higher stage after they listen to us. For example, to people who are satisfied with just a little, we may encourage them to advance further. To people who can give alms, we may lead them one step further to take precepts and keep the moral laws. To practitioners of Hinayana, we may convince them to further cultivate Mahayana. These talks belong to the category of words to help others advance to a higher stage. Sometimes, we may not just use soft and tender words to advise and encourage, we may also use harsh words to scold so as to awaken people to make great efforts to get enlightened. As long as our attitude is sincere, we can win other people over and let them accept our teaching and guidance.

(3) Winning over with beneficial acts: This refers to doing things to benefit others. When parents educate their children and pay attention to the benefits of their children's physical and mental health, they naturally win their children's filial piety. When teachers always teach and think of the benefits of their students, they are sure to get the trust of their students. When senior officers can take care of the benefits of their subordinates, they will get their support.

When bodhisattvas can comply with the wishes of sentient beings and do all kinds of good deeds for their benefits, they are naturally appreciated by sentient beings, who will follow their guidance.

In the past, there was a man living in Europe who specialized in keeping wild animals. He spent all his time with lions and tigers and these fierce animals didn't hurt him. People asked him the reason why he was not hurt by lions and tigers, and he answered, "There is nothing strange about it. As long as you treat them well and don't hurt them, they naturally follow your instruction and don't hurt you." Even wild and fierce animals can be won over, not to mention human beings. Therefore, if bodhisattvas want to win over sentient beings, they have to pay attention to doing beneficial acts.

(4) Winning over with collaborative work: This means working collaboratively with people from all walks of life in society, sharing work together and living together with them through thick and thin. For example, if we have never lived the life of a businessperson, what we say may not be comprehended and accepted by business people. If we have never lived the life of a farmer, farmers may not be able to understand and believe in all that we say. Therefore, in order to appropriately convert people, Bodhisattvas appear in various forms to live together with people from all walks of life and work collaboratively with them to give them a silent transforming influence and eventually reach the goal of enlightening sentient beings. Guan-yin Bodhisattva shows up in thirty-two manifested bodies according to the various capacities of sentient beings. Tisang Bodhisattva and Maitreya Bodhisattva appear in hundreds of billions of bodily shapes and these are examples of how Bodhisattvas show up in various forms to work in collaboration with sentient beings in order to universally ferry over all sentient beings.

These four methods are actually the most basic and the best ways to win over people and lead them; even when people in the mundane world want to win others over, they cannot violate these



principles. If we can use these methods to promote Buddha-dharma and win people over, we must be able to succeed easily. Why is it that we cannot move others with our words and make more people believe in and accept what we say even though we are practicing Buddha-dharma or instructing people? It must be that we haven't learned these four methods, or haven't done them well. We can test it and find out the answer ourselves.

Also, when bodhisattvas make their initial resolve to attain enlightenment, they must enlarge the capacity of mind and know their goals by following the Four Noble Truths and taking Four Great Vows. One, following the truth of suffering, bodhisattvas see the endless suffering of the sentient beings in Six Paths and take the vow to save the numberless sentient beings. Two, following the truth of the cause of suffering, bodhisattvas understand the afflictions accumulated since the time without a beginning and take the vow to cut off the endless afflictions. Three, following the truth of the Way, bodhisattvas know all sorts of Buddhist teachings and take the vow to study the countless Dharma doors. Four, following the truth of the extinction of suffering, bodhisattvas know there is the highest fruit of the pure, clean, tranquil and still nirvana and take the vow to realize the supreme Buddha Way. All the practitioners of the way of the bodhisattvas depend on the Four Great Vows as guidance for how to both benefit themselves and others.

# 32.

## THE BASIC DOCTRINES OF BUDDHISM

### (1) Three Seals

The fundamental principles of Buddhism are Three Seals<sup>58</sup> and One Seal of Reality<sup>59</sup>. The Buddha mostly expounded Three Seals to Hinayana practitioners of dull faculties and One Seal of Reality to Mahayana practitioners of sharp faculties. But actually the differences between the two are in their depth and profundity and they are taught opportunistically and suitably depending on the faculties

58 Three Seals are: (1) Phenomena are impermanent. (2) All dharmas are non-self. (3) Nirvana is perfect quiescence. When an additional truth that all sensations are suffering is added to Three Seals, they become Four Dharma-sources. But actually impermanence, suffering, voidness, and non-self of Three Seals already contain the Dharma-source of "all sensations are suffering." In other words, Three Seals already include Four Dharma-sources. The Buddha expounded Three Seals to make Buddhist practitioners know that the truth of the universe and life is impermanence, suffering, voidness, and non-self so that they will neither go with the tide and have afflictions unwisely nor create bad karmas and suffer bitter retribution. Instead, they should actively work toward goodness, do good deeds, cultivate virtues and have a career to benefit both themselves and others with a selfless spirit. Therefore, the fundamental principles of Buddhism are about making active self-reformation (getting rid of afflictions of being attached to the notion of an enduring and inherent self, holding to things as realities, greed, resentment, ignorance, etc.) to make one have a wholesome character. However, people in the world sometimes criticize the expounding of impermanence, suffering, voidness, and non-self in Buddhism as passive thoughts. But this is actually a mistaken idea caused by not having a deep study of Buddhist teachings.

59 The meaning of One Seal of Reality is deep and profound. It clearly explicates the original nature of voidness by elaborating on the following points: (1) Ultimate voidness is pervasive in all dharmas. (2) Five laws and three self-natures are pervasive in all dharmas (3) Eight consciousnesses and two non-selves are pervasive in all dharmas. (4) That there are no barriers in dharma-realm is pervasive in all dharmas. As all dharmas arise from conditional causation and the nature of all dharmas (including both material existence and the mind) is ultimately void, the absolute nature of voidness is always connected with the doctrine of cause and conditions. Of the five laws, names, appearances, and ordinary mental discriminations, which are conditionally existent, are void, and the unconditioned right wisdom and reality nature are terms to represent abstract ideas of wise observation meditation, and therefore, they are void as well. Of the three self-natures, the nature of things arising dependently on other things shows the self-nature of arising is void, and in the nature of holding to the appearance of things, there is actually not an inherent self in either person or things and thus attachments to the two are void as well. The unconditioned perfect true nature is also the void self-nature of the highest reality. The eight consciousnesses and two non-selves actually refer to the voidness of attachment to an inherent self in both ego and dharmas. If we can understand the meaning of voidness in this way, then we will not have any attachment in the mind. In dharma realm, each dharma can include other dharmas and not get mixed up, and it can embrace all things without barriers. When we can reach this state, all afflictions will become empty and the mundane life and the society will be purified to become Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

of the practitioners.

“Seal” means a recognition or approval of truth. The truth of Buddha-dharma can be tested and recognized based on Three Seals and One Seal of Reality. All Buddha-dharma can be verified based on them. All the teachings that fit these seals can be proved to be Buddha-dharma. The following is a brief explanation of Three Seals of Hinayana:

1) Phenomena are impermanent: The “phenomena” in this seal refer to all activities and things in life, which have conditioned existence and keep deteriorating. In other words, all phenomena in the world that are created by causes and conditions have the four aspects of arising, abiding, changing and extinction, which evolve one after another and therefore are impermanent and cannot forever stay. We can explain this truth from two facts: ① All things move and change continuously in the past, present and future and are thus impermanent. ② All things are causally produced and are thus impermanent.

What is “moving and changing continuously in the past, present, and future”? It means moving and changing continuously in time, whose smallest measure is ksana, or a thought. In time, nothing can stay for even one ksana and all things are produced and annihilated in every thought-moment: phenomena of the present are being produced and annihilated; those of the past have already been annihilated; and those of the future are not yet produced. That is why all things in the past, present and future are moving, changing and annihilated in continuity and therefore are impermanent. For example, the activity consciousness of one’s past life enters a mother’s womb and becomes a fetus to be born; after a human being is born, he/she grows up from a little baby, becomes an adult, ages, and dies; and then he/she enters a mother’s womb again to be reborn as a sentient being in the future life. In this way, a sentient being goes through the endless cycle of birth and death, moving and changing continuously in the past, present, and future life. Life is truly impermanent in this way. Also, the birth

and death of sentient beings is called “fragmentary samsara.” And as bodhisattvas have not reached the state of Buddhahood, they too have to go through birth and death of a different kind, called “transforming samsara<sup>60</sup>.” With these two kinds of birth and death, there is the external appearance of periods of birth and death, and each period of life surely ends because nothing can stay for one ksana and all things are constantly moving and changing and are produced and annihilated in every thought-moment. As it is said in *Agama Sutra*, “What has been assembled will eventually be dispersed; what is sublime is sure to fall; whoever gathers together with us will depart from us in the end; and there is no birth without a death.” This passage explains that life is impermanent, and sentient beings must experience the pain of birth and death. And this is also true with material things. From the moment any utensil is made, it is constantly changing until it is destroyed. These are all phenomena of impermanence.

Why is it that all things are causally produced and are thus impermanent? This is because all things come into being with the right causes and conditions. When the causes and conditions are dispersed, they are annihilated. Therefore, the law of cause and condition is the law of coming into being and annihilation, for when there is birth, there is change and when there is change, there is annihilation. And after annihilation, there is new birth to replace it. From this, we know that the phenomena created by causes and conditions are impermanent but they are not exterminated and have their law of cause and effect.

From his observation of both the moving and changing of all things in the past, present and future and the law of cause and condition, the Buddha saw that all the phenomena created by cause

<sup>60</sup> Fragmentary samsara and transforming samsara: Fragmentary samsara refers to the transmigration of birth and death of ordinary beings within the Three Realms, where sentient beings have bodies, forms and periods for transmigration of birth and death. Transforming samsara refers to the birth and death of the holy beings beyond the Three Realms, where there are no longer bodies, forms, and periods for transmigration of birth and death, but only breakthroughs of the birth and death of thoughts and remembrances in the mind, which is the birth and death of spirituality. Only when bodhisattvas can cut off innate ignorance and get rid of all thoughts that are born and annihilated can they be free from transforming samsara.

and conditions are sure to move and change. Therefore, he set up the seal of “all phenomena are impermanent,” which strengthens the pure faith in the profound meaning of voidness and enables Buddhist practitioners to stay away from the five desires and leave afflictions, working toward goodness and doing good deeds.

2) All dharmas are non-self: The Buddha observed the connection of all things in space and saw that since all phenomena are created by causes and conditions, when phenomena leave their cause and condition, they no longer exist. A human body is a conglomeration of Five Skandhas and Four Great Elements. Life is impermanent with just a temporary external appearance of mere decades of lifespan. So, it is certainly to be annihilated in the end. Seeing this, the Buddha taught that nothing has an ego, or is independent of the law of causation.

The purpose of the Buddha’s teaching that nothing has an ego is that all sentient beings cling to illusory views, thinking that they are independent subjects with an ego that has a self-nature and can master things. And that sentient beings wrongly cling to this ego is called “the belief in the existence of an inherent ego.” There are two kinds of belief in the existence of an inherent ego. One is about sentient beings—the attachment to the belief in the existence of an inherently existent self<sup>61</sup>. And the other is about phenomena—the attachment to external objects<sup>62</sup>. They are also called “the attachment to self” and “the attachment to phenomena.” Because of these two kinds of false attachment, sentient beings have afflictions of greed, resentment, ignorance, etc., willfully doing wicked deeds to hurt others, causing fights and restlessness in the society, and making people lose the blessedness of owning a harmonious life and society.

The Buddha expounded the truth that all dharmas are non-self for practitioners of the sravaka vehicle and the pratyekabuddha

61 The attachment to the belief in the existence of an inherently existent self—This includes attachment to the concept of an inherent real ego, the concept that a human is different from other organisms, the concept that all beings have reality, and the concept that life is limited.

62 The attachment to external objects—This includes attachment to Five Skandhas, Twelve Bases, Eighteen Fields, etc. (According to Abhidharma-kosa, skandhas, bases, and fields include all dharmas of material existence and the mind.)

vehicle because he wanted to negate the two kinds of attachment: the attachment to the belief in the existence of an inherently existent self and that to external objects. Based on the fundamental truth that everything arises from conditions, the Buddha explained that there is no everlasting material existence. And as transmigration of birth and death arises from conditions and this physical body of the present life is a conglomeration of Five Skandhas and Four Great Elements, when this body leaves Five Skandhas, it disappears. Therefore, the ego of a body with Six Roots is an empirical ego of Five Skandhas, void and without self-nature, and there is no such a thing as an independent ego, which must have the attributes of constancy, oneness, changelessness, and freedom from confinement. But actually, our physical body is a conglomeration of Five Skandhas. It is impermanent, not one, capable of deteriorating, and a conglomeration of bitterness. So how can it be free? Therefore, the Buddha set up the seal of “All dharma are non-self,” hearing which Hinayana practitioners can get rid of their attachment to the feeling of subjectivity and witness to the truth that there is no ego.

3) The eternity is nirvana and stillness: Nirvana is the truth of the Way in the Four Noble Truths. There are wide and narrow definitions of nirvana. Mahayana nirvana has a broad definition, which means complete fullness and quiescence, or all virtues being complete and full and all obstructions being erased and still. In the sravaka vehicle and the pratyekabuddha vehicle, nirvana has a narrow definition, which means annihilating desires to cease suffering, i.e., following Buddha’s wisdom to annihilate desires to get rid of afflictions that create karmas. By annihilating desires, we can be set free from the flowing and returning of birth and death and can eternally abide in calmness and quietness. That is why we say that nirvana is perfect tranquility. Practitioners of the sravaka vehicle and the pratyekabuddha vehicle witness to the truth that there is no ego, but they haven’t yet cut off hindrances to wisdom and still have attachment to the teachings of Buddhism, so they can

only attain to Hinayana nirvana<sup>63</sup>. Only Buddhas can cut off both attachment to self and that to external objects and attain Nirvana of no dwelling. This is because Buddhas have complete blessedness and wisdom and are constantly aided by the prajna paramita of great compassion. It is called Nirvana of no dwelling, for with prajna, Buddhas do not abide in the mundane world; and with great compassion, they do not leave it, either. Therefore, we can see that Hinayana nirvana is different from nirvana in the state of Buddhahood. Also, as the state of nirvana is always still and quiet, we generally refer to nirvana as “nirvana stillness and calmness.”

Among the three seals stated above, the seal of “phenomena are impermanent” and that of “all dharmas are non-self” are recognitions to assure that all things created by causes and conditions in the world are produced and annihilated, while the seal of “the eternity is nirvana and stillness” is a recognition to assure that things of the supra-mundane world, which are not subject to causes and conditions, are nirvana methods. The seal “phenomena are impermanent” is expounded first to explain that all things in the world created by causes and conditions are impermanent and consequently lead to suffering. And because of suffering, sentient beings are not free. After it is made clear that sentient beings are not free, the seal “all dharmas are non-self” is expounded to show the absolute void nature of all things—nothing has an independent ego and everything in the mundane world is created by causes and conditions and is destined to be annihilated after being produced. When we know that nothing in the world is permanent and that nothing has an independent ego, we can then advance quickly to salvation and reach the perfectly tranquil and still state of nirvana. The seal “all dharmas are non-self” actually connects the impermanence of all things created by causes and conditions with nirvana, in which things are not subject to causes and conditions,

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<sup>63</sup> Hinayana nirvana refers to annihilating all afflictions, ending all karmas that create birth and death, mystic correspondence with the eternal truth, and leaving all sufferings in the Three Realms as the unsurpassed achievement. In other words, the unsurpassed achievement of Hinayana nirvana is to attain to the mystic wisdom and the nature of unconditioned existence and correspond with the eternal reality of Buddha-truth.

and this seal can put the three seals together with the same fundamental principle or absolute nature. But then, why is the same fundamental principle divided into the three seals? Actually, it is divided into three seals because humans have different natures and characters for understanding and practice. Some become enlightened through the dharma-gate of impermanence, and this is “emptiness liberation.” Some become enlightened through the dharma gate of non-self, and this is “desireless liberation.” And others do that through the dharma gate of nirvana tranquility, and this is called “no-aspects liberation.” By becoming enlightened through the three gates of liberation<sup>64</sup>, practitioners can reach the same absolute nature of nirvana. Therefore, the same fundamental principle is divided into Three Seals. In summary, Three Seals are recognitions to assure that the universe and life are impermanent, bitter, void, and without an independent ego. They teach us to actively break loose from the control of the five desires, cultivate goodness and do good deeds, and advance to the peaceful and joyous way of freedom.

## (2) One Seal of Reality

One Seal of Reality—the term comes from *A commentary on the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra* by Nagarjuna Bodhisattva<sup>65</sup>,

64 The three gates of liberation: 1. Emptiness liberation—if people contemplate and thoroughly understand the truths that all things are created by causes and conditions and therefore their nature is void, and that there are no makers and no receivers, then they can be enlightened and enter nirvana. 2. Desireless liberation—it is also called “non-active liberation.” This is to stay away from all thoughts of doing things that bring about birth and death for not wanting to get anything for an afterlife, and thus become enlightened and enter nirvana. 3. No-aspects liberation—This is to know that Four Great Elements and Five Skandhas are empty and that this body of Six Roots is a false conglomeration and thus one can get rid of the attachment to the conception of self as an independent ego, becoming enlightened and entering Hinayana nirvana tranquility.

65 Nagarjuna—According to *The Biography of Nagarjuna Bodhisattva* translated by Kumarajiva, Nagarjuna was born in a Brahmin family in South India and was very clever and special. He first became knowledgeable with the studies of Veda, arithmetic, astronomy, geography, etc., and then together with three of his friends, he learned ways to make the body invisible and entered the imperial palace at will to have sexual intercourses with female attendants there for a hundred more days. Later, they were found and caught. His three friends were killed and Nagarjuna had a narrow escape. From this experience, he realized that desires are the source of suffering and the root of all evils, so he left home to become a Buddhist monk. At first, he learned the sutra-pitaka, vinaya-pitaka, and the abhidharma-pitaka of Hinayana. Then, he learned Mahayana canons from an old bhiksu in a stupa in Snow Mountain. Because he didn't truly awaken to the truth, he became self-conceited. A great naga bodhisattva saw this and pitied him. He took him to the sea and had him stay in the dragon palace for ninety days to read all the profound vaipulya



who maintains that the sravaka and the pratyekabuddha dharma is recognized and assured by Three Seals, while the Mahayana dharma is recognized and assured by One Seal of Reality. “Reality” here refers to the true reality of all dharmas—Five Skandhas, Eighteen Fields<sup>66</sup>, etc. One Seal of Reality explicates the original truth of all dharmas to let practitioners know what the real truth is. It is the great universal and impartial perception of the objective realm known to Buddhas. Due to limited capacity of mind, the rest of the sentient beings cannot have wholly complete consciousness of the objective realm. However, although bodhisattvas at the initial stage of making determination to seek enlightenment have not yet witnessed and cognized the real truth of all things, they can still depend on Buddhas’ wisdom to reach it. Actually, Three Seals are One Seal of Reality. The former explicate the three aspects of the latter, explaining how all dharmas are created by causes and conditions and have no self-nature. Therefore, ultimately, Three Seals can be traced to their origins to become one with One Seal of Reality. One Seal of Reality only differs from Three Seals in its elaboration on the following points: 1) Ultimate voidness is pervasive in all dharmas; 2) The five laws and three self-natures are pervasive in all dharmas; 3) Eight consciousnesses and two non-selves are pervasive in all dharmas; 4) That there are no barriers in dharma realm is pervasive in all dharmas. The following is a brief

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sutras. Thus, Nagarjuna became enlightened with the truth of Buddha-dharma. And after that, he went back to South India to widely spread Buddha-dharma, refuting heresies and writing books. When he converted the king of South India, he knew that a Hinayana Buddhist teacher was angry with and jealous of him, so he went to a spare room, transformed and disappeared. In Chinese, Nagarjuna is translated into two characters, “龍” meaning “dragon” and “樹” meaning “tree.” Sometimes, his name is translated into “龍猛” meaning “the vigor of a dragon,” or “龍勝” meaning “the excellence of a dragon.” According to what is stated at the end of *The Biography of Nagarjuna Bodhisattva*, Nagarjuna got his name because “his mother gave birth to him under a tree,” and “he became enlightened with the help of a dragon.” Nagarjuna wrote many books, among which *A commentary on the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra* was translated by Kumarajiva. The book is a translation and commentary on the second assembly of *Mahaprajna Sutra*, or *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra* (25000 verses) . It explicates with the view of the middle way the prajna practiced and experienced by bodhisattvas only (not shared with the sravaka vehicle and the pratyekabuddha vehicle) .

66 Twelve Bases and Eighteen Fields—Six Sense-organs (the Six Internal Bases) and Six Fields of Senses (the Six External Bases) are called Twelve Bases. A base is a foundation of things. In other words, Six Sense-organs and Six Fields of Senses are foundations of Six Consciousness. And together, they make up Eighteen Fields.

description of the four points:

**1) Ultimate voidness is pervasive in all dharmas**—In One Seal of Reality, the first and most important thing is to know that the ultimate voidness is pervasive in all dharmas. Dharmas created by causes and conditions actually have conditioned existence. Although they have phenomenal forms and temporary functions, when their real bodies are sought after, no self-nature can be found. This is true with both material existence and the dharma of mind. Therefore, all dharmas created by causes and conditions, which still have continuous phenomenal forms and temporary functions, are ultimately void, let alone inactive principles not subject to cause and effect, which are just assumptions when applying one's concentration power to observe clearly and thus do not have any phenomenal forms and illusive functions at all. Knowing this truth, we can see that all attachments do not have any concrete objects to hold on to. And with the understanding, we can obtain the wisdom of non-discrimination and correspond with the absolute truth of all dharmas just as it is.

**2) Five laws and three self-natures are pervasive in all dharmas**—**The five laws** are: ① names, ② appearances, ③ ordinary mental discrimination, ④ right wisdom, and ⑤ reality nature. The following is a general explanation of the five laws:

① Names—It refers to the names that speech depends on. Names bring about sentences, and sentences make up a speech. Generally speaking, in all dharma-realms, each phenomenon has a name. And since there are numerous phenomena, there are also numerous names.

② Appearances—It refers to the phenomenal world perceived and differentiated by the mind. For example, when we say this is a red flower and that is a white flower, or when we say this is meaningful and that is meaningless, here the colors of red and white or meaningfulness and meaninglessness are appearances which consciousness depends on to give names, while in turn the names are used in speech to specify the appearances. All

phenomena in material existence and the dharma of mind are called appearances. Names can be given on basis of appearances and that is how names and appearances are connected—appearances give names and names specify appearances.

③ Ordinary mental discrimination—in whatever dharma, what is to be cognized is its names and appearances, and the mind and cognition that can understand is ordinary mental discrimination. Therefore, what can differentiate is the mind and cognition and this is the subject; what is differentiated is names and appearances and they are the objects. This mental discrimination is defiled cognition.

④ Right wisdom—“Right” means exact, proper and suitable. Here “wisdom” refers to the undefiled pure and clean wisdom. Right wisdom means the exact and undefiled cognition. It is the non-discriminating wisdom.

⑤ Reality nature—It refers to the thing that is purely, cleanly, and correctly cognized. In other words, this is the unchanging truth of just as it is-ness, which is cognized through the right non-discriminating wisdom. It is different from the names and appearances cognized with defilement and discrimination, which cannot correspond with the truth because they are discriminating. Names and appearances cognized with defilement and discrimination are false forms produced by the discrimination of the mind and cognition and therefore are not the truth. Reality nature is the subject of cognition, which very straightforwardly and thoroughly corresponds with the truth as the object is without using any subjective power to change it a little bit at all. It shows things as they are and the original nature of the reality-realm, which is the unconditioned dharma, permanent and unchanging, neither arising nor ceasing, neither adding nor subtracting, and neither defiled nor undefiled. These five laws pervade all dharmas, so they are also called five categories of elemental constructs.

The three self-natures are: ① the nature of existence as arising from dependence on other things, ② the nature of holding to everything as what it appears to be, ③ the perfect true nature. All

dharmas have no self-nature and are ultimately void, so three self-natures are three no self-natures, which should not have been set up but are set up and explicated in order to awaken sentient beings:

① The nature of existence as arising from dependence on other things—This refers to the no self-nature of arising. All things arising from various conditions, other than themselves, do not have any unchanged conditions that produce them and there are no unchanged things arising from various conditions that produce them, either. And as nothing is created by any unchanged producer, the original quality of all things is emptiness and there is actually no self-nature for arising. And since arising has no self-nature and is created by the conglomeration of various conditions and given the false name of “birth,” arising actually depends on other things for existence. All things arise from dependence on other things and are shown according to various kinds of cognition. This is called “the nature of existence as arising from dependence on other things.” For example, a human being is created by a conglomeration of Five Skandhas and other dharmas that depend on his/ her karmas of afflictions in the past. Therefore, understanding the nature of existence as arising from and dependence on other things is realizing no self-nature for arising of things.

② The nature of holding to everything as what it appears to be—It means that appearances do not have self-nature. Ordinary beings do not cognize that arising has no unchanging essence and that existence arises from dependence on other things, so they hold to things as what they appear to be, thinking that there is an eternally true ego and the inherent existence of a certain set of causes and conditions called dharmas. There are two forms of this attachment: (A) internally holding to the form of an eternally true ego, and (B) externally holding to the form of things. Ordinary beings do not cognize that the two are just false illusions created by various conditions and acts of mental discernment, thus holding to them as things truly existent. But actually, the appearance of ego and the appearance of material things have no self-nature, and attachment

to them is erroneous tenets. Therefore, when we understand our nature of holding to everything as what it appears to be, we will realize that forms do not have self-nature.

③ The perfect true nature—This refers to the no self-nature of the highest reality. If we understand that all things arise from conditions and their nature is empty, i.e., all dharmas are ultimately void, then we can get rid of our erroneous attachment, obtain the undefiled, pure and clean correct understanding, or the perfect true nature, and correspond to the truth of all dharmas. Therefore, the fully complete true nature is the truth form and the unsurpassed reality of nirvana is void, for it has no self-nature at all.

Judging from the five laws and three self-natures explained above, names, appearances, and ordinary mental discrimination have the nature of arising from dependence on other things, for they are created by the dharma of cause and condition. Names, appearances, and ordinary mental discrimination also have the nature of holding to what things appear to be. This nature is the delusion that dharmas created by causes and conditions are real. On the other hand, right wisdom and reality nature refer to the perfect true nature, which is uncontaminated, pure and clean and stays away from all speeches and discrimination. In other words, it means the ultimate voidness of all things.

**3) Eight consciousnesses and two non-selves**— Eight consciousnesses refer to the first five consciousnesses—the consciousnesses of the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, and the body, the sixth consciousness, the seventh consciousness—manas-vijnana, and the eighth consciousness—alaya-vijnana. In other words, there are eight consciousnesses of the mind that give the function of cognition and cause illusions to understanding and views as well. So we have to turn the eight consciousnesses into the four pure and clean wisdoms. And this is the pure and clean right wisdom. The first five consciousnesses are changed into the wisdom of fulfilling the vow of working on benefiting all sentient beings; the sixth consciousness into wisdom of unerring cognition;

the seventh manas-vijnana into wisdom of understanding the equality of all things; and the eighth alaya-vijnana into great perfect mirror wisdom. If we can turn eight consciousnesses into four wisdoms, then we can remove our attachment to ego and dharmas, get rid of delusions and witness to reality. Therefore, we call them eight consciousnesses and two no-selves. Although we can find a lot of teachings on eight consciousnesses in the holy words of the Buddha, the Buddha did not clearly elaborate on them individually and sometimes his essential meanings were concealed. In Hinayana, mostly only six consciousnesses are expounded. Only the scholars of the consciousness-only Dharma-character school established the structure of eight consciousnesses based on the essential concealed meanings in the holy words of the Buddha. These scholars actually had to make up the incompleteness of Hinayana, which over-emphasizes the doctrine of voidness, argue against all the non-Buddhist teachings, and study the true nature of the Void of nirvana over a long time of great effort-making to achieve this. This Buddhist sect maintains that all dharmas are perceptions of consciousnesses and all discriminations of names and appearances are deceptive and false, and therefore, as long as we turn consciousnesses into wisdom, we can awaken to the ultimate reality of all things. Ultimate reality is actually devoid of phenomenal characteristic. The nature of all things is nullity, neither born nor annihilated. And since the nature of all things is neither born nor annihilated, it is the original stillness and quietness of the nirvana in self-nature.

**4) There are no barriers in dharma-realm—Dharma-realm<sup>67</sup>** is reality-nature, the suchness that the non-discriminating wisdom

<sup>67</sup> Dharma-realm includes the dharma-realm of phenomena and the dharma-realm of noumenal principle. The word “dharma” in the dharma-realm of phenomena refers to all things, and the word “realm” means boundary. All dharmas have their own causes and therefore they have different boundaries. And this is called the dharma-realm of phenomena, or the phenomenal world. But from the perspective of the dharma-realm of noumenal principle, Ten Dharma Realms are the only one dharma-realm of suchness. To sum up, dharma-realm has three meanings: (1) Dharma-realm is reality-nature, or things as they are. (2) Dharma-realm is the universal characteristics of all phenomena in the universe. (3) Dharma-realm is the individual causes of all dharmas.

corresponds with. When we refer to the universe, it is not just space and time, but all things in a myriad of forms. This is also true with dharma-realm, which includes a myriad of dharmas. Each of all dharmas has the universal characteristics of all phenomena. In other words, a dharma includes all dharmas and any dharma is dharma-realm. For example, a tree can gather together all dharmas because it is created by a variety of conditions, which in turn are created by an endless variety of other conditions. Thus, a dharma includes all dharmas and from one dharma, we can enter all dharmas. Dharma-realm means the universal characteristics of all phenomena in the universe. Also, as “realm” means “cause,” dharma-realm is the causes of all dharmas. In other words, although the noumenal principle of all dharmas is one, all dharmas have their individuality because each of them has its specific seeds of cause that do not mix up with others and whose manifest activities are different from others. On the other hand, however, as the fundamental law of these different cause-seeds is universal, from each of the cause-seeds, which uses the capability of alaya-vijnana unlimited by space and having no boundaries, we can find the ruling principle of dharma-realm. In summary, the dharma-realm explicated above actually means three things: reality-nature, the universal characteristics of all phenomena in the universe, and the separate cause-seeds for all dharmas. And as each dharma in dharma-realm includes one another without getting mixed up, we say that there are no barriers in dharma-realm. Also, dharma-realm has no barriers because all dharmas arise from various conditions and are without self-nature. And as all dharmas are perceived only through the mind and their forms are transformed and manifested from all the seeds in alaya-vijnana, they are separate and do not get mixed up with one another but simultaneously they can include and enter one another. This Mahayana One Seal of Reality actually pervades all dharmas in the same way.

We can say that the Mahayana One Seal of Reality includes

Three Seals, and Three Seals lead to One Seal of Reality<sup>68</sup>. If we want to understand how Three Seals lead to One Seal of Reality, first we have to know the truth that nothing is independent of the law of causation, for once cognizing the truth that nothing has an ego, we will know that all things arise from conditions and have no self-nature and understand the Law of Dependent Origination, i.e., the law that all things are created by mutually dependent conditions. From the Law of Dependent Origination, we can see that the way of transmigration in the cycle of cause and effect leads to impermanence and the way of returning to extinction of cause and effect leads to nirvana. Therefore, by observing dependent origination of all things, where no ego can be found, we can thread together the conditioned and the uncaused with voidness and non-self, i.e., One Seal of Reality, which threads together all dharmas with the reality of the ego-less interdependence.

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68 The differences between One Seal of Reality of Mahayana and the Three Seals of Hinayana are: (1) Hinayana maintains that all things are in a state of incessant change, while Mahayana, besides maintaining the impermanence of all things, considers it unceasingly following the law of cause and effect. (2) Hinayana maintains that all dharmas are non-self, while Mahayana, besides expounding non-self of the absolute truth, emphasizes the saving of others of the secular truth. (3) Hinayana expounds nirvana stillness in the view that in truth there is no ego, while Mahayana expounds no-dwelling nirvana in the view of emptiness of inherent selfhood in both an individual person and the compositional elements of the world. The reason why Mahayana is different from Hinayana is that the former can fit the wondrous use of One Seal of Reality. Therefore, the dialectical way of teaching of Mahayana becomes One Seal of Reality.



# 33.

## THE FOUR ASSEMBLIES OF COLLECTING AND FIXING BUDDHIST CANONS

[33. to 36. explain the evolution of Buddha-dharma and the cause and condition of its introduction to China]

After the death of the Buddha, for fear that heresies would infiltrate Buddha-dharma and that the teachings of the sutra-pitaka, the vinaya-pitaka, and the abhidharma-pitaka would disappear over a long time, the disciples of the Buddha held assemblies of collecting and fixing Buddhist canons. The ceremonies were somewhat similar to those of the meetings today. First, bhiksus were summoned and organized according to the rules and disciplines of sila and vinaya to form an assembly. In the assembly, one was chosen to ascend a high seat and spoke what the Buddha had taught. If there were no objections to the speech, it was recognized by the assembly to be identical with what the Buddha had taught them and then was written on tala leaves<sup>69</sup> to become an official canon. The sutras and vinayas circulated today are the products of these assemblies. Therefore, whatever is not collected by the Tripitaka is a fake canon made up by later generations and is not supposed to be followed.

There should have been only one assembly for collecting Tripitaka. However, over a long time, heresies became popular and affected the fundamental principles of Buddhism; so during the four hundred years after the death of the Buddha, there were altogether four assemblies, the last three of which were forced to take place. The following is an explanation of the reasons for the four assemblies to be held:

The first assembly—Three months after the death of the

<sup>69</sup> In the ancient India, people used to write passages of sutras on the leaves of tala trees, which were the most suitable kind of leaves for transcription at that time.

Buddha, the Venerable Kasyapa, supported by King Ajatasatru of Magadha<sup>70</sup>, convened a thousand arhats to gather at the Pippala cave of the Seven-Leaf Crag<sup>71</sup> in Gijjhakuta Mountain outside Rajagaha. And of the one thousand arhats, five hundred were chosen to assume the task of collecting and fixing Tripitaka. Ananda<sup>72</sup> was assigned the responsibility of collecting and fixing the sutra-pitaka, and Upali<sup>73</sup> was responsible for the vinaya-pitaka. This is the so-called The Assembly of the School of the Elders, or The Council of the Five Hundred Arhats.

At that time, several tens of thousands of bhiksus later arrived at the Seven-leaf Crag and wanted to come inside the crag cave to hear the Buddha-dharma but were disallowed by Kasyapa. Consequently, they gathered in a place twenty more miles to the northwest of the crag cave and read aloud Tripitaka by themselves and collected and fixed Buddhist canons on their own. They collected and fixed five categories of Buddhist canons: the sutra-pitaka, the vinaya-pitaka, the abhidharma-pitaka, the miscellaneous discourses, and Dharani-pitaka. This is the so-called the Assembly of the School of the Majority.

The second assembly—The Assembly of the School of the Elders emphasized the conservative old systems, while the School of the Majority valued adaptation to the environment of the times. One hundred years after the death of the Buddha, some felt that the

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70 King Ajatasatru was the ruler of Magadha Kingdom when the Buddha was living in the world. When he was the prince, he listened to his wicked friend, Devadatta, and imprisoned his father, King Bimbisara. After he succeeded the throne, he conquered small countries and was feared by all his neighboring countries. But because of his crimes of hurting his father, he had pus and sores all over his body. He went to the Buddha's place to repent and recovered from the illness after it. After that, he converted to the Venerable Sakyamuni and became a powerful protector of the Buddha-truth.

71 The Pippala cave of the Seven-Leaf Crag was in Gijjhakuta Mountain outside Rajagaha. As there were sapta-parna trees, which were commonly-called seven-leaf trees, growing on the crag, the crag cave got its name of "the Pippala cave of the Seven-Leaf Crag."

72 The name "Ananda" means celebrating on joyous occasions. Ananda was the son of Suklodana and the younger brother of Devadatta. He was a cousin of the Buddha and was born on the night when the Buddha entered enlightenment. He followed the Buddha to become a monk and served him for 25 years. He was the disciple to manage affairs for the Buddha and was the most learned among Sakyamuni's ten principal disciples.

73 Upali was originally the barber of Bhadraka, the son of Dronodana. At first, he was a disciple of Nirgrantha, one of the six major non-Buddhist schools of his times, and later he converted to the Buddha. Among Sakyamuni's ten principal disciples, Upali was the best one to observe precepts.

rules of the sila and vinaya were too strict and suggested new rules be made. At that time, the elder Yasa invited seven hundred sagely bhiksus to have a second assembly in Vaisali. The problem was raised at the assembly for discussion but the decision made after the discussion was to continue following the systems handed down by the Venerable Sakyamuni. This was the second assembly.

The third assembly—In 250 BC, as King Asoka deeply believed in Buddha-dharma<sup>74</sup>, non-Buddhist practitioners were not offered enough clothing and food. Therefore, they pretended to be bhiksus, entered sangha, altered Buddhist canons, and messed up meanings of doctrines of Buddhism. Many Buddhists could not tell the difference and were tempted to follow the heterodox views. Sixty thousand bhiksus then gathered together to discuss the problem so as to find out ways to solve it. In the end, they chose one thousand people who mastered Tripitaka, with Tissa Moggaliputta as the leader, and had them gather in Pataliputra to have an assembly, sorted out the correct doctrine of the Buddha, and eliminated Mara monks. This was the third assembly.

The fourth assembly—In 70 BC, Kanishka<sup>75</sup>, the king of Gandhara<sup>76</sup>, greatly adored and believed in Buddha-dharma, and each day he would invite a monk to the palace to speak dharma for him. He found that each monk had a different interpretation of the same sutra title, so he asked Master Parsva<sup>77</sup> about it and got

74 King Asoka—He was the king of Magadha who united the whole India. At first, he believed in Brahmanism, acted violently, and killed his brothers, subordinates, and numerous commoners. But later, he converted to Buddhism and became a great protector of Buddha-dharma, promoting kindness and mercy, making benevolent policies, setting up eighty-four thousand great temples and the same number of stupas in the country, and sending preachers everywhere to teach Buddha-dharma to spread the Buddha truth abroad.

75 King Kanishka was originally a native of Greater Yueh-chih. He conquered the north of India and became a king. At first, he did not believe in Buddhism, but converted to it in his old age. He convened the fourth assembly, built temples and stupas, preserved Tripitaka canons, or had Tripitaka canons inscribed on thin pieces of red copper. His merits and achievements equal those of King Asoka.

76 Gandhara was a country in the west of Kashmir, which is to the northwest of India. The country was surrounded by mountains and was hardly accessible. The only road leading to this hardly accessible country was the most important route connecting China and India in the past.

77 Master Parsva—Because of karmas of his past lives, Master Parsva spent sixty more years in his mother's uterus and when he was born, his hair and beard were white. He became a monk at eighty, swearing and vowing to himself, "If I cannot master Tripitaka, get rid of desires of Three Realms, or obtain six supernatural powers, I will never lay the side of my body on a straw mat." After three years, he fulfilled all his vows and people of his time respectfully called him "Parsva, the Bhiksu" or "the Venerable Parsva."

the answer, “It has been a long time since the death of the Buddha, so the individual opinions of all preachers have infiltrated the sacred books of Buddhism. Now it’s time to have another assembly to collect and fix Buddhist canons to settle this problem.” King Kanishka took his advice and chose five hundred arhats, with Vasumitra Bodhisattva as the leader, to gather in Kasmira. They made one hundred thousand verses for each of the sutra-pitaka, the vinaya-pitaka, and the abhidharma-pitaka, gave the verses the title *Mahavibhāṣa Sastra*, inscribed them on thin pieces of red copper, and built a stupa to keep them. This was the fourth assembly.

The assemblies of Mahayana—The four assemblies introduced above were all held to collect and fix the Tripitaka of Hinayana. According to *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, after the Buddha passed away, Manjushri, Maitreya, and other great Bodhisattvas invited Ananda to Cakravada-parvata to collect and fix Tripitaka, and they are called the the assemblies of Mahayana.

# 34.

## THE THREE PERIODS OF BUDDHA-DHARMA IN INDIA

The Buddha-dharma in India after the death of the Buddha can be divided into three periods, each of which lasted about five hundred years. After the three periods of one thousand five hundred years, Buddhism in India declined.

### **The first period: A period when Hinayana flourished and Mahayana submerged**

Venerable Sakyamuni spoke dharma for forty-five years in his lifetime. Except for the agama period, when he spoke only the scriptures of Hinayana, in the other periods of Avatamsaka, vaipulya, prajna, the Dharma-flower, and Nirvana, the Buddha spoke the scriptures of Mahayana.

Soon after the Buddha passed away, the School of the Elders and the School of Majority separately collected and fixed Hinayana Tripitaka inside and outside of the Pippala cave of the Seven-Leaf Crag, while Manjushri Bodhisattva, Maitreya Bodhisattva, etc. and the Venerable Ananda collected and fixed Mahayana Tripitaka in Cakravada-parvata. Also, quite a portion of the five categories of dharma-treasures: the sutra-pitaka, the vinaya-pitaka, the abhidharma-pitaka, the miscellaneous discourses, and Dharani-pitaka, which were collected and fixed by the School of the Majority outside of the crag cave, belong to Mahayana. They are not purely Hinayana.

However, although Mahayana scriptures had been collected and fixed in Cakravada-parvata and outside the Pippala cave of the Seven-Leaf Crag, during the five hundred years after the Buddha's death, the Buddha-dharma which developed and expanded all over

Indian belonged to Hinayana. In this period, although Mahayana Buddha-dharma was also alternatively taught, because of the popularity of Hinayana scriptures, Mahayana scriptures were hidden and neglected. Therefore, the first five hundred years after the Buddha died can be said to be a time when Hinayana prospered and Mahayana submerged, and these five hundred years is also called the period of the true dharma<sup>78</sup>.

### **The second period: A period when Mahayana was dominant and Hinayana subordinate**

After the first period of five hundred years was over, in the six hundred years after the Buddha's death, Asvaghosa Bodhisattva<sup>79</sup> was born. In his life, he greatly promoted Mahayana Buddha-dharma, and wrote very valuable texts like *The Awakening of Mahayana Faith*<sup>80</sup>, *Sutralamkara-sastra*<sup>81</sup>, etc. so that Mahayana scriptures could start to give light to the world again. At about the time of seven hundred years after the Buddha's death, Nagarjuna<sup>82</sup> and Aryadeva<sup>83</sup> were born. They wrote a variety of sastras to negate the idea of the realistic school of Hinayana that the compositional elements of existence are inherently real, and promoted Mahayana by elaborating on the meaning that all things arise from conditions

78 The period of the true dharma—Although the Buddha died, the dharma and rituals remained the same. There were the aspect of teaching through sutras, that of keeping the vinaya discipline, and people who obtained the fruits of the various stages of attainment. This period is called the period of the true dharma. In all sutras, the time of each period of Venerable Sakyamuni's teaching is recorded differently. But sages in the past mostly agreed that the period of true dharma lasted for five hundred years, the period of semblance dharma one thousand years, and the period of degenerate dharma ten thousand years.

79 Asvaghosa Bodhisattva—He was a native of Central India. At first, he was a non-Buddhist and was very good at debate. He was later converted by the Venerable Parsva to the correct path. He then greatly promoted Buddha-dharma, subdued non-Buddhists, and made the basic meanings of Mahayana known to the world.

80 *The Awakening of Mahayana Faith*—There are two Chinese translations of the text. One was translated into one volume by Master Liang, Chen-ti of the South Dynasty and the other was translated into two volumes by Siksanda of the Tang Dynasty. Liang's translation has been circulated more widely.

81 *Sutralamkara-sastra*—The text was translated into fifteen volumes by Kumarajiva of Yao Qin. In the text, all sorts of comparisons of cause and effect are used to admonish people.

82 Nagarjuna—His name is also translated into “龍猛” in Chinese, meaning “the vigor of a dragon.” He was born in South India and was very learned. His thoughts emphasize the voidness of dharmata and are opposite to those of the school of the reality of all phenomena.

83 Aryadeva—He was a native of South India and a disciple of Nagarjuna. He wrote *The Sata-sastra*, *Catuhstataka*, *The Catuhstataka-sastra-karika*, etc. to explicate the prajna sutras and promote the idea that all dharmas are ultimately void.

and are ultimately void. At about the time of nine hundred years after the Buddha died, under the influence of Nagarjuna's thoughts, most scholars held to voidness and were trapped in the view of denying the law of cause and effect. To amend this, Asanga<sup>84</sup> and Vasubandhu<sup>85</sup> demonstrated the meaning of the absolute reality of Mahayana according to the doctrines and theories of Yoga<sup>86</sup> and Consciousness-only<sup>87</sup>, expounding that seeds can generate all things and the law of cause and effect never fails. With the efforts of these masters, Mahayana Buddha-dharma spread and prospered all over India and Hinayana became subordinate. Therefore, between six hundred years and one thousand years (the second five hundred years) after the Buddha's death, it is the period when Mahayana became dominant and Hinayana subordinate.

### **The third period: A Period when esoteric Buddhism was dominant and exoteric Buddhism subordinate**

After the five hundred years of the second period was over, in about one thousand two hundred years after the Buddha's death, Treatise Master Bhavaviveka of the Mahayana madhyamaka school negated Yogacara based on the meaning of the ultimate voidness.

84 Asanga—He was a native of Gandhara (in the west of Kashmir). He first became a monk of the Five Part Vinaya and converted to Mahayana. At night, he ascended to the Inner Court of Tusita to learn the discourses on *Yoga* and *Mahayanasutralamkara* from Maitreya. In the daytime, he descended from heavens and spoke dharma for people. He was the first patriarch of the "Dharma-character" school. He followed Maitreya's Yoga doctrines and taught *Yogacara-bhumi*, *Mahayanasutra-lamkara-tika*, *Madhyanta-vibhaga-tika*, etc., and wrote *Abhidharma* of the Mahayana, *Prakaranaryavaca-sastra*, *Abhidharma-sastra*, etc. to widely expound the profound meanings of Consciousness-only of Dharma-character.

85 Vasubandhu—His name is also translated into Chinese as "天親," meaning "akin to the gods." He was the brother of Asanga. He wrote *Abhidharma-kosa*, *Vidyamatrasiddhi-vimsakakarika-sastra*, *Buddha-nature Treatise*, *Dasabhumi-vyakhyana*, *Maha-parinirvana-sutra-sastra*, etc. Altogether, he wrote five hundred works in volumes for Hinayana and the same number of works in volumes for Mahayana to promote the doctrines of Mahayana realistic school, and was thus called the master of a thousand works in volumes.

86 Yoga—It refers to *The One-hundred-volume Yogacara-bhumi*, which was spoken by Maitreya, recorded by Asanga, and translated by Xuanzang of the Tang Dynasty. It is the fundamental discourse of the study of Consciousness-only, expounding the absolute reality and not the unreality of the nature of all things. In the book, there is an exposition of the seventeen spiritual ranks of a Yoga master and that's how the book got its name.

87 Consciousness-only—Consciousness-only means that all dharmas in the world are manifested only by consciousness, and that no dharma can be separated from consciousness. The Dharma-character school is exactly the study of consciousness-only, which refers to the functions of generating all things in Alaya-vijana as seeds, for they are just like the seeds of plants that can produce flowers and fruits.

On the other hand, Treatise Master Dharmapala of the Mahayana Yogacara school also negated the madhyamaka school based on the meaning of transitory existence of things. Their disciples continued the debate and therefore there were arguments between ultimate voidness and transitory existence, which caused the schism of Mahayana thoughts and formally divided Mahayana into two schools of madhyamaka and Yogacara. And at this time, Hinayana was in a state of gradual decline.

At this time, Nagabodhi Bodhisattva taught and promoted dharanis, using dharanis to interfuse customs in India, and dharanis gradually flourished. At this time, both Mahayana and Hinayana Buddha-dharma widely circulated because of dharanis. In about one thousand three hundred years after the Buddha's death, due to the revival of Brahmanism in India and the introduction of Islam to India, Buddha-dharma gradually declined and almost disappeared in the territory of India. The five hundred years of the third period can be said to be a time when esoteric Buddhism was dominant and exoteric Buddhism subordinate.

On the next page is a diagram of the three periods of Buddha-dharma in India after the Buddha died:

**Three Periods of Buddha-dharma in India**

The first five hundred years	— The period of prosperous Hinayana and obscure Mahayana	— spreading to Ceylon, Siam, etc.	— in Pali
The second five hundred years	— The period when Mahayana was dominant and Hinayana subordinate	— spreading to China, and then to Korea and Japan	— in Chinese
The third five hundred years	— The period when Esoteric Buddhism was dominant and Exoteric Buddhism subordinate	— spreading to Tibet and then to Mongolia, etc.	— in Tibetan





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# 35.

## THE INTRODUCTION OF BUDDHA-DHARMA TO CHINA

According to historical records, it was in the Later Han Dynasty that Buddha-dharma was first introduced to China. But actually before that time, Buddha-dharma had already entered China. Confucius was once quoted by Lie Zi, “I have heard that in the west there are sages who do not manage people but things are in order, who do not speak but people have faith in themselves, who do not educate but people know how to behave. Their greatness is as broad and far as can be so that people cannot name how great they are.” From this passage, we can infer that Confucius already knew about the existence of Buddhas. And according to *The Table of Contents of Translations of Buddhist Sutras* compiled by Chu, Shi-hsing, “In the fourth year of the King of Qin, eighteen venerable sramanas from western countries first came to China bringing Buddhist sutras with them. The king considered them weird-looking and put them in jail. Soon after that, he expelled them from the country.” From this record, we know that before the king of Qin became the emperor Qin Shi Huang, sramanas and Buddhist sutras had already entered Qin. As it is recorded in *Histories of Buddhism and Taoism in Wei of the Northern dynasties*, “In the past, when Emperor Wu of Han set out on a round of tour of official calls, Huo, Qubing got a gift of a gold man from King Hun-ye. The gold man was more than ten feet high and the emperor thought it a great god so he put it inside the Sweet Fountain Palace and burned incense to worship it.” From this passage, we know that at the time of Emperor Wu of Han, Buddha statues had already entered China. But these historical records can only be considered the proofs of the beginning of the entrance of Buddhism to China, and at that time Buddhism had not

yet been formally taught and promoted in China.

It was not until the seventh year of Yongping in the Eastern Han dynasty, when Emperor Ming dreamed of a gold man flying above the palace court with a halo around his head. The next morning, the emperor asked his ministers what an auspicious sign it was. The court historian Fu, Yi replied, "It is recorded in 'Narration of Differences' in *Book of Zhou*: that at the time of King Zhao of the Zhou dynasty, there were five-color luminous beams of light penetrating through the place where noblemen and ministers dwelled. The court historian Su, You reported to the king, 'the auspicious sign showed up because a great sage had been born in the west and one thousand years later, the teachings of the great sage could be heard in this land.' The king ordered the whole thing to be inscribed on a stone. What Your Majesty dreamed was this." Hearing this, Emperor Ming sent eighteen officials, including Langzhong Tsai, Yin, Boshi Wang, Zun, Zhonglangjiang Qin, Jing, etc., on a mission to seek Buddha-dharma. When arriving in Yueh-chih, they met two sages, Kasyapa Matanga and Indu-dharmaranya, who put Buddhist sutras and Buddha images on horsebacks and were on their way to China to spread Buddha-dharma. Consequently, they invited the two sages to go back to China with them. In the tenth year of Yongping, the two sages arrived in Luoyang and stayed in Honglu Temple<sup>88</sup> for a while, and later White Horse Temple was set up for them to dwell in. Then, the two sages translated *The Sutra in Forty-two Chapters*. This was the time when China first had Buddhist temples and translations of Buddhist sutras (A temple was a government office in the Han dynasty. It was not a place to worship deities but a highest-

88 Honglu Temple: Honglu was the title of an official. In the Zhou dynasty, it was called Xingren, who was the ceremonial official in charge of courtiers' morning meetings with the emperor and ambassadors' visits of the country. In Qin, it was called Dianke, who was in charge of affairs of the dukes and princes and the surrendered barbarians and whose missions were similar to those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today. A temple was an office resided by officials and all the places resided by government officials were called temples. In the beginning, the name was only used to call government offices. But since Kasyapa Matanga and Indu-dharmaranya came to Luoyang, stayed for a while at Honglu Temple and later dwelled in White Horse Temple, people have been specifically referring to the dwelling places of monks and nuns as temples.

level unit directly managed by the emperor. The emperor was in charge of nine temples, whose chiefs were called Qing. After Buddhism entered China, one more temple was set up and there were altogether ten temples. And the tenth temple was the Buddhist Temple).

The new coming Buddhism was so much worshipped and protected by the imperial court that it made Taoists, who cultivated themselves in the Five Sacred Mountains, feel jealous. They reported to the emperor, “Your Majesty has given up the most important thing to pursue the least important thing in asking for the teachings of Indian monks. We are afraid that this is not the Great Way. In the Five Sacred Mountains, we have many clever, wise and learned practitioners who are expert in canons. You may give us tests. We are all expert in canons and incantations. For example, we can use charms that take us to the Universe, and by swallowing paper charms and breaths, we can control ghosts and deities to work for us and remain unburnt in fires and undrowned in water. We wish to compete with the two Indian monks.” The emperor granted their wish. He chose a day to have three stages built in the south of White Horse Temple, on each stage separately put Buddhist canons, Taoist canons, and sariras of the Buddha<sup>89</sup>, and then ordered the three stages to be burned. All the Taoist canons were burned to ashes, while the Buddhist canons were shining brightly in the fire, not being burnt at all. Kasyapa Matanga and Indu-dharmaranya jumped up to the skies and showed miraculous transformations, saying a chant, “A fox does not belong to the species of lions. A lamp does not give light as bright as the sunlight and the moonbeams. A pond does not have the amount of water of the sea. A hill is not as glorious as a high mountain. The clouds of

<sup>89</sup> Sariras of the Buddha: After Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, arhats, eminent monks, etc. entered nirvana and their bodies are cremated, sariras are found among the cremated ashes. Some are pearl-like, and some are like flowers. White sariras are relics of bones, red ones are those of flesh and blood, black ones are those of hair, and mix-colored ones are those of mixed body parts. How beautiful the sariras are depends on one's cultivation of discipline, meditation and wisdom in his/her lifetime, and they are the congregation of immeasurable merits and virtues. If it is the sariras of the Buddha, nothing in the world can damage it. The hardness of the sariras of a Bodhisattva is less than those of a Buddha's, etc.

Buddha-dharma cover the skies of the whole world and the rain of Buddha-dharma waters all the tender shoots. Buddha-dharma is demonstrated in all ordinary and rare things and converts and salves sentient beings everywhere.”

At this sight, the six hundred and twenty-eight Taoist priests instantly converted to Buddhism. Two hundred sixty people, including Liu, Jun, the Minister of public works, three hundred ninety scholars and commoners, Madam Yin of the imperial palace, and one hundred ninety palace maids, including Wang, Jie, a female official, also saw these miraculous transformations and begged to become monks or nuns, for they wanted to attain to the holy fruit as well. Consequently, Emperor Ming ordered ten temples to be built, with seven outside of the city for monks and three inside the city for nuns. And at that time, the Three Precious Ones, i.e., the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha were complete and thus Buddha-dharma greatly flourished.



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# 36.

## REASONS WHY BUDDHISM IS DIVIDED INTO VARIOUS SECTS

Buddha-dharma is both immense and subtle. It is inclusive of a myriad of things and all the mundane and transmundane dharmas. Raising eyebrows and blinking eyes or carrying water tanks and chopping firewood are very common things people do in the world. But when we come to think of why people can do all these things, we cannot get a reasonable and wholly complete answer without delving into the sutra-pitaka and thoroughly learning the Consciousness-only of the dharma-character school. Therefore, if the nature and form and the substance and function of something are not explained with Buddha-dharma, be it as vast as the whole universe or as small as a grain of sand, it will always remain a mystery.

Since Buddha-dharma was introduced to China, it has been divided into various sects. The reasons for it can be summed up as follows. The first reason is that the doctrines of Tripitaka were written down in so many books and volumes that it is difficult for people to study Tripitaka without putting the numerous texts into various categories. The second reason is that doctrines vary and sometimes they are contrary to one another. When two conflicting doctrines are put together, they become senseless. But when they are separated, each of them can function very well by itself. The third reason is that sentient beings have different natural capacities and they have to follow the right doctrine to correct their specific kind of force of habit. Consequently, the doctrines have to be put into various categories for people of various natural capacities to choose from. The fourth reason is that a clear and simple system of categorization has to be set up so that the numerous texts of

Tripitaka can be more easily passed down to the future generations. The fifth reason is that Buddha-dharma is simply too vast and profound for one to master and achieve something in such a short lifetime. If one can persistently and earnestly follow just one method to the utmost, it will be easier for him/her to approach Buddha-dharma and make achievement. The sixth reason is that eminent monks of the past had their different methods of practice and realization handed down by their patriarchs, and as a result, their methods of teaching disciples would be different. Therefore, Buddhists following different masters unavoidably set up their own sects. The above six reasons are why Buddhism is divided into various sects. Some people may think that having various sects in Buddhism is a schism of Buddhism, but actually it works as teamwork. It is just like a hospital. Although there are various divisions like Division of General Medicine, Ophthalmology, Division of Otolaryngology, etc. in it, yet only with various divisions can the hospital function as a whole and complete system.

Buddha-dharma in the three periods in India was already roughly complete and had inheritances of dharma similar to sects. For example, Asanga and Vasubandhu's teaching and promoting Consciousness-only, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva's teaching and promoting the Three Sastras, Kasyapa and Ananda's teaching and promoting dhyana methods, and Nagabodhi and Subhakarasiṃha's teaching and promoting esoteric methods. But they had not yet intentionally set up distinct sects. When Buddha-dharma entered China, however, as a result of the analysis and categorization of many masters that led Buddhists to the Way, thirteen sects of Buddhism were set up. They were Abhidharma sect and Satyasiddhi sect of Hinayana, and vinaya sect, dhyana sect, pureland sect, Avatamsaka sect, Tiantai sect, Dharmalaksana sect, the three sastra sect, Mantra sect, Dasabhumika<sup>90</sup> sect, Nirvana sect<sup>91</sup>,

90 Dasabhumika: It is a short name for *Dasabhumikasutra-sastra*. It is a treatise on "The Chapter of the ten spiritual ranks" in the sixth part of *Avatamsaka Sutra*. There had been Dasabhumika sect, but when Avatamsaka sect greatly flourished in the Middle Tang, Dasabhumika sect merged into it and no longer existed as a sect.

91 Nirvana sect: The sect was based on the teachings of The *Nirvana Sutra* to promote the idea of the

and Mahayana-samparigraha-sastra sect<sup>92</sup> of Mahayana. Later, Dasabhumika sect merged into Avatamsaka sect; Nirvana sect merged into Tiantai sect; and Mahayana-samparigraha-sastra sect merged into Dharmalaksana sect. Thus, Mahayana had only eight sects left and together with the two Hinayana sects, there were ten Buddhist sects, which made up an outline of Buddha-dharma in China.

*In The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment*, Superb Power Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “The World’s most Venerable One, it is just like a big city with four gates for comers to go through into it, and there is more than one route to choose from. Similarly, there is more than one expedient method for a practitioner to choose from with all the magnificent lands of Buddhas and so many dharma gates to help one attain to Bodhi. But I only pray for the World’s most Venerable One to tell us how many different kinds of expedient and step-by-step methods and how many different types of practitioners there are. By doing so, Bodhisattvas in this assembly and sentient beings in the third and last period of this Buddha-kalpa who seek Mahayana can become enlightened soon and play in the great tathagata sea of calmness and stillness.” This passage clearly points out that there is more than one method to learn Buddha-dharma, and there are a variety of expedient doctrines for cultivation. Consequently, it is unavoidable to have sects. Now that all doctrines lead to unsurpassed Bodhi, all sects and schools are just like several tens of thousands of streams and brooks flowing to the sea. Each of the practitioners can actually choose his/her own suitable method and way to attain enlightenment without conflicting with one another.

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permanent Buddha-nature. It flourished during the time of the six dynasties, the Sui dynasty, and the Tang dynasty. Later, when Tiantai sect, which was based on the teachings of The *Lotus Sutra* and The *Nirvana Sutra*, began to flourish, this sect merged into it and no longer existed.

92 Mahayana-samparigraha-sastra sect: It was a sect which flourished in the Chen and the Sui dynasty to promote Asanga Bodhisattva’s *The Mahayana-samparigraha-sastra*. However, when Dharmalaksana sect began to flourish, the sect was no longer passed down and inherited.



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# 37.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF BUDDHISTS

[37. to 41. explain that because Buddha-dharma exists in the mundane world, it does not leave the awareness of the world. It is an enlightened life, not a passive, retreating, and superstitious religious belief.]

Buddhism is a religion for all humans and people of all races and classes can benefit from Buddha-dharma. But since humans have different natures, characters, and aspirations, in order to fit different innate qualities of humans, the Buddha spoke a wide variety of doctrines for believers to follow and carry out. Thus, followers of different doctrines become different types of Buddhists.

Some, having heard Buddha-dharma, understand that all things are produced by causes and conditions and they have grasped the right and inevitable law of cause and effect and known that retributions of good and bad karmas are exact, clear and inescapable. Thus, in their minds, there arises the desire to advance onto the next level of spirituality. These people cannot stand to become depraved and thus vow to improve themselves all the time. They uphold Triratna and keep the Five Commandments and the Ten Commandments, trying their best to cultivate their thoughts and behaviors and create better and happier conditions for their present and future life, following the law of retribution of karma and that of cause and effect. Buddhists of this type are the practitioners of the doctrines of the human and the deva vehicle.

Some, having heard Buddha-dharma, further understand that a rich and happy life can never last long and that all sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, and death are constantly around us. Thus, there arises in their minds strong detestation for the mundane life and they want to rid themselves of afflictions of birth and death right away. Therefore, they cultivate themselves by following



the law of the four truths and the thirty-seven conditions leading to Buddhahood in Buddha-dharma. Buddhists of this type are practitioners of the sravaka vehicle. And those who cultivate the law of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination are practitioners of the pratyekabuddha vehicle, who awaken to the truth of life and reach enlightenment with the knowledge of these twelve nidanas.

Still another type of people, having heard Buddha-dharma, understand that all things in life and the universe have conditioned geneses and depend on one another for existence and that all people are closely connected with us and have done us great acts of kindness. So these people cannot bear to leave others alone to seek enlightenment by themselves, feeling that the more sufferings there are in life, the greater necessity there is for them to save others. Therefore, they have made the great resolution of Bodhi to save all sentient beings. They make great efforts to cultivate the Six Paramitas and consider it true happiness only if they can serve all sentient beings, suffer infinite suffering in their stead, and let all sentient beings obtain the ultimate joy. Buddhists of this type are practitioners of the Bodhisattva vehicle.

The type of Buddhists following the human and the deva vehicle are attached to life and they do not have a sublime aspiration for a higher level of spirituality. On the other hand, the type of Buddhists following the sravaka and the pratyekabuddha vehicle wish to be reclusive and seek liberation from their own suffering. The type of Buddhists following the Bodhisattva vehicle, however, are engaged in the mundane world without becoming attached to it. Also, they transcend the mundane world but do not just seek liberation by themselves. They sacrifice themselves to serve the society, benefit and save all sentient beings, following the teachings of the Buddha and spreading the Buddha's spirit of saving the world. They are indeed good models for Buddhists.



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# 38.

## GUIDELINES OF LIFE FOR A BUDDHIST ORDER

Although there are seven groups of Buddhist disciples, there is a common standard for guidelines for Buddhist disciples who live together as a group. The standard is the six points of reverent harmony in a monastery or convent. It is these six rules that allow Buddhists to live a pure, clean, equal, mutually-respectful, harmonious and happy life together.

(1) The reverent harmony of acts and behaviors: When Buddhists live in the same place, they must have pure and clean karmas operating in the body so that they can get along harmoniously with one another without rude acts and behaviors such as frictions, fighting, etc.

(2) The reverent harmony of speech: When Buddhists live in the same place, they must have pure and clean karmas produced by speech. In other words, they should speak politely and gently in a pleasant and lovable voice and avoid evil or rude speeches, which make other people feel displeased and consequently lead to quarrels and fights.

(3) The reverent harmony of mind: When Buddhists live in the same place, they must have pure and clean function of mind. In other words, they must have good intentions, frankness, and tolerance for others. When something happy and fortunate happens, they should share the joy together and not ignore the feelings of others or even make others miserable for the sake of their personal pleasures and joy.

(4) The reverent harmony of precepts: Although each of the seven groups of Buddhist disciples has precepts of its own, Buddhists in the same group have communal disciplines to keep. Take the example of a sangha. There are two hundred fifty rules for

bhiksus in a sangha to follow. So, each bhiksu in the sangha should have the lawful spirit and follow the rules as required.

(5) The reverent harmony of benefits: Benefits include benefits of riches and those of dharma. No matter they are economic benefits of riches or intellectual benefits of dharma, they should be distributed impartially among members of the group and enjoyed equally by them so that there will not be conflicts caused by a member's selfish behaviors, such as putting one's interest above the others, favoring one and discriminating the others in the group, etc. Possessions of a Buddhist group can never become personal belongings. If this happens, it will cause disputes among members and in turn endanger the existence of the Buddhist group.

(6) The reverent harmony of views: This means that Buddhists of the same group should have unified views so that the power of the group will not be weakened. Otherwise, the group will not be pure and clean and will become scattered and powerless, incapable of achieving anything, with all the different views of its members who obstinately insist on their own views, thinking that they are better than others.

Actually, these six points of reverent harmony can be summarized into two kinds: harmony of the fundamental principle and that of practice. The reverent harmony of views means that the original reality nature, i.e., the truth of life and the universe, understood by everybody in the group is the same one and there cannot be any difference. With the same realization of the original reality nature, the views of all members of the group will naturally be unified. Thus, the reverent harmony of views is harmony of the fundamental principle. And the rest five points of reverent harmony belong to harmony of practice, for when thoughts are unified, actions and behaviors will be unified as well, which is but natural. Therefore, the six ways for Buddhist practitioners to live in harmony and remain sensitive and caring towards each other are not just the guidelines of life for Buddhist groups but can also serve as the guidelines of life for all groups in the society.

The greatest advantage of a sangha following the six points of reverent harmony is that besides emphasizing the lawful spirit of the first four points, the Buddha also highlighted the economic equality and unity of thoughts in the last two points. Of course, a wholesome group cannot go without lawful spirit, but not emphasizing even distribution of material resources and economic equality and ignoring unity of thoughts can become a fatal wound that eventually decomposes and breaks up this group. This is because most causes of fights, from those of a group to those of the world, are uneven distributions of economic benefits and differences in the fundamental thoughts. But more than two thousand and five hundred years ago, the Buddha already set up guidelines for living together in a group and highlighted the essential factors of people's getting along peacefully with others. Actually, no other guidelines for living a group life in the following generations can go beyond these six points of reverent harmony. The Buddha's wisdom and ability are truly rarely found and amazing.



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# 39.

## BELIEF IN SERVING OTHERS OF BUDDHISM

The Buddha said, “We should know about favors that others have done us and repay them.” We should always keep in mind all the favors someone has done us and try our best to repay him/her. Ungratefulness is something that the Buddha severely reprimanded.

But who has done us favors? The Buddha said that there are four kinds of favors: (1) favors of our parents, (2) favors of our country, (3) favors of sentient beings, (4) favors of Buddhas.

In our family, the ones that have done us greatest favors are our parents, who have given life to us, brought us up, and taught us, and their favors are as high as mountains and as deep as the sea. Therefore, we should be filial to them and support them richly when they are old. This is called repaying our parents’ favors.

Our country is where we grow up and where our parents and ancestors grew up. Our lives and property depend on the protection of our country. Therefore, our country has done us great favors. We should love it and be loyal to it to repay the favors of our country.

The rice we eat daily is grown by farmers and the cloth we wear is woven by factory workers. Just come to think of it, we literally get everything we need in our life from other people’s hard work. In a society, where everything arises from conditional causation and people help one another, all people are helpful to us and have done us favors. This is true with not only humans, but animals. Dogs keep us company and watch out for dangers for us. Cows give us milk and in some places, buffalos plough rice paddies for us. Even earthworms, which seem to have little connection with us, dig earth day and night and make fields arable. Thus, all sentient beings have done us favors, so we should protect them to repay their favors.

The three kinds of favors given to us by our family, our country, and finally the world and the universe, despite having different connections with us and covering different scopes, have done great favors to our physical life. But besides these, our spiritual life owes great favors to Sakyamuni Buddha, who taught us to realize the truth, leave the Three Realms, get rid of afflictions to obtain joy, and know how to live as a worthy person. Therefore, we should believe in and be respectful to the Buddha to return his grace.

As we owe so much to the Buddha, all humans, and all sentient beings, we should make full requital to them all. Therefore, we don't earn any credits when we help others without thinking of ourselves or give all we have to serve our family, our country, human beings and Buddhism. We are just doing what we should do to requite grace and favors and this is but our responsibility. This is the reason why we say that the purpose of life is service. Actually, we should establish a philosophy of life of serving others based on the thought of repaying favors and grace.



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# 40.

## THE PURPOSE AND MISSION OF LEARNING BUDDHISM

Whatever we do, there must be a purpose for it. If we do not set up a goal when we do something, not only do we waste our time and energy but the result will also be unsatisfactory. We may even have many regrets that create misfortunes and sorrows for the rest of our life.

This is also true with learning Buddhism. But what is the purpose of learning Buddhism? Simply put, the purpose is to change delusion into enlightenment and leave sufferings and obtain joy.

“Delusion” and “enlightenment” are nouns with the opposite meaning to each other. Delusion refers to not being enlightened, and enlightenment means not being deluded. If not being deluded, one becomes a holy person; if not being enlightened, one becomes an ordinary person. Ordinary people are foolish and know neither the true original nature of things as they are nor the impermanent phenomena arising from causal conditions in the universe. Therefore, they hold on to an inherent ego and things as realities, become deluded and create karmas, and forever wander between births and deaths in the sea of suffering. A Buddha refers to an awakened one, who is enlightened without delusion and has great wisdom and a thorough understanding of both the true original nature of things as they are and the phenomena arising from causal conditions in the universe, and who knows that all things arise from causal conditions and their nature is void without an inherent ego. With the great wisdom, a Buddha does not hold on to a discriminating mind that lays hold of cognized objects to create more bad karmas and incur afflictions and physical and mental

suffering. This is the boundary between delusion and enlightenment and the difference between a sage and an ordinary person.

Therefore, the purpose of learning Buddhism is none other than turning delusion into enlightenment and turning an ordinary person into a holy person. But what is delusion and what is enlightenment? Simply put, we are deluded because we are blind to the truth of reality and don't know the ways and methods of cultivating discipline, meditation and wisdom, and have afflictions of greed, resentment, and ignorance instead. Contrarily, being enlightened means being awakened to the truth and seeing Buddha-nature, clearly knowing phenomena, and thereupon taking precepts, learning meditation and then cultivating wisdom. In this way, an enlightened one can break loose from the snare of ignorance, cut off the origin of birth and death, attain nirvana on the other shore, and have the surpassing function of leaving suffering and obtaining joy.

Leaving suffering and obtaining joy is the purpose of learning Buddhism and it is also the rare and extraordinary wonderful result of reaching Buddhahood. Life is full of various kinds of suffering, but they can be summed up into two: suffering caused by material things and that caused by spiritual things. When people have tattered clothes, scant food, and broken shelters, and do not have any means of transport, they suffer for lacking in material things. On the other hand, spiritual suffering is caused by desires, for when desires arise and cannot be fulfilled, it causes suffering. And desires are endless and insatiable. For instance, a poor man wants money; after having some money, he wants to have children; after having children, he wants to be an important government official; and after that, he wants to have longevity. Take Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor in China, for example. He sent Xu Fu<sup>93</sup> to the sea to seek

93 Another name for Xu Fu is Xu Shi. He was a native of Qi and claimed himself to be a Taoist priest. He told Qin Shi Huang, "There are three gods' mountains in the sea: Penglai, Fangzhang, and Yingzhou, where many immortals are living. I am willing to go to the sea to look for these immortals for Your Majesty and implore them to tell the secrets of becoming immortal. But before that, I will fast and then take thousands of virgin boys and girls with me with enough supplies of food." On hearing it, Shi Huang felt immensely excited, so he sent people to recruit thousands of boys and girls, offered a lot of food, and ordered Xu Fu to seek immortals in the sea. But when Xu Fu found an island in



the fabled elixir of life. Another example is Emperor Wu of Han<sup>94</sup>, who, wanting to be immortal, summoned alchemists to make pills of immortality for him. But desires in life are essentially empty and any wish for immortality is vain. Not only is it hard to satisfy one's desires, but, more often than not, pursuing them makes people feel deeply regretful and painful.

Thus, to save people in the world from suffering, we advocate learning Buddhism, for Buddha-dharma teaches people to have a pure mind without unneeded desires and liberates them from afflictions. However, in order to become physically and mentally quiet and peaceful without many desires for being satisfied with what one has, people must realize that the nature of all things is void and that all things are produced by causal conditions without an inherent ego. With the understanding, people will see all things in the world clearly and will not argue and fight with others, which already helps them get rid of a lot of avoidable afflictions even in the present life. If they can further cultivate themselves by following the three studies of discipline, meditation, and wisdom and cut off the habit energies of the three poisons of greed, resentment, and ignorance, they can obtain the joy of the liberating supramundane nirvana.

But the mission of learning Buddhism is not just getting rid of our own suffering and looking for happiness for ourselves. We should universally help liberate all sentient beings from suffering and make them obtain joy. In the present life, we should have fewer desires and be satisfied with what we have to reduce the pain of afflictions or cultivate the methods of discipline, meditation, and wisdom to attain nirvana, which is the very purpose we want to fulfill by passively reducing desires and afflictions. But after fulfilling this purpose, we should assume a proactive attitude to

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the sea, he stayed there with the thousands of boys and girls without return, while Shi Huang was waiting day and night for the coming of immortals but not even getting any message from him. In the end, only after twelve years in his throne, Qin Shi Huang died at the palace in Shaqiu.

94 Emperor Wu of Han was the most powerful emperor of the Han dynasty. He built magnificent palaces and had a superstitious belief in fairies and immortals. As he wished to become immortal, he summoned alchemists to make pills of immortality.

serve the society by instructing it, transforming and delivering it, and we should create welfare for the public in our society and make them capable of reaching the state of leaving suffering and obtaining joy. It is just like what the Buddha said, “If I do not go to hells to save sentient beings there, who will?” It is also like what Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva<sup>95</sup> said, “I vow not to be a Buddha before hells become empty. Only after all sentient beings in there are saved will I attain Bodhi.” If people learning Buddhism can act like this, then not only have they fulfilled the purpose of learning Buddhism, but they have also accomplished the mission of learning Buddhism.

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<sup>95</sup> Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva—Before the Buddha entered final nirvana, he went to the Trayastrimsa heaven to speak dharma for his mother to return her grace. He also bade the devas to protect and maintain Buddha-dharma and advised Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva to save sentient beings in his stead in the age of the decline of the dharma until Maitreya Bodhisattva reaches Buddhahood. Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva’s taking the responsibility of transforming and delivering sentient beings in hells has the cause and condition of his original vows. When he was still in the incarnation of the bright-eyed daughter, to save her mother from suffering in hells, the sacred girl vowed before the image of the Pure-and-Clean-Lotus-Flower-Eyed Tathagata that if she could not save all the sentient beings there, she would not become a Buddha. This is the vow, “I vow not to be a Buddha before hells become empty. Only after all sentient beings in there are saved will I attain Bodhi.” Another evidence of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva’s transforming teaching was in 696 AD, when Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva was in the incarnation of Kim Gyo-gak, a prince of Silla. When Kim Gyo-gak was twenty-four, he was tonsured to become a monk and took his white dog named Good at Hearing with him aboard a ship, which sailed across the sea to Jiuhua mountain of Tang, to cultivate the Way. He sat still for seventy-five years and once entered into meditation for twenty years. A reverend gentleman named Min offered him Jiuhua Mountain as his place of practice and his son also followed Kim Gyo-gak to become a monk, named Taoming. And later, the reverend gentleman Min also became a monk. Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva lived in the world for ninety-nine years (with seventy-five years as a monk) . He entered into final nirvana on the thirtieth day of the seventh month in the lunar calendar. His body was put in a stone box, which people opened many years later only to find the amazing miracle that the physical body of the monk was intact and his face was as if he had still been living. In the second year of Jite of Emperor Su, a stupa was built to house the physical body of the monk. When the construction of the stupa was finished, it shone brightly like being on fire. Therefore, the construction site of the stupa was called the Ridge of Light of Immortals.



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# 41.

## BUDDHISM AS THE BUDDHA'S PERFECT AND WHOLLY COMPLETE EDUCATION

### **(1) What is Buddhism?**

What on earth is Buddhism? People learning Buddhism cannot practice it without knowing the answer. Buddhism is actually the education of the Buddha. It is the perfect and wholly complete education the Buddha gives to all the sentient beings in nine dharma realms and this education covers endless and boundless phenomena and their underlying principles and is richer in content than the curricula of a university today. In terms of time, it talks about past, present, and future; and in terms of space, it deals with the life we have right in our sight and keeps going to the boundless worlds in the universe. Therefore, Buddhism is a teaching and an education instead of a religion. It is an education of wisdom and awakening to the truth of the universe and life. The education of Confucius in China is about one period of life, from birth to death, while Buddha-dharma is an education of the triple world of past, present, and future.

Is Buddhism really an education? If we make a close observation, the doubt will be dismissed. In our daily life, only in education do people call each other a teacher or a student. And the fact that we call Sakyamuni Buddha our original teacher shows that this education was set up by him and that he was the first founder of this education. We call ourselves disciples, which was how students in the old times of China called themselves. From the ways we address ourselves and the Buddha, we know that our relationship with the Buddha is that of a teacher and students. In addition, our relationship with Bodhisattvas is that of schoolmates.

Bodhisattvas were the Buddha's students in earlier times and we are the Buddha's students now. Bodhisattvas and we are schoolmates of the earlier and the present time and we should clearly know that Bodhisattvas are our schoolmates many years ahead of us. In our daily life, we usually call monks "heshangs," but in fact there is only one heshang in each temple. The word is actually the Chinese translation of Upadhyaya in Indian, which means a preceptor, a teacher teaching and guiding us personally like an advisor in university today, who instructs us directly and has a very close relationship with us. If a teacher does not guide us directly, we call him/her a master of the Law, who is just like one of the teachers in the same school that neither gives us classes nor personally guides us. This is the difference between a heshang and a master. We call teachers who help the heshang to teach us acaryas, whose speeches and behaviors can serve as examples for us to follow. These titles for teachers are found only in education, not in religion. From this fact, we can prove that Buddhism is an education rather than a religion.

In terms of the organization of Buddhist places of practice, temples are educational institutes teaching Buddhism and Buddhist arts, and they are very much like a combination of schools and museums of today. This form of education is what is called art teaching in modern times. Modern people have a great interest in art and over two thousand years ago Buddhism already carried out art teaching. Furthermore, the organization of a temple is similar to that of a school in modern times. The heshang, i.e., the abbot, is similar to the head of a school, and his responsibilities are making teaching policies, deciding curricula, and employing teachers. Working under the heshang to help him are three people. In Buddhism, they are called "principle-guiding executives," who are in charge of three departments separately. The one in charge of affairs of studies is called the First Seat; the one in charge of disciplinary affairs is called the arranger of duties; and the one in charge of general affairs is called the temple supervisor. The

titles are different from those we find in a school but the affairs they handle are the same as the affairs of studies, student affairs, and general affairs of a modern school. Therefore, we can see that the organization of a temple is indeed that of a school, and a very complete one. In the past, a Buddhist university was called a jungle in China. So, from the origin of Buddhism to the establishment of Buddhism in China, we can see that Buddhism is indeed an educational system, which is a fact we should recognize clearly before we know what we are learning.

The system of a Buddhist temple is like the combination of a school and a museum. In modern times, schools and museums are separate but Buddhist temples have a special structure of combining schools with museums. All arts in Buddhism are not simply artistic works but have a deep significance in teaching and are high in spirituality and wisdom, which ordinary beings cannot see and understand. Take Buddha and Bodhisattva images for example. When people see so many images of gods and goddesses, many of them may think that this is a low religion of pantheism, for there should be only one God for a high religion. But what he does not know is that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas commemorated and worshipped in Buddhism are not gods but they represent doctrines. There are boundless and limitless things in the world, and it is impossible to express them all with just one image or in just one way. Therefore, they are expressed in many different artistic works. When we really understand the special meaning of Buddhist arts in education, we will not treat Buddhism as a religion of pantheism and will naturally admire it.

All Buddhas represent virtues possessed by our original nature, and all bodhisattvas and arhats represent virtues attained through practice. Without cultivation, although we all possess virtues in our original nature, they cannot be manifested and function. Therefore, the manifestation of virtues possessed by our original nature depends on virtues attained through practice. And as Bodhisattvas represent cultivation and Buddhas represent original

nature, normally a Buddhist temple sustains and commemorates the images of one Buddha and two Bodhisattvas. The one Buddha statue represents the suchness of original nature and the two Bodhisattva statues represent the functions of reality-nature. The original nature is void and it is the substance, while its function is phenomenal. The substance is void and still, but it can manifest phenomena. And when the substance manifests phenomena, it is functioning. Bodhisattvas represent phenomena and their functioning. Buddhas represent the substance. This is why in *Avatamsaka Sutra* the Buddha did not speak dharma—for the substance is void and still and naturally does not have anything to say—and instead a Bodhisattva spoke dharma—for when the original nature is functioning, speeches can be made. It is possible to talk about phenomena and functions, but it is impossible to say anything about substance. Not only is the substance incapable of speeches, it does not even have a thought. As it is said, “You are wrong when you open your mouth, and mistaken when you even have a thought.” This is about the substance. Buddhas represent the substance, so in a temple, one Buddha statue is sustained and commemorated. But why sustain two Bodhisattva statues that represent functions of the substance? Actually, there are two categories of the boundless and unlimited phenomena and their functions: one is knowledge and the other is action, i.e., understanding and doing. Wang, Yangming’s advocating the theory of putting knowledge and action together actually came from Buddhism. Buddhism maintains that understanding corresponds with doing, and the old gentleman changed it into “Knowledge and action become one” and then had his own philosophical idea. But actually, his philosophy completely comes and changes from Buddha-dharma. Understanding and doing are principles and phenomena. Usually, we sustain and worship Sakyamuni Buddha, who represents the substance. And on the two sides of Sakyamuni Buddha are statues of two arhats—the Venerable Ananda and the Venerable Kasyapa. The Venerable Ananda was the most

learned one among the Buddha's disciples, and he represents "understanding" and wisdom. The Venerable Kasyapa was the toughest practitioner of austerities among the Buddha's disciples, and he represents "doing." There are some temples which sustain and worship Sakyamuni Buddha with Manjusri Bodhisattva and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva on his two sides. Manjusri is the one with the greatest wisdom, representing "understanding," while Samantabhadra is the Bodhisattva of Great Conduct, representing "doing." In other words, no matter which arhats or Bodhisattvas a temple may sustain and worship, they do not go beyond the two categories of "understanding" and "doing." The Pure-land sect sustains and worships Amitabha Buddha, who represents the substance, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva of great mercy and great pity, who represents "doing," and Mahastamaprapta Bodhisattva of the greatest wisdom, who represents "understanding." Therefore, offering and sustaining Buddha images has its significance; there must be one Buddha and two Bodhisattvas, never two Buddhas and three Bodhisattvas.

Each Buddha represents a part of virtues possessed by the original nature. However, we should know that each part is ultimate and wholly complete, for one is all and all is one. The name of Sakyamuni Buddha shows virtues of the original nature. "Sakya" means being kind, which teaches us to be kind and merciful to others. "Muni" means being pure and clean, i.e., being still and quiet, which is a quality in oneself. So, the Buddha's name means being kind to others and making oneself pure and clean. This is what the name of Sakyamuni Buddha represents, and they are virtues innately possessed by our original nature. Amitabha Buddha's name is a transliteration of Sanskrit words. "A" means "being without." "Mita" means "quantity." "Amita" means "being boundless and limitless." But what is being boundless and limitless? Actually, everything is. There is nothing that is not boundless and limitless: boundless and limitless wisdom, supernatural abilities, power coming from enlightenment, lifespan,

etc. Therefore, when we make offerings to the Buddha, we have to know what cultivation method and what truth in the universe that each Buddha and Bodhisattva represents.

In terms of architecture in Buddhism, the main hall that makes offerings to the Buddha has two layers when seen from the outside, but it has just one layer when seen from the inside. This has meanings, too. It tells us that from the outside, there are the two forms: reality and appearance, but the inside tells us that reality and appearance are one and that all things have non-duality. In other words, this means that there may be difference in appearance, but the essence is the same. For a regular Buddhist temple, after we enter the main gate, the first building we see is the hall of heavenly kings, which is built to make offerings to the four heavenly kings—Four Guardian Kings—and Maitreya Bodhisattva in the center. This way of making offerings allows people to see Maitreya Bodhisattva immediately after they enter the main gate. The statue of Maitreya Bodhisattva is made based on the image of Cloth Bag Monk, whose happy and broadly smiling face is telling people that if they want to learn Buddhism, the first thing to do is to smile and never lose temper, for people have to be happy when they are learning Buddhism and they can never learn it well if they lose temper. And then, take a look at his big belly. Having a “big” belly means that Cloth Bag Monk can tolerate all the things instead of discriminating among them. So, this also teaches people to have an impartial mind and a joyous look. When facing anyone and anything, we should always feel happy and peaceful and not fight with others. Only when we can do this can we learn Buddhism. Therefore, Maitreya Bodhisattva is facing the main gate to tell visitors to the monastery that they are qualified to learn Buddhism only when they are tolerant, happy and calm like him.

Beside Maitreya Bodhisattva are Four Guardian Kings of the east, south, west, and north. The deva king controlling the east is Dhrtarastra, i.e., the Kingdom-keeping Deva, who represents taking responsibilities. When we are in charge of the affairs of a



family, we are householders to keep the family. When we are in charge of the affairs of a company, we are general managers or presidents to keep the company. And it is a king or a president that is in charge of the affairs of a country and keeps it going. But to do it well, one must be responsible. Everyone in this society has his/her responsibilities, and if all people are responsible and try their best to make their work wholly complete, the society will be harmonious and the country will be rich and powerful. This is what Dhrtarastra teaches us.

The deva king controlling the south is Virudhaka, i.e., Deva of Increase and Growth. It is not enough to do our jobs well. We have to make progress every day, for if we don't, we are likely to regress. Time and tide wait for no one, so Deva of Increase and Growth tells us that our virtues, knowledge, wisdom, talents, abilities, and even our standard of living have to keep increasing and growing. So, as you can see, Buddhism moves forward with the times, makes progress, and is actually leading the trends of the times instead of following them. But how can we keep a country going and make wholly complete progress? The next two deva kings will show us the way.

The deva king controlling the west is Virupaksa, i.e., Wide-eyed Deva, who teaches us to see more. The deva king controlling the north is Vaisravana, i.e., the Knowledgeable Deva, who teaches us to hear more. As the Chinese people usually say, "Read tens of thousands of books, and travel tens of thousands of miles." Reading tens of thousands of books is to acquire basic knowledge and traveling tens of thousands of miles is to see things in different places, which refers to the sighting, traveling, and official visits of today. When we see the strengths of others, we can follow them. And when we see their weaknesses, we can reflect on how to avoid them or make improvement. In this way, we can "discard others' weaknesses, and learn from others' strengths" so as to make our own society and country the best one in the world. Then we will become true protectors of dharma. So, these statues are placed in

the hall to give us lessons. When we see them, we should know clearly their teachings and use them any time to remind ourselves of working toward the ideal goal. If we can do this, how can Buddhism be a superstitious religion that worships idol statues?

Each of the four deva kings holds something in his hands to demonstrate dharma. Kingdom-keeping Deva of the east is holding a Chinese lute pipa, which teaches us that we have to know the middle way when doing things, neither overdoing them nor doing not enough, just like playing this musical instrument. When we are playing pipa, if the strings are loose, we cannot play music with it and if the strings are tight, they break. Actually, both the idea of the middle way in Confucianism and the idea of Middle Path in Buddhism mean that when we take the responsibilities of doing something, we have to do it just right, neither overdoing it nor doing it not enough, so as to make it wholly complete. Deva of Increase and Growth of the south, who represents constant progress, has a sword of wisdom in his hand, which demonstrates the dharma of “cutting off afflictions with a sword of wisdom just like quickly cutting off messy linen with a knife.” Wide-eyed Deva of the west has a dragon, sometimes a snake, twining around his body. The snake and the dragon mean the same thing—changes. As we often say, “We can see the head of a magical dragon but not its tail.” All things and all people in real life are ever-changing and we have to see them clearly to deal with them well. This is the dharma that the dragon demonstrates. The Knowledgeable Deva of the north has an umbrella in his hand. An umbrella gives shade and shelter. In this ever-changing world, there are all kinds of defilements and we have to protect ourselves from being defiled. Therefore, while we are learning and hearing more and more things, we have to protect the purity and cleanness of the mind from being defiled. It is only when we can thoroughly understand this realistic world that we can have the wisdom and ability to employ the right attitude and methods to deal with things and manages them as well as possible. These are the things that the hall of heavenly kings teaches us. We

cannot just burn a few sticks of incense praying to a god and expect him to give us good fortunes. This is a terribly wrong idea.

Therefore, we can see that everything in a Buddhist temple means to teach people. Even a sacrificial vessel has its significance in teaching. What does it mean to make an offering of a cup of water before the Buddha image? Of course, it is to demonstrate dharma. Water is clean and pure and it represents that our mind should be as clean as water. Also, as the water in the cup is calm and flat, it means that our mind should be as flat and quiet as the water. When we see the cup of water offered before the Buddha image, we will be reminded that our mind should be pure and clean and impartial. Flowers are offered before the Buddha image. The flowers here represent causes, for after flowers bloom, there will be fruits. The flowers actually represent the Six Paramitas. Fruits are offered before the Buddha image, but they are not for the Buddha and Bodhisattvas to eat but are meant to teach us that whatever effect we want to obtain, we have to cultivate the cause accordingly. In this manner, all the facilities and offerings in a Buddhist temple remind and educate us. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas neither smell the flowers nor eat the fruits. They don't want anything. Likewise, the lights represent wisdom and light, and the fragrance of incense represents the true fragrance of discipline and meditation. There is nothing that is not demonstrating dharma and there is nothing that is not meant for education. It is a pity that people learning Buddhism now know nothing about the educational meaning of the facilities and offerings in a temple. Why burning incense? Why making offerings of these things? As people don't want to know the answers, belief in the Buddha becomes superstition. Therefore, when some people in our society criticize that Buddhists are superstitious, they are right about it, for many people learning Buddhism do not know what they believe in. If they are clear about the educational meaning of Buddhism and explain it to those who criticize, it is likely that these critics will also want to learn Buddhism.

## **(2) Variants of Buddhism today**

In the world today, Buddhism appears in at least four different forms, which confuses us as a result.

The first kind is “the traditional Buddhism” we just described, i.e., the education of the Buddha, which was the original purpose of Sakyamuni Buddha. But now, it is rare to find traditional Buddhist education. Modern Buddhism is more or less transformed.

The second kind is “Buddhism as a religion.” Originally, Buddhism was not a religion, but now it is. Today, we can't deny it when people say that Buddhism is a religion. Why? For it indeed appears in the form of a religion. Temples today are unlike those in the past, when they gave eight hours of class every day. Today we can no longer find a temple giving eight hours of class every day. In the past, in China, every day people learning Buddhism in temples had eight hours of class and cultivated themselves for another eight hours. There were two ways of cultivation: one was sitting in dhyana and the other was repeating the name of a Buddha. Practitioners had sixteen hours of cultivation so that their understanding and practice corresponded with each other. When they attended classes, they listened to the teachers and had discussions. This was when they learned theory. After class, they cultivated the mind to be pure, clean, enlightened, correct, and undefiled. As these practitioners in the past worked hard for sixteen hours a day, their illusions naturally became fewer so that they could have accomplishment quickly. Today, in places where Buddhism is carried out, what we see every day is Buddhists making offerings to the Buddha image just to get a few blessed rewards. Indeed, Buddhism has become a religion now.

The third kind is “the study of Buddha-dharma.” Buddhism becomes academic and is a philosophy. Now in some universities, there is a course on the philosophy in Buddhist sutras, which treats the teachings of the Buddha as philosophy. Why is it wrong to study Buddhism as a philosophy? Just come to think of it, Buddhist education is already a complete university with all the departments

in it but now it is considered just a philosophy course and thus its significance is immensely reduced. So, this is also wrong. As it was well-said by Ouyang Xiu that Buddhism is neither a philosophy nor a religion and that Buddha-dharma is Buddha-dharma, which teaches things that all sentient beings need. Why? Buddha-dharma can really help us solve all the problems, from those happening right now to the grand matter of birth and death in the future, and literally nothing can be unsolved with it. So we can see that the teachings of Buddhism are very profound and broad and if we enthusiastically do academic work on it, this is also a deterioration of Buddha-dharma.

The fourth kind is “the depraved heterodox Buddhism.” It appeared as late as half a century ago, which is something very unfortunate. We should know that Buddhism as a religion advises people to do good deeds and become good people. The study of Buddha-dharma seeks truth and does research on the knowledge of Buddha-dharma, which does not do harm to the society. However, when it degenerates into the depraved heterodox Buddhism, makes use of the weaknesses in human nature, and uses Buddha-dharma as a way to scam and hurt sentient beings, it disrupts the order of the society and endangers the safety of the public. This degeneration is really too serious and too much. These evil heretics use attractive speeches and behaviors to tempt people. Once people follow them, it may be too late when they find out that they have been scammed and deeply hurt physically and spiritually.

My fellow practitioners, in our society today, there are these four variants of Buddhism. We really should open our eyes wide to see them clearly and think clearly about which kind we want to learn so that we can really benefit from it.

# 42.

## A GLOSSARY OF BUDDHIST TERMS AND COMMON KNOWLEDGE OF BUDDHISM

[42. is an introduction to Buddhist terms and common knowledge of Buddhism related to the content of this book.]

### (1) **Buddhist terms**

1) All sentient beings: All sentient beings refer to all living multi-beings.

2) Amitabha: It is a Sanskrit word, meaning unlimited light and unlimited lifetime. Therefore, Amitabha Buddha is also called the Buddha of Immeasurable Life.

3) Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi: It means the supreme correct enlightenment.

4) Arhats: This is a Sanskrit word, meaning no arising, destroying evils, and deserving offerings.

5) The arousal of the sincere and earnest intention to attain enlightenment: It is said in Buddhist sutras that the essentials of arousing sincere and earnest intention to attain enlightenment are as follows. First, a mind profoundly engrossed in Buddha-truth to broadly cultivate innumerable good laws. Second, a heart of compassion to ferry across innumerable sentient beings. Third, a sincere and straightforward mind to have right mindfulness of the immutable reality-nature. As what is said in *Avatamsaka Sutra*: “The tree of the wonderful law of Bodhi grows in the land of a straightforward mind.” This is because when one’s mind is straightforward, he/she becomes sincere; when one’s mind is sincere, he/she becomes determined with an unchanging faith and zealously and vigorously proceeds with the work on benefiting both oneself and others.

6) Asaiksa or no longer learning: In the four fruition of the sravaka vehicle, practitioners of the first three grades of arhatship still learn things, and those of the fourth grade are arhats, who are no longer learning. Arhats are no longer learning and cultivating precepts,

meditation, and wisdom, for they have already entered the wholly complete nirvana state.)

7) Bodhi: It means the way of awakening, i.e., the wisdom attained through the way of enlightenment.

8) Bodhisattvas: It means the awakened sentient beings. They are holy beings who both seek the way of Buddha to improve themselves and convert sentient beings to save them.

9) Bodhisattvas' four methods of winning people over: They are— ① giving what others like, ② using kind words, ③ acting for the purpose of benefiting others, and ④ physically working together with others.

10) Buddhaya: Another word in a shorter form is “Buddha,” meaning the enlightened one, who is capable of both enlightenment from within and awakening others and has perfect enlightenment and accomplishment. Therefore, a Buddha is a great sage of three kinds of wholly complete enlightenment.

11) Conditioned existence: It is the law of the world originated from causes and conditions, which causes afflictions and cannot be clean and pure.

12) Conversion to Triratna: It refers to turning to and relying on the Three Precious Ones—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

13) Dharma: It means “law,” referring to Buddha-dharma, i.e., canons.

14) The Five Coverings of Wisdom: They are the five kinds of affliction which block off the true mind--desire, anger, drowsiness, agitation, and doubt about dharma.

15) The five defilements of the world: They are ① the defilement of the trends of the present age, ② the defilement of mistaken views, ③ the defilement of afflictions, ④ the defilement of being a sentient being, and ⑤ the defilement of having a lifetime.

16) The five desires: They are the five desires of wealth, sex, fame, food and drinks, and sleep.

17) The five great elements: They are earth, water, fire, wind, and space.

18) The five kinds of vision: They are the physical eye, the heavenly eye possessed by devas), the wisdom eye possessed by Hinayana sages), the Dharma Eye possessed by bodhisattvas), and the Buddha-eye including all of the prior four).

19) The five precepts: They are no killing, no stealing, no improper sexual behavior, no false speech, and no consumption of alcohol.

20) The five skandhas: They are the five aggregates of form, sensation, discerning, mental formation, and consciousness.

21) The five studies of India: They are sabda (grammar and composition), silpakarmasthana (the arts and mathematics), cikitsa (medicine), hetu (logic), and adhyatma (inner or special philosophy).

22) The five vehicles: They refer to the vehicles of humans, devas, sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas.

23) The five wrong views: They are ① the view that there is a real self, an ego, and a mine and thine (satkaya-drsti), ② extreme views, e. g. extinction or permanence (antar-graha), ③ perverse views, which, denying cause and effect, destroy the foundations of morality (mithya), ④ stubborn perverted views, viewing inferior things as superior, or counting the worse as the better (drsti-paramarsa), and ⑤ rigid views in favor of rigorous ascetic prohibitions, e. g. covering oneself with ashes (sila-vrata-paramarsa).

24) The four *Agamas*: They are the divisions of the Hinayana scriptures— dirghagamas (cosmological), madhyamagamas (metaphysical), ekottarikagamas (numerically arranged subjects), and samyuktagamas (general, on dhyana, trance, etc.).

25)



The four bases of mindfulness: They are ① contemplating one's body as defiled, ② contemplating one's feeling as painful, ③ contemplating one's mind as impermanent, and ④ contemplating all things as devoid of inherent existence.

26) Four castes in India: They are Brahmins, Kshatryas, Vaishyas and Shudras.

27) The four forms of birth in Six Paths: In Six Paths, sentient beings have four different forms of birth. They are womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and metamorphosis.

28) Four Great Elements: They are earth, water, fire, and wind.

29) Four Great Vows: They are— ① vow to take across the numberless living beings, ② vow to cut off the endless afflictions, ③ vow to study the countless Dharma doors, and ④ vow to realize the supreme Buddha Way.

30) Four Kinds of Grace: They are the Grace of Parents family), the Grace of Sentient Beings society), the Grace of Lands country), and the Grace of the Three Treasures religion).

31) The four noble truths: They are the truth of suffering, the truth of arising of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering nirodha), and the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering.

32) Four Virtues: They are permanence, bliss, self and purity.

33) The four virtues a Buddha manifests equally to all sentient beings out of his infinite mind: They are Four Unlimited Mind— ① unlimited kindness, ② unlimited compassion, ③ unlimited joy, and ④ unlimited impartiality.

34) Hinayana: It is the “dharma-gate,” or doctrines, observed by sravakas, or hearers. The aim of this method is to cultivate and benefit oneself.

35) Icchantika: It refers to people who do not have virtuous roots and do not believe in Buddha-dharma.

36) Mahayana: It is the “dharma-gate,” or doctrines, observed by bodhisattvas. The aim of this method is to save and benefit others.

37) The mind of Bodhi: It means the mind of both seeking the way to improve oneself and converting sentient beings so as to save them.

38) Nirvana: It refers to perfect rest or neither arising nor ceasing.

39) Pratyekabuddhas: They are the ones that hear Twelve Links of Dependent Origination and understand the truth of life.

40) Sangha: It refers to the community of Buddhist practitioners who gather together, following Six ways for Buddhist practitioners to live together in harmony, in the common effort of attaining Buddhahood.

41) Six characteristics observable in existent things: They are totality, distinction, sameness, difference, formation, and disintegration.

42) The six difficult things: They are ① to be born in a Buddha-age, ② to hear the true Buddha-law, ③ to beget a good heart, ④ to be born in the central kingdom India), ⑤ to be born in a human form, and ⑥ to have wholesome sense-organs.

43) Six Dusts or Six Fields of Senses: They are the six external bases-- sight, sound, scent, taste, touch and dharma.

44) Six Paramitas: They are the six things that ferry one beyond the sea of mortality to nirvana—almsgiving, precepts-taking, patience, endeavor, meditation, and wisdom.

45) Six Paths: They refer to the six paths of devas, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell.

46) Six Periods of Day and Night: They are three periods in the daytime morning, noon and sunset) and three periods in the nighttime night, midnight and dawn).

47) The Six Primary Afflictions: They are greed, resentment, ignorance, arrogance, doubt, and wrong views.

48) Six Roots or Six Sense Organs: They are the six internal bases--eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.

49) The six ruiners: They are the attractions of Six Dusts, which can ruin the true nature of humans.

50) Six ways for Buddhist practitioners to live together in harmony: They are ① to be respectful to one another, ② to make gentle speeches without being quarrelsome, ③ to have the same goals, ④ to take the same precepts of purity, ⑤ to evenly distribute benefits, ⑥ to unify their views.

51) Sravakas: They are the ones that become enlightened for hearing the Buddha's voice of speaking Four Noble Truths.

52) The stage of no longer learning: This is the stage of attainment of arhats, which is also called unborn, the condition of cessation of all defilements.

53) Ten Delusions: They are greed, resentment, ignorance, arrogance, doubt, view of self, extreme views, perverse views, stubborn perverted

views, and views of attachment to the rigorous precepts. They are also called the ten deluders.

54) Ten Dharma Realms: They refer to the ten realms of buddhas, bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, sravakas, devas, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell.

55) The ten disciples of the Buddha: Sariputra is first in wisdom; Maudgalyayana is first in supernatural power; Ananda is first in having heard the words of the Buddha; Upali is first in taking precepts; Aniruddha is first in the sharpness of his divine eyes; Mahakasyapa is first in asceticism; Purna is first in explaining good law; Katyayana is first in debating; Rahula is first in esoteric practices; and Subhuti is first in expressing emptiness.

56) Three Evil Paths: They are the three lowest realms of the nine realms—hell, hungry ghost, and animal.

57) The three hinderers: They are the passions, the deeds done, and the retributions.

58) The three karmas: They refer to the karmas of deed, word, and thought.

59) The three kinds of wisdom: They are the three modes of attaining moral wisdom from reading and hearing instruction, reflection and practice.

60) The three poisons: Greed, resentment, and ignorance can poison our bodily life and wisdom-life, and therefore they are called the three poisons.

61) Three Realms: They are Realm of Sensuous Desire, Realm of Form, and Realm of Formlessness.

62) The three sages in the Western Pure Land: They refer to Amitabha Buddha, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva.

63) Three Seals: They are the Three Seals of Hinayana, also known as Three Universal Truths— ① All phenomena are impermanent, ② All dharma are non-self, and ③ The eternity is nirvana.

64) The three studies: They refer to the studies of discipline, meditation, and wisdom and they are the three studies for the passionless life and escape from transmigration.

65) The three vehicles: They refer to the bodhisattva vehicle, the sravaka vehicle, and the pratyekabuddha vehicle.

66) The threefold body of a Buddha: A Buddha has a threefold body—dharmakaya the Buddha-body in its essential nature), sambhogakaya the Buddha-body of bliss, which a Buddha “receives” to use and enjoy for his/her merits attained as a bodhisattva), and nirmanakaya the body manifested in response to the need to teach sentient beings).

67) Tripitaka: It refers to Sutra Pitika the sermons attributed to the Sakyamuni Buddha), Vinaya Pitika the discipline in practice according to the rules and regulations), and Abhidharma Pitik the philosophical work of Buddhism).

68) The two attachments: They refer to attachment to the reality of the ego and attachment to the reality of phenomena.

69) The two hindrances: They refer to the afflictive hindrances the passions and delusion which aid rebirth and hinder entrance into nirvana) and the noetic hindrances worldly wisdom which becomes a hindrance to true wisdom).

70) The two vehicles: They refer to the sravaka vehicle and the pratyekabuddha vehicle.

71) The two voids: They refer to the non-reality of the person the understanding of the truth that there is no ego in the five skandhas) and the non-reality of things the understanding of the truth that all things originate from conditions and that their nature is void).

72) Unconditioned dharma: It is the truth witnessed by sages, which is not originated from causes and conditions. In other words, it is the noumenal essence that is rid of afflictions and attains the cleanness and purity of independence. Also known as Asamskrta dharma.)

73) The wisdom of all wisdom: It refers to the wisdom of a Buddha, for a Buddha has the wisdom to completely know everything in both the mundane and supra-mundane world.

## **(2) Common Knowledge of Buddhism**

1) Vesak Day: It is the day of the full moon. The Buddha was born, entered enlightenment, and entered final nirvana on the day of the full moon in May.

2) Buddhist flags: They are made based on the six colored lights radiating from the holy body of the Buddha when he entered enlightenment. The six colors are blue, yellow, red, white, orange,

and the combined five colors.

3) The Buddha was born in 623 BC, entered enlightenment in 588 BC, and entered final nirvana in 543 BC.

4) The Bodhi tree: The Bodhi tree got its name because the Buddha sat under one of the trees and entered enlightenment. It has heart-shaped leaves with pointed tips.

5) Sala trees: The Buddha entered final nirvana between the twin sala trees in Skusinara. The trees have clustered oval leaves and in the season when the flowers are blooming, the beautiful flower petals fall and cover all over the ground.

6) Shengkesha: This is the place where the Buddha came down from Tusita Heaven to speak Buddha-dharma to his mother. This is also the place where the future Buddha Maitreya is going to be born.

7) The city of Rajagraha is surrounded by five mountains, which are thousands of feet high and are called Mt. Rajagraha as a whole. The city of Rajagraha got its name because of being near the mountain. Gijjhakuta Mountain is another name for Mt. Rajagraha.

8) The earliest site for the Buddha to expound the sutras was Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery in Rajagraha of ancient India. The largest place of enlightenment was Jetavana in the city of Sravasti.

9) The oldest Buddhist university in India was Nalanda, where Master Xuanzang of the Tang dynasty stayed and studied.

10) In the Tang dynasty, a Tripitaka Master named Xuanzang traveled a long way to India at the risk of his life to learn Buddha-dharma and introduce Buddhist sutras to China.

11) In the Eastern Jin dynasty, Master Faxian went to India to get Buddhist sutras. He travelled past Ceylon and many parts of Southeast Asia, etc.

12) The first two official monks arriving in China from India were Kasyapa-Matanga and Indu-dharmaranya.

13) In the Buddha's lifetime, the two kings faithfully supporting Buddha-dharma were King Bimbisara and King Prasenajit.

14) After the Buddha entered final nirvana, there were three Indian kings noted for supporting Buddha-dharma: Asoka, Kanishka, and Harsa ( i.e. Siladitya, who once invited Master Xuanzang to expound Mahayana Buddha-dharma and was very respectful of monks) .

15) In 252 BC, Mahinda, the son of Asoka, went to Ceylon with his sister and met King Tissa hunting in the wild. He expounded Buddha-dharma to King Tissa, who felt very joyous and invited Mahinda to expound Buddha-dharma in the capital. Soon, most people in the kingdom of Ceylon converted to Buddhism and Mahinda's sister transplanted an Indian Bodhi tree in Ceylon, which still exists today and is a holy site of Buddhism.

16) Buddhism spread to the south and the north. Northern Buddhism is called Mahayana Buddhism, and Southern Buddhism is called Hinayana Buddhism, or Pre-sectarian Buddhism.

17) Regions of Mahayana Buddhism include China, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, etc.

18) Regions of Hinayana Buddhism include Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Khmer, etc.

19) There are four assemblies of collecting and fixing Buddhist canons:

- ① The first assembly was held at the Pippala cave of the Seven-Leaf Crag in Gijjhakuta Mountain outside Rajagaha. It took place 90 days after the Buddha entered final nirvana and was presided by Mahakasyapa, who hosted the editing assembly of five hundred arhats.
- ② The second assembly was held in Vaisali about one hundred years after the Buddha entered final nirvana. It was presided by the elder Yasa to support the rules of the sila and vinaya again.
- ③ The third assembly was convened by Asoka and held in Pataliputra (now, Patna in India) in 250 BC. It was presided

by Moggaliputta and after it, the Sutra Pitaka, the Vinaya Pitaka, and the Abhidharma Pitaka were complete.

- ④ The fourth assembly was convened by Kanishka and was held in Kasmira (now, Kashmir in India) in 70 BC. It was presided by Vasumitra and in the assembly two hundred volumes of Mahavibhāṣa Sastra, the complete works of the Existence School, were completed.

20) In Buddhism, the yellow color symbolizes wisdom and Middle Path. Therefore, bhiksus are mostly dressed in yellow robes.

21) In Buddhism, the lotus represents cleanness and purity, for it grows in muddy waters without being defiled.

22) Dalai Lama: “Dalai” is a Mongolian word, meaning “the vast sea,” which refers to the great wisdom vast as the sea. “Lama” is a Tibetan word, meaning “the spiritual guide.” Dalai Lama is the leader of Tibetan Lamaism, belonging to the yellow sect of Lamaism. Second to Dalai Lama is Panchen-lama, who governs the whole western Tibet.

23) Huineng was the sixth patriarch of the Meditation sect of the Tang dynasty in China. He maintained Sudden Awakening Dhyana, while Master Shenxiu in the north maintained Gradual Awakening Dhyana. Therefore, the two branches of meditation school in the north and the south are commonly called the South-Sudden and North-Gradual branches.

24) Tien Tai Sect divides the teaching of the Buddha in his lifetime into five periods: ① the Avatamsaka period, ② the agamas period, ③ the vaipulya period, ④ the prajna period, and ⑤ the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Nirvana Sutra* period.

25) The ten Buddhist schools in China: ① Satyasiddhi sect, ② Kosa sect, ③ Madhyamika, ④ Dharmalaksana sect, ⑤ Tien Tai Sect, ⑥ Huayan sect, ⑦ Chan sect, ⑧ Pure Land Sect, ⑨ Vinaya-discipline sect, and ⑩ esoteric sect.

26) The Tripitaka is the collective term for Buddhist canons. It

is also called the Great Tripitaka.

27) Why do we need to read the Sutra Pitaka when we study Buddhism? This is because the Sutra Pitaka is the basic Buddhist canons, which collect all of the Buddha's fundamental teachings and their meanings.

28) What are the Tripitaka and the twelve divisions of the Buddhist canon? The Tripitaka refers to the Sutra Pitaka, the Vinaya Pitaka, and the Abhidharma Pitaka. The twelve divisions of the Buddhist canon means that the canons spoken by the Buddha are divided into twelve kinds of genre and content: ① sutra (works of long passages) , ② geya (retelling the long passages in verse) , ③ gatha (independent verse without referring to the context) , ④ avadana (explaining the meanings of teachings by comparisons) , ⑤ nidana (describing the cause and condition of something) , ⑥ udana (teaching without being asked questions) , ⑦ jataka (describing how a Buddha and a bodhisattva spread dharma to benefit sentient beings in the present life) , ⑧ itivrttaka (describing the causal stage of something) , ⑨ abdhuta-dharma (the demonstration of supernatural powers never seen before) , ⑩ vaipulya (the straightforward and broad sutras which expound unhindered and perfectly fused conditions) , ⑪ upadesa (treatise of Buddhist disciples on sutras and vinayas) and ⑫ vyakarana (the conferral by the Buddha of the prediction of the attainment of Buddhahood in the future) . Among the twelve divisions, sutra, geya, and gatha are genres of a Buddhist canon, and the rest nine divisions are about its content.

29) Can we express the meaning of the twelve divisions of the Buddhist canon in a poetic verse of four lines? Here is the verse: "Sutra, geya and gatha / avadana, nidana, and undana / jataka, itivrttaka, and abdhuta-dharma / vaipulya, upadesa, and vyakarana."

30) Translation of Buddhist sutras in China began at the time of Emperor Ming in the Eastern Han dynasty. Kasyapa-Matanga and Indu-dharmaranya were invited specially to take up the mission.



They translated five sutras together, four of which were lost, and the only one still existent today is *The Sutra in Forty-two Chapters*. The four lost translated sutras are *The Sutra of Severing Afflictions in shidi*, *The Sutra of the Birth stories of Shakyamuni in Present Life and Past Lives*, *The Sutra of the Dharma-sea*, and *The Sutra of a Buddha's Method of Attainment*.



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