

The Awakening of
Lovingkindness

&

A Path to
True Happiness

VENERABLE MASTER CHIN KUNG



The Awakening of Lovingkindness

Based on the Work of
Master Chin Kung

Translated by
Silent Voices



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HARMONY AND UNITY

1 January 2000

His Excellency, the President of Singapore, Mr. S.R. Nathan and First Lady Mrs. Nathan, distinguished guests, honored Ambassadors, the Deputy Director General of States Administration for Religious Affairs of China, Mr. Tong-Xiang Yang, representatives of the Inter-Religious Organization, religious representatives from Singapore and abroad, guests and friends. Everyone is a great Bodhisattva, a messenger of God, and an utmost virtuous person.

Tonight, the nine religions of Singapore are united here for the Inter-Faith Prayer for the Millennium and Charity Dinner to celebrate the arrival of the new millennium. We wish to welcome our guests, over five thousand senior citizens, and children of different religions and races from Homes for the Aged and from Children's Homes. It is our deep-felt wish that this event would help to foster harmonious relationships and unity among different races and religions. In this way, we hope to achieve happy families, a stable society, prosperous nations, and a peaceful world.

In recent years, we have witnessed disasters that are increasing in severity and frequency. Many people think

that these disasters are unavoidable while others believe that these can be resolved. Most of us are worried. How are we going to face the coming 21st century?

We have studied the past and present teachings of the great sages and virtuous people of various religions on the origin of life and the universe. The Buddha said it is the True Mind; that the universe is manifested from the mind. The Hindus say it is the Identity of Ego and Brahman. This ego or self does not refer to the minor self, but the eternal true self that always exists. Many religions say God created the world and life. Other religions say that God is the manifestation of wisdom. This is spoken from the aspect of essence. Those who understand this are called sages and virtuous people.

From our experience, the world can be divided into two aspects - spiritual and material. They are infinite. There is a creator and the created. The creator is the truth, the true god, the true mind. The created is everything that is manifested, generated, and transformed. How do we understand this?

In Buddhism, understanding of the true reality of life and the universe is achieved through a high level of moral self-discipline, deep concentration, and wisdom. Deep concentration gives rise to the wisdom needed to understand the truth of the universe. This is why the great

sages and virtuous people of this world diligently practice deep concentration and meditation to witness the true existence of spiritual planes and infinite dimensions. This confirms the eternal presence of the Identity of Ego and Brahman, God, True Mind, the Holy Spirit. This is the creator. From here, we know that all sentient beings in the universe are one entity.

We often hear national leaders address people as "Fellow citizens." Great sages would say, "Fellow sentient beings of the universe." Although all living beings are of different ethnic groups, cultures, appearances and religions, we all share the same origin, are all one. Those who understand are called God, the Holy Spirit, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, prophets, or angels. We sincerely respect them equally. Those who do not understand are called ordinary beings.

Sages and virtuous people teach us that the key in understanding the truth lies in changing our viewpoints. To do this we change from bad to good, from deluded to enlightened, and from being ordinary to a sage. We often say that by planting good causes, we will harvest good results, but although many people cultivate good deeds, they seem unable to change their karmic retribution. Why? Because while their speech and behavior may be virtuous, their thoughts are not. Thus, the ancients taught us to

cultivate from the basics.

As long as our minds are virtuous and we have the minds of sincerity, purity, equality, proper understanding and compassion; as long as our thoughts are virtuous and we cultivate good fortune for all beings, let go of differentiation and attachments, accord with all beings and are joyous in the merits of others; we will be able to change karmic retributions and resolve all disasters.

I often use a tree as an example. The mind is the root, our thoughts are the trunk, our behavior is the branches, and our speech is the leaves. If we try to correct the problem of an unhealthy tree by plucking off each leaf while forgetting to treat the root, our efforts will be futile. But if we were to begin from the root, to understand from the basics, our problems would be easily solved.

Today, the goals of our prayers are very practical: peace and equality. The Buddha described this in the *Flower Adornment Sutra* as multiculturalism and inter-faith. In this sutra, we see an infinite number of groups that are able to live together in harmony and equality, to respect, help, and cooperate with one another regardless of race, religion, or nationality. Creation without destruction: peace without chaos. Their lives are happy and complete, filled with truth, goodness, beauty, and wisdom. This is what we strive to learn and accomplish.

Today, I am encouraging religious leaders around the world to educate their followers, wishing that everyone who is involved in multicultural education will be the messengers of Buddha and God, nurturing the sincere, pure, equal, selfless lovingkindness, and awakening the proper understanding in all beings. In this way, we will live in harmony and equality, and gradually understand that "we are all one entity."

While our lives are eternal and our future lives are infinite, this lifetime is short. In striving for eternal happiness, we must eradicate all that is bad and embrace all that is good to transform delusion into enlightenment. It is important to be virtuous in our thoughts and conduct, and to live in harmony with people of all races, religions, and nationalities, and with all beings. If we regard all seniors as our parents and all children as our own as we care for, protect and guide them, we will be setting good examples. Thus, we will attain peace and happiness for all.

The Buddha said: "Refrain from all that is bad and there will be peace and harmony. Do all that is good and dreams will come true year after year." Lastly, on this rare occasion of the new millennium where all virtuous people have gathered, I wish everyone a Happy New Millennium.

THE PATH TO BUDDHAHOOD

Today, very few practitioners truly understand the term cultivation although many talk about it and this is why our thoughts and behavior have not changed. There are countless types of behavior, but Buddha Shakyamuni categorized all of them into three major types. They are the three karmas of the body, speech, and mind.

What is karma? The act of doing something is called a deed and the consequence of that deed is called karma. Karma is divided into three types: good, bad and neutral or that which is neither good nor bad. What is considered good or bad? The standard for good or bad is actually very complicated.

Just like the educational system of our schools, the standard of good or bad for a primary level student is different from that for a secondary level student. The standard for the latter is different from that for the university student and that for the university student is different from that for people in society.

Similarly, Buddhism has levels of standards; each is finely detailed and differentiated because Buddhist teachings are for all the sentient beings in the universe and their abilities are very different. For example, in this world the beings are of different cultures, races, religions,

lifestyles, and live in different environments and geographical locations. Just one standard for good or bad cannot possibly meet the needs of everyone; thus, we need many standards.

Today, due to the advancements in technology and communication, we can easily travel to other countries. When we are in a different country, we learn about their diverse cultures, customs, and laws. As it is said: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." The standard for what is good in our region may not work elsewhere, for others may think that it is bad, while what they regard as good, we may consider as bad.

However, among all the different standards, one never changes. What is it? It is love. This standard does not change with different ethnic groups, cultures, or religious beliefs. Every ethnic group and religion teaches people to love themselves and others. God loves everyone in this world. If we adhere to this absolute standard, then we would commit fewer mistakes.

In Buddhism, we are taught not only to love, but that our love needs to arise from a mind of sincerity, purity, and equality. We call this kind of love compassion. Compassion is rational love. We also need to use true wisdom. Wisdom is the true mind and emotion is the illusory mind. Love that arises from emotions will change

while love that arises from wisdom will never change. Hence, Buddhas do not use love, but instead use compassion. On appearance, love and compassion seem the same, but their intentions are different. Love may change to hatred but with wisdom, love will never change. All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will love us no matter what; whether we love or hate them, become jealous, or slander, harm or destroy them. Their compassion for us will never change. This is true love.

Ordinary beings have an illusory mind, the mind that arises and ceases. In other words, ordinary beings have wandering thoughts. Enlightened beings have true minds that constantly dwell on truth. They do not have wandering thoughts, only deep concentration. Deep concentration is the state without discriminatory wandering thoughts or attachments. However, this does not mean that we are idle all the time; we continue to do our job with a pure and completely aware mind. When the external environment no longer hinders or affects us, we have attained deep concentration.

Understanding this principle, we will know how to correct our improper behavior. When our six senses encounter the external environment, our thoughts, words, and deeds are improper because our senses follow the external conditions and we allow afflictions to take hold.

We have been wrong for countless eons and this is the root of our improper behavior. We have lost our True Nature and have allowed afflictions, especially those of views and thoughts, to be dominant. Thus, we have transformed the One True Dharma Realm into the Six Realms of Reincarnation. How are the Six Realms formed? They are formed by our attachments.

The first mistake from the view or thought affliction is our attachment to our bodies as we think that this body is "I." This is why the Buddha told us there is no self and therefore our attachment to self is wrong. With the initial attachment to self, we have a mistake that is hard to undo. This body is not "I." This body is something that we possess just like the clothes that we own. If we understand this, we will realize that humans do not have births or deaths. Death is just like taking off our soiled clothes and birth is like putting on a new set of clothing. In the cycle of reincarnation, our birth and death is like changing clothes.

What then is "self"? In India, some religions believe that the spiritual self is "I." In China, we call it the soul. In Buddhism, we call it the spirit. This state of believing that the spiritual self is "I" is higher than that which views the body as "I." Why is it such an improvement? Because when one believes that when revolving in the cycle of

reincarnation the spiritual self takes on a body just like someone takes on a piece of clothing, there is no fear of death. Rather, death is regarded as something quite normal.

If we have accumulated only good karma in this lifetime, then we will be reborn into the Three Good Realms - changing from a human into a heavenly being and having a much more beautiful and dignified appearance, a longer lifespan and greater good fortune. This is to "sow a good cause and reap a good result." However, if we were to do bad deeds, then our body will change for the worse.

Recently, in Singapore, some Chinese practitioners told me about an elderly woman in Tianjin, China. She dreamt that her son, who had died two years before, came to tell her that he was now a guardian at a certain temple. She woke up feeling very sad.

Sometime later, she heard some practitioners planning a pilgrimage to the temple her son had spoken of in the dream. She accompanied the practitioners to the temple and asked the abbot about the temple guardian. The abbot answered that there was only a temple guard dog named Xiaohu (which means little tiger). As the woman heard the name, she suddenly had goose bumps because that had been her son's name. She rushed to the gate of

the temple to find the dog. When she got there and the dog saw her, tears began to stream down its cheeks and as they hugged each other, she too began to cry.

This account of a human being reincarnated as a dog is the consequence of the human having done bad deeds. When the residents of Tianjin heard what had happened, many of them came to see the dog. The intelligent dog felt ashamed and he avoided people who came from his former hometown but would reappear when people from other places visited the temple. Some practitioners encouraged the woman not to feel embarrassed, but to tell her story so others could learn the truth.

There is another case of a person being reincarnated as a dog. I will ask those who know about what happened to record the details so that all of us will know that reincarnation is true and that we need to be cautious in our every rising thought. Life is short but death is really not frightening. However, what comes after death? Have we seriously considered this? This critical issue of death is the major reason why we cultivate. We hope that our future lifetimes will be better than this one and that tomorrow will be better than today. With this goal in mind, we must know how to practice and remember the teachings of the Buddha that are recorded in the sutras.

We need not learn all of the Buddha's numerous

teachings but instead grasp their essence that is within the Three Conditions found in the *Visualization Sutra*. First, we are to be filial to our parents. Second, we are to be respectful to our teachers and elders. This is the heart; the very foundation of the Buddha's teachings, and it is from this foundation that the innumerable Dharma methods were developed. Hence, filial piety and respect for teachers and elders are the way of Buddhism. In many Mahayana sutras, especially those on the Bodhisattva precepts, the Buddha taught us to regard all women as our mothers and all men as our fathers. This is the basis for our practice of filial piety. Also, every being is a future Buddha and this principle is the basis for respecting teachers and elders.

Who is a Bodhisattva? Bodhisattvas are beings who regard and respect all others as their parents and as Buddhas. This is the mind and heart of a Bodhisattva. Today, the main reason we cannot achieve results in our cultivation is due to our lack of filial piety and respect for others, and our incessant thoughts of superiority. Without respect for others, no matter how hard we practice, even to the point of chanting a Buddha's name one hundred thousand times a day until our voices become hoarse, we cannot escape retributions in the Three Bad Realms.

In the *Surangama Sutra*, we learn that when our causal

intentions are impure, our results will be false and confused. What is the causal intention? It is the very first arising thought. Thus, we need to follow the teachings of the Buddha to correct any erroneous thought.

The Buddha said that every sentient being was our parent in our past lives and is a future Buddha. If instead he had said that every being is our current parent and a current Buddha, we may not understand or accept this fact so readily. We can more readily accept his explanation that every being was our past parent and is a future Buddha. But frankly, even after hearing this, we still cannot accept this wholeheartedly; if we did, we would become a Buddha. Those who are able to practice this teaching in their daily lives are Bodhisattvas who have attained at least the first level of the Ten Beliefs Bodhisattvas; they have already corrected their basic wrong views.

Without exception, the great masters of all schools in Buddhism taught us to cultivate from the root, and from here, to bring forth the minds of sincerity, purity, equality, awakening, and compassion. Today, although we know the essence of the Buddha's teachings, we have yet to benefit from our cultivation. The reason why we cannot reap anything is that we have yet to find the root. For countless eons, we have been revolving in the cycle of life

and death. We do not know where the problem lies or what is our relationship to the universe. The Buddha was a human being who had experienced life and who revealed the truth to us. Thus, we need to believe and accept this truth, and truly reform. After we have reformed, we will be leading the lives of the Bodhisattvas and following the Bodhisattva's way.

The word "Bodhisattva" is a Sanskrit one meaning an enlightened sentient being. A sentient being is an ordinary being and all of us are sentient beings. Bodhisattvas are enlightened sentient beings. The difference between an ordinary being and a Bodhisattva is that the former is deluded and the latter is enlightened, and thus they are given different names.

Enlightened beings are constantly correcting their erroneous behavior. But, before we are able to correct our faults, we must first discover them. In Buddhism, one who discovers and clearly knows his or her faults is awakened. After we have awakened, the next step is to correct our faults. Bodhisattvas abide by six guidelines that are called the Six Paramitas of Giving, Moral Self-discipline (Precepts-keeping), Patience, Diligence, Deep Concentration, and Wisdom, to remedy our six major afflictions. The foremost of our six afflictions are greed and stinginess. Most people desire wealth, lust, fame, food, and sleep as well as sight,

hearing, smell, taste, touch, and thought while Bodhisattvas correct these faults by the practice of giving. The *Paramita of Giving* can free us of greed. The roots of greed and stinginess are our attachments to our bodies, fear of death and selfishness.

How do we practice giving in order to free ourselves of greed and stinginess? We need to know the true meaning of giving for it does not mean donating money to temples. Its underlying meaning is to be filial to parents, and to respect teachers and elders as all beings are our parents, teachers, and elders. The Paramita of Giving is to consider all beings with sincere filial piety and respect, to serve and to help them. We give wealth to benefit society and all beings, and we sacrifice ourselves to help and serve all others unconditionally.

Today, voluntary social work is the Paramita of Giving. Constantly bearing in mind the needs of all beings and how we can help them encompasses the giving of wealth, teaching, and fearlessness. When our minds are filled with filial piety and respect, giving becomes an offering, which is one of the Ten Great Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. These Ten Great Vows are the highest level of practice.

It is important that we nurture in ourselves the spirit of filial piety and respect, and do not slight anyone for that

means slighting our parents, teachers, and elders - a serious offence. We cannot be born into the Pure Land even though we chant the Buddha's name because we continue to commit these mistakes daily. So, we have actually not accumulated great merits although we think we have.

When working for others, no matter how inconsequential the task might seem, as long as we do it logically and abide by the rules, we are practicing the Paramitas of Wisdom and Precepts keeping respectively. We are setting good examples for others by systematically completing the task. The practice of the Paramita of Precepts Keeping helps us to correct our bad habits and erroneous behavior. We have countless weaknesses that are bad examples for others. If we can constantly remind ourselves to be good examples for all through our behavior, we are practicing precepts keeping. Thus, we need to understand the Buddha's teachings.

When we interact with circumstances fairly and sensibly, we are practicing the Paramita of Wisdom. When we are courageous when helping others, we are practicing the Paramita of Patience. Practicing the Paramita of Patience frees us from the afflictions of intolerance, anger, and hatred. Small tasks require a lesser amount of patience while great undertakings require an abundance of

patience. Without patience, nothing can be achieved.

In the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha told us that everything is achieved through patience. In the Bodhisattva's practice of the Six Paramitas, the Buddha particularly emphasized endurance, showing that in this Saha world of endurance, patience is greatly lacking in all beings. This is why we cannot succeed in anything (either worldly or Buddhist). To obtain success, we must learn to cultivate endurance. And in whatever we do, we must not be overly enthusiastic or rash because rashness results in mistakes. It is good to slow down a little.

Two days ago, in Australia, we met Mr. Uri Thernal and today we met with a senator in Brisbane. We talked about the rapid advancements in technology that are causing disasters in our world. Wisdom tells us that some things need to be done quickly while others need to be done more gradually. People today do not possess the wisdom to differentiate between the two.

In the past, the ancient teachings like those of Confucius and Buddha Shakyamuni taught that a moral character should be quickly and enthusiastically cultivated while material objects should be pursued at a slower and less aggressive pace. Buddhism emphasizes progress in cultivation and teaches us to be contented with just the necessities. Many religious teachings, such as those in

Christianity and Catholicism, also place great importance on leading a simple and honorable life, and are indifferent to pursuing materialistic enjoyments.

If we feel the same way, we need to be enthusiastic in helping others and unconcerned about our own needs. In doing so, we will be practicing the Paramitas of Patience and Diligence. The *Paramita of Diligence* frees us from laziness. If we follow the teachings of the Buddha to practice the Six Paramitas, they will benefit us for the rest of our lives. And when we dedicate the merits from our practice, vow to be born into the Pure Land, and chant Buddha Amitabha's name from one to ten times, we are assured of being born into his Western Pure Land.

Can we really be born into the Pure Land by chanting "Buddha Amitabha" just one to ten times? The sutras assure us that yes, we can. When we do not create negative karma but accumulate merits due to our daily cultivation of the practice of proper thoughts, words and deeds, we are assured of being born into the Pure Land.

What is the *Paramita of Deep Concentration*? The Buddha taught us to concentrate deeply in order to free ourselves of distractions. In the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha taught Subhuti, who had generated the Bodhi heart to help all beings, that the most important criteria in helping others are deep concentration and wisdom; that is

to not be attached to phenomena, but to maintain the mind of tranquility. These principles are the basis of the teachings of China's Sixth Master of Zen, Master Hui-Neng, who taught us not to be attached to external forms and to maintain the mind of stillness within. Not to be attached to external forms is not to be attached to phenomena, while maintaining the mind of stillness means that we do not have greed, anger, or ignorance as we encounter external conditions. When we encounter external conditions but are unaffected and can thus help others, it is due to our deep concentration and wisdom.

With deep concentration and wisdom, we will be unaffected by external situations; without deep concentration, we will be unable to educate others, but would instead be swayed by them and end up being confused about the whole situation. How does this happen? When we are in contact with others and things go our way, thoughts of greed arise. When things do not go our way, anger and hatred arise because we lack deep concentration and wisdom. With deep concentration and wisdom, we will not have thoughts of greed, hatred, or anger in any circumstance, whether they are favorable or unfavorable.

Deep concentration is the state of constantly maintaining a mind of purity and equality. Cultivating deep

concentration does not solely mean sitting in meditation in the cultivation hall. Practicing sitting meditation is similar to teaching the skills to a beginner. After graduation from school, the students need to practice what they have learned in the cultivation hall by applying the principles in their daily lives. The practitioner will have practiced deep concentration when he or she can remain unaffected by external circumstances.

In the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, Master Yu-Xiang practiced deep concentration by visiting busy places, such as marketplaces. Today, we need not need to visit noisy and busy places. We can practice deep concentration while having the television turned on. However, are we able to remain unaffected by external situations in places such as discotheques, movie theaters or other places of entertainment? If we can, then that is deep concentration. When we can clearly perceive what is happening around us, remain unmoved, and not have any wandering discriminatory thoughts or attachments, we are cultivating wisdom and deep concentration simultaneously. Bodhisattvas use these principles in their daily lives.

We do not need to change our current lifestyles or jobs to accord with the teachings. Of all professions, the ones that involve killing are the worst as they create negative karma and consequences. Bodhisattvas however, can

practice any profession even that of a butcher or a restaurant owner.

Why is it that Bodhisattvas do not create negative karma by doing these seemingly negative deeds and instead are able to help sentient beings? This is because in everything Bodhisattvas do, they do not have wandering discriminatory thoughts and attachments. Therefore, they do not create negative karma. By not creating such karma, they are able to liberate all beings from sufferings.

Not creating negative karma is not achievable by ordinary beings because we kill animals and eat meat, while at the same time, have wandering thoughts such as what does or does not taste good. Hence, we will have to suffer the bad consequences. It is crucial to understand that we should not try to emulate all of the Bodhisattvas' behavior because we have not yet attained their level of deep concentration.

One of the fifty-three advisors in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, Sweet Dew Fire King represents a profession that involves killing. Another advisor, Shengrepoluomen represents a profession where beings are deluded. And a third advisor, Fasumiduonu, can also be a Bodhisattva because as a prostitute she practices the Bodhisattva's way to help beings. The fifty-three advisors, who are actually portrayed by Bodhisattvas, represent all levels of

society. Thus, we see that the Buddhism encompasses all of society.

With the minds of sincerity, purity, and great compassion, Bodhisattvas benefit society in every field they are engaged in. These beings take on these immoral jobs in order to help sentient beings reduce their own disasters and negative karma. If we do not possess the Bodhisattva's great compassionate and sincere mind to help all others as well as their level of achievement, and try to follow their example in doing these jobs, then we are creating negative causes and results.

The practice guidelines in the *Flower Adornment Sutra* are comprised of the Ten Paramitas of Great Wisdom Bodhisattva and the Ten Great Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. These twenty Paramitas and vows are the primary guidelines for the Dharma Body Bodhisattvas of the Flower Adornment Assembly. Each of the guidelines has profound meanings and encompasses the entire universe.

Since we are mere beginners in learning Buddhism, it is necessary for us to look for favorable environments in which to practice. But, the Dharma Body Bodhisattvas are the advanced learners of Buddhism; they practice in whatever environment they are in and do not try to change their present lifestyle or job. They cultivate the

Ten Paramitas and the Ten Great Vows in meeting their daily responsibilities to become Buddhas.

Although we are not yet able to accomplish this, we must know this principle so that our spiritual level will be continually raised. We may practice very hard, but if we do not know this principle and truth, our level of achievement will be limited. We cannot achieve a breakthrough because our thoughts are barriers.

In recent years, we have maintained contact with friends from religions and other races; this is truly practicing the teachings in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*. The ancient sages explained that the *Flower Adornment Sutra* is the expanded version of the *Infinite Life Sutra*. At the end of the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, Manjushri Bodhisattva and Universal Worthy Bodhisattva dedicate the merit of the Ten Great Vows to be born into Buddha Amitabha's Pure Land. If we abide by the methods and principles in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, correct our improper thoughts and behavior, and dedicate the merits of our cultivation to being born into the Pure Land, we will be born there. As the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas said, such truly wonderful merits and benefits are beyond description and comprehension.

The teachings in the *Flower Adornment Sutra* are in accordance with the level of understanding of people

today and are suitable to our current conditions. Although people are creating heavy negative karma, they possess deep and great roots of virtues and merits. It is a pity that these beings have not had the good conditions to bring about the germination of their virtuous roots and merits. With a change of thought, they would uncover the Mahayana's perfect root nature. Without such a change, then as the ancients said: "We will get the result that we are destined to get (as we have not yet encountered good conditions)." With such a change in thought, we will immediately break through delusion, become awakened, and be transformed from an ordinary being into a sage. As Master Shan-Dao said, a person's achievement depends on the conditions he or she encounters. Thus, encountering the right conditions is crucial in determining whether we attain results in our cultivation.

However, an ordinary being is simply that, an ordinary being. Even if we were to listen to the Buddha's teachings for hundreds or thousands of times, it would still be difficult for us to reform. Buddha Shakyamuni taught daily for forty-nine years, he lectured for tens and hundreds of thousand of times to "wake" us up. If we will turn back from our erroneous behavior, then the Buddha's goal of eradicating our suffering will be achieved.

Have we lost our chance to encounter the right

conditions now that the Buddha is no longer with us? No, the question is - do we know how to hold on to the right condition when we encounter one?

At eighty-six years old, the former president of the Singapore Buddhist Lodge, Mr. Guang Bie Chen, who was recently been reborn into the Pure Land, did not ignore the right condition when he encountered it.

A few years before he died, his poor health forced him to stop working and to remain at home. During this period, Mr. Bock Guan Lee gave him videotapes of my lectures on Buddhism. Mr. Chen listened to these lectures eight hours daily for four years. He had met a wonderful opportunity and made good use of it. He succeeded after four years, attained the state of One Mind Undisturbed and knew three months in advance the day he would die.

Two years ago, he saw Buddha Amitabha and requested to leave for the Pure Land. However, Mr. Lee said that probably Buddha Amitabha advised Mr. Chen to wait another two years to take care of the Buddhist Lodge until the election for the next committee was over.

I was there the day he attended the election seated in his wheelchair. A few months later, Mr. Chen left this world. This shows that conditions depend on us. The late president of the Lodge had the wonderful opportunity to obtain the videotapes of all my lectures. If our conditions

are not as good as his were it does not matter. If we can only obtain one videotape and listen to it eight hours a day for four years, we are assured of surpassing him in our merits.

This kind of prolonged cultivation on one single subject encompasses the Three Learnings of self-discipline, deep concentration, and wisdom, and assures us success in our practice. Thus, if we do not succeed, we cannot blame others, our bad luck, or the lack of good teachers or classmates; all these are just excuses to shift our responsibility. True practitioners understand that we ourselves are to blame; others and our environment are without fault, but rather we let the opportunity pass us by.

About fifteen years ago, when I lectured in Los Angeles, I met a retired university professor, Mr. Li-Ben Zhao. After his retirement, Mr. Zhao had opened a restaurant with a friend. He heard my lectures and was very happy to learn the teachings. He brought home audiotapes of the lectures on the *Platform Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra* and listened to these for twenty-six times. Mr. Zhao asked me if his approach of sutra study, of simply listening to these two sets of lectures, could help him be born into the Pure Land when he chanted Buddha Amitabha's name and vowed to be born there.

I assured him it would, but that twenty-six times was

not enough, that he needed to listen at least one hundred times. When he had done so, he came to me again and I told him to listen for another one hundred times. Now, Mr. Zhao lectures very well on these two sutras and receives many invitations to give lectures. It really is possible. If we can become very familiar with the teachings, then they eventually will become part of us and will come from within us.

It is good if we know this method of concentrated cultivation for it contains each of the Three Learnings. Practicing according to the teachings is *self-discipline*; when our minds are settled and focused on learning one method of cultivation, we will have *deep concentration* and with deep concentration, we will uncover our *innate wisdom*.

Why is it that most people cannot uncover this wisdom? It is because our minds are too cluttered. If we can concentrate deeply, we will uncover wisdom with new awakening and understanding each time we listen to the lectures. Accumulating small awakenings leads to complete enlightenment. When we dedicate this merit to be born into the Pure Land, we are assured of being born there. This is stated in the last section about the three levels of rebirth into the Pure Land of the *Infinite Life Sutra*.

Master Ci-Zhou (who wrote the study outline of the thirty-seven chapter version of the *Infinite Life Sutra*) said that it does not matter whether the sutra we choose to learn is one of the Pure Land sutras or not, as long as it is one of the Mahayana sutras. If we dedicate the merits from our learning to being born into the Pure Land, we are assured of attaining our goal. There have been practitioners who succeeded in this way and they are good examples for us.

With our advanced technology, it is easy for us to use a cassette player and listen to audiotapes of one or two series of sutras. There is no reason why we cannot succeed in our practice. If we truly practice, everything we do will be in accordance with each of the Six Paramitas for to practice one Paramita is to practice all Paramitas. This is the way Bodhisattvas practice.

We need to understand these principles to know how we should practice. Those who succeeded are those who practiced patience. The Buddha taught us that everything is obtained through patience. If we patiently and persistently listen to the Buddhist teachings and correct our faults everyday, follow the teachings in the sutras on what should or should not be done and repeatedly engrave them in our memory, we will be able to immediately perceive a rising thought and detect whether

or not it is proper during our daily interaction with others and circumstances. If the thought is improper, we should correct it instantly; this is true cultivation. We no longer follow our afflictions and bad habits, but instead accord with the teachings of the Buddha. In this way, we are assured of success in our practice.

In the *Infinite Life Sutra*, the Buddha said that this kind of practitioner is the Buddha's best student, for he or she abides by the Buddha's teachings, studies the sutra, and is a good example for all. If we truly understand what the Buddha told us, we will accept his teachings wholeheartedly; if we have yet to accept his teachings, it simply means that we have not truly understood them. Why are we unable to understand the intrinsic meanings? It is because we have not read the sutra enough. The ancients said that we would naturally understand the meaning in a book if we read it one thousand times.

This principle can also be applied to listening to teachings. One who listens to the lectures for one or two thousand times, will naturally attain awakening. When the number of times we immerse ourselves in the teachings is insufficient, we will be unable to overcome our afflictions. Focus on one subject, for that will block the distractions that keep us from entering the door to awakening.

To listen or read the sutras with concentration is to

practice all Three Learnings at one time. If we listen to too many different types of teachings, then all that we gain is knowledge. This will not qualify us to teach others. The secret in obtaining deep concentration and in uncovering wisdom lies in choosing one method of cultivation and studying it for a prolonged time. With deep concentration, our wandering thoughts and afflictions will lessen as our wisdom increases proportionately. Whereas in the past, we were confused and disorganized, now we are intelligent and clear about everyone and everything. This indicates that we have increased deep concentration. In the past, we used to make mistakes, now we no longer do so. This is a sign of deep concentration and wisdom.

To be able to overcome our afflictions accumulated from incalculable lifetimes, to transform afflictions into wisdom, evil to good, delusion to awakening, and from being ordinary to a sage, we must use great efforts in our practice. Everyone can achieve this goal so long as we know how; it has nothing to do with our lifestyles or jobs.

Do not mistakenly think that your job makes it too difficult to cultivate or that another job lends itself more easily to cultivation. The key lies in whether we know the proper way to succeed. If we do not know the right method, then even if we were to become monks or nuns, chant the Buddha's name and meditate all day in the

cultivation hall, we will still never be able to achieve the way in our practice.

The Three Learnings and Six Paramitas can be achieved all at one time in our daily lives, whether eating, dressing or doing anything else, all activities can completely encompass the Six Paramitas. This is the state of "one is all, all is one" that was taught in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*. Any cultivation method encompasses infinite cultivation methods and contains the complete Paramitas and infinite teachings within each. Thus, if one method works, all methods work. We need to listen to the Mahayana teachings more often so that we can break through our wandering discriminatory thoughts and attachments. This will reduce our misunderstandings and obstacles in our path of cultivation.

Today, although this lecture is only ninety minutes long, we can still benefit from it if we grasp the important points on how to cultivate, and make use of today's technology to keep listening to the lectures. We are much more fortunate than our ancestors were because we are able to listen to a lecture repeatedly until we thoroughly understand it. Listening to the lecture many times will enable us to truly understand the way to attain Buddhahood.

EVERYONE CAN BE A BUDDHA

Several groups of practitioners from China, the USA, and Taiwan are here to visit us. Although they have not been here long, only a week or two, they have seen our conditions for learning and practice. Not everything has been satisfactory, for doing everything perfectly is very difficult.

During the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, there were numerous diverse religious groups as well as differences of opinions within the Sangha itself; hence, their Buddhist community was also imperfect. The Buddha said it was actually all a great performance, that they were all manifestations of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Some played negative roles, like Devadatta, while others played positive roles; but those who are unawakened do not realize this. From this example, we can see how Buddhas guide sentient beings with both positive and negative examples.

The Buddha taught in this way, as did the saints from various religions. As Confucius often said: "In every group of three people, there is teacher we can learn from." When we include ourselves in a group of three, there would be one person who is more virtuous and one who is less virtuous. We emulate the former and observe the latter to see if we have the same faults. If so, we quickly

correct them. In this way, we learn from both examples.

The same applies to situations, whether they are good or bad, both can help us to learn. Likewise, we make use of favorable or unfavorable conditions and relationships with others to help us achieve attainment in our practice of virtue. Confucius said that a benevolent person has no enemies. This is even truer in Buddhism.

We are listening to people from various religions. For example, last night at the Singapore Buddhist Lodge, we attended the lecture given by a Sikh Elder, Mr. Harbans Singh. Are there any real differences between the Sikh or other religious teachings and the educational teachings of Confucius or Buddha Shakyamuni? Problems exist today because we do not listen to one another - we envy one another, we surmise and jump to the wrong conclusions. These lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and even wars among ethnic and religious groups. What were the causes? People did not communicate. If we frequently visit one another and exchange ideas, there will be mutual understanding. (As Mr. Singh elaborated on Sikh beliefs, we also explained that we view Buddhism as an education rather than a religion.) If everyone communicated like this, our problems would cease.

Last night, practitioners asked Mr. Singh some very good questions. One person asked what was a Sikh's

highest goal in cultivation. Mr. Singh wisely replied that the highest goal is to become one with God. Buddhists do not speak of God but of perfect enlightenment, to become one with one's mind and True Nature. What Buddhist practitioners call mind and True Nature, religious followers call God. The words are different, but the meaning is the same.

Mr. Singh explained that God created everything. Buddhism does not mention God in this context. Rather, we believe, as explained in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*: "Everything arises from the mind and changes according to our perceptions." We speak in terms of mind and consciousness; others speak about God. When others ask us the ultimate goal of our practice, we explain that it is to become Buddhas, for our bodies and minds to combine with all sentient beings throughout the universe to become one entity. We are all speaking of the same thing.

Religions say that the saints from all religions, who we call the founders of religions, are messengers or embodiments of God. This is correct. The God they speak of is what we call the True Nature. We want to be logical, mindful, and free of prejudices in our communication with all religious groups.

We know that all sentient beings in the universe share a common life entity that Buddhists call the Dharma-body:

"All Buddhas from all space and time share one Dharma-body." Thus, among religions, there are no contradictions or conflicts but peaceful coexistence and equality. When our minds reach the equal and non-discriminatory state, we become Buddhas and we no longer have wandering discriminatory thoughts or attachments. When such thoughts and attachments are present, the mind is not in the state of equality.

To explain further, all the saints in this world and beyond are manifestations of God. But what about us mortal beings? We are also embodiments of God! To use religious terms, everything created by God is his manifestation. In Buddhist terms, everything in the universe is the manifestation of the Dharma-body, which is the mind and consciousness. Nothing exists outside the mind-consciousness.

With a profound understanding of this principle, we reach the state of seeing our True Nature, which also means having no obstruction in understanding all phenomena of the universe. We then reach the state of not encountering any hindrances at all, as auspicious peace and harmony pervade the universe.

Originally, human beings of all diverse nationalities, races, and religions, and other sentient beings coexisted peacefully, for all are part of the same family; like parents,

children and siblings who have respect and non-discriminatory unconditional love for one another. To love all beings is to love ourselves. Thus, in Buddhism it is said: "Unconditional compassion for all others, as we are all one entity." Who really understands this truth? Buddha Shakyamuni understood, Dharma-body Bodhisattvas understood, and as we learn about the founders of religions, these saints understood.

In Buddhism, we learn ten guiding principles for relating to others and circumstances. These are the Four All-embracing Methods and the Six Paramitas. How do husbands and wives get along? By practicing the Four All-embracing Methods and the Six Paramitas. In this way, spouses and families would live together harmoniously, society and nations would be stable and prosperous, and the world would be peaceful. Why are we unable to practice the Four All-embracing Methods and the Six Paramitas? Because, we lack the right learning and cultivation. We cannot blame ourselves for we did not receive such an education.

In the past, Confucius, Buddha Shakyamuni, great sages, and virtuous people dedicated their lives to teaching people and enabling them to understand the true reality of life and the universe. The Four All-embracing Methods and the Six Paramitas are actually virtuous

qualities of our True Nature, what the True Nature is supposed to be; they are natural qualities and not the opinions of Buddha Shakyamuni. We are at fault if we cannot practice these principles with understanding, for we are going against the True Nature.

We have lost touch with our consciences, the intuitive ability to know right from wrong. We originally had this ability in our True Nature. Thus, by nature we are the same as Buddhas. In religious terms, we are the same as God. However, we are now different because we have lost our True Nature.

Why do we have so many adversaries and where do they come from? They come from misunderstandings. Once we thoroughly understand the true reality, we will no longer have adversaries for they cannot exist when the mind returns to its originally sincere, pure, non-differentiating, awakened and compassionate state.

Even if someone physically hurt us, like King Kali's dismemberment of the Buddha in one of his former lifetimes, would we as enlightened or awakened people harbor any hatred? No! An awakened, understanding person would know that the other party had misunderstood and would therefore be very caring. Ill intentions and bad behavior arise from a lack of understanding.

Both the ancient Chinese and the saints taught us to have “open communication.” In managing the country, a government that understands and governs well will be supported by the people. How can a family be united? By having open and honest communication, and by not hiding anything, a family is assured of prospering. So, we need to understand this major principle of open communication.

Misunderstanding results from a lack of interaction and communication. Discord between spouses is also the result of the lack of communication and of having secrets. Wives and husbands lie to one another and eventually the family is torn apart. A family in which the siblings are suspicious, envious, and distrustful of each other will decline.

Last night, Mr. Singh told us two stories about honesty. In one story, a thief was asked who he was. He honestly replied: “I’m a thief.” The guard did not believe a real thief would say this and allowed him to enter the palace. The thief gathered many valuable items, but before he left, he remembered that a saint had told him that it was wrong to steal. He realized what he was doing was wrong, put down the belongings and left empty handed.

Buddhism and Confucianism both speak of sincerity. We read in Confucianism of the sincere and honest mind. We read in Buddhism that sincerity means the true mind. The essential nature of the Bodhi mind is utmost sincerity.

What is the true mind? It is the presence of sincerity and the absence of deceit. It is to be honest even after making a mistake. This is how we will reach enlightenment and become Buddhas. However, we will not accomplish our goals if not only do we not admit our mistakes but even try to conceal the truth.

Even with good cultivation, we will remain mired in reincarnation that we alone have created. With utmost sincerity, reincarnation will disappear; with an illusory mind, reincarnation will manifest. We learn from the sutras that reincarnation is an illusory realm formed by wandering discriminatory thoughts and attachments. We have failed to transcend this illusory state in countless lifetimes throughout infinite eons because we have not severed our wandering discriminatory thoughts and attachments.

Fortunately today, we have encountered Buddhism and the teachings of saints from many religions. After carefully absorbing what we have heard, our problem lies in whether we can practice the teachings. By following them, we would transcend to a higher level in this lifetime or as we have learned from many religions, we would become a saint, not to become God, but to become one with God, to possess the virtues and conduct of saints.

Consider our chaotic and unstable world. Yesterday, I

had lunch with Mr. Huang, the director of the London Buddhist Library, and his wife before they left Singapore. He told me that London has become extremely unsafe. Children kill their parents, and students kill their teachers and classmates. Similar worrisome occurrences are taking place in the United States as well. There are frequent strikes in the transportation and communication industries disrupting people's lives. Moral concepts are in a steep decline in western societies and there is an urgent need for the education of morality and ethics.

Mr. Huang has edited a series of textbooks that are used in government-run schools. He will send a copy of the textbooks to us. This first series is for elementary schools. He wants to continue with another series for secondary schools and a third one for universities. Moral education is urgently needed. The British government and the Prince of Wales welcomed the introduction of these textbooks and actively support this project.

When I asked him if there was an inter-faith organization in Europe, he replied that they have one that is similar to the Singapore Inter-Religious Organization. I asked if it was possible to communicate with them in the hope that these organizations might begin a dialogue. We could invite them to visit Singapore or the nine major religious groups in Singapore could visit them. The

purpose of the lunch with Mr. Huang yesterday was primarily to discuss this idea.

It is hoped that all the religious leaders can communicate and meet often to find ways to save this world from disasters, eliminate racial prejudices and conflicts, and abolish religious misunderstanding and wars. This is the way to nurture a stable and prosperous society, and to bring true peace to the world. This work is urgently needed now.

Somebody asked, since there is only one God, why are there so many religions? Many others have also asked this very good question. We can better understand this by looking at history and geography. Modern technology has advanced greatly from its inception approximately one hundred years ago when aviation did not even exist. It took a few months for people to travel by steamship from China to America and more than twenty days from Shanghai to Singapore.

Two hundred years ago, it took three or four months to sail from China to America and without favorable winds the trip could last six months. Because transportation and communication were inconvenient and slow, people had limited contact with one another. The ancient Chinese said that if someone visited the provincial capital, they were considered to have seen the world. That was because

people were completely isolated from one another throughout their entire lives and most never even left their town. Written communication primarily relied on asking friends or relatives to pass on a letter until it reached its recipient. This whole process could easily take weeks.

Before the Chinese War of Resistance against the Japanese invasion, I lived in Anhui, China and my father worked in Fujian Province. We had mail delivery, but it usually took two and sometimes even three weeks for a letter to be delivered. An improvement over times past, but it was still very slow. In the same amount of time, God can manifest in many forms to teach different races. I believe that this adaptation among various races with different cultures and historical backgrounds resulted in different religions.

Likewise, Buddha Shakyamuni taught sentient beings according to individual needs and circumstances. Buddhas do not have a fixed way of teaching and neither does God. They match their teaching to the being's needs.

We read of the thirty-two manifestations of Great Compassion Bodhisattva in the "Universal Door Chapter" from the *Lotus Sutra*. To those who can be liberated through the manifestation of a Buddha, they will appear and teach as a Buddha. Similarly, to those who can be liberated as Christians, they will appear and teach as Jesus.

And for those who can be liberated as Sikhs, they will appear and teach as a Sikh. The form he or she appears in will be the same as that of the group.

During our last visit to Malaysia, we visited a Burmese temple and saw twenty-some statues of Buddha Shakyamuni. Each had different features. The first statue we saw had Indian features. The features of the second Buddha were Nepalese. We also saw statues with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean features. This illustrates that wherever Buddha Shakyamuni manifested, he assumed the same features as the local people and adapted to local conditions, so they would feel comfortable with him. Thus, he had no fixed form.

The teaching given to any particular group must be adapted to their capacity while according with the true reality. In religion, the true reality at its highest level is to be one with God. We are now witnessing this as we listen to lecturers from the different religions. The truths and principles are the same; just the words and presentations are different.

Beginners and those with lower abilities and understanding are taught how to change from bad to good. Those with higher abilities and understanding are taught how to change from being deluded to becoming awakened. The ultimate goal is to help all beings change from being

ordinary beings to becoming sages. These three main guiding principles in Buddhism are present in all religions.

Previously, people were not aware of this because they did not associate with one another. In their conceit and arrogance, each thought that their religion was the best and that all other teachings were improper and inferior. Now that we are communicating, we realize that all are equal. All is one, not two. Hence, we not only come together, we are like sisters and brothers who have a shared mission.

We cannot continue to think only in terms of a small geographical area. In the past, religious teachers would spend their entire lives within this narrow scope, but no longer. Today, we must think globally. If we think only in terms of my district, my religion or my group, we will not survive. Such narrow-minded and selfish thinking leads to misunderstandings, conflicts, wars, and ultimately a Third World War - nuclear war. Our world would be destroyed.

We have to expand our thinking. In our lectures, we have encouraged practitioners to care about our world. Is this enough? No! Now we hear of the possibility of interplanetary wars. We need to expand our hearts and minds further, to think not only of our planet Earth but also of the infinite planets throughout the universe. Mahayana Buddhism teaches us that our minds can

encompass the universe. Only in this way, can our problems be truly solved. If practitioners cannot think this altruistically and do not have this mind capacity, how can we become Buddhas? This mind capacity is the Bodhi mind, the true mind. Originally, our minds were this all-encompassing.

Where do all the sentient beings in the universe come from? They manifest from our True Nature. Thus, it is said in Buddhism: "Nothing exists outside the mind. The mind is not excluded from anything." Once our capacity of mind is extended, higher spiritual realms will materialize, and all resentment and hatred will dissolve.

Some practitioners have asked me how to cultivate the Paramita of Patience. Upon reaching this higher spiritual state in practice, the Paramita of Patience is non-existent because there is no attachment to the form of patience. With the severing of wandering discriminatory thoughts and attachments, all greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, right and wrong are non-existent. In this state, we reach the realm of inconceivable liberation described in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, that of absolute ultimate liberation. It is the highest enjoyment in life. It is the life and enjoyment of a Dharma-body Bodhisattva. What is Dharma-body? It is the state in which we unite our bodies and minds with those of all the beings throughout the

universe. In that state, we are the Dharma-body for we change from ordinary beings into sages and our every thought will no longer be just of this earth but of all sentient beings in the universe.

The Buddha taught us in the *Infinite Life Sutra* to “dwell in the wisdom of true reality.” Only when we attain the aforementioned state will we dwell in true wisdom. In this state, our benefit is “to receive the teaching and uncover the true reality.”

This is also the ultimate enjoyment in human life that Mr. Dong-Mei Fang, a Professor of philosophy, spoke of. Benefiting others is to “bring all sentient beings true benefits.” In other words, lovingkindness that is the sincere, non-discriminatory, unselfish great caring for all sentient beings. All sentient beings include plants, animals, as well as inanimate objects, and can be expanded to include all natural phenomena. This happens because everything arises from the gathering of affinities and conditions.

The term “sentient being” has vast meanings. With sincere, pure, non-discriminatory, and compassionate love, we give true benefits to all. We learn that the *Infinite Life Sutra* is a good sutra, hard to encounter in infinite eons. It tells us of the “three truths.” If we can carefully study and contemplate its essence and principles, and compare these

with the philosophies and conduct of the saints and sages, we will realize that such philosophies and conduct are the same as the teachings in the *Infinite Life Sutra*. Although the words and practice may differ, careful observation shows that the principles are the same. This is why in Buddhism; we say that the saints of all religions are manifestations of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Once we realize this, it will become easy for us to accomplish the highest level of Mahayana Buddhist practice. The first of the Ten Great Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva is "To equally respect all beings and things." We respect all sentient beings the same way we respect the Buddhas.

Last night, Mr. Singh said that whenever they visit any other religious place or group, including Buddhists, they show their respect. When we walk into their temples, are we to do likewise? Certainly. I have visited Sikh temples and paid my respects as they do, by prostrating. Their followers respected me for doing so. Why? When I respect them, they in turn will respect me. It is illogical to expect otherwise.

Christians call Jesus the "messenger of God." We respect their Bible. Some of them may call us disbelievers only because they do not know or understand us. As we communicate and they read about Buddhism, they will

understand us better. How can we help them? First, we need to respect them and take the initiative. This is why every Sunday our Singapore Buddhist Lodge invites representatives from religious groups to teach us about their beliefs.

Their response to our taking the initiative has been very good. In less than a year, a Hindu group has invited us to lecture. Islamic organizations have not only invited us to lecture but have held a forum with us. Our contacts with the Catholics are even more frequent and our venerables have given lectures for them. They have now invited me to lecture on the Rosary. I will not lecture on Buddhist sutras but on their sacred texts. The Rosary is a prayer; a requirement for them like our morning and evening ceremonies are for us. I have accepted their invitation to lecture on the Rosary.

Gradually we will meet with every religion. First, we extend an invitation to them and in return, they invite us. Our sole hope is that every religion will open its church, mosque, and temple doors and welcome all the other religions to give teachings. This is an inevitable evolution of the twenty-first century. Our world is no longer comprised of small self-contained societies or locally restricted areas. Keeping to ourselves is wrong and is no longer an option.

The Buddha explained in the *Lotus Sutra*, that in the Dharma Ending Age we would need to propagate Mahayana Buddhism. He knew that in our time, society would be democratic and liberal. While Theravada Buddhism is more conservative and was suitable for earlier times, Mahayana Buddhism is better suited to our times.

In this progressively liberal age, even some countries that have had a monarchistic form of government are turning to democratic constitutional governments. This is their only option in the face of modern political and social changes. This trend goes well with the propagation of Mahayana Buddhism. We wish to introduce its principles and practice to every religion in the world. I sincerely respect their sacred texts as I respect Mahayana sutras.

Judaism upholds the Old Testament. Christianity upholds the New Testament. Catholicism regards the Old and the New Testaments as equally important. These three religions share a very close relationship. In their worship of one God, a few differences abound. In Judaism, God is worshipped as supreme to Mother Mary and Jesus. In Catholicism, Mother Mary and Jesus are equally supreme as are God and Jesus in Christianity. The three religions differ primarily in this aspect. Thus, this is like one family being divided into three parts. These three primary religions are like brothers with the other religions

and Buddhism branching out from them like cousins and the whole being one big family.

Buddhism does not talk of brothers or cousins but of one common life entity. As the Buddha said: "All sentient beings by nature can become Buddhas." Buddhism provides us with a perfect and complete explanation. It does not discriminate, but says that no one is inferior to another and that it regards all equally. It is stated in the *Infinite Life Sutra*: "All will become Buddhas." We need to work especially hard to seek the profound meanings within these two phrases and achieve the state of mind of a Buddha. Only in this way, can we truly become one entity with all Buddhas throughout all space and time.

ACHIEVING LASTING WORLD PEACE THROUGH EDUCATION

Throughout history, humanity has longed for and prayed for lasting peace. But, not only has this peace continued to elude us, natural and human made disasters, especially those from warfare, are increasing in frequency and severity. The loss of lives and property is beyond calculation. In the last century, there were two world wars and I fear a third is inevitable. The possibility of genuine peace seems hopeless.

Why have these things happened? While sages and virtuous people of ancient China prayed for blessings from heaven, they did not rely on heaven but rather on the teachings of the sages. When Buddhism was brought into China, it encountered Confucianism and Taoism. These three are not religions, but teachings, each with its own unique qualities.

As Emperor Yung Zheng, who came to power in 1722, stated in the proclamation for the *Sutra of the Ten Virtuous Conducts*, the three teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism all guide people to enlightenment. Their basic teachings and methods of practice are essentially the same and thus do not conflict with one another. The emperor was correct. Similarly, the teachings

of many religions also come from the same basis, the same principles. What are the principles? They are sincerity, purity, equality, and compassion. When we summarize the Buddha's teachings, they are these same four values plus proper understanding.

The principles and methods of practice can coexist without conflict. What is the teaching? It is to love everybody and everything. This is the answer of retired Sister Theresa Hsu in Singapore. When Mr. Bock Guan Lee asked her what religion is, she replied that it is love. We read in the Holy Bible that God loves all people. In Buddhist sutras, we read that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are compassionate. Most people in this region are Muslims. For example, our neighbors Malaysia and Indonesia are Islamic. When we open the Quran, we find that the beginning of each paragraph starts with "In the name of Allah, the Merciful." They address God as Allah.

Although there are many religions in our world, they all have the same essence of sincerity, purity, equality, wisdom, compassion, and nondiscriminatory love. The teaching goal of each religion is the same as well; it is to guide all to mutual respect by living in harmony and equality regardless of nationality and ethnicity. We do not hear members of the clergy say that you are not supposed to believe in their religion because you are not from their

group or country. We see that religions have now spread around the world. Most people do not understand that all religions are equal, and that only through religious education can we attain world peace.

Originally, every religion was a teaching, a multicultural social education. When we carefully read the sacred texts of each religion, we will understand; they all harbor great broadmindedness. As the Buddha said: "The mind encompasses the universe." Which religion is not like this? Then why are people so narrow-minded? They think only of themselves and look down on others. This is not God's will or the teaching of the sacred texts but the opinions of individuals.

Take Buddhists for example. Do we follow the Buddha's teachings? No. We want our way place to be prosperous and that of our neighbor to fail. We want the followers of other way places to come to mine. Even within Buddhism, different factions compete with one another. Is this really what the Buddha taught? No. He taught that "Praising oneself and slandering others" is a grave offense.

What did the Buddha teach us? We can see in the *Flower Adornment Sutra* that every Bodhisattva and every benevolent teacher is humble, and respects and praises others. This is to demonstrate "Principles and methods of practice accord with each other." This is how world peace

can be attained. We are told that every proper teaching in the world is equal and the best; but, if we say this one is number one and that one is number two, we create conflicts. Equality is indeed the foundation for peace.

Harmony is invaluable and it is what we all wish for but where does it come from? It comes from equality, without which, there will be no lasting peace. Every religion teaches people to regard others with a non-discriminatory mind.

Why are there so many religions? In the past, most people were unable to travel much over great distances, and thus could not easily communicate with one another. People who lived in the countryside only moved within their own villages. To live harmoniously in a small village required the guidance of the teaching of sages and virtuous people. Due to differences in culture, history, and surroundings, the sages and virtuous people guided people with diverse needs and abilities and this resulted in different religions.

We read in the sutras that in India, in Buddha Shakyamuni's time, there were over one hundred religions and thus over one hundred teachings that guided people of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. This is how the different religions in India originated.

China became a unified nation during the Qin Dynasty

(221-206 B.C.) under the Emperor Qin Shi Huang. Although the dynasty was short-lived, its influence was far-reaching. The succeeding dynasty, the Han, had a much longer history, approximately 400 years. Emperor Wu, the second emperor, unified educational policy and goals that were based on Confucianism.

Since that time, Confucianism has been the most popular teaching in China. Over the past 2000 years, there have been many dynasties in China; but although the government changed, the educational policy remained the same, even during the Mongolian and Manchu invasions.

In 67 AD, during the Han dynasty under Emperor Ming, Buddhism was formally introduced into China. Thus, since ancient times there have been three major teachings to guide the Chinese people. As Buddhists would say, "The Chinese people possess excellent roots of goodness." For millennia, the Chinese have sought peace. In the early dynasties, China never invaded any country because they were well educated in and accepted the teachings of sages and virtuous people. China cared for others and governed by virtue and not by force.

In ancient times, emperors in every dynasty nurtured and ruled with virtue. Neighboring countries respected and thus willingly followed the guidance of China. They showed their respect by making offerings and sending it

gifts. This esteem was returned many times over for we see that China respected smaller countries and treated them well.

In the past, China governed by the ancient teachings and not by force, but over the past one hundred and fifty years, the Chinese have gradually turned away from the ancient virtuous teachings. As their afflictions and bad habits surfaced, their selfishness, greed, anger, ignorance, and arrogance corrupted social values. Thus, when they encountered the guns and cannons of the invading westerners, the country was almost torn apart and has continued to suffer the results ever since. In the face of this erosion, the Chinese people started to doubt their own culture and moral values.

They have not been alone. People around the world need to return to traditional values and strive to attain peace. How do we attain peace? Through education. The most important education is that of the family as it is the basis of all education. When a family loses its sense of unity, it affects the stability of society because families are the foundation of society and the core of a family is the husband and wife. When spouses do not get along, society will not be peaceful. This is why Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism emphasize family education.

The principle teaching in Buddhism is to practice filial

piety and respect; we are to be filial to our parents, respectful to teachers and elders, compassionate and not kill any living beings, and practice the Ten Virtuous Conducts. The essential teaching of the *Ten Virtuous Conducts Sutra* is comprised of these four principles.

Confucianism stresses the Five Human Relationships including those between husbands and wives, parents and children, siblings, friends, political leaders and the public and the Eight Virtues of loyalty, filial piety, kindness, compassion, trustworthiness, justice, harmony, and equality.

Whether it is Confucianism, Buddhism, or Taoism, the teachings primarily begin in the family. If family education is lost, then no other teachings will be able to help us reach peace and stability. The family is the foundation of society like the ground level is the foundation of a four-story building. Without the first level, the other levels cannot be built.

Formal education is the second level, social education is the third level, and religious education the fourth level. Religious education is the education of spirituality. The main objective is to help sentient beings transcend from ordinary beings to sages. Religious teachings show us how to broaden our compassion and lovingkindness until we care for all sentient beings in the universe. When all four

educations are taught, the world will attain eternal peace and stability, living beings will mutually respect and care for each other in unity, and we will coexist in peace and harmony. However, without these four educational foundations, peace and stability will be mere hollow words.

In the world today, traditional education by the family rarely exists; thus, the vast majority of children no longer listen to their parents. Quality education in schools is rare to find; most students ignore their teachers.

As to the education that society largely provides, what do we learn from our daily contact with newspapers, magazines, television, and movies? How to kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct, and lie. Religious education has also greatly changed as most emphasize ceremonial rites; so religious education has also largely vanished. Even if we can read religious texts, we barely understand the principles within them. No wonder we cannot practice their teachings in our daily lives.

When the four kinds of education are so rare, how can the world not be in chaos! Today, there are people who want to save this world, but without these four kinds of education how can they achieve that? Do we need a new religion? No. The religions passed down since ancient times are rich in content. If we can practice only a small percentage of their teachings, the world will exist in peace

and hope.

There is no need for new religions, for they would be meaningless and would only serve to increase confusion in the world. We must understand this. In the past, the world recognized six main religions. In Singapore, nine main religions have excellent sacred texts and teachings. We need to use lovingkindness and profound understanding to bring together and harmoniously unite all these teachings.

Today, they are separate, but all originate from the same basis, the same principles of sincerity, purity, equality, and compassion. If we can accomplish harmonious unification and earnestly learn these teachings, we can widely propagate them to help society, save the world from conflicts, establish world peace and bring happiness to all. We must solve these crucial problems now.

In the 1970s, Professor Arnold Toynbee said: "Only the teachings of Confucius, Mencius and Mahayana Buddhism will be able to solve the problems of the 21st century." What he said is reasonable because these teachings are specific and complete and are thus, worthy of our study and propagation.

THE FOUNDATION OF ALL RELIGIONS: COMPASSION AND LOVINGKINDNESS

1 January 2001

Your Excellency, the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr. Goh Chok Tong and Mrs. Goh, honored Ambassadors, representatives of the Inter-Religious Organization, religious representatives from Singapore and abroad, guests and friends. Everyone is a great Bodhisattva, a messenger of God, and an utmost virtuous person.

We are here tonight to celebrate our march toward the new century and a new year. As each year begins, everything changes from old to new. This first day of the new Millennium is very rare, occurring only once in a thousand years.

We would like to thank the Singapore Buddhist Lodge and the Jamiyah Centre in initiating this Cross-Century Charity Dinner and uniting the nine religions of Singapore in a prayer for world peace. We extend a warm welcome to our important guests, over five thousand senior citizens and children of different religions and races from Homes for the Aged and from Children's Homes. The elderly have dedicated themselves to building the nation and society, and have contributed to the sparkling success of Singapore. We wish to show our respect and care for them,

and hope that this will serve to remind future generations to always appreciate and repay with kindness the efforts of the seniors.

Here in Singapore, people of different racial and cultural backgrounds have fostered harmonious relationships. Due to mutual respect, clergies of the nine religions here work well together. We believe such harmony and respect are rare. I believe there are two basic reasons for this: the wise guidance of the Singaporean government, and its advocacy of both secular and religious education.

The ancient sages said: "Education is essential in building a country and governing its people." The basis for a happy family, a prosperous society, a stable nation, racial harmony, and world peace is education, of which there are four types. The first is family education as found in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Second is formal education. In ancient China, this was based on the teachings of Confucius and Mencius.

Third is social education, which in the past was taught through the arts. When Confucius traveled to different states, he collected popular folk songs from various areas and ethnic groups. Later, he edited these excellent songs and compiled them into *Book of Songs*. In *Analects*, Confucius wrote: "The content of the three hundred

poems in *Book of Songs* is to teach people to nurture a pure honest mind." This is the ultimate guideline for social education. Its goal is to attain happiness, harmony, and a prosperous society.

From times past through the present, we see that social education can encompass many areas, from drama, dance and books to newspapers, movies, TV, and the Internet. We hope these will teach people to nurture a pure honest mind.

The last type is religious education and it is the highest level of human education. Unfortunately, today religious education all too often emphasizes the appearance and thus can border on superstition. These four types of education are rare today. Our minds and spirits have nothing to return to or rely upon. The questions on the meaning and value of life, spiritual refuge, and the resultant confusion have become serious problems for modern society.

High technology and economics cannot bring happiness and peace to all beings but only serve to increase greed and desires. Consequently, our living environment has become polluted and our natural ecology is being destroyed. Natural resources are being depleted and illegal drugs are everywhere. People have forgotten moral values and are only concerned with self-benefit. The shocking

increases in juvenile delinquency, wars, and continuous conflicts make our world increasingly chaotic. Why? Because we have neglected humanity and moral education. These problems cannot be solved by politics, physical force, economics, or technology.

We know that there are four main cultural systems in our world: Confucianism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. These cultural systems are the foundation for most people. We understand that only Buddhist and religious education, in other words the teaching of multiculturalism, can revive the teachings of humanity and morality, and propagate the education of love.

The Buddha said: "All sentient beings have the same wisdom and abilities as those of the Buddha." We read in the Mahayana sutras that broadminded care for all beings encompasses the whole universe. The Buddha explained: "There are no boundaries within the pure mind."

I often use a tree as an example. Different religions and ethnic groups can be seen as the twigs, branches, leaves, and flowers of the tree. They all stem from the same root. They are actually one entity. Only with this understanding, can we live in peace, have mutual respect, and work harmoniously with people of different nations, religions, and ethnicities.

The core of Buddhism is sincerity, purity, equality,

proper understanding, and compassion. These qualities are not only the essence of Buddhism but are at the heart of all religious teachings as well. God loves all beings; Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have great compassion. Who are the Holy Being, God, Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas? They are these five virtues of sincerity, purity, equality, proper understanding, and compassion, the innate virtues of the True Nature. Anything that is done from the True Nature is done with non-differentiating compassion and lovingkindness, care for all inanimate and animate beings regardless of nationality, ethnicity or religious beliefs. Through sincere communication and the exchange of ideas with various religions, we have found a common ground: compassion and lovingkindness.

Over the years, we have earnestly worked with different religions, and hope that all religious leaders can help and guide all beings with their teachings. With thorough understanding of Buddhism and religious teachings we would do well to apply these teachings daily when interacting with others and situations. Our every rising thought is to benefit society, to remember the kindness of others and to repay them with gratitude. Also, we are to set good examples for society.

In June 2000, the Singapore Buddhist Lodge began a weekly program to invite representatives from various

religious groups to teach us about their beliefs. Every religious talk is broadcast live on the Internet and has been produced on VCDs. Also, representatives of the nine major religions of Singapore have made a friendly visit to the five main religions of China. Such activities enhance our communication and understanding, and are sure to bring good responses to our propagation of Buddhism and religious teachings.

We need to do our very best to create happiness and social stability so that all may exist in a peaceful world. If we are sincere and diligent, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, God, and the spiritual beings of all religions will guide us.

With utmost sincerity, I wish everyone success in their contributions to foster social stability, prosperous nations, world peace and universal happiness and lastly, I wish everyone infinite life.

COMPASSION AND LOVINGKINDNESS

The foundation of all religions is
Compassion and lovingkindness.

The goal of all religions is

To teach everyone

To interact with all beings with equality,

To share our prosperity and

To coexist in harmony.

GLOSSARY

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

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

Attachments 執著 **Zhizhuο**. Fixed to certain ideas or objects.

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

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

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

Delusion 迷惑 **Mi Huο**. False beliefs and views.

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

Eon 劫 **Jie**. 1,334,000,000 years. It is often said to be the time it would take for a mountain of solid rock of ten cubic leagues to wear down if the tip of a heavenly

maiden's delicate tunic brushed against it every hundred years. The length of time between the creation and recreation of a world system, spanning the period of a world system's formation, existence, destruction, and non-existence. An unimaginably long time.

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

Five Pure Land Sutras and One Treatise 淨土五經一論 **Jingtu Wujing Yi Lun**. (1) *The Buddha Speaks of the Infinite Life Sutra of Adornment, Purity, Equality, and Enlightenment of the Mahayana School* (The *Infinite Life Sutra*); (2) *The Amitabha Sutra*; (3) *The Visualization on the Infinite Life Buddha Sutra*; (4) "Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's Conduct and Vows", from the *Flower Adornment Sutra*; (5) "The Chapter on the Perfect Complete Realization of Great Strength Bodhisattva through Buddha Name Recitation" from the *Surangama Sutra*; and (6) the *Rebirth Treatise*.

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

Karma/Cause and Effect 業 **Ye** 因果 **Yin Guo**. Consequences result from thought, speech, and behavior.

Karma mainly applies to intentional thoughts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Six Realms 六道 **Liu Dao**. Three upper realms are heavens, demi-gods, and humans. Three lower realms are animals, hungry ghosts, and hells.

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

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

Ten Virtuous Conducts 十善業 Shi Shan Yie. No killing (不殺生 Bu Sha Sheng), stealing (不偷盜 Bu Today), sexual misconduct (不邪淫 Bu Xieyin), lying (不妄語 Bu Wangyu), abusive language (不惡口 Bu E Kou), bearing tales (不兩舌 Bu Liangshe), seductive words (不綺語 Bu Qiyu), greed (不貪 Bu Tan), anger (不瞋 Bu Chen), and ignorance (不癡 Bu Chi).

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

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

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

Three Bad Realms 三道 **San Dao.** Please see Six Realms.

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

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

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

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

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

True Nature 自性 **Zi Xing**. Also called the self-nature. Our original, true self that we still have, but that is currently covered by deluded thoughts.

Wandering Discriminatory Thoughts and Attachments 妄想分別執著 **Wangxiang Fenbie Zhizhuo**. Afflictions that cloud our True Nature. When we have no wandering thoughts, we only have absolute proper and virtuous thoughts. It does not mean that our minds are empty of all thoughts.

Way Place 道場 **Dao Chang**. Usually called a temple, a place where Buddhist practitioners come to practice.

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

A PATH
TO
TRUE
HAPPINESS

SPOKEN BY VEN. CHIN KUNG
NOTE & TRANSLATED BY
TRIRATNANI DISCIPLES

What is Buddhism?

- ☞ Buddhism is the most profound and wholesome education directed by the Buddha towards all people.
- ☞ The content in Shakyamuni Buddha's forty-nine years of teaching describes the true face of life and the universe. Life refers to oneself, universe refers to our living environment. The Teachings directly relate to our own lives and surroundings.
- ☞ Those who possess a complete and proper understanding of life and the universe are called Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. Those who lack the understanding are called worldly people.
- ☞ Cultivation is changing the way we think, speak, and act towards people and matters from an erroneous way to a proper way.

☞ The guideline for cultivation is understanding, proper views, and purity. Understanding is without delusion, proper views is without deviation, and purity is without pollution. This can be achieved by practicing the Three Learnings of self-discipline, concentration, and wisdom.

☞ The Three Basic Conditions are the foundation of cultivation and study. When interacting with people, accord with the Six Harmonies, and when dealing with society, practice the Six Principles. Follow the lessons taught by Universal Worthy Bodhisattva and dedicate one's mind to everlasting purity and brightness. These complete the purpose of the Buddha's Teachings.

BUDDHISM IS AN EDUCATION, *NOT* A RELIGION



According to the Webster's Dictionary, the definition of religion is as follows, "*An organized system of beliefs, rites, and celebrations centered on a supernatural being power; belief pursued with devotion.*"

Buddhism is not a religion because: First, the Buddha is not a 'supernatural being power'. The Buddha is simply a person who has reached Complete Understanding of the reality of life and the universe. Life refers to ourselves, and universe refers to our living environment. The Buddha taught that all beings possess the same ability within to reach Complete Understanding of themselves and their environment, and free themselves from all sufferings to attain utmost happiness. All beings can become Buddhas, and all beings and the Buddha

are equal by nature. The Buddha is not a God, but a teacher, who teaches us the way to restore Wisdom and Understanding by conquering the greed, hatred, and ignorance which blind us at the present moment. The word 'Buddha' is a Sanskrit word, when translated it means, "Wisdom, Awareness/Understanding". We call the founder of Buddhism Shakyamuni 'Buddha' because He has attained Complete Understanding and Wisdom of life and the universe. Buddhism is His education to us, it is His teaching which shines the way to Buddhahood.

Second, Buddhism is not a religion because 'belief' in the Buddha's teachings is not blind belief, blind faith, and far from superstition. Shakyamuni Buddha taught us not to blindly believe what he tells us, he wants us to try the teachings and prove them for ourselves. The Buddha wants us

to know, not merely believe. The Buddha's teachings flow from his own experience of the way to understand the true face of life and the universe, and show us a path of our own to taste the truth for ourselves. This is much like a good friend telling us of his trip to Europe, the sights he has seen, and the way to go there and see for ourselves. The Buddha uses a perfectly scientific way of showing us reality in its true form.

Third, Buddhism is not a religion because all the 'rites and celebrations' are not centered on a supernatural being, but rather the people attending the assemblies. The ceremonies and celebrations in Buddhism all serve an educational purpose, a reminder of the Buddha's teachings and encouragement to all students who practice it. For example, the Thousand Buddhas Repentance Ceremony practiced during

Chinese New Year is to help the participants cultivate a humble heart and respect for others. The point of all ‘ceremonies’ is to help others awaken from delusion and return to Wisdom and Understanding.

Finally, Buddhism is not a religion because the ‘devotion’ used in Buddhism is not one based on emotion, but one based on reason. Students of the Buddha are devoted to their practice of maintaining Purity of Mind because this practice brings true happiness. We are devoted to help others and the Society attain Complete Understanding and Wisdom. Only through Complete Understanding and Wisdom can we realize our true selves and living environment. The Buddha’s education is truly not a religion but an education, teaching us the way to break through ignorance and

arrive at a perfect understanding of ourselves and everything around us.

Our goal is True Happiness. *ℵ*

THE TEACHINGS OF
VENERABLE MASTER
CHIN KUNG

The Teachings of Venerable Master Chin Kung



- Buddhism is an education, not a religion. We do not worship the Buddha, we respect him as a teacher. His teachings enable us to leave suffering and attain happiness.

- What does Buddha mean? "Buddha" means enlightenment/ understanding. Complete understanding is when one realizes the truth about life and the universe. It is when one is apart from all delusions.

- Cultivation is practiced in our everyday life. We should not see it as something unusual, it is simply changing ourselves for the better.

- To keep our mind pure and at peace is like keeping a pond clean and undisturbed. When the water is clear and

still, it can reflect the sky, sun, and trees just as they are, without distortion. Our mind is the same. When we are polluted by greed, hatred, ignorance, and disturbed by discriminations and attachments, we distort our picture of reality and fail to see things as they are. Wrong perceptions of reality can prevent us from enjoying a clear and happy life.

- Learn to turn the light around, reflect upon yourself and smooth your mind-pond still. Everything outside of ourselves are equal in themselves; the garbage does not feel it is unclean, and the flower does not know it is fragrant, there is no such thing as discrimination. We must let our mind be at peace without attachments, this is true happiness.
- There are a lot of music in our society now which promote violence, greed, and hatred. To maintain a peaceful

mind, we should refrain from listening to these the best we can.

- Anyone who still harbours arrogance, a self, cannot receive the true teachings of the Buddha.
- What is purity? Purity is apart from defilement. Defilement is the greed, hatred, and stupidity present in our minds. Cultivation is cleansing these impurities from our hearts.
- Cultivation is not something unusual, it is part of our everyday life. Whenever we recognize and correct our faults, we are cultivating.
- How do we know when our cultivation has improved? The time comes when we begin to understand the sutras deeper, when we can read between the lines and realize the true meaning of the Buddha's teachings. This is when our cultivation has improved.

- “What goes around comes around”, “Treat others the way you would like to be treated”. If we want world peace for ourselves and future generations, we should refrain from evil acts and cultivate kindness.
- To be mindful of the Buddha is to dwell in true wisdom.
- The ultimate goal to which all methods of cultivation lead is the complete pure and equanimous mind. It is our original nature, our Buddha-nature.
- Success is reached only after overcoming great obstacles.
- The Buddha’s teachings should be introduced as an education, not a religion. Using spiritual penetrations and psychic abilities to attract people to believe in Buddhism is not the proper teachings and only serves to mislead others.

- We should not be afraid to see our faults and mistakes because only then can they be corrected. People who fail to see their own mistakes will not be able to change for the better.
- A student of the Buddha does not just *read* Buddhist texts, he/she studies them to reach a deeper understanding of life and the universe and puts the teachings into practice in everyday life.
- Seeing another's fault is the greatest fault in itself.
- In putting the teachings into practice, the first thing we should cultivate is the Pure Heart. The Pure Heart is a mind without discrimination or attachments. We must also develop proper understanding by listening to explanations of the Buddha's Teachings.
- We should treat all people with respect and sincerity. We must be responsible for our actions and careful when

handling other's properties. Be conservative with speech and actions to avoid harming others.

- Listen more, speak less.
- Filial Piety and Respect are the roots of good conduct.
- Be considerate and kind in your speech. To put-down another person is only proving your own arrogance and lack of self-confidence to others.
- The root of people's sufferings and sicknesses is discrimination and attachment to unrealistic things. The Buddha's Teachings tell us how to detach ourselves and not to discriminate. If we listen and practice according to the Teachings, we will be at great ease in this world of confusion.
- The difference between the success and failure of cultivation lies in your learning attitude. Be humble, sincere,

and respectful. Don't think you're on top of everything.

- To often criticize is not a good matter. We should try to see the good points in others.
- Practicing virtue is to keep a kind heart, speak kind words, and do kind acts to benefit others.
- We should cultivate a sincere heart, a pure heart, an equanimous heart, and a great compassionate heart.
- At a place of proper cultivation, the Teacher guides the way and fellow students support each other along the way; we should cherish both equally.
- We must rely upon fellow cultivators to correct our faults. If we cannot accept criticism from others, we will never reach attainment in our cultivation.

- Learn to use time wisely. When dealing with people and matters, be clear of what you're going to do from beginning to end, don't waste time dawdling around. If time is used wisely, there will be plenty of time left to practice diligence.

- When we live together at a place of proper cultivation, we must be mutually respectful as well as harmonious.

- The Buddha helps those who have affinity with Him. The question of affinity rests in whether the person accepts the Teachings or not. The Buddha's compassion and Teachings extend over all living beings, just as the sun shines evenly over the great earth. Those who hide in the shade cannot receive the benefits of the sunshine, just as those who cover themselves in ignorance cannot benefit from the Buddha's Teachings.

- We should truly believe there is heaven and hell. If we practice kind deeds, our future will be in heaven. If we commit evil acts, our future will be in hell.
- Don't be jealous of others, you only harm yourself in the process.
- Wisdom is a must if we truly wish to propagate the Teachings and benefit living beings. Don't use emotions when helping others, use wisdom and be reasonable. If we use emotions when dealing with people and matters, it often makes a good thing go bad.
- A wise mind is like a mirror, reflecting and perceiving everything clearly without distortion.
- A student of the Buddha should strictly abide by the laws of the nation, society, moral codes, and discipline himself/herself in the teachings of the Buddha.

- As our teacher, the Buddha himself took care of the old and sick, and was mindful and ever-ready to help all beings in need. The Buddha's conduct showed unconditional compassion, setting a great example for us to follow.
- Life is short and fragile, why not cultivate kindness instead of committing acts which cause harm to living beings?
- We should constantly be mindful of the people worried by afflictions, and bring forth the heart to help them. Learn to tie good affinities with others and always be friendly.
- To help others is to help yourself.
- To respect others is to respect yourself.
- People who deceive others may someday still feel remorseful and can be saved from hell, but those who deceive

themselves have no way of escaping at all.

- If people would sincerely accrue virtues and practice kind deeds, disasters and calamities can either be reduced or eliminated depending upon the degree of sincerity and kind deeds practiced.
- The key to success is diligence.
- The different methods prescribed by the Buddha come from the different needs of living beings. The methods spring forth naturally from the pure, unwavering heart of the Buddha, without the slightest difficulty.
- The Pure Land method of cultivation is the most difficult to believe and easiest to practice.
- A cultivator can be compared to a worm eating its way out of a bamboo tree. When he practices other cultivation methods, he is like a worm eating his

way up, taking a long time and tedious effort. If he practices the Pure Land method, it's like he's eating his way sideways through the bamboo. He will attain liberation in a short time with lighter effort.

- Initially, the Buddha teaches us how to be a good person, and ultimately, a completely understanding being just like the Buddha.
- True virtue and proper conduct are necessary factors in cultivation. If one cannot practice what one preaches, then regardless of how much one knows, they all become useless at the end of his life.
- Peace of the world is based on peace in the family.
- Our goal in studying Buddhism and cultivation is to attain complete understanding of life and the universe.

- When helping others, we should think about benefitting the entire society or even the world instead of limiting our help to just the ones we love. Expanding the boundaries of our care for others makes our lives more meaningful, full of freedom and happiness.
- Buddhas and Bodhisattvas treat all living beings as they treat themselves. Unlike us, they do not discriminate between themselves and others. Their compassion is equal and do not ask anything in return for their services.
- Disasters appear according to people's thoughts. If we want to turn the tide of destiny, we must first turn our thoughts toward kindness and compassion. We should be vegetarian, refrain from killing, and constantly be mindful of the Buddha's Teachings.
- Worries arise from the mind. You are wise if you do not let things worry you.

Nothing and nobody can make you worry without your permission.

- Accord with the people around you. Don't let your personality get in the way of your relationships with other people.
- Don't worry yourself with worldly matters.
- Not only should we be modest when reciting the Buddha's name, we should be modest when doing anything!
- Our hearts find peace when we understand the law of cause and effect: "What goes around, comes around". We would cease to blame others for our own misfortunes because we would be aware of the fact that we brought it upon ourselves. When our heart is at peace, we develop concentration, and with concentration, wisdom comes forth. Wisdom is the key to changing our lives for the better because only with wisdom can we see true reality.

- If we wish to bring peace to the world, we must start by changing our evil ways. World peace stems from inner peace.

- The ancients often taught of the way to reach attainment through a vase analogy. A conceited cultivator is like a vase filled to the rim with stagnant water, unable to receive a drop of the true Teachings. A cultivator who still holds his own stubborn viewpoints is like an unwashed vase, any true Teachings given to him would instantly be defiled. A cultivator who accepts the Teachings but doesn't put it into practice is like a vase with a hole on the bottom, everything it receives just leaks right back out again. We should not be like the cultivators above, but should accept the Teachings with a pure, humble heart and truly put it into practice. Only through this way are we really worth the Teachings we hold.

- We must cleanse ourselves of greed, hatred, and ignorance. These three poisons are the root behind all our sufferings.
- True love is indiscriminating, unattach-
ing, and unconditional, we should
share this love with all beings. This is
called compassion.
- Living the Buddha's teachings is to fill
our lives with utmost wisdom and
happiness.
- In Christianity, faith in God is foremost.
In Buddhism, faith in oneself is
foremost.
- We must learn to "let go" and not be too
stubborn with our viewpoints. If this
goal can be achieved, then we will be at
great ease and live a happy, fulfilling
life.

- Sufferings arise due to our unawareness and misunderstandings of ourselves and our environment.
- Buddhism is a teaching of wisdom.
- We should be conservative in what we use and be content with what we have.
- Everybody is somebody we can learn from. When we see the virtues of others, we should adopt them as our own. When we see the wrongs of others, we should reflect upon ourselves for the same faults.
- Buddhism is a teaching which shows us how to live a happy, fulfilling, and content life.
- The purpose of the Buddha's Teachings is to eradicate superstition and clear up peoples' misunderstandings about life.

- Are you aware of the fact that our lives are getting shorter by the second?
- Our goal of cultivation is to attain true happiness. True happiness is undiminishing happiness, withstanding the test of time and conditions.
- Love can turn into hate. You may dislike something you adored yesterday. We should see things with eyes of equality and not let emotions control our lives.
- Treat people sincerely. We should mean what we say and truly be sincere from the bottom of our hearts.
- For the health of our body, we should keep it moving. In taking care of our mind, we should keep it at peace. Exercise and peace of mind are the key to living a fulfilling life.

- We must be in control of our body and mind, and not let them hinder our ability to enjoy life.
- Wise people do not harbor feelings of gain or loss. In this way, they often dwell in the joy of possessing great peace of mind.
- When we encounter a person or a situation we do not like, it is the perfect opportunity for us to practice patience and cultivate a pure and compassionate heart.
- If we learn to forgive, we will dwell in peace of mind.
- We must be open-minded to be a good student of the Buddha.
- We should show our gratitude to those who have shown us kindness, such as parents, teachers, and even the society. Everyone in the society is interde-

pendent and inter-related, we should practice good deeds to repay them.

- Regardless of what we do, we should not give rise to anger.
- Wisdom springs from Purity of Mind.
- Our hearts must be like still water in a pond, only then can we reflect the Teachings properly. The Buddha is constantly teaching, we cannot hear it because our mind is not still. We should soothe our mind by clearing it of scattered thoughts.
- True cultivation is reciting Amitabha's name in modesty.
- How many people recognize the kindness shown by parents? Usually, people do not realize until they themselves become parents or lose their parents. We should show our gratitude through practicing filial piety by being

responsible, considerate, and obedient to our parents.

- We should not recite the sutra for the sake of reciting it. We must understand the meaning, put it into practice, and experience the truth.
- We truly benefit from the Buddha's teachings when it is practiced in everyday life.
- In Buddhism, love is based on wisdom. This is called compassion.
- To be a poor, content, and happy person is better than being one who is rich, worried, and afflicted with greed.
- Wise people do not just see matters from the surface, they contemplate them thoroughly and see to the truth.
- A genuine heart is one without discriminations or attachments.

- The point of practicing giving and charity is to forsake greed, hatred, ignorance, and arrogance.
- Everything in the Buddha's teachings can be used in everyday life, we should strive to live the teachings and attain true happiness.

TAKING REFUGE
IN THE
TRIPLE JEWELS

WHAT IS TAKING REFUGE?

Taking Refuge means to *return* and *rely*. From where do we return from and to what do we rely upon? When we take refuge in the Buddha, we are returning from our deluded state of mind and relying upon an Awakened, Understanding mind. When we take refuge in the Dharma, we are returning from deviant views and relying upon proper views and understanding. When we take refuge in the Sangha, we are returning from pollution and disharmony and relying upon Purity of Mind and the Six Principles of Living in Harmony. Taking refuge in the Triple Jewels restores the complete wisdom and abilities of our Self-Nature. We will attain Purity, Equality, Honesty, Contentment, Compassion, and overall, True Happiness.

THE BUDDHA JEWEL



“*Buddha*” is a sanskrit word which means ‘Awareness and Understanding’. When we take refuge in the Buddha, we vow to return from blind faith and delusion and rely upon Understanding and Awareness as a way of life. We are not relying upon the statues or Buddha-images, but rather the spirit of Understanding and Awareness they represent.

As students of the Pure Land Teachings, we learn to rely upon Amitabha Buddha’s lessons on wisdom and compassion. ‘Amitabha’ stands for Infinite Light and Infinite Life. When we follow his teachings, we will attain wisdom, happiness, and longevity.

This is taking refuge in the Buddha.

THE DHARMA JEWEL



“*Dharma*” means ‘Right Understanding and Views.’ Delusion has obstructed us from seeing the true face of people and the reality behind matters and objects. This has caused us to look at life and the universe in a distorted and deviant way. When delusion is cleared and our minds are pure to an extent, we give rise to wisdom. With wisdom, we are able to see all people and matters completely and clearly. When our hearts are pure, we can see the past, present, and future. Only when we have clearly seen the Whole can our viewpoint and Understanding be considered ‘Right’.

The Buddha’s mind is pure without the slightest pollution and therefore sees everything clearly and entirely. We can

rely upon the Sutras (recorded teachings of the Buddha) because they speak entirely of the truths the Buddha has seen. They teach and show us the way to attain Purity of Mind, to see life and the universe most clearly, and become just like the Buddhas.

As students of the Pure Land Teachings, we should rely upon the Six Sutras of Pure Land as guidelines of practice:

1. The Sutra of Amitabha's Purity, Equality, and Understanding.
2. The Amitabha Sutra
3. The Sutra on Observing Amitabha Buddha and His Pure Land
4. The Chapter of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's Conduct and Vows
5. The Chapter on the Foremost Attainment of Great Strength Bodhisattva Through Buddha Recitation

6. Vasubandhu Bodhisattva's Report on the Way to Reaching Pure Land

This is taking refuge in the Dharma.

THE SANGHA JEWEL



“*Sangha*” means ‘purity and harmony’. Today’s world is full of pollution. Pollution of mind, spirit, views, and body. Even the earth and atmosphere are hazardly polluted. The Buddha taught, “The environment changes according to our state of mind.” We should return from all these pollutions and rely upon *purity of mind*. Purity of Mind is the key to saving our Earth.

There is also great disharmony in our world today, among spouses, families, friends, societies, and countries which has brought us much suffering and disasters. The Buddha taught us to rely upon the Six Principles of Living in Harmony to establish harmonious relationships between ourselves and others.

As students of the Pure Land Teachings, we should rely upon the choice of wisdom and compassion as our way of treating others and dealing with affairs. Great Strength Bodhisattva represents wisdom. His choice of the Buddha Recitation method of practice is wisdom in its highest form. Kuan Yin Bodhisattva represents compassion; when we help introduce the Pure Land Teachings to others, we are practicing the complete compassion of Kuan Yin Bodhisattva.

This is taking refuge in the Sangha.

*To the Buddha I return and rely,
returning from delusions and
relying upon Awareness and Understanding.*

*To the Dharma I return and rely,
returning from erroneous views and
relying upon Proper Views and
Understanding.*

*To the Sangha I return and rely,
returning from pollutions and disharmony
and relying upon Purity of Mind and the
Six Principles of Living in Harmony.*



The Teachings Of Great Master Yin Guang

Whether one is a layperson or has left the home-life, one should respect elders and be harmonious to those surrounding him. One should endure what others cannot, and practice what others cannot achieve. One should take others' difficulties unto oneself and help them succeed in their undertakings. While sitting quietly, one should often reflect upon one's own faults, and when chatting with friends, one should not discuss the rights and wrongs of others. In every action one makes, whether dressing or eating, from dawn to dusk and dusk till dawn, one should not cease to recite the

Buddha's name. Aside from Buddha recitation, whether reciting quietly or silently, one should not give rise to other improper thoughts. If wandering thoughts appear, one should immediately dismiss them. Constantly maintain a humble and repentful heart; even if one has upheld true cultivation, one should still feel one's practice is shallow and never boast. One should mind one's own business and not the business of others. Only look after the good examples of others instead of bad ones. One should see oneself as mundane and everyone else as Bodhisattvas. If one can cultivate according to these teachings, one is sure to reach the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Homage to Amitabha! Amitabha!

The Ten Recitation Method

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

The practice begins first thing in the morning when we wake up. We should sit up straight and clearly recite Amitabha's name ten times with an undisturbed mind, whether out loud or silently to ourselves. We repeat the process eight more times for the rest of the day:

- 2) At Breakfast
- 3) Before Work
- 4) At Lunch Break
- 5) At Lunch

- 6) After Lunch Break
- 7) Getting Off Work
- 8) At Dinner
- 9) At Bedtime

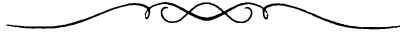
Altogether, the method is practiced nine times a day, everyday. The key point in this cultivation is regularity; we must not practice one day and not the other. If this practice can be maintained undisturbed, the cultivator would soon feel his purity of mind increase, and wisdom grow.

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

Amitabha!

◇ The Pure Land Learning Center ◇

A PATH TO TRUE HAPPINESS



True Sincerity

towards others

Purity Of Mind

within

Equality

in everything we see

Proper Understanding

of ourselves and our environment

Compassion

helping others in a wise and unconditional way



See Through

to the truth of impermanence

Let Go

of all wandering thoughts and attachments

Freedom

of mind and spirit

Accord With Conditions

go along with the environment

Be Mindful Of Amitabha Buddha

wishing to reach the Pure Land and follow in

His Teachings

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

❁ *The Sutra of Amitabha’s Purity, Equality, and Understanding*

DEDICATION OF MERIT



*May the merit and virtues
accrued from this work
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Land,
Repaying the four kinds
of kindness above,
and relieving the sufferings of
those in the Three Paths below.*

*May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the heart of
Understanding,
And live the Teachings for
the rest of this life,
Then be born together in
The Land of Ultimate Bliss!*

Homage to Amitabha Buddha!



華藏淨宗學會

THE CORPORATION

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