

The Treasury of Dharma Gems



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

Brian Bye Sheng Chung

2021 Edition

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Dedication of Merit

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

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Preface

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

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

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

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

Brian Bye Sheng Chung

September 24th 2021

Upasaka Li Bing Nan



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

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

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

EXCERPTS FROM THE TASTE OF TWO WORLDS

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

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

If we look carefully, not only is great wealth unobtainable, even our current standard of living can barely be maintained. Moreover, peace and security in body and mind always eludes us.

Let us have a look at this person: He desires to reside in a large detached house, to ride in a luxury automobile, attend banquets, marry a trophy wife and enjoy the power of possessing a fortune. He seeks left and right to realize this dream, but his efforts are always in vain. Moreover, should he by some rare chance attain all he wishes for, he is unlikely to enjoy it for long. For estates that last a millennium will see their owners replaced hundreds of times, and what blooms today wilts tomorrow. There is nothing that can be planned or guaranteed long term in this world, and the fruit of a lifetime of toil and effort is often to remain empty handed.

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

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

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

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

The Suffering of Strife (Saha World)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Suffering of Feuds and Vendettas (Saha World)

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

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

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

The Suffering of Death (Saha World)

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

The Suffering of Fires and Infernos (Saha World)

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

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

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

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

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

The Purification of Karma

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

The Three Purifications of Karma

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

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

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

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

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

EXCERPTS FROM THE PRICELESS TREASURE THAT IS THE BUDDHA-DHARMA

Human Life is Full of Misfortune

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

This World Mired in Calamities

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

The Pains of Death and Rebirth

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

How to Reverse Adverse Situations and Eradicate Calamities

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

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

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

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

Managing Life And Death is the Greatest Matter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Simple Standard of Good and Evil

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

Actions to Refrain From

The Three Karmas of the Body

Lust
Theft
Killing

The Four Karmas of the Mouth

Lying
Frivolous Speech
Abrasive Speech
Divisive Speech

The Three Karmas of the Mind

Avarice
Wrath
Ignorance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Five Precepts are:

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

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

- 1) **No Killing** — To harm any animal is to kill. The Buddha has said that all sentient beings are our past life parents and future Buddhas, so if we harm them, we incur karmic retributions. It is only because of their past evil karma that they are animals today, and if we harm them, they may take revenge once they receive a better rebirth.
- 2) **No Stealing** — To take the valuables or possessions of others without permission is to steal.
- 3) **No Lust** — All relations outside of a proper marriage is considered a violation of the virtue of chastity.
- 4) **No Lying** — To utter false and unsubstantiated words is to lie.
- 5) **No Idle Speech** — This refers to words that harm public decency and advocate moral laxity.
- 6) **No Divisive Speech** — To provoke conflict between two parties and undermine other's mutual relationships constitute divisive speech.
- 7) **No Abrasive Speech** — Profane, violent and insulting words constitute abrasive speech.
- 8) **No Avarice** — To be obsessively materialistic, to seek more despite already having much, is to be avaricious.
- 9) **No Wrath** — To meet misfortune with hatred and outbursts of anger is to be wrathful.
- 10) **No Ignorance** — To be without good sense, reject the Dharma of the Buddha, neglectful of the teachings of the Sages, and doubtful of the laws of karma is to be ignorant.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Reminder on Reciting the Buddha's Name

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

A Simple Routine for Morning and Evening Practice

- 1) **Namo Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Benevolent, Original Patriarch, Shakyamuni Buddha** (*Recite once and bow once*).
- 2) **Namo Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Benevolent, Amita Buddha** (*Recite once and bow once*).
- 3) **Namo Amitabha** (*No need to bow and may recite while kneeling, sitting or standing. Recite at least a hundred times, but if one has the time, one may recite a thousand times or tens of thousands. However, one may only increase and not decrease the number of regular recitations*).
- 4) **Homage to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva** (*Recite once and bow once*).
- 5) **Homage to Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva** (*Recite once and bow once. Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta are the two Bodhisattvas supporting Amitabha, and together they are known as the Three Sages of the West*).
- 6) **Homage to the Multitude of Bodhisattvas as Pure and Vast as the Great Sea** (*Recite once and bow once. These Bodhisattvas are our peers in Pure Land, hence we must pay them respect here*).
- 7) **I vow that the merit accrued adorn the Buddha's Pure Land, repay the four kinds of benevolence above, and relieve the suffering of the three woeful realms below. May all who hear this give rise to the Bodhi heart, and at the end of this life, be reborn together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.** (*This merit dedication represents one's resolve to attain Pure Land rebirth. Resolute vows are necessary components of practice*).
- 8) Bow and respectfully retire.

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

How to Reverse Adverse Situations and Eradicate Calamities

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

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

Shattering Doubts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Ten Wondrous Benefits of Reciting the Buddha's Name

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

Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu



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

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

—Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu, Page 26

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

【世人共爭不急之務】

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

【何不於強健時 · 努力修善 · 欲何待乎。】

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

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

Excerpts From Commentary on Chapter 35 of Sutra

其二者·世間人民不順法度。奢淫驕縱·任心自恣。居上不明。在位不正。陷人冤枉。損害忠良。心口各異·機僞多端。尊卑中外·更相欺誑。

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

瞋恚愚痴・欲自厚己。欲貪多有・利害勝負。結忿成讐。破家亡身。不顧前後。

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

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

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

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

富有慳惜・不肯施與。愛保貪重・心勞身苦。如是至竟・無一隨者。

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

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

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

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

又或見善憎謗・不思慕及。

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

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

常懷盜心・慾望他利。用自供給。消散復取。

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

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

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

神明尅識・終入惡道。自有三途無量苦惱・輾轉其中・累劫難出・痛不可言。

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

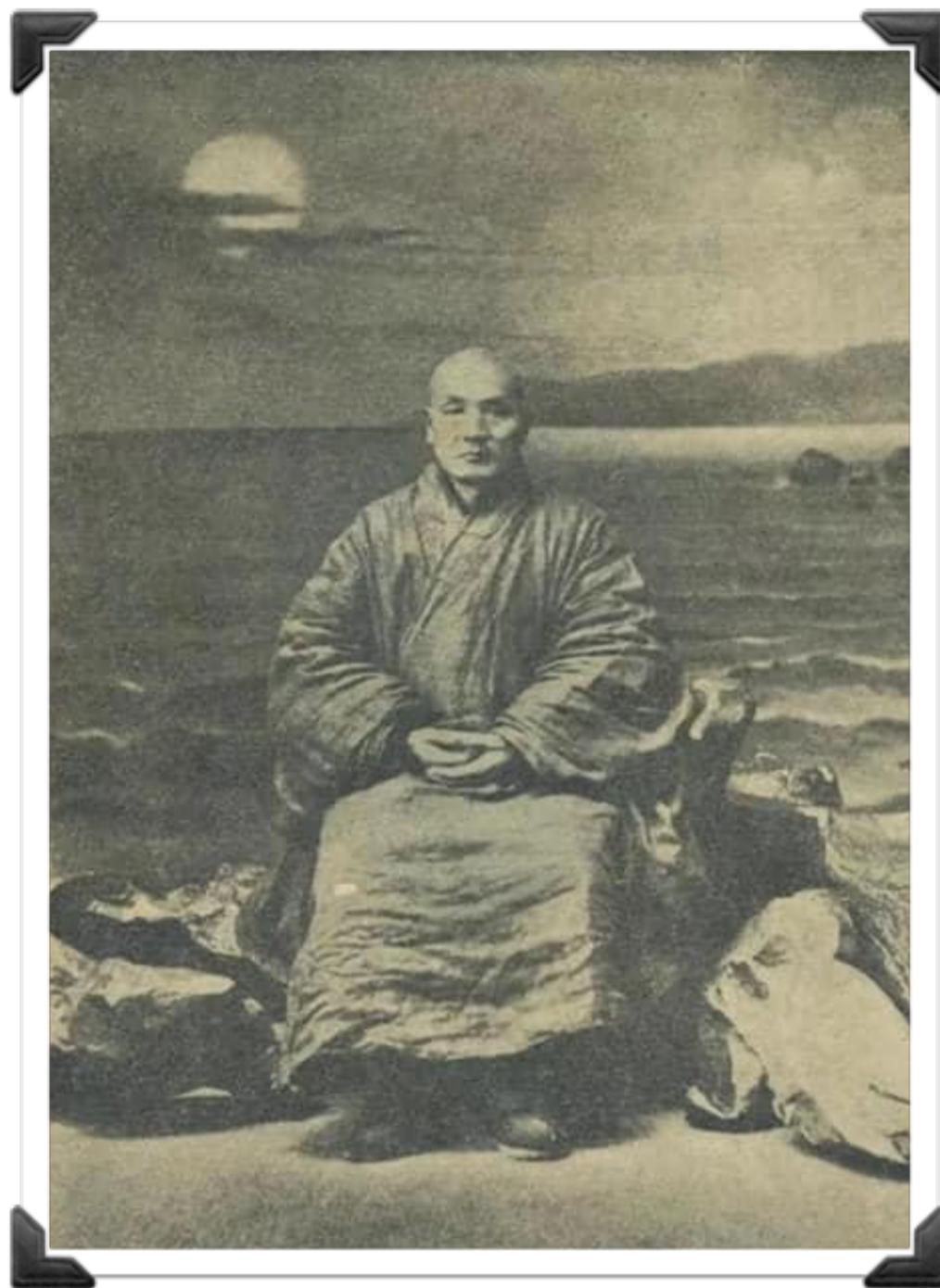
Excerpt 2 (from page 44 of 2015 printed transcript by the Hwazan Pure Land Association):

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

Link to Translation of the Path to Pure Land:

<https://archive.org/details/pathpureland>

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



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

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

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

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



Master Yin Guang (1861-1940)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

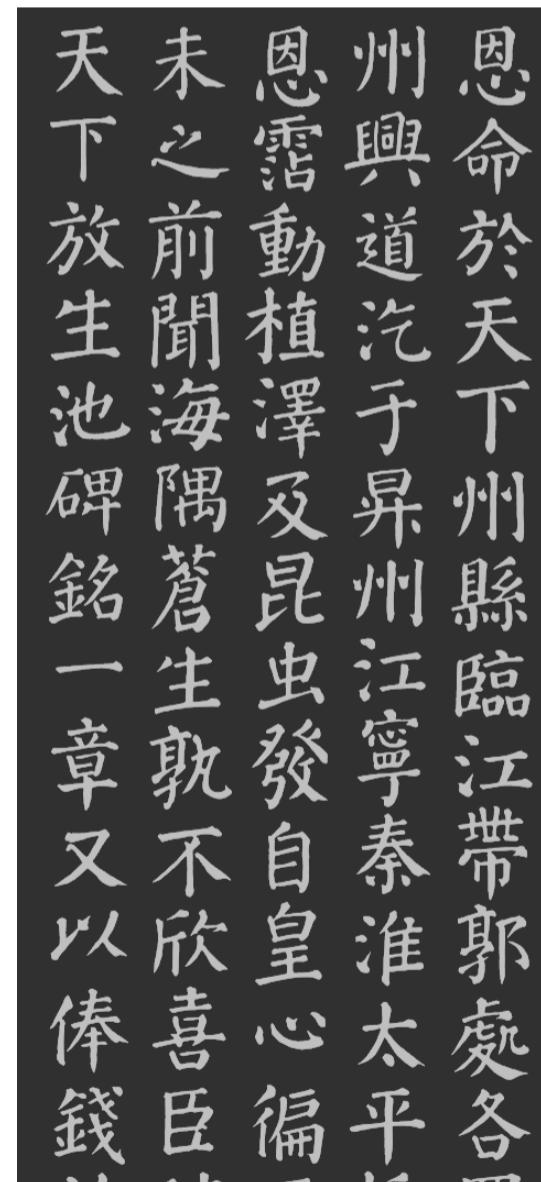
The Ancients say that, “If you wish to know the cause of wars and conflict, simply listen to the midnight cries of animals in the slaughterhouse.” They also say that, “World peace can only be achieved if all persons abstain from eating meat.” Thus, we must understand that liberating life and not killing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

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

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

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

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



One of the steles based on calligraphy of Yan Zhenqing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Date: 27th year of the Republic

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

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

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

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

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

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

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang



Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

Master Yin Guang: The Myriad Manifestations of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

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

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

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

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

Master Yin Guang: Dissolving Fear and Anxiety

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Upasaka was startled by this revelation.

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

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

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

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

Master Yin Guang: Man Saved From Robbers by Avalokitesvara

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

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

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

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

Master Yin Guang: The Avalokitesvara Statue of Stone Bridge Pavilion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Master Yin Guang Saves Those in Desperate Need

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang

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

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

The powers of the Buddha are without limit—capable of uprooting all forms of suffering. Furthermore, as the Dharma is rare and sentient beings innumerable, those who print sutras and create images are building the great bridge of Dharma, converting the masses, and generously gifting the Dharma-treasure to all who have affinities. As their generosity and magnanimity are incalculably vast, so are their merits. Below are the ten karmic benefits, recorded in various Sutras, that those who do such works accrue:

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

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

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

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

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

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

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

※Releasing Fish Increases Lifespan—The Case of Qu Shi

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

※Saving Ants Extends Lifespan of Novice Monk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Date: 20th Year of the Republic (1931)

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

If you do not attain Pure Land, then in the next life where you will enjoy those blessings, you are certain to be tempted, led astray and commit various offenses. Having committed various karmic offenses, your subsequent life will be within the suffering of the hells, ghost and animal realms. Such immense suffering is the direct result of your current wavering resolve for Pure Land rebirth. As I am concerned about you, and do not wish to see you fall into such situations, I have advice for you. If you follow my counsel, you may avoid reaping misfortune from fortune.

As you are still healthy, you must be mindful of death. Thus, you should equally distribute your most prized silk and leather outfits to your daughters in law and grandchildren, keeping only your daily outfits. Gather up your jewelry, armlets, ear rings, gold, silver, jade and the like and donate them to help disaster victims. Dedicate the merits towards Pure Land rebirth.

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

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

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

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang

Record of Upasaka Zhou Zi Shan's Pure Land Rebirth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Three Key Sayings by Master Yin Guang

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

—From the Collected Works of Master Yin Guang

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Master Yin Guang's Warning Regarding Incense

In response to an Upasaka's intention to enter the incense business, the Master had the following to say: Selling incense is an easy way to increase one's blessings, but if done improperly, can cause offenses to snowball. Incense today come in creative and fancy packaging—often with the images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas printed on the box or wrapping paper. Others even impress images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas onto the incense itself. These products are popular among the ignorant who do no realize that they are committing sacrilege. As people use up the incense, they throwaway and discard the boxes and packaging [thereby gravely disrespecting images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas].

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

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

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

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

Master Zhangjia (Zhangjia Hutuktu)



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

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

—Master Zhangjia’s most famous saying

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

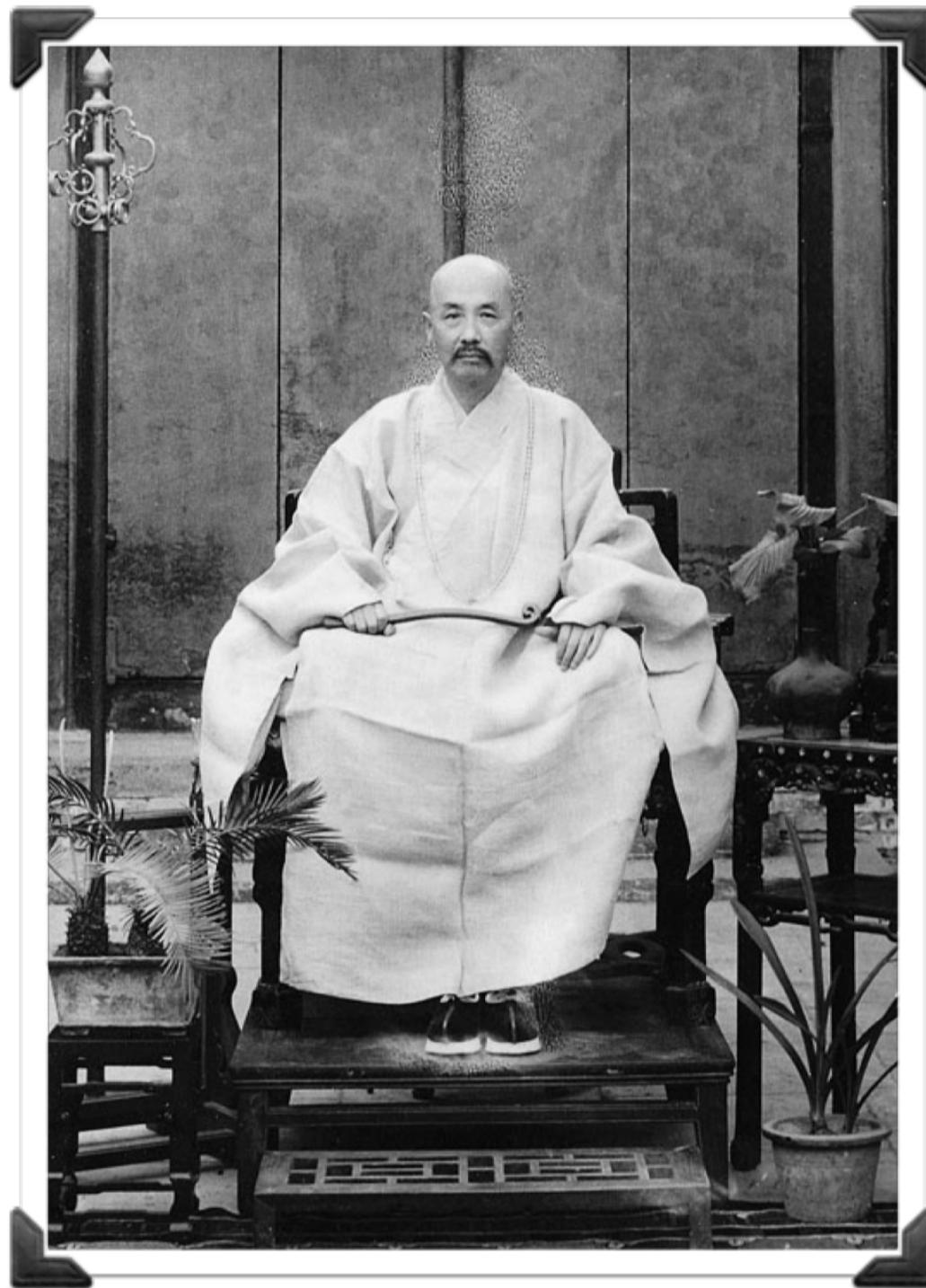
When I [Master Chin Kung] first started to study Buddhism, Master Zhangjia was one of my teachers. At that time, I was twenty six, and he was sixty five. Since he was filled with many decades of life experience, having known a great many people, he knew from just a look that I had the destiny of a pauper,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

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

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

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

Upasaka Xia Lian Ju



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

Biography and Introduction to Magnum Opus

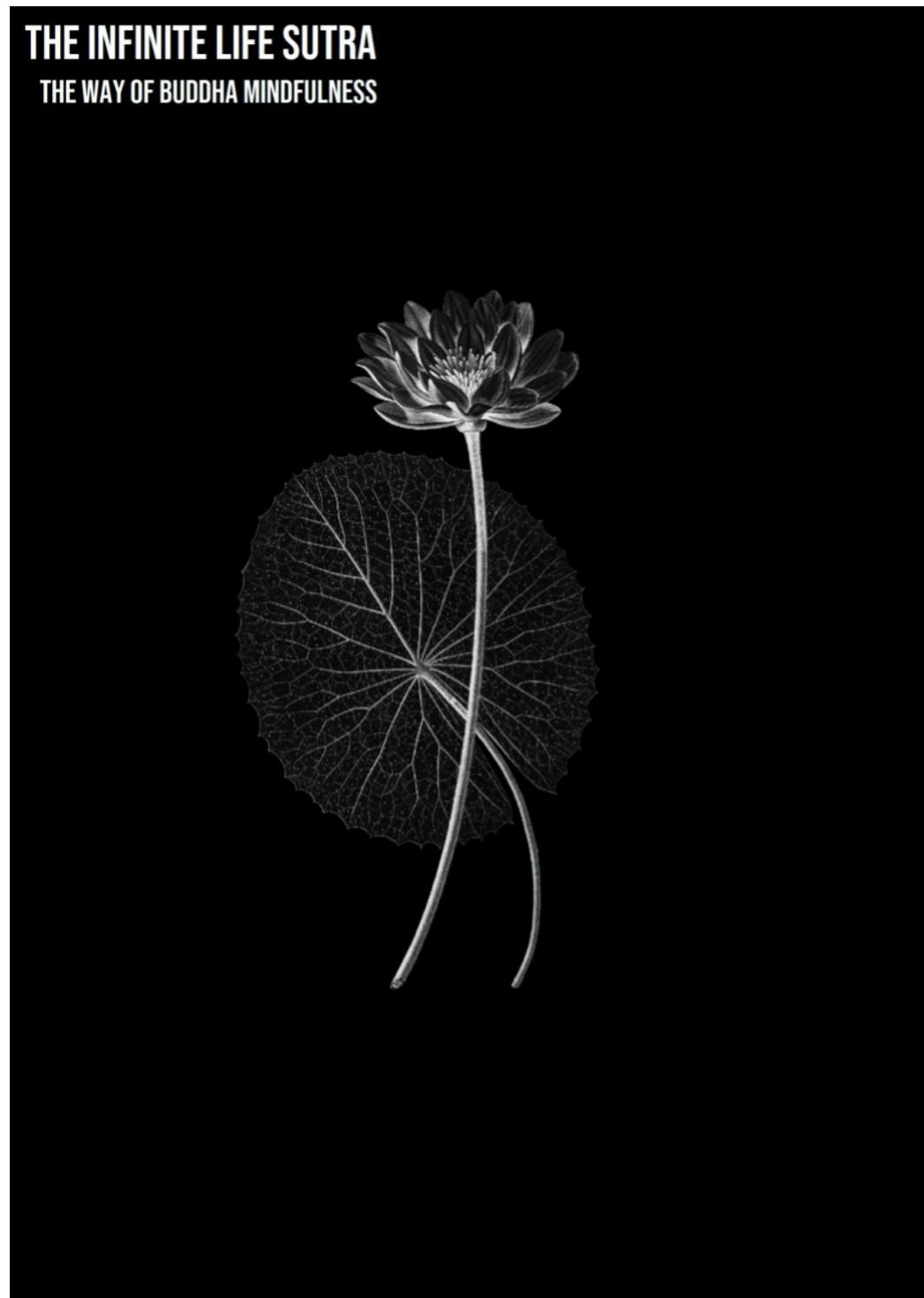
Upasaka Xia Lian Ju (夏蓮居老居士) was born as Xia Ji Chuan (夏繼泉), courtesy name Pu Zhai (溥齋), art name Qu Yuan (渠園), on March 20 1884 into a prominent gentry family. His ancestral home was in Yuncheng County of Shandong Province. An influential Buddhist Upasaka, scholar and statesmen of the late Qing and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

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

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

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

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



Link to Interactive Version:

archive.org/details/the-infinite-life-sutra-the-way-of-buddha-mindfulness

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

www.themathesontrust.org/library/infinite-life-sutra

The Universal Way of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

(Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra)



Preface

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

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

Brian Chung (translator)

March 2020

The Universal Way of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Bodhisattva of Boundless Will then asked in verse:

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

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

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

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

Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!
Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva!

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