

***Sutra of the Merit and
Virtue of the Past Vows of
Medicine Master Vaidurya
Light Tathagata***

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The Medicine Master Sutra

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2nd edition, ISBN 9780983527909

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Reasons for the teachings

I chose to explain this sutra in order to share our views on Mahayana Dharma. It's a small token of gratitude to my Chinese Master, the late Great Master Xuan Hua who founded the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Half a century ago, he brought Mahayana to the West and laid the foundation for the study and cultivation of the Buddhist canon.

The target audience of the Sutra is ordinary people who can greatly benefit from this Dharma Door. However, this Dharma is also for advanced practitioners, therefore we will include quite advanced concepts and terminology that may require multiple readings to grasp.

This Medicine Master Buddha Dharma is an important Dharma Door for our era of global interconnectedness.

Western faiths, such as Catholicism or Islam, focus on “life after death” or the future life. They advocate seeking rebirth to the heavens to draw near the Creator. Their approach is similar in nature to the Pure Land school of Buddhism.

In contrast, Eastern faiths like Confucianism or Taoism tend to put emphasis on the current life, advocating the observance of strict codes of ethics and morality. For example, Confucius taught people to:

1. Improve oneself: work on one's own character flaws,
2. Rectify the family: manage and guide family members so that all live in harmony,
3. Rule the country: govern with justice and fairness,

4. Pacify the world: bring peace to the world.

Shakyamuni Buddha brought Buddhism to this Saha world in order to help living beings resolve issues that may have in this life as well as future lives. In particular, the Pure Land Dharma Door is one of the most effective tools to plan for future lives.

After the Buddhas accomplish the Way, they may choose to create their own Buddhaland as Pure Lands in order to provide assistance to living beings with whom they have affinity. These Pure Lands are ideal places to live. They are far better than the heavens!

One of the major Dharma Doors that Shakyamuni Buddha transmitted to his disciples is the Amitabha Buddha Dharma Door. It relies on that Buddha's vow power to facilitate rebirth to his Pure Land called "Utmost Bliss". Those who manage to get there, have tremendous blessings that enable them to experience great bliss and cultivate with great ease.

Our Saha world is "impure" and filled with defilements, enticements and obstructions, making it very difficult to cultivate. Living beings have myriads of afflictions and problems. Most of us have to earn a living in the midst of a sea of suffering and difficulties. Amazingly, we are very adept at adapting to the many heartaches and failures that characterize our lives. We gladly abuse our bodies and soul in the pursuit of fame and profit or happiness. Unfortunately, the happiness we strive to achieve is just an illusion that only brings more suffering and disappointment.

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In fact, our Saha world is really not worth it! If we manage to be born onto the heavens, when the heavenly blessings run out, we will eventually fall to the lower realms where suffering abounds even more than in the human realm. In contrast, if we manage to obtain rebirth to the Pure Lands, then we escape the wheel of reincarnation and will never experience any difficulties again because we can then become a Buddha in one lifetime.

In this era of the Dharma Ending Age, living beings are weak. Internally, they have many fears and worries. Externally, they lack virtuous conduct. They do not understand the importance of planting blessings and they like to create offenses. They lack self-control: they are easily influenced by the unwholesome environment and evil friends. Furthermore, they often have to rely on others and do not know how to cultivate. That is why the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas exhort us to seek rebirth to Amitabha Buddha's Utmost Bliss Pure Land where we can enjoy peace and bliss and cultivate with ease.

Shakyamuni Buddha also taught the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma Door. Those who cultivate it can obtain rebirth to this Buddha's own Pure Land to the East or Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land to the West. Its distinctive feature is it also helps living beings address problems that they are currently facing this lifetime while waiting for the chance to obtain rebirth at the end of their lives. More specifically, this Medicine Master Buddha Dharma Door can eradicate disasters, increase our blessings, cure illnesses and lengthen life.

In China, during the Song (Northern 北宋 AD 960-

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1127; Southern 南宋 AD 1127-1276) and Tang (唐 AD 618-907) Dynasties, these two Dharma Doors were immensely popular and helped cross over countless living beings. Nowadays, the Amitabha Dharma still has a great number of adherents. However, the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma Door has lost much of its luster. Therefore, we should do our best to revitalize this wonderful Dharma Door so as to enable the multitudes to obtain great benefits from it.

Since I made the resolve to help revive this Dharma Door, our great assembly has obtained numerous responses, especially with its healing powers.

In Buddhism, we know that illnesses can be body or mind based.

Body illnesses are due to:

1. Being present upon birth: Such as a mother transmitting her AIDS disease to her child at birth.
2. Aging
3. Dying.

Mind illnesses originate from:

1. Greed
2. Anger
3. Stupidity.

Ideally, effective healing should address both the body and mind aspects. Failure to do so only eases the symptoms and the illnesses will recur.

Universal Worthy Bodhisattva once sent Good Wealth Pure Youth to the mountains to collect medicinal herbs.

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He came back empty-handed. When asked why, he responded that there were too many: the mountain was full of medicinal herbs! The Bodhisattva then sent the Pure Youth back to the mountains to pick up non-medicinal herbs. This time, he also came back empty-handed and said that the non-medicinal herbs were too many as well. This goes to show that “everything is from the mind alone”. Whether an herb is medicinal or not only depends on our perspective.

Healing can be done with medicine and dharmas.

Medicine can be produced from minerals, plants, herbs, and animals serving as “raw materials”. It requires a prescription which can be considered a method of coping with the problem. From the prescription, medicine can be dispensed as pills, syrup, injections etc...

Mahayana has many dharmas to cure mind sicknesses. The raw materials can be found in the teachings (Tripitaka or the three stores: the Vinaya store, Sutra store and Shastra store). The actual method utilized depends on the Vehicle.

Vehicle can be classified into:

1. Five types: human vehicle, god vehicle, Arhat vehicle, PratyekaBuddha vehicle and Bodhisattva vehicle.
2. Three types: Arhat vehicle, PratyekaBuddha vehicle and Bodhisattva vehicle.
3. One: the Buddha vehicle.

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Each vehicle has many expedients that can be utilized for healing. One such expedient is a dharani, also known as mantra or tantra. Dharani is a Sanskrit word. It has two meanings. First, it means unite and hold 總持; uniting all dharmas and holding limitless meanings. Second, it means cover and hold 遮持; covering all evil sicknesses and holding all good dharmas. Dharanis are mantras that contain secret meanings. Their secret practice involves mudras, recitation and contemplation. When the three secrets are in accord, one can obtain responses such as obtaining as one wishes, ending birth and death, eradicating disasters and difficulties, thus realizing their great wonderful functionality 大妙用.

Next, let's discuss the title of the sutra: **Sutra of the Merit and Virtue of the Past Vows of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata.**

Medicine was explained earlier.

Sutra is a Sanskrit word that has many meanings:

1. Stringing together 貫 : The principles and meanings spoken by the Buddha are strung together from the beginning to the end. Attracting 攝 : means gathering in all living beings whose good roots have matured.
2. Constant 常 : means never changing from ancient times to the present. Whether the Sutras are spoken by the Buddhas of the past, present, or future, they are the same. That is, the Sutra is unchanging time wise. It is also unchanging space wise. No matter

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where the Buddhist teachings are in the universe, it is the same in all Buddhalands. Why? Buddhism describes the universal truth. There is only one truth. That is why it is unchanging and constant.

3. Dharma (method) 法: execute as prescribed in order to attain success.
4. Chalk-line 繩墨: like the marking line that carpenters use for making straight lines or circles. Sutras therefore help us discern proper from deviant.
5. Bubbling spring 湧泉: like water gushing forth from a spring. Similarly, the principles gush forth from the sutra endlessly.
6. Path 徑: that can be followed in order to get to the desired destination, which is Nirvana.

Merit and virtue: merit is the external deed that can be observed such as charity work, giving, bowing to the Buddhas, printing sutras, healing people etc... Virtue is its internal counterpart: the state of goodness or beauty that cannot be observed; one does not seek reward or recognition. Meritorious people are well-known because their deeds are well recognized. Virtuous people prefer to remain anonymous and unnoticed.

Sages obtain balance because they do meritorious deeds while simultaneously accruing virtues. To have merit but lack virtue makes it difficult to obtain liberation: one is

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still greedy and seeks outside. To have virtue but lack merit will result in being unable to help living beings because they are quite attached to external marks or manifestations.

Master: carries the connotation of according and guiding. Here, master alludes to this Buddha's vast and extensive knowledge about medicine.

In ancient China, Emperor Shen Nong 神農 was considered to be the father of Chinese herbal medicine. He used to taste and take hundreds of herbs in order to gauge their effects and effectiveness. That is why he obtained very extensive knowledge of medicinal herbs and transferred this knowledge to benefit his people. This is the typical conduct of a Bodhisattva who comes to the world in order to rescue living beings.

In the nine realms (four evil paths: hell, hungry ghost, animal and asura; two good paths: human and god; three sagely: Arhat, PratyekaBuddha and Bodhisattva), Medicine Master Buddha is the foremost healer. There is no illness that he cannot cure.

Speaking of master, you should know the characteristics of a non-master 非師. This type of person either does not really know but claims that he does know, or she possesses unbeneficial knowledge. One such type of non-master is a deviant teacher. He or she does not believe in cause and effect. Those who follow them will get into trouble this lifetime and many more lifetimes in the future.

Vow: can act as the driving force that propels us to our

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goals. Worldly people call it resolve or aspiration 志. Possessing resolve can help us try our best, to not despair nor give up. Sagely people call it making vow. They vow to “seek the Buddha’s wisdom from above” in order to “rescue confused living beings below”. They make vows to purify their mind.

Light: refers to the inner and outer radiance. The Buddha’s light is very special: it embodies the “Free from Defilements True Suchness”. “Free from Defilements” denotes the absence of impurities, enabling the emitting of light. “True Suchness” is the Buddha nature.

Tathagata: is one of the ten titles of the Buddhas. This Sanskrit word can be translated as “Thus Come One”. “Thus” represents the unchanging principles. “Come” simply is the manifestation of True Principles. It is the response body of the Buddha. According with the True Principles, the Buddha manifests appearing in the world in order to save living beings.

Tathagata symbolizes the Dharma Body virtue 法身德. Light symbolizes Prajna virtue 般若德. Medicine symbolizes the Liberation virtue 解脫德. Also, Tathagata symbolizes great substance 大體 (all Dharmas; True Suchness is level and equal, not increasing and not diminishing); light: symbolizes great mark 大相 (The Tathagata Treasury is replete with limitless nature merit and virtues 性功德); medicine: symbolizes great function 大用 (can produce all the worldly and transcendental good causes and effects). The three virtues

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and three “greats” are all within the mind; three and one are mutually fused and complete 圓融. It is thus inconceivable.

Vaidurya: one of the seven jewels. It is translucent. It is pure and lustrous inside and out, symbolizing the thorough knowledge of medicinal herbs. Medicine Master Buddha is the Great Physician: his healing power is unparallel.

Past: past vows refer to the vows that Medicine Master Buddha made when he was practicing the Bodhisattva path. All 12 of them are not apart from the four vast vows:

1. From the Suffering Truth perspective: vow to cross over the limitless living beings.
2. From the perspective of the Truth of Accumulation: vow to sever the limitless afflictions.
3. From the perspective of the Truth of the Way: vow to learn the limitless Dharma Doors.
4. From the perspective of the Truth of Extinction: vow to accomplish the Unsurpassed Buddha Way.

The Four Truths have four kinds:

1. Production/Extinction 生,
2. Non-production 無生,
3. Limitless 無量,
4. Non-action 無作.

Buddhas rely on the nature merit and virtue 承性功德:

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1. Past vows merit and virtue
2. 10,000 practices merit and virtues.

Why “rely on the nature”? The Tathagata starts (making vows) from the nature 依性而發; and relies on the whole nature for practice. This is a state of the Buddha that lower level Bodhisattvas and Two-Vehicle sages can’t fathom.

Ten reasons why the Buddha transmits the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma Door

The Shurangama sutra states “Recollect the Buddha 憶佛, being mindful of the Buddha 念佛, now and in the future 現前當來, will surely see the Buddha 必定見佛”. With one mind reciting the Medicine Master Buddha’s name, can allow us to enter his knowledge and vision.

Moreover, there are ten specific reasons:

1. To educate living beings about the Buddha’s name, practices, vows and merit and virtues. All Buddhas’ substance consists of the three minds: straight, deep and compassionate. Their marks are their name, practice, vows and virtues. Since way back then, they based their practices on their original vows. When their practices were accomplished, they certified to the fruition and thus obtained their name. Shakyamuni speaks this sutra so that living beings know of this Buddha’s name, practices, vows and virtues so that they can aspire to be like him and seek Unsurpassed Bodhi.

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2. To benefit the living beings of the Dharma-Image and Dharma-ending eras. This Buddha has all sorts of Dharma medicines. The benefits are: 1. thanks to his power, seeing and hearing create seeds of liberation 2. Giving rise to practice and obtaining certification: “my name passes only once through the ear organ, the multitudes of sicknesses will be expelled, body and mind will become peaceful and blissful and eventually certify to Unsurpassed Bodhi”.

The 500 years following the Buddha’s entry into Nirvana is called the Proper Dharma era. It is strong in samadhi cultivation. The majority of the cultivators could certify to Arhatship or higher. Samadhi is essential to breaking through our obstructions and unfolding our inherent wisdom. A good knowing adviser can teach the proper methodology to develop samadhi. Without adequate samadhi one cannot comprehend Mahayana.

The subsequent 500 years are called the Dharma Image era when living beings like to cultivate blessings. They were eager to build temples and stupas, sponsor the building of Buddha and Bodhisattva images and make offerings to the sangha.

The next 10,000 years are called the Dharma Ending era when people no longer cultivate. Instead, they indulge in strife and like to fight. We are currently in the Dharma Ending age of the Orthodox Dharma. However, if there is a single

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person who cultivates and can certify to the fruition then the era becomes the Proper Dharma era. This is why my late teacher, Great Master Xuan Hua brought Mahayana to the United States. For five decades, he taught and trained many disciples who did certify to the fruitions. Therefore, we are simply continuing his work in training the next generation and restoring the strength of the Orthodox Buddhadharma.

3. To turn suffering and offenses into blessings and bliss. The causes for the three evil paths destine us for great suffering. This Medicine Master Buddha Dharma can eradicate those causes for suffering. In addition, one can also receive human and heavenly blessings and bliss. In particular, those who violate precepts can regain purity and avoid falling.

The Buddha knows full well that living beings like to create offenses. They however do not realize that they eventually have to pay for their mistakes sooner or later. Moreover, when mistakes continue to pile up and start to mature, there is no way to escape the dire consequences and undergo great suffering. That is why Shakyamuni Buddha transmitted this Medicine Master Buddha's Dharma to help us turn things around: change harmful into beneficial, bad luck into good luck and suffering into bliss.

Those who have received precepts and made infractions will definitely fall to the hells. If they know how to rely on this Medicine Master Buddha

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Dharma or other dharmas of repentance, they can regain their purity and avoid falling. How can we know that we've regained purity? There will be manifestations such as experiencing wonderful states, seeing flowers, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas etc... They are indications that the obstructions have been eradicated.

Those who have faith in this Buddha's Dharma have already reaped immense benefits. How do you know? Don't be so petty! Just continue to cultivate and gradually you will see the tangible benefits. For example, continue to recite the Buddha's name even though your legs hurt a lot. Show a little moxy and have a little bit of faith. Then you will see a response. If you do not do as taught, you'll never know. The teacher can only bring you to the door, you have to make the effort to cross the threshold to discover the wonders of the beyond.

Question: "How can we turn suffering into blessings and bliss?"

Answer: There are many ways. I'll give an example.

I have a disciple. This person can be nicknamed "Afflictions", or more aptly "Great afflictions" or "Full of afflictions". Every week, she used to send me three or four emails complaining about her many problems. She required constant hand-holding to solve her difficulties. After a while, I sent a reply: "Tough luck!" Not too long

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afterwards, she stopped becoming afflicted by those types of problems. That is one example of turning suffering into blessings through patience. One can learn to patiently endure the tests and skillfully navigate through the obstructions.

There are three kinds of patience:

- I. The ability to endure slander and harm: to bear others' attack and slander, and to exhort them to practice benefiting others.
- II. To peacefully endure suffering, cold, hot, hunger, thirst etc... without retreating or changing direction.
- III. To patiently investigate the principles and Dharma: to investigate the principles, contemplate the dharmas and see that their substance and nature are false and illusory and are fundamentally not produced nor extinguished, thus entering the True principles.

Another example is the story of Master Xuan Hua's disciple, Ven. Heng Shun. He is a Caucasian who trained under the Great Master. He used to provide translation into English when the Master spoke Dharma. When they were in Gold Mountain monastery in San Francisco, he was the Great Master's attendant. He told me that he used to feel fearful when he came near the venerable Master. One day, as usual, he brought the Master's lunch tray to his room. He put it down and was on his way out. All of a sudden, the Venerable Master yelled and threw the lunch tray at him. It barely missed him, hit the door and made a loud crashing

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noise. Ven. Heng Shun was frightened out of his wits. He immediately ran out of the room, headed straight back to his own room where he hid for the rest of the day and night. The following day, great Master Xuan Hua called him in. The Master seemed to have calmed down. He sweetly asked Ven. Heng Shun how he felt. Heng Shun immediately went down to his knees, started sobbing: “Shifu, I know I’m wrong. Please forgive me!” The Great Master said: “Do you now why I yelled at you yesterday? I chased a ghost that has possessed you for quite a while. He was very afraid of the light that I emit. That is why you felt uneasy around me.” Ever since, Ven. Heng Shun no longer felt uneasy around the Great Master.

Question: Why did Great Master Xuan Hua take that long to chase that ghost away?

Answer: How would I know? I can’t possibly understand his reasons. Sages have their own ways of helping living beings. Great Master Xuan Hua used many expedients to help his disciples.

Expedients are ways to help turn things around for the better. They arise from wisdom. The deeper the wisdom, the more effective are the expedients. Usually, only the wise good knowing advisers can recognize expedients whereas the confused folks tend to resent them. Expedients are for the sake of helping free living beings. In contrast, deviant teachers use expedients to entrap their disciples. Invariably, their disciples do not mind the expedients and have no clues that they’ve

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mortgaged their soul! We should pity them because it's very hard to extricate yourself from these deviant teachers.

4. To change the evil and deviant and return to the Proper and Good. We can rely on this Buddha's power to escape the demon and externalists' nets and attachments.

Question: A person has a relative who is stuck with the externalists asked: "You said that we should pity those who are practicing the deviant dharmas. What can we do to help them?"

Answer: It depends. First we have to take care of ourselves. I feel that we should not meddle.

Wouldn't that be lacking in compassion? Isn't Mahayana about compassion? Wait a minute! The followers of these deviant teachings feel happy and content. We should be kind and compassionate and let them be. If they do not ask for help, who are we to meddle into their affairs? If they don't ask for our help, we have no right to intervene. To do so would be wrong no matter how righteous you might feel about it. If they ask for help and yet we don't lift a finger, that's when we are lacking in compassion.

Turning the evil toward the good is important because it clearly delineates the difference between both Hinayana and Mahayana and the externalist paths.

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Hinayana is the “incomparable” Dharma that enables living beings to end suffering, attain peace and bliss and certify to the fruitions of Arhatship. The level of peace and bliss obtained is proportional to the level of the fruitions.

Ordinary people do not realize they are living in shackles. Once certified to First Stage Arhatship, living beings get rid of quite a bit of excess baggage and experience great joy and exhilarations. When they continue onto the realm of the Second Stage Arhat, the peace and bliss experienced will be even greater. When they make it to the Fourth Stage Arhatship, they’ve obtained true freedom and self-mastery: they can experience emptiness.

The Fourth Stage Arhat’s bliss is truly inconceivable. However, it pales in comparison to that of the Bodhisattvas.

5. Turn the Small and Provisional toward the Actual and Great. They stagnate in emptiness and dare not wade in the mundane: they are not willing to slide back into the mud in order to rescue others.

The Small Vehicle practitioners aspire to unfold their transcendental wisdom, thus ending suffering and obtaining bliss. They succeed in liberating themselves but do not know how to help others. For example, an Arhat sees his mother in dire straights but has no real Dharma to help her escape. In contrast, Mahayana practitioners not only want to rescue their parents but also all living beings’ parents. In fact, they do not reject the poor, lowly

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or most evil.

When I was a small boy growing up in Hue, Vietnam, we used to have a lot of snakes. One day, on the way home from school, I saw a young man who was using his foot to crush the head of a large diamond-backed snake. As the snake was dying, its body was contorting in great pain to the delight and applause of a small throng of people who was gathering around the brave young man. We Buddhists should never do that! We will not kill even the most evil beings. They too have the right to exist. So do the ghosts and demons! They come to cause us trouble because of past debts. The wise Buddhist takes advantage of the opportunity to resolve the past enmity so that everyone can move on.

6. To give rise to causal positions in order to obtain the Buddha fruition 起因位得佛果. The causal positions refer to the Bodhisattvas having to progress through 54 stages before accomplishing the Way.

The Medicine Master Buddha Dharma has marks such as the doctrine, practices, vows and merit and virtues. Cultivating this Dharma Door is the rapid track to Buddhahood.

Question: Does one then become Medicine Master Buddha or another Buddha?

Answer: When you realize Buddhahood, you'll then have three bodies: Dharma body, Reward

body and Response body. The Dharma body is the same for all Buddhas. The Buddhas use their Reward body in order to teach Bodhisattvas. Because Bodhisattvas are not easily impressed, the Reward body is so adorned that they take one look and are smitten. Medicine Master Buddha is a Response body. Response bodies are manifestations to help living beings. Therefore the answer to the question is when you realize the Way, you'll become another Buddha and have your own response body in order to do your own work.

7. To sever the seeds of three obstructions [三障: 1. Karma obstructions 業障 (e.g. the task is quite difficult to carry out), 2. Retribution obstructions 報障 (e.g. you obstructed others in the past, now you must incur the retribution of being obstructed), and 3. Affliction obstructions 煩惱障 such as quitting because you can't take it any more; they can obstruct the good things in the human and heaven paths and can manifest as habit energies. Here is a famous example of this. There was an Arhat disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha who had great wisdom and spiritual penetrations. Usually, when Arhats want to cross rivers, the waters are automatically parted at the crossing point and the flow is resumed after they are done crossing. This great Arhat came upon a river. The water did not part to facilitate his crossing. He therefore said to the river spirit: "Little slave, stop the water". The river spirit grudgingly obliged but then went to see Shakyamuni Buddha to file a complaint. She said

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to the Buddha that the Arhat was impolite and called her slave. It was really uncalled for and she thought that Arhats were supposed to be polite. The World Honored One summoned the Arhat and explained to the river spirit that she used to be his slave for five hundred lifetimes. He addressed her as slave by force of habit and not because he was being impolite. The Buddha then told the Arhat to apologize to the river spirit for his lack of courtesy. The Arhat said to the river spirit: "I did not mean to be impolite. I'm very sorry, little slave".

Habit energies are habits that accrue over many lifetimes, such as chemical dependency. If one can recite the Buddha's name or the Medicine Master Buddha mantra, then the habit energies will gradually disappear.

Left home people are not supposed to eat after noon. However, nowadays the majority of the left home people no longer observe this precept. This can be considered to be a bad habit energy.

Habit energies are more dangerous than obstructions because obstructions can be recognized as undesirable whereas habit energies are not, and yet they can cause us to derail before we know it.

How can we fight habit energies? By first recognizing that they are undesirable. Just because everyone else does it does not mean that it is OK. For example, doctors recommend that we sleep for seven or eight hours a day. Cultivators can largely

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ignore that recommendation because it is nonsense. Once we stop going down those slippery slopes of the habit energies, eventually they disappear because of lack of reinforcement.

It is also worth noting that another type of dangerous habit energy is success. What worldly people consider success is actually attachment to winning. This kind of habit energy of seeking success is actually reinforcing the ego with fighting against others and refusing to yield or compromise. The wise ones learn to live in harmony and realize that arrogance is destructive.

In addition, how can we deal with afflictions? Those who are more blessed will have fewer afflictions. Therefore, continue to accrue merit and virtues. In fact, I advocate relentlessly looking for opportunities to generate important contributions to Mahayana in order to accrue quality blessings.

What about the kinds of afflictions that span many lifetimes?

The Buddha and Ananda passed by a stall in the market place. The merchant was friendly and courteous to some people even though they did not buy from him. In contrast, he was rather impolite toward some who even bought quite a bit from him. Ananda asked the Buddha why the difference in attitude. The World Honored One said: “In a prior life, that vendor was a man condemned to death. He was paraded on the streets on the way to the executioner’s block. Along the way, many

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people cursed at him or even threw stone at him. Those were the people who the merchant treated harshly then. As to those who expressed sympathy toward the condemned man, the vendor was more friendly”.

Similarly, the attraction between men and women arise from habit energies from prior lifetimes. Some fall in love and vow to be together again in future lifetimes. That’s how they manage to get reunited and rekindle the prior passion.

Afflictions that span multiple lifetimes can be considered to be debts. If we want to avoid them, then we should not plant the causes: do not get into debt by committing offenses.

8. To instruct on the three contemplations:
 - I. Contemplation of the expedients: Their substances are ultimately empty; this destroys karmic obstructions. That is those karmas that are conditioned and with outflows as well as those unconditioned and without outflows.
 - II. Contemplation of the limitless vows and practices: Universally illuminating the false phenomena; thus destroying the retribution obstructions of share section birth and death as well as change section birth and death.
 - III. Contemplation of the deep and profound practices 甚深行處觀 or the Middle Way. Thus destroying the affliction obstructions which manifest as delusions of

the worldly views and thought delusions 世
內 as well as ignorance 世外.

Because the three contemplations are accomplished within the same mind and the three obstructions can be simultaneously severed, it's called deep and profound 甚深.

Mahayana has many Dharma Doors to eradicate afflictions, depending on the cultivator's level of attainment. In fact, if you listen to the same teachings repeatedly, each time you are bound to pick up new things as your gongfu level rises.

9. To exhort reciting the Buddha's name and seeing the Buddha nature. Reciting the Dharma Body Buddha is referred to in the Contemplation sutra as "This mind is Buddha 是心是佛"; creating the Thus Come One title at the inherent enlightenment level. Reciting the transformation body Buddha is referred in the Contemplation sutra as "This mind acts as Buddha 是心作佛"; creating the One Worthy of Offerings title at the Beginning enlightenment level. Reciting the Reward Body Buddha, one creates the One of Proper and Universal Knowledge title at the ultimate enlightenment level. The Buddha recitation samadhi can be called "the seeing the nature accomplishing Buddhahood true secret words 見性成佛真蜜訣."

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Question: It is said that to recite one Buddha's name is to recite all the Buddhas' names. Then the vows and practices of the Buddhas have what distinctions?

Answer: To recite one Buddha's name is to recite all the Buddha's names because we are reciting the Buddhas' Dharma Body which they all share. However, each Buddha's Transformation Body is the result of different vows and practices. For example, the Pure Land Dharma Door advocates reciting the Buddha's name in order to seek rebirth to the Pure Lands. One can recite any Buddha's name. However, at the time of death, it is better to recite Amitabha's name because of this Buddha's superior vows to aid us in obtaining rebirth to his Pure Land. While alive, reciting the Medicine Master Buddha's name is more beneficial because of his many vows to help improve our quality of life.

10. To point to the Pure Land for rebirth. This land of ours is evil, full of suffering and defilements. If you don't believe it, just stop bathing for a few days and see how smelly you become. Furthermore, most of us need to go to work to earn a living. Each day, we have to put in up to ten hours doing something that we would rather not do if we had the choice. Isn't that suffering?

His Vaidurya Pure Land is good, blissful and pure. The inhabitants neither have to bathe nor go to work.

Explained by Master YongHua

This land is like a hotel; his land is like our original home, we should hurry back home! This Dharma Door is suitable for all types of roots.

Great Master Xuan Hua said: “Our parents, siblings and relatives may be closest to us. However, we are all like guests at the hotel. We eventually have to move on and part ways without knowing when we can meet again.”

If even familial relations are temporary then why does Buddhism still emphasize filial piety? It's to repay kindness to our benefactors no matter how short-lived the relation is. An act of kindness may be momentary but carries long-term benefits. Therefore we must be grateful and seek to repay the kindness.

Question: What about the parents' obligations toward the children?

Answer: When the children's wings are fully formed, then they are free to take off on their own. However, parents still continue to be over-protective no matter how old the children are.

This Medicine Master Dharma Door is appropriate for modern times because it teaches about benefits that can be obtained this lifetime while also reminding us that rebirth to the Pure Land is still the most potent Dharma for the Dharma Ending Age.

The Medicine Master Buddha Dharma is a great Dharma and yet has so few practitioners, why is that? There are

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two reasons. First, few left-home people really understand it and therefore cannot teach it to the faithful. Second, if you don't understand it then you do not know how to cultivate it. As a result, your practice tends to bring little or no response and may ultimately make you lose faith and quit.

There was an Asian young man. He was 18 years old and recently graduated from high school. Even though he had no real job, he moved out of his mother's house into his own house with his Caucasian girlfriend. He drove around in an expensive German sports car. Life seemed to be very good. Rumor has it that he was dealing drugs. One day, he disappeared for over a week. His mother and brothers reported it to the police but he could not be found. Later, they found his body in a ditch. The police concluded that he was killed execution style. This type of premature death can happen to anyone. Even though things seem to be good for the moment, let's not forget to heavily invest into our rebirth to the Pure Lands while we still can.

Furthermore, practitioners who violate the precepts can regain their purity thanks to the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma. It is one of its distinctive competences. It can also help us obtain rebirth to the Pure Lands. If our rebirth to the Pure lands blessings fall short, we should be able to accrue enough blessings to avoid falling to the lower realms and obtain rebirth to the human or god realms where we can continue to cultivate.

In brief, this Medicine Master Buddha Dharma can take care of our present and future needs. Only those who are tremendously blessed get to encounter and practice it.

As by tradition, we can use the Tian Tai five-fold profound meanings to have an overview of the sutra.

The Tian Tai 5-fold profound meanings:

1. (Explaining the) Title 題: The title of the sutra can be classified as containing references to a person (Master and Tathagata), Dharma (Past Vows and Merit and Virtue) and analogy (Medicine and Vaidurya).
2. (Describing the) Substance 體: This sutra relies on the nature 承性, past vows and merit and virtues as substance. It also takes the True Mark 實相 as substance.
3. (Clarifying the) Doctrine and principles 宗. The Pure Land Dharma Door is the faster practice track, replete with all three studies and six paramitas. The two adornments of blessings and virtues are the doctrine.
4. (Discussing its) Function 用: What is the sutra's power and use? Its power is to eradicate obstructions 拔障 and is used to give living beings great benefit and bliss.

There three kinds of power, that of the: Self, Others and of Dharma.

5. (Determining the) Teaching 教: The sutra was spoken during the Vaipulya period.

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Five teaching periods (At 19 years old, Shakyamuni Buddha left home. At 29 years old, he became enlightened. At 80 years old, he entered Nirvana):

1. Avatamsaka period: 21 days (Perfect teaching; like milk). After Shakyamuni Buddha accomplished the Way, He taught this Dharma to the Bodhisattvas only. All the lower level beings such as Arhats and PratyekaBuddhas could not attend this Assembly. This Dharma is embodied by the Avatamsaka Sutra, also called the king of sutras. Great Master Xuan Hua was really the first monk of our modern era who provided a comprehensive explanation of this wonderful sutra. Like many of his other disciples, I hold that sutra to be one of my favorites. Hopefully, when conditions ripen, I'll take 10 or 15 years to try to explain it to you too.

2. Agama period: 12 years (Store teaching; like cheese). This Dharma is revolutionary because it was the first Dharma that the Buddha taught to the human realm. It's designed to train Arhats, also called Sound-hearers. Agama is a Sanskrit word meaning incomparable. Its doctrine is wonderful beyond comparison in regard to the existing alternative faiths.

3. Vaipulya period: 8 years (Connective teaching; like raw butter). After training Arhats and PratyekaBuddhas, the Buddha then taught this expedient Dharma to transition them toward the next Dharma period.

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4. Prajna period: 22 years (Separate teaching; like cooked butter). This is the Dharma to train Bodhisattvas. It is the Dharma of Enlightenment.

5. Dharma Flower – Nirvana period: 8 years (Perfect teaching; like clarified butter) is the final phase of the Buddha's teaching career. He explained the Lotus Sutra and Maha-Nirvana Sutra. This period teaches living beings to become Buddhas. Its main purpose is to inform living beings that they are replete with the Buddha nature: we can all become Buddhas and should settle for nothing less. This is unlike all the other religions who teach their followers to aim for much lower attainments.

Therefore, one needs to choose the right path of cultivation, just like we need to pick the right treatment when we are ill. In fact, we need to cultivate to heal ourselves. Some may object and say that they are not sick. Yet they are. They are afflicted with that silent illness: mortality. Cultivation helps keep the death emissaries at bay. These messengers of death manifest themselves as all sorts of illnesses.

In general, people are sick because they must undergo the retribution for prior killing offenses. We inflicted pain and suffering on others in the past. Now we must pay for the consequences of past debts by being sick. Another form of debt repayment is to endure the leg pains when we cross our legs. Another yet form of repayment is to transfer the merit and virtues of cultivation to our creditors.

Question: Can we help others settle their debts?

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Answer: Certainly. However that would involve meddling into their affairs and invariably means that we have to pay the consequences for choosing to intervene. I'll give you an example.

I know a nun called Zhi Shun 智順 who owns a big temple in India. When I first met her over ten years ago, we hit it off. She wanted to teach me her healing Dharma which she used liberally to gain donors. She claimed that she could heal many types of illnesses. She would place a cup of water in front of the Buddhas and prayed for their help in healing the sick patient. Many would experience significant improvements or were completely healed after drinking the water. I was quite impressed until she confessed to me that she herself was plagued by many illnesses. It convinced me to never use her Dharma. It is an example of using small and incomplete knowledge to take care of the big problems! What makes us think that we can meddle into others' business? How does that help us become Buddhas?

Question: If we use mantras to heal, what are the consequences?

Answer: There is a family of Eastern medicine doctors that has been providing healing for free for seven generations. The doctor came to me and asked for help with his cultivation. I spent time with him and told him that I could teach him the way to unstuck himself but he would not be able to do it by himself. A week later, he came back with his two small boys. All three bowed to me respectfully and even brought gifts of cookies. I was surprised at the formality. He

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thanked me profusely for having helped him. He said that a while ago he used a mantra to try to heal a man who has venereal disease. As a consequence the middle finger of his right hand would break out and become rather painful for long periods of time. Over time, the skin healed but remained red and swollen. It was like that for months until last week when he came to see me. After spending two hours talking with me, his middle finger finally healed.

Question: The liberating life Dharma is known to reduce illnesses, but does that also save lives?

Answer: Yes. You may want to pick the right temple. For example, if you were to sponsor the ceremony at a certain temple which advocates offering ducks, chicken and the flesh of living beings to the ghosts and spirits, then you'll most likely obtain little or no response.

Question: How can we meddle without having to pay too high of a price?

Answer: There are many ways. One such Dharma is to request a Medicine Master Buddha plaque on someone's behalf. This Dharma is not available in Vietnamese temples. Nor can you find it at Hinayana temples. The temple uses your offerings (fees charged for the plaque) to generate blessings that can be used to settle past debts.

Translated into Chinese by Tripitaka Dharma Master Xuán Zàng under the auspices of Emperor Táng Tài Zong.

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Tripitaka is Sanskrit for Triple Store: the Sutra Store that contains all the Buddha's discourses, Vinaya Store, containing all the Buddhist rules of morality and regulations, and Shastra Store which contains all the commentaries of the Buddha's disciples.

A Tripitaka Dharma Master is one who is thoroughly versed in the three stores or baskets.

During the Tang dynasty, Tripitaka Dharma Master Xuán Zàng translated many Buddhist texts under the auspices of the Emperor Táng Tàì Zōng 唐太宗或高宗.

Ven. Xuán Zàng's contributions to Chinese Buddhism are unsurpassed. He spent around fifteen years to journey to India to bring back Buddhist texts. He then headed a team of thousands of monks to translate the scrolls into Chinese.

This particular sutra has five different translation versions. The one we use is that of Great Master Xuán Zàng.

Sutra Preface

Sutra:

Thus I have heard. At one time the Bhagavan was traveling through various lands to teach and transform living beings. He arrived at Vaisali ["City of Extensive Adornments"] and stayed beneath a tree from which music resounded. With him was an assembly of eight thousand great Bhikshus and thirty-six thousand Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas; also kings, ministers, Brahmans, lay disciples; gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division; beings both human and non-human. The immeasurable great multitude respectfully surrounded him, and he spoke Dharma for them.

Commentary:

In the Jin 晉 Dynasty, Dharma Master Dao An 道安 decided to divide sutras into three sections: preface, proper text and circulation. Subsequent Dharma Masters continued that distinction in explaining sutras.

The preface section introduces the reasons for the arising of the teachings.

The proper text section contains the gist of the doctrines. In this sutra, it begins with **“The Buddha told Manjusri, "Passing from here to the east, beyond Buddhalands numerous as the sand**

grains in ten Ganges rivers, is a world called 'Pure Vaidurya.'".

Finally, the circulation section contains exhortations to widely circulate the sutra in order to benefit living beings. In this sutra, it begins with “**At that time, twelve great yaksa generals were present in the assembly. They were:**” They will be named at the very end.

Thus I have heard. At one time the Bhagavan was traveling through various lands to teach and transform living beings. He arrived at Vaisali [*'City of Extensive Adornments'*] and stayed beneath a tree from which music resounded.

Dragon Tree Bodhisattva indicated that authentic Buddhist sutras must meet six requirements:

1. Faith: **Thus**

Vimalakirti said: “All Dharmas are thus 一切法皆如也”. All Dharmas arise from conditions & have no self-nature 諸法緣生無性. When the Buddha speaks Dharma, it tallies with the true principles. However, it must also be appropriate for the listeners’ potential. That is “arising from conditions”.

Furthermore, faith is a necessary requisite for entering Mahayana. Mahayana is also called the Middle Way because it avoids extreme principles found in externalist faiths.

Those who understand this “Thus” Dharma decide to help others without any ulterior motives. In contrast, the Christians help us in order to convert us and have us serve their god. Looking back, I was very fortunate to have found a teacher like Great Master Xuan Hua because he exemplifies selflessness. He helped me and patiently taught me and yet never asked anything of me. He also helped others, intervened on their behalf and took on their sicknesses. That’s why toward the end of his life, he had to endure great pain and suffering.

If meddling has consequences that cannot be ignored, then why do doctors and nurses seem to be so well off and have no problems? What makes you think that’s the case? One of my disciples was a registered nurse. She has a lot of illnesses. If some of the professionals in the medical profession seem to be free from sicknesses, it’s most likely that they are enjoying blessings from prior lives. It would not be surprising that they have planted a lot of Medicine Master Buddha blessings in the past. Regardless, their current profession meddles in others’ business. They have to deal with the consequences sooner or later.

When choosing a profession, take care to avoid creating offenses.

2. Hearing: I have heard

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This refers to the Mahayana “I” which is free from the notion of a self, others, living beings and lifespan. All dharmas have no self. The externalists are confused by the false self and therefore are attached to the body.

“Heard” involves three conditions: the ear organ, the ear-consciousness and the sound. Ven. Ananda personally heard the Buddha speak these sutras. The Buddha used his spiritual penetrations to repeat to Ananda those sutras explained when he was not around.

When Ven. Ananda ascended the Dharma seat, he usually started out with “Thus I have heard” in order to resolve three kinds of doubts in the Assembly.

First, Ananda looks just like the Buddha, therefore some thought that Ananda was the Buddha. His starting out with “Thus I have heard” would then be a clear indication that he was not the Buddha.

Second, some thought that Shakyamuni Buddha came back to life. This is also dispelled by the same phrase.

Third, some thought that another Buddha came to speak Dharma. This notion is also quickly dismissed by the phrase.

Speaking of hearing, reciting Amitabha Buddha's name at the time of death is like dialing 911 to call for help. We are calling out to the Buddha for help with rebirth to his Utmost Bliss Pure Land. In order for it to work, the Buddha must be able to hear our call. People seem to think that reciting the Buddha's name will assure rebirth. It could if they have enough rebirth blessings. If they don't have enough blessings, they can recite the Buddha's name for many lifetimes and still cannot obtain rebirth. How can you expect to travel to a place as far away as his Pure Land when you cannot afford the travel expenses? Therefore, if you really want to be reborn when your current life ends, you need to start planting a lot of blessings with the rebirth Dharma.

3. Time: **At one time**

We rarely spell out the specific time when the sutras were spoken by the Buddha. This is to avoid unnecessary details. We do not need to worry about time zones, lunar or Western calendars, or time as calculated in the heavens.

“At one time” refers to the best time to speak the Dharma in question.

4. Speaker: **the Bhagavan**, is another title of the Buddha. This Sanskrit term is not translated because it carries multiple meanings:

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- I. Comfortable 自在 (no afflictions),
- II. Renowned 名稱 (all superior merit and virtues are complete and perfected, there is nothing that he does not know),
- III. Adorned 端圓 (not deviant and adorned with 32 hallmarks),
- IV. Resplendent 熾盛 (refers to his wisdom light),
- V. Auspicious 吉祥 (all the worlds draw near and make offerings to or praise),
- VI. Honored 尊貴 (replete with merit and virtues; often uses expedients to benefit and bestow bliss to living beings; he does not reject any of them).

5. Place: music **tree**, located at Vaisali.

Vaisali translates as “City of Extensive Adornments 廣嚴城”, symbolizing Nirvana. It’s a large city, its populace is well-educated, has abundance and wealth. Its buildings are numerous and adorned.

The music tree produces music. There are many kalavinka birds dwelling in the tree. They sing melodious sounds in concert with the gentle breeze.

Tree carries two connotations: I. increasing (the good roots, helping sever afflictions and obtain coolness and clarity) II. Covering and

shading. It symbolizes the Bodhi tree.

The Buddha used to **travel through various lands to teach and transform living beings**, as per people's request. This represents that his work includes all living beings in all worlds.

6. Assembly: **Bhikshus, Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, kings, ministers, etc...**

They represent the audience for the session. The wide range of realm, wisdom and social status reflect the extensive usefulness of this Dharma.

With him was an assembly of eight thousand great Bhikshus and thirty-six thousand Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas; also kings, ministers, Brahmans, lay disciples; gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division; beings both human and non-human.

“Bhikshus” are monks. It is Sanskrit and has three meanings:

1. Mendicant 乞士: He begs food to nourish the flesh body and begs the Dharma to nurture the Dharma body.
2. Frightener of demons 怖魔: His appearance is proper and upright, his righteous energy frightens demons.
3. Destroyer of evil 破惡: His external appearance is to leave the world, trying to give up bad habits (eradicating evil),

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internally he cleanses the three karmas by changing his faults and becoming good.

Bhikshu also has five meanings:

1. Substance and nature soft and supple 體性柔軟: Left home people can subdue and tame their body and speech making them neither coarse nor demented.
2. To guide the arrogant and slanderous to make offerings 引蔓旁布: They transmit the Dharma to cross over living beings ensuring continuation of the Dharma.
3. Their reputation is far-reaching 馨香遠聞: Their precepts and virtues are both fragrant, and well-known to the multitudes.
4. To be able to cure aches and pains 能療疼痛: They can sever afflictions and not give rise to a poisonous and harming mind.
5. Not turn their backs to sunlight 不背日光: Always going toward the Buddha's sun/wisdom brilliance.

Bhikshus strive to be good fields of blessings. Although they take on the appearance of beggars, they are not real beggars. They are not greedy for good food or fine clothing. They do not get afflicted at all whether they receive a lot of offerings or none, always keeping the mind of equanimity. If they reach this level, then they can become a superior field of blessings for the faithful.

Explained by Master YongHua

There are three kinds of fields of blessings:

1. Repaying kindness field of blessings,
2. Merit and virtues field of blessings,
3. The poor and destitute.

The Buddha is replete with the first two. So is the Dharma. The Sangha is replete with all three.

Great: has three meanings:

1. Great 大: respected by gods, kings and great men
2. Many 多: expansively comprehend internal and external scriptures
3. Superior 勝: in titles & reputation. There are definitely no Hinayana specialists in this group.

Present in the assembly were eight thousand great Bhikshus and **thirty-six thousand Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas**. Bodhisattva is a Sanskrit word, but it has become a very popular term.

A "Bodhisattva" is a sage of the Great Vehicle. "Bodhisattva" means "one who enlightens sentient beings.": he uses his enlightened wisdom to rescue and liberate all sentient beings, beings with blood and breath.

A Bodhisattva is also defined as "an enlightened sentient being." The Bodhisattva is the same as other living beings, except that he is enlightened. Being enlightened, he "does no evil and practices all good deeds." He has no bad habits or faults.

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Bodhisattvas who come to this Assembly can manifest as left home people or lay people. Their appearance is not fixed.

"Mahasattvas" are great Bodhisattvas endowed with great vows, great wisdom, and great skill and accomplishment in cultivation. They are at least eighth ground Bodhisattvas or higher. For example, Master Xuan Hua's teacher, Master Xu Yun, is an eighth ground Bodhisattva.

Also kings, ministers, Brahmins.

Various kings were also present. Kings rule the country in order to bring blessings and prosperity to the people. They are assisted by ministers and Brahmins.

The Brahmins [the priestly class] were one of the two noble classes in ancient India. While practicing, Brahmins, like Buddhists, may observe certain ascetic practices and be vegetarian. Their goal is to be born in the heavens. Although they cultivate purity and asceticism, they do not work on subduing greed, anger, and delusion. Their equivalent in China is the Taoists.

Lay disciples.

Draw near the left-home people and help them cultivate and propagate the Dharma.

There were also **gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division; beings both human and non-human.**

Temples are protected by the gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits.

The eightfold division is comprised of:

1. Gods 天, The gods in the heavens made vows in the past to protect the Buddhas' temples
2. Dragons 龍, have a lot of spiritual powers
3. Yakshas 夜叉, are called "speedy ghosts 疾鬼" because they can travel very quickly.
4. Gandharvas 乾闥婆, spirits that make delightful music.
5. Asuras 阿脩羅, have huge tempers. Male asuras are quite ugly. Female asuras are very attractive.
6. Garudas 迦樓羅, are the great golden-winged Pénɡ birds. They have great spiritual penetrations
7. Kinnaras 緊那羅, are called "doubtful spirits 疑神" because they look like humans, except that they have a single horn growing on top of their heads. They also make extremely fine music.
8. Mahoragas 摩侯羅伽 are huge pythons (also known as earth dragons).

There were also **beings human and non-human**. People came to protect the Buddha's teaching and support the Triple Jewel, and so did other kinds of beings. Non-humans are such as ghosts and spirits etc...

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The immeasurable great multitude respectfully surrounded him, and he spoke Dharma for them. The countless beings in the Dharma assembly respectfully surrounded the Buddha, eagerly listening to his sermon. Please note that the Dharma must be requested before it is dispensed as evidenced in the following section.

Sutra:

At that time, the Dharma Prince Manjusri, receiving the awesome inspiration of the Buddha, rose from his seat, bared one of his shoulders, knelt on his right knee, bowed his back, put his palms together and said to the Bhagavan, "World Honored One! We wish you would speak about such Dharma marks as the Buddhas' names, the great vows they made in the past, and their supreme merit and virtue, so that those who hear them will be rid of their karmic hindrances. This request is also for the sake of bringing benefit and bliss to sentient beings in the Dharma Image Age."

Commentary:

At that time, the Dharma Prince Manjusri.

The Buddha is the Dharma King, and the Bodhisattvas are Dharma Princes.

“Dharma” has the three characteristics of: infinite, universally applicable and all-inclusive.

“King”: in the Avatamsaka Sutra the Buddha states: “I am the Dharma King; within the Dharma I have obtained self-mastery 我為法王，於法自在”.

“Dharma prince”: has been transmitted the Dharma Seal 傳佛心印 and will inherit the Dharma King position. “Manjusri”, is a Bodhisattva of Equal Enlightenment, is due to achieve Buddhahood very soon. He manifests the appearance of a pure youth. Manjusri can be translated as “Wonderful virtue” or “Wonderful and auspicious”. He is foremost in wisdom among Bodhisattvas. He travels throughout the ten directions teaching the Prajna non-discriminating fundamental Wisdom 般若無分別根本智, urging living beings to bring forth the Bodhi mind. He symbolizes the Buddha fruition Wisdom virtue 佛果之智德.

Receiving the awesome inspiration of the Buddha. He respectfully received the awesome spiritual power of the Buddhas of the ten directions and **rose from his seat.**

This is an indication of his status in the Assembly. Because of his stature, he gets a seat whereas beings of lower stature such as gods and ghosts must stand.

He bared one of his shoulders, knelt on his right knee, bowed his back, put his palms together and said to the Bhagavan-the World Honored One.

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This represents respect in both body and mind and the purity of the three karmas.

When the three karmas are purified, there will be a response!

A few years ago, I was invited to San Jose to teach Chan and explain sutras. I decided to explain the Bequeathed Teachings sutra, a rather short sutra that few people bother to explain because the principles appear to be so obvious. Since the audience was primarily made up of the local Vietnamese, I spoke in Vietnamese with the occasional English translation for my Caucasian disciples.

There was a lay person who considered himself to be my Dharma protector. He came to listen to my sutra lecture once and commented that I needed to improve my lecturing technique. He mentioned the names of some other Dharma Masters, some of whom earned doctorates from the internationally known universities and asked me to research their approach and learn from them. I thanked him and said that I would try to improve.

A month later, he came again to see me and asked how things went. I told him that we still had around a dozen people come to the lecture as usual. I also told him that I continued to use the projector screen to provide visual aids to the lecture, unlike his advanced lecturers who could lecture for hours without any notes. He sounded disappointed.

I then told him about a senior seated monk in the

Assembly who was in his fifties. This monk left the home life when he was in his twenties in Vietnam. He then went to India to study for several years. When he was about to earn his PhD, he became gravely ill. He was so sick that he had to give up his studies and return to Vietnam to receive medical treatment. He was later sponsored to go to the United States a few years later. He came to the US but did not receive any medical treatment because he more or less gave up any hope for a cure.

Every week, he would come to listen to my sutra lecture, on a most “simple sutra”. He would skip the Dharma request portion and sat on a chair we reserved for him (the rest of us sat cross-legged on the floor as per our tradition). Since he seemed to enjoy the sutra lecture, I started asking him questions and encouraged him to contribute to the lecture. He obliged graciously each time I made the request.

After three months of listening to my sutra lecture, something happened. “What happened?” asked “my Dharma protector”. I told him that the monk went from Second Dhyana to Third Dhyana. That is what Mahayana can do for you should you be able to sincerely listen to the lectures. This Dharma protector of mine has a little wisdom. He never criticized me again on my lecture technique. He later tried to arrange to get me a temple so that I can move my Dharma to San Jose and then he can help me become more well-known.

At any rate, those four months of Dharma propagation in San Jose were grueling because we’d

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lecture in Los Angeles on Saturdays and then hop in a rental car to drive to San Jose for the Sunday Dharma Assemblies. Each Sunday was a twenty-plus-hour affair for us. Because of the many responses, it helped me broaden my repertoire: in addition to teaching Chan, I also started teaching the Pure Land Dharma.

"World Honored One! We wish you would speak about such Dharma marks...

All of us in the Dharma assembly are hoping the Buddha will speak of such dharmas **as the Buddhas' names**, the names of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata and the Buddhas in the ten directions, **the great vows they made in the past, and their supreme merit and virtue.**

Most translations skip the word “marks”. The original Chinese text is “**相類**” meaning marks and types. What did the wisest Bodhisattva have in mind?

Each Buddha chooses a “type” of Dharma to cultivate in order to realize the Way.

Furthermore, each type of Dharma has its own characteristics that can be observed: they are called “marks”. Dharmas have marks so that living beings can perceive and imitate them for their own cultivation.

The Bodhisattva only asked for various types of Dharma marks in order to provide a general description of the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma.

Those who are really interested can then do further research to cultivate them.

" ... so that those who hear them will be rid of their karmic hindrances.

When living beings hear of these Dharma marks, offenses and karmic hindrances will disappear and they will return to purity!

There are three types of **karmic hindrances** 業障:

1. Blessings karma 福業: causes for human and god destinies in the Desire Realm
2. Evil karma 惡業: causes for the three evil paths
3. Unmoving karma 不動業: causes for the two upper (Form and Formless) realms.

Each living being also has specific karmas that further dictate their individual retributions such as complete or incomplete organs etc...

Obstructions or hindrances prevent us from producing the Buddha's knowledge and vision and get us mired in afflictions, causing us to revolve in the wheel.

"This request is also for the sake of bringing benefit and bliss to sentient beings in the Dharma Image Age.

Manjusri Bodhisattva is requesting the Buddha to speak Dharma for those in the assembly, as well as for people in the Dharma Image and Dharma Ending

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Ages.

“**Sentient beings**”: will be explained later.

“**Dharma Image Age**” was explained earlier.

“**Benefit**”: is the major engine for cultivation. Cultivation has many advantages.

People often ask me why they should cultivate. I never could give them a satisfactory answer because it’s like asking the cat to describe its superior stealth. Instead, these folks should do a little bit of observation. If they pay attention to those who regularly come to the temple. These include old grandmas as well as highly paid professionals such as engineers, and dentists. If these people got nothing out of cultivation, they would have given up a long time ago. What do they obtain? They’ll tell you that their bodies are healthier and their minds are clearer. They are less stressed out. They enjoy their family life more and are more productive at work.

There are five types of **Bliss 樂**:

1. Causal bliss **因樂**: From practicing the good dharmas, one obtains subsequent bliss such as birth into high classes, having wealth and high net worth, etc...).
2. Feeling bliss **受樂**: The body grows and matures. The mind is peaceful and stable. This sutra says once his name passes through the ears, this is the end result.
3. Bliss from the ending of the feeling skandha

斷受蘊樂: This is the state of the sages (Arhats).

4. Bliss from separating from bliss **斷樂**: To permanently sever afflictions, and to be apart from disasters and difficulties as a result of destroying stupidity (this is the state of the enlightened beings).
5. Bodhi bliss **菩提樂**: The bliss of Nirvana.

Sutra:

The Buddha then praised the Pure Youth Manjusri: "Good indeed! Good indeed, Manjusri. Out of great compassion you now request that I speak about the Buddhas' names and the merit and virtue of their past vows, for the sake of rescuing sentient beings who are bound up by karmic obstacles, and for bringing benefit, peace, and bliss to those who live in the Dharma Image Age. Listen attentively and contemplate most diligently, for I will now answer you."

Manjusri said, "Please do speak. We are glad to listen."

Commentary:

The Buddha then praised the Pure Youth Manjusri:

Pure Youth: seven to 15 years of age. They are said to be more yang dominant, their inner light is still brilliant. They have few afflictions and are not yet

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defiled by the environment.

The environment tends to dull our inherent wisdom. The education system of the world tends to strengthen our discriminating mind. That is why we need to cultivate to recover our fundamental abilities and wisdom.

Pure youths have fewer afflictions and are more clear-headed because they do not indulge in sexual pleasure.

Manjusri Bodhisattva had begun practicing the Bodhisattva Way as a virgin youth, and he eventually became the foremost leader among Bodhisattvas.

The Buddha praised him: "**Good indeed!** Well done! **Good indeed**, just like what I have in mind **Manjusri**, because **with great compassion you now request that I speak**. Compassionately wishing to save all beings, you ask me to tell everyone **about the Buddhas' names and the merit and virtue of their past vows**,...

for the sake of rescuing sentient beings who are bound up by karmic obstacles,...

Rescue (beings) ... **bound**: means

1. Living beings are stuck but cannot extricate themselves
2. The Dharma can pull them out but they must cooperate or else they cannot be freed.
3. The Dharma is able to rescue: originally from the Chinese word 拔 meaning to pull out of

the mud.

sentient beings: are replete with the six organs which are the six emotional roots 情根 (so called because they are constantly activated 流轉 and cannot be restrained 無能轉). These emotional roots are also known as consciousnesses:

1. The first five consciousnesses supply external data to the five sense organs. They rely on the form root 色根.
2. The 6th consciousness processes the data from the first five. It relies on the 7th.
3. The 7th and 8th are mutually dependent. The 7th consciousness relays data between the 6th and 8th consciousness. The 7th is also known as the defiled root because it tends to distort the data it transfers. It is known as the ego.
4. The 8th is the basis for all the other consciousnesses. It is known as the store consciousness: containing all the past data.

and for bringing benefit, peace, and bliss to those who live in the Dharma Image Age.

You wish to benefit all the sentient beings in the Dharma Image Age, making them free from afflictions and experiencing bliss.

"Listen attentively and contemplate most diligently, for I will now answer you.

Listen carefully. Stop your false-thinking and reflect single-mindedly on the Dharma that I will now explain to you. I am about to teach you how to

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rescue living beings who are in suffering and difficulty."

To Listen:

needs six marks and five minds.

Listening requires being apart from the defilements of arrogance, slighting and fear; and not slighting oneself!

The six marks are to:

1. Listen in a timely fashion 應時聽.
2. Listen with sincerity and gravity 殷重聽.
3. Listen with respect 恭敬聽 for the Dharma as well as the speaker.
4. Listen with no harming intention 不為損害聽, to dwell on the constructive.
5. Listen not for according with 不為隨順聽 : That is not just because others do it and therefore you are only following along.
6. Listen without seeking flaws 不為求過失聽 : stop passing judgment.

The five minds are:

1. Seeking enlightenment and understanding 求解悟解.
2. Being single-minded 專意住心.
3. Concentrating on the sound, not the other external elements.
4. Sweeping the mind clean of all thinking.

5. Gathering in all the roots.

Manjusri said, "Please do speak. We are glad to listen."

Buddha, please be compassionate and teach us. We all now wish to hear the Buddha explain this Dharma.

This Great Bodhisattva took time off work to come to the Assembly to request the Dharma. Because of his extreme sincerity, the Buddha is about to transmit an invaluable Dharma Door.

This concludes the preface section.

Proper Text

Sutra:

The Buddha told Manjusri, "Passing from here to the east, beyond Buddhalands numerous as the sand grains in ten Ganges rivers, is a world called 'Pure Vaidurya.' The Buddha there is named Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment, One Perfect in Understanding and Practice, Well Gone One, One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Knight, Regulating and Subduing Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, Bhagavan. Manjusri, when that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, was practicing the Bodhisattva path, he made twelve great vows that enable all sentient beings to obtain what they seek."

Commentary:

The Buddha told Manjusri, "Passing from here to the east, beyond Buddhalands numerous as the sand grains in ten Ganges rivers, is a world called 'Pure Vaidurya.'

If you start from our Saha world and go east (this direction is the leader of movement; in movement there is also stillness), passing over Buddhalands as many as the number of sand grains in ten Ganges rivers, there is a Buddhaland called the Pure Vaidurya. This is a Pure land.

There are four general types of Pure Lands:

1. Commoners and Sages Cohabiting 梵聖同居土：

- Commoners have not yet ended view and thought delusions;
- Sages refer 1st to 3rd stage Arhats.
- They cohabit without distinction.
- There are god and human realms.
- There are no other four “evil” paths.
- Even the externalists and heavenly demons all have entered proper samadhis instead of deviant samadhis.

2. Expedients with Residues 方便有餘土：

- Those who have ended view and thought delusions can be born here.
- But they have not yet ended delusions like motes of dusts 塵沙無明.
- Or it is the destination for those who have obtained one mind unconfused phenomenon 事一心不亂.

3. Actual reward Adorned 實報莊嚴土：

- The residents have attained one mind unconfused noumenon 理一心不亂.
- They have destroyed up to 41 grades of ignorance.
- Noumenon: To realize that mind is Buddha, there is no Buddha outside of the mind; one can recite and yet not recite; one is still and unmoving.

4. Permanently still brilliance 常寂光土：This is the Buddha’s Nirvana.

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Vaidurya: 琉璃 is Sanskrit for a blue gem, one of the seven gems.

1. Its substance is that of a jewel, symbolizing value and rarity 尊貴
2. Its mark is the absence of flaws 無瑕穢, symbolizing purity
3. Its use is thoroughly bright 用甚明徹, symbolizing radiance or resplendence.

This sutra stresses the purity aspect.

This Buddhaland is of the 3rd type: Actual reward; with Vaidurya as adornment and ground.

The Buddha there is named Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment, One Perfect in Understanding and Practice, Well Gone One, One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Knight, Regulating and Subduing Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, Bhagavan.

Like all Buddhas, he has the ten titles:

- 1) **Tathagata** 如來: Thus Come One
 - Thus 如 : has no place nor direction; symbolizing inherent enlightenment 始覺之智.

- Come 來: manifesting a response by becoming the Buddha; symbolizing fundamental enlightenment 本覺之理.
- 來無所從, 如無所去: He's thus not coming from anywhere nor going anywhere.

2) **One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment 應正等覺:**

- Accepts offerings: I) from the humans and gods; II) humans and gods should make offerings to him; III) even though He ended birth and death but still manifests birth and death in order to rescue living beings.
- “Proper”: non deviant, not like ordinary people.
- “Equal Enlightenment”: no discrimination of high or low, pure or defiled, large or small, more or less.

3) **One Perfect in Understanding and Practice 明行圓滿:**

- (Maha-Nirvana sutra) “Understanding” is Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi: the Buddha fruition. “Practice” perfected: refers to precepts, samadhi and wisdom. The Buddha relies on the three non-outflow studies to realize the Way.
- (Great Shastra) “Understanding” refers to the three clarities (which are the clarity of past lives, the clarity of the heavenly eye and the clarity of the exhaustion of outflows). “Practice” involves the body and mouth karmas. The

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Buddha is replete and accomplished in the three clarities and two karmas.

- “Understanding” symbolizes wisdom. “Practice” refers to blessings. The Buddha is replete with all sorts of wisdom and blessings.

4) Well Gone One 善逝:

- The Buddha teaches and rescues living beings according to the Dharma.
- He is the teacher of all living beings throughout the ten directions.
- The original Sanskrit word can also be translated as “Well explained 好說”: the Buddha speaks Dharma to reveal the True Mark. Depending on the listeners’ capacity, He can teach the appropriate Dharma such as giving, Nirvana, the 12 conditioned links, the Four Noble Truths, and many more, to lead living beings to enter the Way.
- Therefore, the Buddha can accord with True Suchness and travels back and forth between the two shores, and will not regress or sink in the sea of birth and death. Once certified to the Buddha fruition, one is never defiled or afflicted again, just like once gold is refined it can never return to the ore state.

5) One Who Understands the World 世間解:

- He can understand the false & penetrate the true.
- He thoroughly understands all worldly and transcendental dharmas.

Explained by Master YongHua

- He understands both the sentient and insentient worlds which are the proper and dependent retributions.
- The Sixth Patriarch says: “The Buddhadharma is worldly dharmas. Enlightenment is not apart from the mundane”.

6) **Unsurpassed Knight** 無上士:

- A “Knight”: possesses skills, knowledge and is capable. As the “Unsurpassed Knight”, the Buddha’s wisdom and abilities are unparalleled.
- If there is even a trace of defilements, one can still be surpassed. The Buddha is unsurpassed because He is free of all defilements and ignorance. He can clearly understand that inside and outside are both false and truly empty.
- “Knight” also is frequently used to refer to Bodhisattvas. “Unsurpassed Knight” points to the Buddha because he is the topmost of all Bodhisattvas.

7) **Regulating and Subduing Hero** 調御丈夫:

- A **Hero**: has courage and vision. The term usually refers to a man.
- The Buddha is able to regulate and subdue the very hard to regulate and very hard to subdue heroes. The Chinese words have the connotation of being able to reign in wild horses, steering them in the right direction to obtain the good dharmas.
- He can overcome the demon armies

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- He can teach and transform living beings with soft and enrapturing words, moving and sincere words, many and various kinds of words.

Question: Why only men?

Answer: The way of the world typically favors men over women. Women tend to follow men, and men are usually in charge. However, ‘heroes’ actually represents both men and women. If you can control men then you can also control women. Broadly speaking, one must not only regulate and subdue men and women, one must also be able to subdue non-humans as well.

8) Teacher of Gods and Humans 天人師:

- He is the Teacher of both humans and gods, instructing them on what should be done and what should be avoided, on good and evil etc... If they can follow the instructions and do not quit, they will obtain the retribution of getting liberated from afflictions.
- The Buddha can expound on the Triple Realm dharmas to humans and gods.
- He acts as a role model for humans and gods.
- These two types of beings are singled out because they possess keener roots and can more easily enter the Way.
- When the Buddha speaks Dharma, limitless humans and gods became enlightened.

The remaining two titles of **Buddha** and **Bhagavan**

were explained earlier.

"Manjusri, when that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, was practicing the Bodhisattva path, he made twelve great vows that enable all sentient beings to obtain what they seek.

Before he became a Buddha, he made twelve great vows. People who cultivate should make real vows.

Great Vows 大願 are:

- To help all living beings.
- Endless: in time and space.
- Boundless in substance and mark.
- He created fantastic infrastructures: providing living beings with the Entire Substance Great Functionality 全體大用 to rescue those with whom he has affinity.

Our cultivation is relatively easy, compared to Shakyamuni Buddha's. Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated for three great *asamkhyeyas* of eons before becoming a Buddha. An *asamkhyeya* is an uncountable number. Medicine Master Buddha also cultivated the Bodhisattva path for many *asamkhyeyas* of eons before realizing Buddhahood. Now we can rely on the vows made by the Buddhas. We are the Buddhas' disciples, and they have bequeathed to us the Three Treasuries and Twelve Divisions of the Canon.

Sutra:

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"The first great vow: 'I vow that in a future life, when I attain *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, my body will shine with dazzling light that will illumine measureless, countless, boundless worlds. My body will be adorned with the thirty-two hallmarks of A Great Man and the eighty subsidiary characteristics, and I will enable all beings to become as I am.'

Commentary:

Every Buddha and Bodhisattva, before realizing the Way, makes infinitely many great vows to benefit and help living beings.

"The first great vow: 'I vow that in a future life, when I attain *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, the Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment:

- This is the Buddha fruition
- Anuttara: Unsurpassed
- Samyak: Proper, referring to the Arhat's attainment
- Sambodhi: Equal, referring to the enlightenment of the Bodhisattvas.

my body will shine with dazzling light that will illumine measureless, countless, boundless worlds. My body will be adorned with the thirty-two hallmarks of A Great Man and the eighty subsidiary characteristics, and I will enable all beings to become as I am.' This describes the response body (one of the three bodies of the Buddha).

He is so kind that he wants all of the inhabitants of his Buddhaland to have the same kind of body as his: of lapis lazuli (versus golden color in the Western Bliss Pure Land).

The **32 hallmarks** are:

1. The feet lie flat and stable 足下安平立相.
2. The sole of each foot has a 1,000 spoke wheel , as do the palms of the hands 足下二輪相.
3. Long fingernails 長指相.
4. His hands and feet are soft 手足柔軟相.
5. The hands and feet have nets 手足指縵網相.
6. The heels are complete 足跟廣平相.
7. The arches of the foot are high 足趺高滿相.
8. 伊泥延[足*專]相 The thighs are like those of the deer kings.
9. His hands extend beyond his knees 正立手摩膝相.
10. The male organ is hidden 陰藏相, retracted inside the body.
11. The body is tall and broad 身廣長等相.
12. The hair pores are blue 毛上向相.
13. The hair on the body and head curl upwards 一一孔一毛生相.
14. The body is a golden color 金色相.
15. The body emits light 大光相.

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16. The skin is soft and smooth: 細薄皮相.
17. The seven places are flat and full 七處隆滿相:
the 2 hands, 2 feet, 2 shoulders and neck are fully
formed with bone and flesh.
18. The armpits are full 兩腋下隆滿相.
19. Lion body 上身如獅子相 (awesome and
adorned).
20. The body is upright and proper 大直身相.
21. The shoulders are full and complete 肩圓好相.
22. He has 40 teeth 四十齒相.
23. The teeth are white and evenly spaced 齒齊相.
24. The four front teeth are white and pure 牙白相.
25. Lion cheeks 獅子頰相: full cheeks.
26. His saliva is sweet tasting 味中得上味相.
27. He has a vast and long tongue 大舌相.
28. His Brahma sound is deep and far-reaching 梵聲
相.
29. His eyes are blue 真青眼相 like blue space, still
and beautiful.
30. He has eyelashes like the king ox 牛眼睫相,
long and beautiful.
31. Has has a white hair between his eyes 白毛相
that emits light.
32. Hidden summit 頂髻相: This is represented as a
bump on the top of their heads.

They have to cultivate three asamkhyeya kalpas to

perfect the 32 hallmarks. Then cultivate another 100 kalpas to perfect the subsidiary characteristics.

The 80 subsidiary characteristics: 隨好、小相、小好、好。

The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have the 32 hallmarks as described earlier, which are clearly visible. The subsidiary characteristics are more subtle, sometimes hidden or secret or very hard to notice. They supplement the hallmarks and make their bodies even more adorned. The Wheel-turning sagely kings may also have the 32 hallmarks but only the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas would have the subsidiary characteristics.

I'll include the list in Chinese for future reference.

(一)指爪狹長，薄潤光潔。(二)手足之指圓而纖長、柔軟。(三)手足各等無差，諸指間皆充密。(四)手足光澤紅潤。(五)筋骨隱而不現。(六)兩踝俱隱。(七)行步直進，威儀和穆如龍象王。(八)行步威容齊肅如獅子王。(九)行步安平猶如牛王。(十)進止儀雅宛如鵝王。(十一)迴顧必皆右旋如龍象王之舉身隨轉。(十二)肢節均勻圓妙。(十三)骨節交結猶若龍盤。(十四)膝輪圓滿。(十五)隱處之紋妙好清淨。(十六)身肢潤滑潔淨。(十七)身容敦肅無畏。(十八)身肢健壯。(十九)身體安康圓滿。(廿)身相猶如仙王，周匝

端嚴光淨。(廿一)身之周匝圓光，恒自照耀。(廿二)腹形方正、莊嚴。(廿三)臍深右旋。(廿四)臍厚不凹不凸。(廿五)皮膚無疥癬。(廿六)手掌柔軟，足下安平。(廿七)手紋深長明直。(廿八)唇色光潤丹暉，(廿九)面門不長不短，不大不小如量端嚴。(卅)舌相軟薄廣長。(卅一)聲音威遠清澈。(卅二)音韻美妙如深谷響。(卅三)鼻高且直，其孔不現。(卅四)齒方整鮮白。(卅五)牙圓白光潔鋒利。(卅六)眼淨青白分明。(卅七)眼相脩廣。(卅八)眼睫齊整稠密。(卅九)雙眉長而細軟。(四十)雙眉呈紺琉璃色。(四一)眉高顯形如初月。(四二)耳厚廣大脩長輪埵成就。(四三)兩耳齊平，離眾過失。(四四)容儀令見者皆生愛敬。(四五)額廣平正。(四六)身威嚴具足。(四七)髮脩長紺青，密而不白。(四八)髮香潔細潤。(四九)髮齊不交雜。(五十)髮不斷落。(五一)髮光滑殊妙，塵垢不著。(五二)身體堅固充實。(五三)身體長大端直。(五四)諸竅清淨圓好。(五五)身力殊勝無與等者。(五六)身相眾所樂觀。(五七)面如秋滿月。(五八)顏貌舒泰。(五九)面貌光澤無有顰蹙。(六十)身皮清淨無垢，常無臭穢。(六一)諸毛孔常出妙香。(六二)

面門常出最上殊勝香。(六三)相周圓妙好。(六四)身毛紺青光淨。(六五)法音隨眾，應理無差。(六六)頂相無能見者。(六七)手足指網分明。(六八)行時其足離地。(六九)自持不待他衛。(七十)威德攝一切。(七一)音聲不卑不亢，隨眾生意。(七二)隨諸有情，樂為說法。(七三)一音演說正法，隨有情類各令得解。(七四)說法依次第，循因緣。(七五)觀有情，讚善毀惡而無愛憎。(七六)所為先觀後作，具足軌範。(七七)相好，有情無能觀盡。(七八)頂骨堅實圓滿。(七九)顏容常少不老。(八十)手足及胸臆前，俱有吉祥喜旋德相（即卍字）。

Sutra:

"The second great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, my body will be as bright and clear as *vaidurya*, flawlessly pure, vastly radiant, majestic with merit and virtue, abiding at ease, adorned with blazing nets brighter than the sun and the moon. Beings dwelling in darkness will be illuminated and will succeed in all their endeavors.'"

Commentary:

The second great vow: "I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, my body will be as bright

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and clear as *vaidurya*, flawlessly pure, vastly radiant, majestic with merit and virtue, abiding at ease, adorned with blazing nets brighter than the sun and the moon.

The first vow refers to the body characteristics common to all Buddhas. The second vow further describes characteristics special to Medicine Master Buddha's transformation body.

His body is as clear and transparent as *vaidurya*, free of blemishes and defilements. It shines with great brilliance. It will have a commanding appearance, completely at ease, and is extremely adorned.

Light universally illuminating has two meanings:

1. Inside, to use the wisdom light to illuminate the true Dharma realm. This is for his own use.
2. Outside, to use the body light to illuminate and respond to those with great roots. This is for the benefit of others.

flawlessly pure: flawless like jade and free from defilements.

Flawless carries ten meanings:

1. Durable 堅牢: It cannot be destroyed. Our Vajra body is most durable and cannot be damaged.
2. No defilements 無垢: not mixed with dusts and impurities.
3. Bliss giving 與樂: It can give peace and bliss.

Explained by Master YongHua

4. Difficult to encounter 難遇: rare.
5. Can destroy 能破: poverty and suffering.
6. Awesome virtue 威德: it can subdue enemies and demons.
7. Wish-fulfilling 滿願: getting what one seeks.
8. Adorned 莊嚴: the places of dwelling.
9. Most wonderful 最妙: superior, wonderful without equal.
10. Unchanging 不變: fire cannot melt it. Nothing can alter it.

vastly radiant

the retribution for being proper and not covering up.

majestic with merit and virtue

merit and virtues great and tall, an appearance that reflects his great virtues.

blazing nets

his body has so much light from the jewels that it resembles the heavenly nets.

brighter than the sun and the moon

has two meanings:

1. No discontinuity like the light of the moon or sun
2. It surpasses the light of those celestial bodies: those lights are not as bright as the light of the gods; how can they even compare with the Buddha's?

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abiding at ease, adorned with blazing nets brighter than the sun and the moon.

I'll be comfortable and free of sickness, and will be surrounded by fiery nets of light that outshine the sun and moon.

Beings dwelling in darkness of ignorance will be illuminated by its light, and will succeed in all their endeavors.

The second vow enables us to succeed in all of our endeavors.

Is that possible? It depends on how many blessings you have.

I have a disciple. When she first came to me, she knew very little about Buddhism. Four years ago, when she heard that I started explaining the Medicine Master Sutra, she wanted to attend the lectures. It was as if she was drawn by some invisible force. She lived two hours from my place and yet she would drive to the lecture in spite of bitter complaints from her own family and relatives who not only felt that she neglected them, but also had little regard for Buddhism.

She never had doubts about the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma. She started requesting the Medicine Master Buddha plaques to assist her family. As she saw the associated responses, she continued to get more plaques for her relatives. She clearly has a lot of affinities with this Dharma.

Explained by Master YongHua

In 2008, during the world-wide financial crisis, it was very difficult to find work in the United States. There was another student who helped out this disciple with her family problems. Subsequently, this other student then was laid off work because of performance failures. My disciple asked me whether or not the Medicine Master Dharma could help people find employment. I said yes. She got a temporary Medicine Master Buddha plaque for the laid off lady (because it was all the money she had left for that month). Within two weeks, she had an interview and got a better position with a raise.

A year later, she wanted to help her spouse find work. He had been unemployed for two years and gave up looking for a job quite a while back. He found a job in his field of work within one month after he started looking again.

Those are two small cases of obtaining as one wishes.

Sutra:

"The third great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I will, by means of limitless, unbounded wisdom and skill-in-means, enable all sentient beings to obtain an inexhaustible supply of material necessities so they are without the slightest want.'"

Commentary:

The third great vow.

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Medicine Master Buddha made great vows, enabling him to achieve Buddhahood very quickly.

I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi,
I will not retire and take it easy.

I will, by means of limitless, unbounded wisdom and skill-in-means

True wisdom is unbounded by time or space. It is also unlimited by our imagination. Wisdom manifests in the form of expedients.

Medicine Master Buddha uses wise expedients, not stupid ones, to teach and transform living beings. Wise expedients may not necessarily benefit oneself, but they do benefit others. Wise expedients are wholesome and in accord with the Dharma. Stupid expedients are unwholesome and go against the Dharma.

He uses countless skill-in-means to enable all sentient beings to obtain an inexhaustible supply of material necessities so they are without the slightest want.

We can be without the slightest want if we are sincere enough.

This Buddha is most kind and compassionate. He wants us to have all the things we need so that we no longer feel the need to fight and steal. The world can then be more at peace. Countries will not wage war against other countries to get land, water, clean air, minerals, or anything else they now fight over.

Another advantage of having adequate material necessities is that it enables us to live in dignity and gives us more time to cultivate.

Sutra:

"The fourth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall lead those sentient beings who practice deviant paths to firmly reside in the Way of Bodhi, and those who practice the vehicles of the Hearer or PratyekaBuddha to become firmly established in the Great Vehicle.'"

Commentary:

In **the fourth great vow**, Medicine Master Buddha wants to help those who got lost. We can generate blessings with this Dharma to help those who erroneously went down deviant paths or are treading on the narrow tracks of the Two Vehicles.

"I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, when I become a Buddha and attain Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment, I shall lead those sentient beings who practice deviant paths to firmly reside in the Way of Bodhi."

Deviant paths

This refers to practitioners of the external paths. They are non-Buddhists who are misguided. They adopt deviant views and consider them to be the truths. They fail to understand that "everything is made from the mind alone". They seek for answers

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outside the mind and refute the law of cause and effect.

Mind here refers to the true mind or the Buddha nature. It is not the ordinary mind that the externalists mistakenly take as the true mind. All living beings are endowed with this true mind. The Buddha said: “I am the accomplished Buddha, living beings are the Buddhas to be accomplished”. Initially, our Buddha nature is disturbed by the false thought of wanting to add light to it and is then incrementally defiled by more false-thinking.

Question: Why take refuge?

Answer: If you have already taken refuge with the Triple Jewel then you don’t have to take refuge again. To take refuge is to take the Buddha as teacher, the ceremony master monk is only the certifier. There is no need to take refuge more than once unless the conditions warrant it.

The ceremony master confers upon those who take refuge a gift: the Buddhist substance. That is why the ceremony master plays an important role in the process. One can look at it as the dowry that is bestowed upon the bride.

There was a dentist who came to listen to our sutra lectures. He was very bright and liked to read up on the Buddhist books, especially those written by the patriarchs such Great Master Xuan Hua. After studying with us for six months, he decided to take refuge. He later told me that the night after the

Explained by Master YongHua

refuge ceremony, he had a dream. A bunch of ghosts came and told him: “now that you’re like this, we are moving. This is good-bye”.

The dowry gift is the invisible energy that Buddhists have.

Question: If someone takes refuge with the Triple Jewel but asks someone else to attend the ceremony on his or her behalf, does the first person obtain any blessings?

Answer: He or she does not have to be present to obtain the gift and blessings. However, it would be better to attend the refuge ceremony. It marks the beginning of an important phase in your life. Making the extra effort would show more sincerity and increase your blessings.

It goes without saying that when you leave the homelife, the substance that can be conferred upon you is pretty important. The higher the quality, the easier it is for you to cultivate. We also have the deceased precepts which are designed to help the deceased receive the five precepts, thus increasing their blessings and enabling them to obtain liberation sooner.

We are organizing a Fo Qi: a Buddha recitation week for the first time in Southern California. The Chan school has its own Chan Qi: meditation week while the Pure Land school has its own Fo Qi: Buddha recitation week. Reciting the Buddha’s name is also a very effective way to develop

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samadhi power. When you participate in these Fo Qi's, do not be afraid of getting tired. If you are sincere, then even though you are tired, your throat is dry, the belly complains of hunger, or many other types afflictions affect your concentration, you still continue to recite the Buddha's name. Typically, the other way places would go for a lighter schedule in order to avoid stressing you out and making you feel like quitting.

The patriarchs designed these Dharmas in order to help us cultivate more effectively. They created these wonderful Great Assembly dharmas to train the best of the best. Cultivation is supposed to be hard work. If you are willing to tough it out, take the bitter pill. Then you will discover a sort of bliss and happiness that you've never experienced before.

Furthermore, the Great Assembly dharma makes it a lot safer to cultivate because we obtain encouragement and instructions on how to overcome our obstructions.

“Firmly reside in the Way of Bodhi”

Medicine Master Buddha vows to help the deviant believers to safely dwell within Mahayana.

Here is a summary of the cultivation process:

- We can stop, then afterwards enter samadhi 知止而後能定: the first step is to hang in there until the mad mind slows down. “Stopping” means that we do not follow our false-thinking. At first it is very difficult. But if you hang in there you can

stop and eventually enter samadhi.

- In samadhi, then afterwards become tranquil 定而後能靜: samadhi can bring on tranquility. Tranquility means not moving. The world around us may be spinning but we are still able to remain tranquil.
- Tranquil then afterwards become at peace 靜而後能安: if you are tranquil for some time, then you will experience peace and bliss.
- After the stage of peace we can then contemplate 安而後能慮: then you can really enter the contemplation phase and understand emptiness.

What is the difference between tranquility and peace? Tranquility refers to be being unmoving even though the external environment is chaotic. Peace is deeper. Internally we are experiencing no conflict with the external environment.

“The Way of Bodhi” brings on three types of enlightenment:

1. Inherent enlightenment: even though we have the Buddha nature, we are confused because it is covered up.
2. Initial enlightenment: we encounter the BuddhaDharma and start cultivating. Our wisdom begins to unfold.
3. Ultimate enlightenment: the enlightenment of the Buddhas.

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And those who travel on the vehicles of the Hearer or PratyekaBuddhas

Hearers cultivate the Dharma of the Four Noble Truths, which are suffering, accumulation, cessation and the Way. PratyekaBuddhas, also known as “Those Enlightened to Conditions” or “Solitarily Enlightened”, cultivate the Twelve Conditioned Links, which are as follows:

1. Ignorance, which (is the condition that) brings on
2. Activity, which brings on
3. Consciousness, which brings on
4. Name and form, which brings on
5. The six entrances, which bring on
6. Contact, which brings on
7. Feeling, which brings on
8. Love, which brings on
9. Grasping, which brings on
10. Becoming, which brings on
11. Birth, which brings on
12. Old age and death

The twelve conditioned links describe the process by which all living beings come into, pass through and leave their existence. As it is said, "All activities are impermanent, subject to production and extinction. When production and extinction are extinguished, that still extinction is bliss." If one understands the Twelve Conditioned Causes, then one can wake up from confusion and cultivate the Six Perfections of the Great Vehicle.

The Twelve Conditioned Links

We were born from 1. *ignorance*. Ignorance is the root of birth and death, the source of all troubles and afflictions. The goal of our practice is to break through ignorance. Ignorance confuses us, so that we live as if drunk or dreaming, driven by the desires for wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep. Once there is ignorance, it manifests in sexual 2. *activity*. At the moment of conception, the eighth 3. *consciousness* arrives. When consciousness arises and begins to discriminate, the marks of self, others, living beings, and a life span appear. Next, the living tissues begin forming: 4. *name and form* comes into being, cells multiply. Then the whole body comes into being, and with it, the 5. *six entrances* [eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind]. The six entrances come into 6. *contact* with the external environment, and that contact brings on 7. *feeling*. We differentiate between good and bad sensations, trying to avoid unpleasant sensations while craving pleasant ones. Thus, feeling then brings on 8. *love*. As we 9. *grasp* at the object of our craving, there is 10. *becoming*, we gravitate toward the realms we have strong affinities with then 11. *birth* into the next life, and then 12. *old age and death* all over again. The Twelve Conditioned Causes describe the endless rounds of rebirth that all living beings undergo.

PratyekaBuddhas feel that this cycle is a lot of suffering, so they practice the Way in order to liberate themselves from birth and death.

Question: Those who gave birth to us, are they ignorant?

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Answer: Yes. But so are we. Do not blame them because we came already ignorant. Our parents simply provided the conditions for our birth. They did not make us more ignorant.

Question: What is the connection between the twelve conditioned links and the practice of the PratyekaBuddhas?

Answer: They spend a lot of time observing and pondering these links. It would not be uncommon for them to perhaps spend an entire lifetime just to fully understand one pair, say how 9. Grasping brings on 10. Becoming. They spend many lifetimes studying these links and discover that the way out is to sever the root cause: ignorance. That's how they become enlightened.

The Two Vehicles consist of the Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions (also called Solitarily Enlightened Ones). The term "vehicle" is used to designate a class of cultivators who are able to carry (help) others.

To become firmly established in the Great Vehicle the deviant paths practitioners can “reside” or take shelter under Mahayana. The Two Vehicles practitioners can “establish” their deeper roots and infrastructures in the Mahayana fields and to resolve their minds on realizing the Buddhas' Unsurpassed Enlightenment.

I've met a good number of left-home Hinayana practitioners. They concentrate on developing their meditation skills and as a result have a little bit of samadhi power. Unfortunately, they lack the wisdom eye and fail to recognize that their gongfu leaves a lot to be desired. I hope that in the future, people will resolve to create Medicine Master Buddha blessings on behalf of these types of cultivators to help them take advantage of the Mahayana Dharmas.

Sutra:

"The fifth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall enable limitless and boundless numbers of sentient beings who cultivate Brahma conduct within my Dharma to perfectly uphold the three clusters of precepts without deficiency. Should there be any violation, upon hearing my name, they will regain their purity and not fall into the evil destinies.'"

Commentary:

Because of Medicine Master Buddha's vows, even if you have committed the ten evils, or broken the precepts, if you hear this Buddha's name, you will attain bliss and be freed from offenses, suffering, and birth and death.

"The fifth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall enable limitless and boundless numbers of sentient beings who cultivate Brahma conduct within my Dharma

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Medicine Master Buddha knows that most living beings do not uphold the precepts, their karma is a mixture of good and evil. It's like a muddy puddle in which dirt and water are mixed. Water represents wisdom, and dirt ignorance. If we can hold precepts, then we can return to the origin and discover our inherent wisdom. Not upholding the precepts is like muddying the clear water of wisdom with the dirt of ignorance. However, upholding the precepts is not an easy thing to do. Not upholding precepts is like trying to cross the ocean with a leaky vessel.

Question: People take precepts with their own free will. The Buddha is supposed to be compassionate. Then why does he encourage us to receive precepts knowing full well that we'll break them and will have to fall to the hells for our infractions?

Answer: You are quite right. Living beings do not need any more encouragements! They can do just fine by themselves. They love to break precepts and can do it rather effortlessly. Why do they break precepts? Either they do it in order to fulfill their desires or it could be from their lack of self-control.

The Buddha did not create precepts to make it harder for living beings. Do you really believe that He would do that to us? If not then why did he teach precepts? To bring great benefits to all living beings. Precepts are in essence the roadmap that reveals to the cultivators where the dangers lie. They therefore can help us avoid falling off the cliffs by telling us where the cliffs are. Unfortunately,

even though we know of the dangers, we still like to flirt with danger even at the risk of our lives. We can hardly blame the Buddha for our stupidity!

Another advantage of the precepts is that if we receive them and manage to uphold them, then we can accrue a lot more blessings than we otherwise would have, had we not received the precepts. However, this works both ways. If we receive a precept and then break it, we create more offenses than if we were to break the same precept prior to having taken it (because now we not only commit an offense, but we also break our promise not to commit that offense).

Thus the precepts Dharma is designed to help serious cultivators. Those who do not wish to cultivate do not have to receive precepts.

“**Brahma conduct**” refers to pure conduct, to the strict observance of the precepts.

Pure upholding of precepts: “**without deficiency**” (不缺戒) can be compared to a perfectly round, full moon.

The Three Clusters of Pure Precepts 三聚戒:

1. The precepts for gathering in living beings 攝衆生戒: Widely practice all the good dharmas for gathering in all living beings. Cultivating this Dharma will result in accomplishing the transformation body.

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2. The precepts that are comprised of wholesome dharma 攝善法戒: To cultivate all good dharmas, the 10 paramitas, and the 84,000 assisting-the-Way practices; thus accomplishing the reward body.
3. The precepts which are comprised of the rules of discipline and deportment 攝律儀戒. This accomplishes the Dharma Body.

The first cluster benefits others while the second and third clusters are for self-benefit.

"Should there be any violation, upon hearing my name, they will regain their purity. If one violates the precepts, if one hears my Buddha-name, one will return to the origin **and not fall into the evil destinies.** One will avoid falling into the hells, the realm of hungry ghosts, or the animal realm."

Sutra:

"The sixth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are sentient beings whose bodies are inferior and whose faculties are imperfect, who are ugly, recalcitrant and dull, blind, deaf, mute, deformed, paralyzed or lame, hunchbacked, or afflicted with skin disease, insanity, or various other sicknesses and suffering, upon hearing my name they shall all become endowed with upright features, keen intelligence, and perfect faculties, and they shall be free of sickness and suffering.'"

Commentary:

The sixth great vow: "I vow that in a future life ...
"

Medicine Master Buddha is most compassionate. He understands how much suffering handicaps and deformities can bring. Sickesses can be cured or can come to an end with death. However, handicaps and deformities can make us live on to endure unspeakable suffering.

Because the Buddha was aware of this, he vowed, **"when I attain Bodhi**, when I attain the Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment, **if there are sentient beings whose bodies are inferior**, perhaps their body is frail or undersized.

A Chinese couple used to bring their son to the Gold Wheel Temple on the weekend. The boy was born quadriplegic and his mind was unclear. He needed constant attention. His body grew unevenly. At the age of fifteen, his limbs grew more than the tendons, causing him great pains. The doctors had to operate and cut the tendons. He suffered a lot and also caused a lot of grief to his parents and sister. He passed away a few years later.

And whose faculties are imperfect.

Their sense organs are not complete. They may have only one eye. Some of their features may be mutilated or deformed. Perhaps some of their limbs and faculties don't function normally like the helpless boy mentioned above.

who are ugly, recalcitrant and dull.

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They could be so ugly that they are quite hard to look at. Or they could be rather dull and unable to listen.

blind, deaf, mute

The **blind** may have eyes, but cannot see; probably because they encountered the Dharma but refused to acknowledge it. The **deaf** may have ears, but cannot hear; perhaps for refusing to listen when people spoke Dharma to them. The **mute** tries to talk, but if they can make a sound their voice is unintelligible. This could be due to refusing to speak Dharma to others when requested.

Deformed, paralyzed or lame, hunchbacked

People whose joints or limbs are **deformed** may not be able to extend them. **Paralyzed** people cannot move. **Lame** people have difficulties walking. **Hunchbacks** look as if they had the hump of a camel.

Or afflicted with skin disease

Skin disease disfigures people in various ways, perhaps covering their faces with patches of different colors. Or they could have leprosy.

Insanity

Those suffering from **insanity** have a mental disorder rendering them incapable of taking care of themselves or not knowing what they are doing.

or various other sicknesses and suffering

whether bodily or mental; because they created killing offenses or worked against Mahayana in the

past.

Upon hearing my name, "Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata," they shall all become endowed with upright features, keen intelligence, and perfect faculties and they shall be free of sickness and suffering.

Upon encountering this Dharma, they can be free from their handicaps, illnesses and suffering.

Anecdotes: during the Song Dynasty, there was a woman who upheld the Medicine Master mantra. She also bowed to and recited this Buddha's name. She fell sick and requested help from a monk. He spoke the causes and conditions of this Buddha's Buddhaland, vows and practices. She felt great joy. That night, she dreamt of Medicine Master Buddha holding a cup of medicine. She drank it, began to break a sweat and suddenly felt a light ease. She woke up cured.

Also, there was a woman whose eyes were blind. A monk taught her to recite the Medicine Master Buddha's name. She did so for three years. Her blindness was cured.

During the Qing Dynasty, National master Yu Lin 玉琳, in his prior life was a monk with incomplete organs. Back then he was rather ugly, hunchbacked and dull. He heard of the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma, brought forth faith and practiced it. In his next lifetime, he then became National Master Yu Lin. He was very handsome, had great wisdom, became very well-known and was the teacher of the

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emperor.

Sutra:

"The seventh great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause sentient beings who are oppressed by many illnesses and who are without aid, without a place to turn, without a doctor, without medicine, without relatives, and without a family, who are poverty-stricken and filled with suffering, to be cured of their sicknesses upon having my name pass by their ear, so they are peaceful and blissful in body and mind. They will have a family and relatives, and acquire an abundance of property and wealth, and even realize unsurpassed Bodhi.'"

Commentary:

"The seventh great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause sentient beings who are oppressed by many illnesses

Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata is a great king of physicians who cures people without using medicine.

many illnesses: of three general types

1. Sicknesses of the four great elements,
2. Sicknesses caused by ghosts and spirits,
3. Sicknesses from karmic retributions.

Chinese physicians use the methods of looking, listening, asking, and feeling the pulse to diagnose a

patient's condition.

Physicians are classified as:

1. Spiritual 神: the very best; they know the patient's conditions by merely looking.
2. Sagely 聖: They know by listening.
3. Skillful 功: They know by asking.
4. Clever 巧: They know by feeling the pulse.

Ordinary doctors must use these four methods to diagnose sickness.

and who are without aid, without a place to turn,
no one is willing to lend a helping hand or there is nowhere one can turn to for shelter or protection.

without a doctor, without medicine,
Can't find a competent doctor or more likely cannot afford the doctor's fees. If the doctor gives them a prognosis, they then can't afford the medicine.

without relatives, and without a family,
No one you can lean on, no family who will care for you.

who are poverty-stricken and filled with suffering.

They are so poor that people avoid them out of fear of having to help them. They're poor and alone and beset by hardships.

To be cured of their sicknesses upon having my

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name pass by their ear.

If they hear my name, "Medicine Master Buddha Who Quells Disasters and Lengthens Life," they will be cured of all disease, without having to take medication or get shots, X-rays, or CAT scans. There's no need for electrotherapy, acupuncture, or any other treatments or operations.

So they are peaceful and blissful in body and mind.

Both their body and mind are healed. They feel safe, at peace and happy.

They will have a family and relatives, and acquire an abundance of property and wealth.

They will not be alone in the world, nor will they be poor or deprived of necessities. In fact, they will be quite well off.

And finally, they will even realize unsurpassed Bodhi. Bodhi is truly being free of all illnesses.

Sutra:

"The eighth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are women who give rise to a deep loathing for their female body and wish to renounce it because they are oppressed and disturbed by the myriad kinds of suffering of being female, upon hearing my name, they will be able to turn from women into men who are replete with male features and ultimately realize unsurpassed Bodhi.'"

Commentary:

"The eighth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi

Why would women want to become men? Don't think that Buddhism looks down on women. In the Medicine Master Buddha's Pure Land, there are no men or women because living beings are born by transformation, rather than from the mother's womb. Since there is no childbirth and no need for the difficulties of menstruation, all beings born there have male features.

Without mixing men and women, we are spared from significant problems: sexual desire between men and women can be overpowering. In this day and age, there are all sorts of strange problems. Demons and ghosts take advantage of the lust between men and women and stir up trouble.

if there are women who give rise to a deep loathing for their female body and wish to renounce it

If they have had enough with the problems associated with a female body... From what I hear, in this day and age, women constantly feel preyed on by men. Even older women can be abused by younger men. If such women are fed up, they may wish to renounce their female body.

because they are oppressed and disturbed by the myriad kinds of suffering of being female,

Women are oppressed day and night by the excessive

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suffering and hardships of being female.

There are ten evils associated with a female body:

1. At birth the parents are displeased (in certain cultures).
2. Parents sometimes feel that raising daughters is not very interesting.
3. Women are often afraid of people.
4. Parents can undergo a great deal of worry about their daughters' marriage.
5. Traditionally, women must leave their parents and take care of their in-laws.
6. When married many women live in fear of their husbands.
7. Women have the difficulty and fear of giving birth.
8. Commonly, no matter what they do or say, daughters' actions are reported to parents as not being good.
9. They are often controlled by husbands and subject to many restrictions, which, if broken, can lead to divorce.
10. When they become old, they are often slighted and controlled by their own children and grandchildren.

upon hearing my name, they will be able to turn from women into men who are replete with male features and ultimately realize unsurpassed Bodhi.”

They can receive the benefits that men usually do, they may be reborn as males if they wish, and they will eventually attain the supreme fruit of Buddhahood.

Sutra:

"The ninth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall liberate sentient beings from the nets of demons and the bonds of external sects. If they have fallen into the dense forests of evil views, I shall lead them and gather them in, causing them to have proper views and to gradually cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas so they will quickly realize unsurpassed, proper and equal Bodhi.'"

Commentary:

The ninth great vow is concerned with destroying the nets of demons and gaining liberation from the dense forests of the evil views of externalists.

Medicine Master Buddha said: **"I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall free sentient beings from the nets of demons."** Right now people are mired in the demons' nets without realizing it. Their nets are not easy to disentangle. How can we escape the nets of demons? Demons use their tricks to lead people to believe in wrong views and do stupid things. However, if we rely on the power of Medicine Master Buddha's vow, it becomes very easy to escape the demons' nets.

Demons are of four types:

1. Affliction demons: 62 views, 5 dull servants, 108 afflictions, 84,000 dusts
2. Skandha demons: of form, feeling, thought,

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formation and consciousness. Those who seriously cultivate eventually have to face them because they are determined to come and obstruct our cultivation. They are quite tricky and dangerous.

3. Death demons: the causes and conditions of impermanence terminate the three dharmas of breathing, consciousness and warmth, thus ending life
4. Heavenly demons: at the top of the Desire Realm heavens. They have tremendous spiritual penetrations and resort to all sorts of tricks to get us to indulge and do stupid things. If we oblige, we then become part of their retinues.

Question: How can we cultivate to escape these four types of demons?

Answer: Both the evil and good exist simultaneously. These four types of demons may be very evil but they can also help us cultivate. There is no need to be overly concerned. As you progress in your cultivation, your good knowing adviser will teach you dharmas to deal with them.

Frankly, I find the demons to be useful for cultivation. Their existence helps put all of us on the highest level of alertness because we cannot afford to indulge or be scattered. The demons' attacks reveal where we still have leaks. If we have the clarity of mind to recognize them, we can then plug up the leaks and escape their nets. Or if we remain in samadhi then we will not be affected by

their tricks.

The important thing to remember is to DO NO EVIL. If we know it's wrong and insist on doing it, we are doing the demon's work.

How can we recognize that we are caught in the demons' nets? It's quite easy: If we find that the more we cultivate, the more arrogant we become, the bigger temper we have, the less willing we are to listen to others (to wise people etc.), then surely we are caught in their nets. How can we keep them at bay? Just observe the precepts.

And the bonds of external sects

External sects indoctrinate their followers with erroneous beliefs. They can be easily recognized because they like to use various methods to control people, even making them swear that if they disobey, they will be struck by lightning or suffer other calamities. Thus the adherents of external sects dare not offer any opposition, even though they may know their beliefs are mistaken. They have no freedom and cannot escape.

If they have fallen into the dense forests of evil views

There are many kinds of deviant knowledge and views, as thick as forests (which obscure the way and make it hard to find a way out), that totally control people's minds. Buddhism, however, does not attempt to control people.

Dense forests has three characteristics:

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1. It has layers upon layers and is vast.
2. It causes the people caught inside to be disoriented.
3. It's very difficult to get out.

So, beware!

There are 62 kinds deviant views:

- Form is me
- I am apart from form
- Form is large I'm small, I'm within form
- I'm big, form is small, form is within me.
- Each skandha has four of these views.
- Five skandhas times four yields 20 deviant views. Multiply by the three periods of time to make up 60.
- Then add permanence and nihilism.

Medicine Master Buddha says, "When I meet people of deviant views, **I shall lead them and gather them in,**

I'll provide them with guidance and help them switch sides.

causing them to have proper views and to gradually cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas.

I shall explain proper views to them and teach them to cultivate the Six Perfections and myriad practices of Bodhisattvas

There are two types of **proper views**:

1. Worldly Way Virtue Good Dharmas 世間道
德善法: like Catholics advocating charity

and helping others.

2. Transcendental Ultimate Buddhadharma 出世究竟佛法: frees us from afflictions and brings about enlightenment.

Having proper views is critical to cultivation. That is why we train our students in samadhi in the morning. Then in the afternoon we explain sutras so as to help rectify the erroneous views.

so they will quickly realize unsurpassed, proper and equal Bodhi.

And help them quickly become a Buddha.

Sutra:

"The tenth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause sentient beings who fall into the hands of the law and are bound, interrogated, whipped, beaten, fettered, imprisoned, sentenced to execution, or subjected to endless disasters, hardships, abuse, and humiliation so that they are torn by grief and distress and suffering in body and mind, to obtain, upon hearing my name, liberation from all worry and suffering by means of my blessings, virtue, and awesome spiritual power.'"

Commentary:

"The tenth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause sentient beings who fall into the hands of the law

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The tenth great vow helps those who are in trouble with the law. If they obey the laws of the country, they will be protected and safe. If they violate them, they will be restrained and penalized.

and are bound, interrogated,

Infractions can lead to being tied up, interrogated and one's name being entered in the records.

whipped, beaten,

You can be beaten by hand, by whip or other types of tools.

fettered, imprisoned,

You could be put in shackles, handcuffs and detained.

sentenced to execution,

You can be called in front of a judge to be sentenced, and you can be put to death.

sentenced 刑 Ancient China had five types of sentences:

1. Flogging 笞.
2. Imprisonment 徒.
3. Exile 流.
4. Hanging 絞.
5. Decapitation 斬.

executed 戮 : capital punishment.

The sage Zhuang Zi 莊子 said: “Human burden

engenders human worry 有人者累，見有於人者憂” meaning that those who depend on us will cause us to have worries. Living in society subjects us to personal, known as “proper”, as well as “common” retributions. Proper retributions refer to those peculiar to each individual from past causes. Common retributions are those common to society such as war, famine, epidemics etc...

or subjected to endless disasters, hardships, abuse, and humiliation so that they are torn by grief and distress and suffering in body and mind... "

Faced with countless heartaches, they feel miserable. Feelings can be:

1. Bliss 樂: pleasant feelings
2. Suffering 苦: unpleasant ones
3. Neutral 捨: neutral feelings.
4. Worry 憂,
5. Happiness 喜.

The first three belong to the body: what we currently experience at the moment. The latter two belong to the mind which worries about what happened in the past or what will happen in the future. Why is there no neutral mental feeling? Ordinary people are not capable of neutral mental feeling. Only the sages are.

Speaking of suffering and bliss, they are feelings that lie underneath and pull the strings, creating

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attachments.

For example, the human existence is filled with suffering. In the six Desire Heavens there is more bliss than suffering. That is why humans aspire to be born there, to enjoy heavenly pleasures. However, these heavenly residents will eventually have to face the suffering that arises with the appearance of the signs of decay at the end of their heavenly existence. At that time, they can't take the suffering because they are not used to it!

As for the heavenly dwellers of the Form and Formless realms, they no longer have worries. However, when they exit their samadhi, they still are subject to share section birth and death. While in samadhi, they are also not spared from change birth and death: subtle thoughts still rage in their mind without any control.

In all, they need to continue to progress in their cultivation until they accomplish the Way. At that time, they can transcend it all and enjoy the ultimate bliss of Nirvana. Until we get there, keep in mind that those pleasurable feelings are planting seeds for future suffering. In contrast, if we endure the suffering and hardships of cultivation, we are ridding ourselves of suffering and plant the causes for future liberation and bliss.

Furthermore, suffering comes and goes. There is a saying: the Triple Realm arises from the mind, the 10,000 Dharmas arise from consciousness 三界唯

心，萬法唯識, meaning the world we live in is created from our mind and all that can be perceived is done through our consciousness. If you have no attachment then you have no worry and thus will be free from suffering.

How can we be free from suffering? By reciting Medicine Master Buddha's name. It brings peace and bliss to our mind, thus relieving mind suffering. Furthermore, reciting his name can also bring relief to our bodily suffering because it lessens or resolves our obstructions and difficulties.

Question: So the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma affects the body and mental states?

Answer: Yes, both. It can heal both physical and mental illnesses. The healing power depends on your samadhi power.

Question: We are presently attached to unpleasant or pleasant feelings, if we can reverse those feelings, would that solve the problem?

Answer: No. We spend time discussing feelings to make you aware of your human condition. What for? As long as you still have feelings and sensations you will still experience rejection of the unpleasant or seek the pleasurable. If you want to truly experience peace and bliss, you have to end the feeling skandha.

Question: If we neither suffer nor feel good, aren't we becoming stones or wood?

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Answer: I'd like to know how you cease to experience pain or pleasure. If you are pinched, don't you feel pain? When we are praised, don't we like it?

For ordinary people, let's say that we hear a dog being abused. At first, we can't help but feel uncomfortable. However, over time, the dog's sounds of pain will create less of an impression on us. In other words, we become more desensitized with repeated exposure.

As to those who have samadhi power. They can enter samadhi and will not be bothered by the dog's sounds of suffering. That's another way to obtain relief.

For the advanced Buddhist practitioner, even though the sounds of suffering are unpleasant, our mind is not affected at all. That is the meaning of ending the feeling skandha: even though the feelings are there, the mind is no longer moved.

Taking it a step further, can you cultivate to the level where you suffer on behalf of living beings? Or can you experience joy because you want to share it with living beings? That is the state of the Bodhisattvas. Their experiences are solely for the sake of connecting with and helping living beings. That connection is instantaneous. They don't think. There is no premeditation or pretense.

Question: When they function with their wisdom

and refrain from using their conscious mind like that, can they still distinguish the good from the bad?

Answer: What is good or bad? It simply is your mind of discrimination. My guess is that the Bodhisattvas do not discriminate the way we do. They only react to our discriminating minds. They see no evil when the demons come. In fact, they look at demons or sages as being the same. In contrast, ordinary people like us still like to pass judgment on others, saying that this Bodhisattva is a good one because he's so nice and gentle, the other Bodhisattva is just too temperamental!

To obtain, upon hearing my name, liberation from all worry and suffering by means of my blessings, virtue, and awesome spiritual power.

Medicine Master Buddha vowed, "If such people hear my Buddha-name, then by means of the blessings and virtue that I cultivated in past lives, they will be saved from all disasters and hardships, and will obtain bliss."

“Worry” Mencius says that humans have human burden and worry . Burdens are when others depend on you. Worry is when you depend on others.

While the law emphasizes punishment and isolation to affect behavior, the Buddhadharma emphasizes prevention and repentance in order to unfold wisdom.

Sutra:

"The eleventh great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause all sentient beings who are so plagued by hunger and thirst that they create all kinds of evil karma in their quest for food, upon hearing my name and single-mindedly receiving and upholding it, to be filled with fine and wonderful food and drink and afterward, by means of the flavor of Dharma, to build and settle in ultimate peace and bliss.'"

Commentary:

"The eleventh great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause all sentient beings who are so plagued by hunger and thirst that they create all kinds of evil karma in their quest for food,

In this eleventh vow, the Buddha wants to help us obtain flavorful food and drink. Then he'll favor us with the Dharma flavors.

Confucius stated that "People take food as Heaven" and acknowledged that "Food and drink and the opposite sex are the great desires for humans".

The Buddha said: "All sentient beings rely on food for sustenance 一切有情，皆依食住". If we lack food, we will be hungry and become afflicted. Afflictions aggravate us and make us become angry, thus impelling us to create offenses. Because of the lack of food, people create all sorts of offenses. Think of how many of hundreds of millions of people still experience hunger and thirst every day!

The world cannot be peaceful and stable if people still have inadequate food and clothing.

Therefore, Medicine Master Buddha made this vow to help the worlds. If we have abundant food and drink, we will not be afflicted and create offenses. That way, we won't fall, and will have the chance to cultivate. Usually, one must first become wealthy with blessings before one can cultivate: “wealth followed by teachings 富而後教”. Cultivate and you also can taste the unsurpassed Dharma flavors. That is the Dharma without outflows.

Many people ask me how to help their relatives and loved ones reap the benefits of Mahayana. They say: “since practicing Mahayana, I feel so much better, my health improved by leaps and bounds, my work is more enjoyable and my life is more meaningful. How can I share those with my family and relatives?” You obtained those benefits because you've planted blessings with Mahayana over many lifetimes already. If you want them to also benefit from Mahayana, you must give them blessings: “wealth followed by teachings 富而後教”. How? Get them a Medicine Master Buddha plaque, dedicate merit and virtue to them, encourage them to practice giving etc... When they become wealthy of blessings, they will naturally want to create merit and virtue themselves.

Moreover, there is a saying: “For he who has abundant clothes and food but knows etiquette and principles, though the food storage is full, he

remains non-corrupt and knows shame 衣食足而知禮義，倉稟實而識廉恥”.

The first part emphasizes etiquette and righteousness. This is to have class. The European royalties send their children to finishing school to build their pedigree. Our young generation neglects this. They only want to get a degree and make a lot of money. They fail to become quality human beings.

The second part of the saying is also interesting. It reminds us that even if our overflowing wealth is obtained cleanly, we should remain humble. We should be ashamed of our mistakes and try to change and improve in spite of our wealth and status.

There are four kinds of food:

1. Portion 段食: for the Desire Realm. They have the six attributes of the dusts (form, flavor etc...). They have form and portion attributes. They can be seen: touch, fragrance and flavor as substance.
2. Touch 觸食: the eyes touch food, the ears touch sound as food, the nose touches odor as food, the tongue touches flavor as food, the body touches fine and smooth as food, the mind touches dharmas as food. The six organs produce the six consciousnesses to touch the six dusts and produce pleasure: they are all food, all can sustain life. For example,

seeing a play or watching the opposite sex can satisfy hunger.

3. Thought 意思食: From the mind having thoughts of hoping as food. The hoping mind does not die and can sustain life. Although it must undergo a thousand obstructions and failures, the hoping mind does not die but can extend life 雖經千挫百折而希望心不死，亦得延其生命. As to the gods in the Form Realm: they rely on setting their eyes on the wonderful and subtle forms and shapes 形色 to sustain life.
4. Consciousness 識食. Unlike the thought kind which relies on the 6th and 7th consciousnesses, this relies on the 8th. In other words, to be conscious of food makes one full. For example, this is how the Buddha accepts our food and drink offerings.

Question: When we abstain from food, are we using one of the above four Dharmas?

Answer: No. Fasting is a special cultivation dharma. For example, in Taiwan there is a well-known Qi Gong practitioner who does not have to eat for years. There are also people who can live by absorbing nutrients from the air. Our Buddhist fasting dharma is based on enduring the hunger and not avoiding the hunger pangs.

Cultivators tend to have fewer outflows and

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therefore need less food intake and rest. For example, one of our students drove from Los Angeles to San Francisco. He drove for several hours without stopping. When he got there, he was not tired at all because he concentrated on driving and had minimal false-thinking.

Our body transforms food into energy. When there is no food, our body naturally cuts off unnecessary activities. We naturally become more efficient with our available resources. That is the spirit behind our Buddhist fasting dharma. By the way, medical researchers have discovered this effect. They compared one group of monkeys who were well fed with another group that was underfed. The underfed monkeys were skinnier but lived longer and were in better health.

upon hearing my name and single-mindedly receiving and upholding it, to be filled with fine and wonderful food and drink and afterward, by means of the flavor of Dharma, to build and settle in ultimate peace and bliss.”

Medicine Master Buddha vowed, "**Upon hearing my name and single-mindedly receiving and upholding it ...** If they retain my name in their minds and practice my Dharma with their bodies, I will cause them to **be filled with fine** superior quality **and wonderful** beyond their expectations **food and drink**. I will make all kinds of delicious food appear so that they may eat their fill;

and afterward, by means of the flavor of Dharma (the flavor of the Wonderful Dharma; masticate it

and the mind gives rise to bliss and happiness), I will cause them **to build and settle in ultimate peace and bliss**. Then I will explain the Dharma to them, so that they may taste its supreme, wonderful flavor and attain perfect peace and bliss.

Sutra:

"The twelfth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are sentient beings who are poor and without clothes so that day and night they are troubled by mosquitoes and flies, and by cold and heat, upon hearing my name and single-mindedly receiving and upholding it, they shall obtain all kinds of fine and wonderful garments that accord with their tastes, as well as a variety of precious adornments, flower garlands, fragrant balms, and the enjoyments of music and various kinds of talents, so that all their hearts' delights will be fulfilled.'"

Commentary:

"The twelfth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi,

Medicine Master Buddha must have known poverty and hardship in the past, and so he made vows to save all living beings from such suffering. In **the twelfth great vow**, he says, **"I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are sentient beings who are poor and without clothes so that day and night they are troubled by mosquitoes and flies, and by cold and heat,**

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if there are sentient beings of any nationality or ethnic background, who are poor and without clothes

The previous vow was to save beings without food, but this vow talks about beings who have neither food nor clothes.

Clothing serves two purposes:

1. To protect against the weather and insects.
2. It covers the body and adorns it.

There is a saying: “Wealth adorns the house, virtues adorn the body 富潤屋，德潤身”. Our abodes can be adorned with material things whereas our body should be adorned with virtues. Cosmetic surgery can only give a false sense of beauty that does not last.

Question: How does one cultivate virtue?

Answer: Keep the precepts. That’s the best way.

so that day and night they are troubled by mosquitoes and flies,

Stinging and biting insects inflict suffering to sentient beings.

and by cold and heat,

Without clothes, they suffer day and night from the cold and the heat. Did you know that this is an occasional form of torture (official as well as unofficial) when you are detained?

upon hearing my name and single-mindedly receiving and upholding it, they shall obtain all kinds of fine and wonderful garments that accord with their tastes, as well as a variety of precious adornments, flower garlands, fragrant balms, and the enjoyments of music and various kinds of talents, so that all their hearts' delights will be fulfilled.'"

Upon hearing my name, the name I will have as a Buddha, and single-mindedly receiving and upholding it

The goal here is to single-mindedly recite the name, to recite Medicine Master Buddha's name in thought after thought.

They shall obtain all kinds of fine and wonderful garments that accord with their tastes. They obtain the most wonderful clothing, exactly the kind they like, **as well as a variety of precious adornments**, playthings made of the seven treasures—gold, silver, *vaidurya*, crystal, mother of pearl, red pearls, and agate. They obtain whatever they fancy, such as **flower garlands** made of the seven treasures or expensive **fragrant balms** (In the past rubbing incense was used as fragrance. One can also use expensive incense as offerings to the Buddhas.

and the enjoyments of music that you yourself play on fine musical instruments or others perform for you, **and various kinds of talents**, referring to performances put on by others for your entertainment such as dance, ballet, juggling, recitals

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etc... so that all their hearts' delights will be fulfilled. They obtain all these playthings for their amusement.

Sutra:

"Manjusri, these are the twelve sublime, wonderful and superior vows that the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment, made while cultivating the Bodhisattva Way."

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha addresses this wise Bodhisattva, Manjusri, because only a very wise person can understand the great vows of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata.

These are the twelve sublime, wonderful and superior vows that the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment, made while cultivating the Bodhisattva Way.

"World Honored One" and "One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment" are two of the ten titles of Buddhas.

Although twelve vows are not very many, these vows can solve the numerous types of problems of all living beings.

"sublime"

Explained by Master YongHua

Containing very subtle and profound meanings.

“wonderful”

Beyond our imagination.

“superior”

Vision of great men.

The vows were made along time ago before he became a Buddha. They can rescue all beings.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Manjusri, if I were to speak for an eon or more about the great vows made by the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, when he practiced the Bodhisattva Way, and about the merit, virtue, and adornments of his Buddhaland, I could not finish."

Commentary:

"Moreover, Manjusri," Shakyamuni Buddha continues. **"If I were to speak for an eon or more about the great vows made by the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, when he practiced the Bodhisattva Way, when he was on the causal ground (planting the causes for Buddhahood), and about the merit, virtue, and adornments of his Buddhaland, the Vaidurya Land in the East, I could not finish.** Even if I spoke continuously for a great eon or more, I still could not finish in that long a time." Remember that this is

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coming from one with unsurpassed wisdom and eloquence!

“**eon**”

also known as kalpa.

A great 大 kalpa consists of four middle 中 kalpas; a middle kalpa has 20 small 小 kalpas. A small kalpa has one increase 增 and one decrease 減.

Increase: every hundred years, the lifespan increases one year, from an average of 10 years to a maximum of 84,000 years.

Decrease: the average lifespan starts decreasing one year every hundred years from 84,000 years to 10 years.

Each world goes through the following cycle consisting of four phases:

1. Formation 成
2. Dwelling 住
3. Decay 壞
4. Destruction 空

Each cycle lasts one great kalpa, each of the four phase lasts for a middle kalpa.

How are the worlds formed?

First the Brahma Heaven 大梵天 is formed. This is where the Brahman Heaven King resides. Then the Heaven of the Ministers of Brahma 梵輔天 comes into existence, followed by the Heaven of the Multitudes of Brahma 梵眾. These three heavens make up the Heaven of the First Dhyana. Next, the six Desire Heavens 欲界諸天 are formed. Then the Human realm 人間 comes into being, followed finally by the three Evil Paths 三惡趣 : the animal, hungry ghost and hell realms. The Brahman Heaven King gets to observe how the rest of the world is created, that's why he thinks he fathers the world. He actually simply accrued the Brahman Heaven blessings in the past and cannot create the world anymore than the Christian God can.

Sutra:

"That Buddhaland has always been completely pure; there are no women, no evil destinies, and no sounds of suffering. The ground is made of *vaidurya*, with golden cords lining the roads. The city walls, towers, palace pavilions, studios, windows, and latticework are all made of the seven jewels. The merit, virtue, and adornments of this land are identical to those of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss."

Commentary:

That Buddhaland has always been completely pure;

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It is always clean, pure, and undefiled, as bright and clear as *vaidurya*.

there are no women in the Vaidurya Land because residents are completely free of desire and birth occurs by transformation, not by sexual reproduction. There are no women in these lands.

no evil destinies, and no sounds of suffering. The hells, hungry ghosts, and animals do not exist in the Vaidurya Land. This is because the residents are free of greed, hatred and stupidity and therefore there are no realms for such retribution. There aren't any heart-breaking sounds of pain, sorrow, or distress.

The ground is made of *vaidurya*, with golden cords lining the roads.

The Vaidurya Land is so named because its ground is made of Vaidurya. Ropes and railings made of gold are used to mark the sides of the roads.

The city walls overlook the moat of the city. **Towers** are lookout towers above the city gate, or openings in the city wall. **Palace** refers to the kings's palace. **Pavilions** are the two-story buildings inside the palace. **Studios** refer to individual rooms. The **windows** are clear, and everything is very clean.

and latticework

There are seven rows of trees and seven layers of netting. They **are all made of the seven jewels**-representing the seven sagely assets:

Explained by Master YongHua

1. Gold 金, ore needs to be smelted; symbolizing vigor 進
2. Silver 銀, can honor agreements; symbolizing faith 信
3. Vaidurya 琉璃, is unobstructed; symbolizing shame and remorse 慚愧,
4. Crystal 玻璃, light can traverse; symbolizing erudition 聞,
5. Mother of pearl 碑磬, white and pure, free from mistakes; symbolizing renunciation 捨,
6. Red pearls 赤珠, shines brightly; symbolizing wisdom 慧,
7. Agate 瑪瑙, is durable, true and unchanging; symbolizing precepts 戒.

This is the dependent retribution for practicing the 10,000 virtues.

The merit, virtue, and adornments of this land are identical to those of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Their adornments are equivalent. There is a saying: "Akshobya in the East, Amitabha in the West." Akshobya (Medicine Master) Buddha, the teaching host of the Vaidurya Land, leads the Vajra Division. Amitabha Buddha, the host of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, leads the Lotus Division. We can take our pick for rebirth to their lands.

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Sutra:

"Residing in that land are two Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas; the first is called Universally Radiant Sunlight, and the second, Universally Radiant Moonlight. They are the leaders among the immeasurable, uncountable hosts of Bodhisattvas in that land and will be the successors to that Buddha. They are able to maintain the Jeweled Treasury of the Proper Dharma of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Therefore, Manjusri, all good men and women who have faith should vow to be born in that Buddha's land."

Commentary:

Residing in that land are two Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas.

Amitabha Tathagata has two assistant Bodhisattvas: Guan Yin and Great Strength. So does Medicine Master Buddha.

The first is called Universally Radiant Sunlight, and the second, Universally Radiant Moonlight.

"Radiant": all the residents' bodies are made of Vaidurya and therefore shine brightly.

"Universally": their light can shine through the Dharma Realm without obstructions.

"Sun, Moon": amongst the stars these are the brightest, symbolizing their leadership position.

They are the leaders among the immeasurable,

uncountable hosts of Bodhisattvas in that land and will be the successors to that Buddha.

These two Bodhisattvas assist Medicine Master Buddha in teaching the residents of the Vaidurya Land. When Medicine Master Buddha retires from the Buddha-position, Universally Radiant Sunlight Bodhisattva will take over 補佛處. When he retires, Universally Radiant Moonlight Bodhisattva will assume the position.

Sunlight, is true light; use true wisdom 實智 to illuminate the principles of True Suchness, extinguishing living beings' delusions and darkness, enabling them to ascend the Nirvana mountain; contains the Prajna principles 波若義; symbolizes All Wisdom 一切智.

Moonlight, sometimes is full, sometimes is not; use the provisional wisdom to illuminate the mundane phenomena to eradicate living beings' afflictions enabling living beings to leisurely roam the cool and refreshing ocean; contains liberation principles 解脫義; symbolizes Wisdom of the Way 道種智. Lapis lazuli light symbolizes the Wisdom of All Modes 一切種智. The three wisdoms are in the mind.

The two Bodhisattvas used to vigorously practice pure conducts in the time of Lightning Light Thus Come One 電光如來. They brought forth the Bodhi mind and vowed to cross over living beings in

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the six paths. That Buddha gave them their names: Medicine King, Sunlight Radiance 日照, Moonlight Radiance 月照.

These two Bodhisattvas used to be princes.

They are able to maintain the Jeweled Treasury of the Proper Dharma of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata.

After these two Bodhisattvas become Buddhas, they will continue to honor the vows made by Medicine Master Buddha, adorning themselves with that Buddha's merit, virtue, and adornments, using his methods to teach beings. They will receive and uphold Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata's vows and practices, thereby maintaining the Jeweled Treasury of the Proper Dharma. All pure, refined and wonderful merit and virtues flow forth from the Proper Dharma. The Proper Dharma also contains limitless Dharma Doors that can destroy deviancy. The Proper Dharma is also called Jeweled Treasury because it contains countless Dharma gems that can help living beings accrue limitless merit and virtues: it's a true treasure trove.

The Buddha nature is the five kinds of Treasure 五種之藏:

1. Thus Come One Treasury
2. Proper Dharma Treasury
3. Dharma Body Treasury
4. Transcendental Treasury

5. Self-nature pure Treasury.

Therefore, Manjusri, all good men and women who have faith should vow to be born in that Buddha's land.

They can meet Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata and receive training from him.

Good

has two kinds:

1. Planted in the past 宿直: referring to having planted good roots with the Triple Jewel.
2. Currently practicing 現修: practicing good in this life.

This adjective refers to practice 行.

Faith, vow: two of the three requisites for rebirth in the Pure Lands. Faith: in the teachings and responses. Vows: make vows to take the initiative and create a handle that will subsequently enable you to extend a lending hand to others.

This sutra states that with these factors, living beings will be reborn in his Buddhaland at the end of their life, obtain irreversibility and certify to Bodhi.

Sutra:

At that time, the World Honored One again spoke to the Pure Youth Manjusri saying, "Manjusri, there are living beings who don't distinguish good from evil, who only harbor greed and stinginess, and who know nothing of

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giving or its retributions. They are stupid, ignorant, and lack the root of faith. They accumulate much wealth and many treasures and ardently guard and protect them. When they see a beggar coming, they feel displeased. When they have to practice an act of charity that does not benefit themselves, they feel as though they were cutting a piece of flesh from their body, and they suffer deep and painful regret.

Commentary:

At that time, the World Honored One, Shakyamuni Buddha, again compassionately spoke to the Pure Youth Manjusri, saying, "Manjusri, there are living beings who don't distinguish good from evil, who confuse good with evil. They do not understand that good or evil arise from the same mind.

who harbor greed and stinginess, are very greedy and miserly, can't seem to have enough for themselves, and who know nothing of giving or its retributions. They don't know how to be generous or how to treat people well. They don't realize that wealth comes from giving not competence. Similarly, intelligence is the result of secretly helping others, again from practicing giving.

Question: Every time we transfer the merit and virtues, that's for helping others?

Answer: Yes.

Explained by Master YongHua

Intelligence is to see things before the average person. That's from having planted the seeds of helping others secretly: not having allowed them to know, now you get to see before they do.

The Chinese have a saying: “To refuse to pick a hair in order to help others 拔一毛利天下而不為”. This refers to those who could benefit others with so little effort on their part, like pulling a fine hair, yet they are not willing to help because they fail to see how that would benefit them personally.

They don't understand that they should give to the needy.

There are three kinds of giving:

1. The giving of wealth
2. The giving of Dharma
3. The giving of fearlessness

Giving wealth has two types: inner or outer. Outer wealth refers to stuff outside of our body. Inner wealth refers to our bodily organs. In the United States, a lot of people choose to give away their organs when they die. That is quite kind. However, I do not recommend it because it may affect your rebirth. After we pass away, if our organs are harvested for transplant, we can still feel the pain from the operation and can get quite afflicted thus potentially making us fall to the lower realms.

Dharma giving ranks foremost of all types of giving. The Dharma can help unfold transcendental wisdom. Therefore the gift of Dharma can plant seeds for

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unfolding our transcendental wisdom in the future. These kinds of blessings are without outflows and can continue to accrue for limitless lifetimes until used. Dharma giving can be through speech or through non-speech channels. Unspoken Dharma giving can be through our comportment, our actions and our value system. If we can live in purity, goodness and virtue, then we are practicing Dharma giving.

The giving of fearlessness is to console and reassure others when they are in fear. Why should we? So that we too can overcome our fears. In our daily life, we are less fearful of failure, of suffering losses, of darkness, of spiders, of snakes, of losing face, of getting lost, of being duped, of ghosts etc... Higher level cultivators will encounter quite frightening states. Fear makes us lose our resolve, clouds our mind and causes our body to freeze, thus making it impossible to respond affectively to the threat or dangers!

Question: What does fear have to do with rebirth to the Pure Land?

Answer: Plenty. I'll relate a story to you.

Randy, our dentist, has an uncle who is very savvy and clever. He heard of Great Master Xuan Hua's reputation and used to come to consult with him. He'd ask about his personal problems as well as other information or foresight that might affect his investments. He only came for the advice, not for Buddhism or planting his blessings with Mahayana.

He was quite well off and his own children were well-known doctors. In all, they are quite content and proud of their success.

Last year, the uncle passed away. Randy consulted with me and asked what he could do to help his uncle obtain rebirth to the Western Bliss Pure Land. When I took a look at the uncle, he was frozen with fear. It's not uncommon for the recently deceased to encounter a lot of frightening states. Since Randy was a disciple of great Master Xuan Hua, I advised him to turn to the CTTB (Master Xuan Hua's disciples' temples) for specific rebirth help. Randy immediately got a permanent rebirth plaque for his uncle at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. As a result, the deceased uncle was no longer fearful. This is clearly due to that gentleman having practiced the giving of fearlessness in the past. But it only means that he made it past the first test.

The second test: the CTTB does not do the 49-day Dharma to help with the rebirth. Therefore, it took Randy 13 days before he came back to me to request for help. When he did, I took another look at the uncle and found out that he was doing OK. However, he was back to the same old habits. He was rather arrogant and looked down upon the DRBA even though they were trying to help him. He probably only looked up to Great Master Xuan Hua while looking down upon all of his disciples. Do you think this kind of conceited individual deserves to be helped to obtain rebirth? At any rate, because of the sincerity of his nephew, Randy, we had to help out. We sent him to the Pure Land but

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that's a story I'll tell another time.

Question: If you die and see the Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, should you believe it?

Answer: If they truly come then whether you believe it or not is irrelevant because they have plenty of ways to rescue you. On the other hand, if the ghosts and demons come in disguise, it's not good because it's quite difficult to cope with their tricks.

Moreover, what if the ghosts and demons come as themselves? That's not good either because then we'll be so terrified that we'll freeze. In that case, the better alternative is to be rescued. That's why the Buddha told us to practice the giving of fearlessness. Such practice creates seeds in our Alaya consciousness, which could mature at a time when we need it most.

Giving has five aspects:

1. With utmost sincerity 至心施.
2. With our own hands 自手施.
3. With faith 信心施 (in goodness, cause and effect etc...).
4. Seasonal 時節施 (e.g. To give warm clothes in the winter, or give air conditioners in the summer time) .
5. In accord with the Dharma, seeking things 如法求物施: the Earth Store sutra states that if you have an incurable disease, you

Explained by Master YongHua

can give away your house and possessions to help create images of the Earth Store Bodhisattva, then you'll be cured and your human and heavenly blessings will increase many fold.

One should also be apart from the Five Dharmas and Three Phenomena.

Five Dharmas:

1. When giving, do not select your recipients on the basis of virtues.
2. When giving, do not label the recipients of evil or good.
3. When giving, do not select the recipient by caste.
4. When giving, do not slight the seeker.
5. When giving, do not speak abusively to the recipient.

The Three Phenomena 三事:

1. To often give rise to the mind of giving, but when it's time to give, we tend to give less than was originally intended.
2. To select bad things to give away.
3. After giving one regrets.

Giving of food results in five types of retribution:

1. Lifespan 壽命歐 because you help others avoid famine
2. Complexion 顏色. Why? When you are hungry, you certainly don't look happy! When you're hungry and are offered food, you

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look happier and the giver also looks good.

3. Stamina and strength 氣力
4. Peace and joy 安樂
5. Eloquence 變才 can persuade living beings to obtain what they seek.

They are stupid, ignorant, and lack the root of faith.

Ignorant people are those who have never heard the principles of cause, effect, and retribution. Those who lack faith and wisdom are skeptical when they hear the Proper Dharma. They do not have the Dharma-selecting eye—i.e. the wisdom to select the proper course of action.

They accumulate much wealth, they are solely preoccupied with hoarding wealth, assets, and many treasures, and ardently guard day and night and protect them.

When they see a beggar coming, they feel displeased. They feel so threatened! When they have to practice an act of charity that does not benefit themselves... Perhaps they are compelled by circumstances to give to charity, **they feel as though they were cutting a piece of flesh from their body, and they suffer deep and painful regret.** For them, giving money is just like cutting the flesh from their body. The pain sears their hearts, and they cannot bear to do it.

Sutra:

"There are other innumerable avaricious and miserly sentient beings who hoard money and necessities that they don't use even for themselves, how much less are they able to give to their parents, wives, or servants, or beggars! At the end of their lives, such beings will be reborn among the hungry ghosts or animals.

Commentary:

There are other innumerable avaricious and miserly living beings who hoard money and necessities that they don't use even for themselves, how much less able are they to give to their parents, wives, or servants, or beggars! There are countless "stingy ghosts" who amass riches and store them away, not allowing anyone to use them. They cannot even bear to use these things themselves, so how could they possibly let their parents or wives enjoy them? How much less would they share their wealth with servants or beggars!

Anecdote: There was an elder in India. He had great wealth but was very stingy. He had one son. At the end of his life, the elder was reborn into a mother who was blind. The newborn was also blind. At the age of seven, the blind beggar boy begged at his former son's place. His former son cornered him, gave him a good beating that resulted in his arm being broken and head injured. The spirit guardian of the door explained that this pain was small, bigger suffering was forthcoming; he was stingy with his wealth and therefore received such retribution this life. Death would be even more

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painful and entail more suffering. The Buddha said: “The son and father did not recognize each other!”

At the end of their lives, such beings will be reborn among the hungry ghosts or animals. Such misers may turn into poor ghosts, hungry ghosts, money-guarding ghosts, or animals.

Rebirth into the animal realm has three grades:

1. Heavy 重: inside the earth where sunlight cannot be seen.
2. Middle 中: in the mountains or forests.
3. Light 輕: as domesticated animals.

If they could understand that the body and wealth are illusions, and that the nature of greed is fundamentally empty 貪性本空, then the hungry ghosts and animals would immediately obtain liberation.

Sutra:

If they heard the name of that Buddha, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, in their former human existence, and they recall that Tathagata's name for the briefest moment while they are in the evil destinies, they will immediately be reborn in the human realm. Moreover, they will remember their past lives and will dread the suffering of the evil destinies. They will not delight in desires and pleasures, but will rejoice in giving and praise others who give.

They will not begrudge giving whatever they have. Gradually, to those who come to beg, they will be able to give away their own head, eyes, hands, feet, and even their entire body, to say nothing of their money and property!"

Commentary:

If they heard the name of that Buddha, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, in their former human existence, and they recall that Tathagata's name for the briefest moment while they are in the evil destinies, they will immediately be reborn in the human realm. As humans, they might have heard someone reciting the name of Medicine Master Buddha. If they remember that Buddha's name while they are in the three evil paths, they will be reborn in the human realm.

Moreover, they will remember their past lives. Having the knowledge of past lives, they will dread the suffering of the evil destinies. They will not delight in worldly pleasures, but will rejoice in giving and praise others who give. They will no longer indulge in eating, drinking, and making merry, but will instead delight in giving to all living beings and will praise those who do charity.

According to the Upasaka precept sutra 優婆塞經, the four benefits of giving are:

1. Because of giving, one can destroy afflictions
2. Because of giving, one can make all sorts of vows
3. Because of giving, one can enjoy peace and

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bliss

4. Because of giving, one can obtain a lot of wealth and precious things.

The Buddhists sutras have a story. Jambudvipa had a king named Moonlight who practiced extensive giving. There was a small king who was jealous of him and often sought help to cut his head off. There was a Brahman who agreed to kill the big king. As he entered the garden to do his deed, he was bound by a tree spirit. The big king told the tree spirit: “I have already forsaken my head 999 times under this tree. Please do not interfere with my reaching 1,000.” The Brahman was then able to cut the big king’s head. Instantaneously, the earth shook. The big king was Shakyamuni in a former life. The small king was Mara. The tree spirit was Mahamaudgalyayana.

They are no longer misers, they will not begrudge giving whatever they have. Gradually, to those who come to beg, they will be able to give away their own head, eyes, hands, feet, and even their entire body to anyone who seeks for them, to say nothing of their money and property! How much more will they be able to renounce other possessions!

By giving, one reaps blessings. Those who were stingy in past lives are poor now, while those who were generous are now rich. We must be clear about cause and effect. If you make even a tiny mistake in cause and effect, the consequences may be terrible.

The Sutras tell us to give to others, not to constantly be seeking offerings from others. Buddhists should benefit others. Otherwise, we will only be "thieves among the virtuous." If we constantly exploit situations and pull strings with the Dharma-protectors, we are simply creating offenses and trying to destroy Buddhism.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Manjusri, there are sentient beings who, although they study under the Tathagata, nonetheless violate the *sila*. Others, although they do not violate the *sila*, nonetheless transgress the rules and regulations. Others, although they do not violate the *sila* or rules and regulations, nonetheless destroy their own proper views. Others, although they do not destroy their own proper views, nonetheless neglect learning, so they are unable to understand the profound meaning of the Sutras that the Buddha speaks. Others, although they are learned, nonetheless give rise to overweening pride. Shadowed by overweening pride, they justify themselves and disparage others, slander the Proper Dharma, and join the retinue of demons.

Commentary:

"Moreover, Manjusri The Buddha said, "There are sentient beings who, although they study the Dharma under the Tathagata, nonetheless violate the *sila*."

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“**sentient beings**” are living beings as opposed to insentient beings which are inanimate objects.

Humans have five aspects:

1. Life root 命根: vitality
2. Love 愛
3. Desire 欲
4. Emotions 情
5. Views 見

The combination of the above five will enable one to obtain a human body.

Sila refers to moral precepts that guard against evil and wrongdoing. This Sanskrit term has multiple meanings:

1. Cool and refreshing 清涼
2. Peaceful and stable 安穩
3. Peaceful and pure 安靜
4. Still and extinct 寂滅

They are designed to help prevent leakages. Just like when the windows are locked, the thieves cannot sneak in and take our belongings.

Others, although they do not violate the *silā*, nonetheless transgress the rules and regulations that everyone should honor and abide by. While *Sila* is for personal practices, the rules and regulations apply to all cultivators. Violating the rules and regulations is like violating the laws of the country and will subject one to common and/or

public retribution.

Others, although they do not violate the *sila* or rules and regulations, nonetheless destroy their own proper views.

Such people abide by the rules, and yet are influenced by improper views.

A view consists of:

1. Discernment 分別.
2. Thinking 思想.

To destroy proper views is to commit thought offenses.

Proper views are of two types:

1. Worldly: To believe in nurturing human interpersonal relationships and way virtues 信倫常道德. In particular, we need to educate our children properly. Unfortunately, in the modern times, people are more interested in acquiring skills and knowledge in order to compete against others and make more money. Consequently, they neglect building their foundation and end up quite unhappy and bitter.
2. Transcendental: To believe in Emptiness, Bodhi, Nirvana, the Middle Way etc...

Others, although they do not destroy their own proper views, nonetheless neglect learning. They are lazy when it comes to studying the Dharma.

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They feel that it's a waste time or it is rather unproductive to study the Sutras, **so they are unable to understand the profound meaning of the Sutras that the Buddha speaks.** They have no wish to comprehend the truths in the Sutras, which "tally with the principles of the Buddhas above and the potentials of living beings below." In order to be able to reach the depths, one must invest a lot of time to gain erudition 多聞.

Others, although they are learned, nonetheless give rise to overweening pride.

“**Overweening pride**” comes from the Chinese 增上慢, literally “increase, above, arrogance”, meaning due to their arrogance, they add on more and above the actual facts. For instance, because they are erudite and have studied many Sutras, they become arrogant and think they are better than everyone else. Like the Unlearned Bhikshu, they thought they obtained what is not yet obtained; certified to the not yet certified; count few as many and consider inferior as superior. That Unlearned Bhikshu only attained the fourth Dhyana but thought that he attained fourth stage Arhatship. Because of his arrogance, he ended up falling into the hells upon his death.

Shadowed by overweening pride, they justify themselves and disparage others.

With their wisdom obstructed by their arrogance, they believe they are right and that the others are wrong. They **slander** monasteries where people practice **the Proper Dharma**, criticizing such

practices as eating one meal a day, not lying down to sleep, or reciting the Medicine Master Buddha's name.

and join the retinue of demons.

Such people become the friends and followers of demons.

These people are excessively arrogant. They do have understanding. Unfortunately, they only know a little bit and love to impose their views on others. They can't recognize the truth in the Buddhist teachings and the superiority of our secret practices. They open their mouth and slander the Proper Dharma in order to demonstrate their imagined superiority. They work for the demons.

Sutra:

"Such fools act on their deviant views and further, cause immeasurable millions of sentient beings to fall into pits of great danger. These beings will drift endlessly in the realms of the hells, the animals, and the ghosts. But if they hear the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, they will be able to renounce their evil practices and cultivate wholesome Dharmas, and thereby avoid falling into the evil destinies. If those who have fallen into the evil destinies because they could not renounce their evil practices and cultivate wholesome Dharmas, by the awesome power of the past vows of that Tathagata, get to hear his name for only a moment, then after they pass out of that

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existence, they will be reborn again as human beings.

Commentary:

Such fools act on their deviant views, behaving improperly

deviant views 邪見:

1. Upper: claim there is no cause & effect
2. Middle: do not deny cause & effect, but claim Triple Jewel is inferior to externalist teachings. Two of this type:
 - I. The mind and mouth both assert that the Triple Jewel is inferior
 - II. The mind knows it is not, but the mouth says it is.
3. Lower: do not say Triple Jewel is inferior, but abandon the proper and grasp the deviant, renounce the inner and chase after externals.

and further, cause immeasurable millions of beings to fall into pits of great danger, from which they cannot escape and can perish.

These beings will drift endlessly in the realms of the hells, the animals, and the ghosts, undergoing endless suffering.

When born into the hells, they all have these three thoughts:

1. They realize that this is hell
2. They remember the cause for their fall
3. They remember the place where they came

from.

As soon as they begin to undergo their punishment, they can only see darkness and can no longer discern.

But if they hear the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata ... If these beings, who have committed the ten unpardonable offenses (*parajika*), the ten evils, or the five rebellious acts—Offenses that merit falling into the Relentless Hells—get to hear that Buddha's name, **they will be able to renounce their evil practices**, which were based on improper views, **and cultivate wholesome Dharmas**, and thereby avoid falling into the evil destinies.

If those who have fallen into the evil destinies because they could not renounce their evil practices and cultivate wholesome Dharmas ... Some beings may not be able to renounce their evil deeds right away and cultivate precepts, erudition, and proper views. They also find it difficult to follow the rules and regulations. However, if, **by the awesome power of the past vows of that Tathagata, they get to hear his name for only a moment, then after they pass out of that existence, they will be reborn again as human beings.** The Buddha manifests before those beings and, using various expedients, causes them to hear the name of "Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata" so that when they die, they will be reborn as human beings.

If you commit offenses, then you should repent in

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order to eradicate the retributions and obstructions. Men in particular do not believe in the repentance Dharma. I was one of them. I thought that crossing my legs was also repenting and would have been sufficient. Later, I understood more and then also believed in the importance of the repentance Dharma.

We should try to eradicate the following retribution obstructions 拔除業障:

1. The obstruction from the accumulation of greed and stinginess 貪吝積拒障.
2. The obstruction from understanding but not practicing 行解不修障.
3. The obstruction from jealousy and harming others 忌妒毀他障.
4. The obstruction from destroying others with an angry mind 瞋心毀害障.
5. The obstruction from retreating or falling each time we change bodies 轉身退落障.
6. The obstruction from sickness, suffering and calamities 病苦天衡障.

There are three kinds of repentance:

1. Subduing karma repentance 伏業懺: As described in the vinaya; subduing prevents the creation of new similar offenses.
2. Turning karma repentance 轉業懺: for overweening arrogance, slandering the Dharma. Reciting the Buddha's name is one

such Dharma Door of merit and virtue seas. It obliterates future retributions

3. Extinguishing karma repentance 滅業懺. This is based on the true mark Dharma Door sea 實相門海. Extinguishing karma means to destroy all those evil seeds in our Alaya consciousness. True mark refers to advanced cultivators. At their level, they can destroy their own evil seeds as well as help us destroy our seeds.

Question: How do we repent?

Answer: you can recite the Buddha's name, the Bodhisattvas' names, spiritual mantras or bow repentances. They are a lot of Buddhist repentance Dharmas. If we do not perform repentances, we will have a hard time cultivating! When executing the Dharmas of repentance, it is important to have faith. You should believe that your views and understandings are limited and that there are others who are a lot wiser and competent who are willing to help. Each level of gongfu has its own particular set of obstructions and difficulties. That's why we should frequently perform repentance Dharmas. Personally, I like the 10,000 Buddhas repentance. The late patriarch, Great Master Xu Yun used to advocate this practice as well. It takes about a month to bow to this. Right now, it's still practiced at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. You should go there to learn how to do it.

There are five causes for birth in the human realm:

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- 1) To widely and expansively give.
- 2) To respect and bow to the Triple Jewel.
- 3) To practice patience and eliminate anger.
- 4) To have humility, non-aggression and concordance with others.
- 5) To widely listen to sutras and precepts

Question: Do we need to do all five?

Answer: Any number would do. The more of these seeds, the more chances for your obtaining a human body.

Another set for birth into the human realm is:

- 1) To give to the poor and destitute.
- 2) To hold precepts without any violation.
- 3) To practice patience and not be scattered.
- 4) To vigorously exhort to cultivate and transform living beings toward the good.
- 5) To single-mindedly practice filiality and loyalty.

Loyalty is a very good thing to have. We should be loyal to our relatives, parents, spouse, friends or our benefactors. Loyalty is the way of human beings. In the old days, people were loyal to their monarchs.

Someone said that he lived in Great Britain for fifteen years. He discovered that the British mindset is rather remarkable. Now he can see that it relates to their loyalty to their royalty. The current Queen Elizabeth is a very good monarch. She takes her royal duties to heart. She takes good care of her own people, of all the residents of her country. She

spent her entire life trying her best to take care of her people. The king's duties toward the populace are a lot harder than the parental duties. Therefore, the people should be grateful and loyal to their king. Nowadays, the young royals are more interested in indulging themselves and neglect their royal duties: they are only ceremonial but they must truly take care of the people. That's why people do not respect or show loyalty to their monarchs anymore.

However, we should not be blindly loyal. We need only be loyal to those who did us good. In this day and age, people can be ungrateful. That's why I tell my students to learn to appreciate their boss. It's thanks to them that they still have a job to take care of their family and have social status. Today's young seem to be more interested in getting a highly paid job worthy of their degree from a top notch educational institution. They seem to feel they deserve it and are so unloyal. If you do not appreciate your boss' kindness, chances are that you are unhappy with your job and that you will be disliked by your co-workers.

Moreover, the youngsters also have the wrong attitude: they look down upon their teachers. This is because their parents did not teach them properly. Their parents probably had to resort to "bribing" their children to make up for their neglect. The parents have to put in over sixty hours a week to earn a living. By the time they get home, they have nothing left for their children. So they give the children things instead of spending time to teach them right and wrong. That's why family life is

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primarily based on getting material things instead of spending time together and teaching the children the way of virtues.

Our life style is just too stressful! We are all constantly chasing after externals: wanting to buy a bigger house, a nicer car every three years, a boat, a trip etc... We neglect our emotional and spiritual life. It is important to put on our best clothes on Sundays and go to church. Spirituality brings more balance to our life. Learn to have a more balanced emotional life and not put so much importance on material things. If you are so set on getting what you want, then how can you find the time to love your spouse and children?

Sutra:

They will hold proper views and will be ever vigorous. Their minds will be well-regulated and blissful, enabling them to renounce their families and leave the householder's life. They will take up and maintain study of the Tathagata's Dharma without any violation. They will have proper views and erudition. They will understand profound meanings and yet be free from overweening pride. They will not slander the Proper Dharma and will never join the ranks of demons. They will progressively cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and will soon bring them to perfection."

Commentary:

Once reborn as human beings, **they will hold proper views and will be ever vigorous. Their minds will be well-regulated and blissful, enabling them to renounce their families and leave the householder's life.** They are always happy, because they avoid selfishness, pursuing self-benefit, fighting, greed, and seeking, knowing that these are causes for falling. They see through the transient affairs of the world and leave home to cultivate the Way.

Why is it that hearing Medicine Master Buddha's name can sometimes enable one to avoid falling and yet sometimes one must fall before one can escape and be reborn in the human realm? Karma can be light or heavy. Roots can be sharp or dull. Light karma combined with sharp roots will result in immediately dropping the evil karma and thus avoid falling into the evil paths. Heavy karma and dull roots will result in falling. When one can hear the Tathagata's name, afterwards one can be reborn in the human realm.

Karma has four types:

- 1) Time fixed, retribution unfixed
- 2) Time unfixed, retribution fixed
- 3) Both unfixed
- 4) Both fixed

They will take up and maintain study of the Tathagata's Dharma without any violation. They will have proper views and erudition; they will understand profound meanings and yet be free from overweening pride. They will vigorously

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study the Dharma under Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Never again will they transgress the precepts or rules, destroy their own proper views, or become lazy in their studies. Although they grasp the most profound and subtle principles in the Sutras, they will not become arrogant. **They will not slander the Proper Dharma and will never join the ranks of demons.** They do not join the demons' retinue. **They will progressively cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and soon bring them to perfection.** Cultivating the Bodhisattva practices step by step, they will soon realize perfect enlightenment.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Manjusri, if there are sentient beings who harbor stinginess, greed, and jealousy, who praise themselves and disparage others, they will fall into the three evil destinies for countless thousands of years where they will undergo intense suffering. After undergoing intense suffering, at the end of their lives they will be born in the world as oxen, horses, camels, and donkeys that are constantly whipped or beaten, oppressed and afflicted by thirst and hunger, and made to carry heavy burdens along the roads. Or they may be reborn among lowly people, as slaves or servants who are always ordered around by others and who never for a moment feel at ease.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha patiently calls out again,

"Moreover, Manjusri, if there are sentient beings who harbor stinginess, greed, and jealousy ... " A stingy person is a miser, very scared to spend money. Greedy people are insatiable. Jealous people try to hinder others from obtaining benefit. People may be jealous of others' talents, intelligence, blessings, happy lives, or good fortune. Usually, jealousy is hidden in the mind, and is not seen by others until it manifests in one's behavior.

According to the Accomplishing the Actual Shastra 成實論, stinginess has five aspects:

1. Wealth stinginess: not giving one's own possessions to others.
2. Dharma stinginess: not explaining to those who seek.
3. Household stinginess: not wishing the donors and believers to be known.
4. Dwelling stinginess: not wishing others to stay in dwellings.
5. Praise stinginess: not proclaiming others' goodness fearing that one's own will be superseded.

The Chan Dharma Door has three kinds of greed:

1. External greed: greed for the opposite sex (or same sex)
2. Internal external greed: greed and love for self and others' body
3. Universal greed: can't have enough of the five dusts for sustaining life

The Bodhisattva Precepts speak very clearly about those **who praise themselves and disparage others.**

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Actually, people have sharp eyes. If you are truly good, they will be able to tell. You don't have to self-advertise.

Such people, **they will fall into the three evil destinies for countless thousands of years where they will undergo intense suffering.** It's not known how many eons they will suffer as hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals, suffering all sorts of unbearable pain.

Evil has upper, middle and lower grades:

- From the state perspective 約境: an upper grade is to harm or kill upper beings such as parents; a lower grade would be harming lower beings such as ants, mosquitoes; middle grades pertain to the rest.
- From the basis of mind 約心: regardless of good or bad, to do it with a fierce mind results in an upper grade; lower grades would be from a mind that is unintentional or half-hearted; middle grades cover the rest.
- Based on time 約時: upper grades would be not to repent in the three periods of time; middle grade is from repenting after the deed is done; lower grades: to repent while doing it.

After undergoing intense suffering, at the end of their lives they will be born in the world not as humans, but as oxen, horses, camels, and donkeys that are constantly whipped or beaten, oppressed and afflicted by thirst and hunger, and made to carry heavy burdens along the roads. As beasts of

burden, they toil under oppressive conditions, constantly being flogged and often going without food and water. They never know a moment of happiness.

Or they may be reborn among lowly people, as slaves or servants who are always ordered around by others and who never for a moment feel at ease.

When they are nearly finished paying for their offenses, they become people again, but are born into the poorest families, where they do not have adequate food, clothes, or shelter. They may also become slaves or servants, who must take orders from others and are never at ease.

Anecdote: An elder had an old servant who ferociously guarded his assets. She often hindered the elder's giving efforts. Her bad reputation spread far and wide. The queen called the old woman to the palace and gave her a good scolding. The Buddha happened by. The old woman did not enjoy looking at the Buddha and covered her face with a fan. The queen requested the Buddha to help the old woman. He said: "This woman's offenses are heavy; she has no affinity with me". He then instructed Rahula to take over. Rahula accepted the old woman as disciple and transmitted the Five Precepts. The old woman certified to 1st Stage Arhat. The queen asked the Buddha: "What offenses caused this old woman to be lowly; what blessings caused her to encounter the Buddha and certify to the fruition?" The Buddha explained: "In the past, a prince left the home life. The abbot spoke the Great Emptiness 大空 Dharma

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for him”. The prince monk said: “The venerable abbot really lacks wisdom. How can he explain about this great dharma? In future lives, I do not wish to see him again. My teacher monk Acharya is both eloquent and wise. I wish that he’ll be my teacher time and time again”. This prince monk thus slandered the Dharma, claiming non-Dharma to be Dharma and Dharma to be non-Dharma 非法. At his death, he fell to the Avici hell for 80 hundred million kalpas. After which, he went to the human realm where for 500 lifetimes where he was deaf, mute and blind. For 1,200 lifetimes, he was born into the lowly station of servants. The abbot was Shakyamuni Buddha, the teaching monk Acharya was Rahula, and the old woman servant was the prince monk.

Sutra:

"If such beings, in their former lives as humans, heard the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and by this good cause are able to remember it and sincerely take refuge with that Buddha, then, by means of the Buddha's spiritual power, they will be liberated from all suffering. They will be endowed with keen faculties, and they will be wise and erudite. They will always seek the supreme Dharmas and encounter good friends. They will eternally sever the nets of demons and smash the shell of ignorance. They will dry up the river of afflictions and be liberated from birth, old age, sickness, death, anxiety, grief, suffering, and vexation."

Commentary:

If such beings, in their former lives as humans, heard the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and by this good cause-this good seed, are able to remember it and sincerely take refuge with that Buddha ... In this life they may once again think of that Buddha's name and take refuge in him with utmost sincerity.

Then, by means of the Buddha's awesome spiritual power, by the spiritual power of his great vows, **they will be liberated from all suffering** and distress. **They will be endowed with keen faculties.** They will have excellent seeing, hearing, and a highly developed sense of smell. They will have discerning taste buds. They will have an acute sense of touch, and will be very intelligent with good memory.

And they will be wise and erudite, understanding many principles. **They will always seek the supreme Dharmas.** Not being satisfied with small achievements, they will always strive to advance. They won't grow weary and quit. And they will always **encounter good friends** and good advisers who will help them.

They will eternally sever the nets of demons. They will be liberated from the demon king's retinue forever, and will not be caught in their nets. **And they will smash the shell of ignorance.** Ignorance

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is like an eggshell that isolates you. Inside the shell, you have no idea of what is going on outside. Being all confused inside that shell of ignorance, you start having idle thoughts that lead you to doing something wrong.

They will dry up the river of afflictions and be liberated from birth, old age, sickness, death, anxiety, grief, suffering, and vexation.

They will leave all these problems behind, and always dwell in the four virtues of Nirvana—permanence, bliss, true self, and purity.

Question: If we commit offenses and know how to repent, we can eradicate the bad retributions. Can we repent for others?

Answer: No. Repentance has two components. First one must admit one's mistakes. Second, one must change one's ways. You can however transfer the merit and virtue of repentance to others.

End of the upper roll.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Manjusri, there may be sentient beings who delight in perversity and engage in legal disputes, bringing trouble to others as well as themselves. In their actions, speech, and thoughts, they create ever increasing amounts of evil karma. Never willing to benefit and forgive others, they scheme to harm one another instead. They pray to the spirits of the mountain forests,

trees, and graves. They kill living beings in order to make sacrifices of blood and flesh to the *yaksa* and *rakshasa* ghosts. They write down the names of their enemies and make images of them, and then they hex those names and images with evil mantras. They summon paralysis ghosts, cast hexes, or command corpse-raising ghosts to kill or injure their enemies.

Commentary:

The next two sections show how the proper overcomes the deviant and how the true destroys the false. Shakyamuni Buddha says, **Moreover, Manjusri**, let me explain for you in greater detail. **There may be sentient beings who delight in perversity.** Such beings deny truth, confounding right and wrong. They stir up trouble for no reason and use false principles to bully the powerless.

and engage in legal disputes

They file suits and take people to court. Although the court is supposed to uphold justice, they use their illogical arguments to convince the court to rule their defendant innocent. That's how they invert right and wrong and cover up the truth. If they lose their case, they appeal to a higher court. They're determined to fight, and they won't give up until they die!

Bringing trouble to others as well as themselves, not allowing themselves or others a moment of peace, **in their actions, speech, and thoughts, they create ever-increasing amounts of evil karma.** Their bodies kill, steal, and engage in sexual

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misconduct. Greed, anger, and delusion fill their minds. Their mouths utter harsh speech, lies, frivolous speech, and duplicity. As they commit these Ten Evil Deeds with increasing frequency, their offenses become more and more serious.

Never willing to benefit and forgive others, they scheme to harm one another instead. Involved in endless, vengeful feuds, they are unable to forgive and forget past wrongs, and unwilling to benefit others under any circumstances. In their schemes of harming others, they even resort to the aid of ghosts and spirits.

They pray to the spirits of the mountain forests, trees, and graves. They bow to mountain spirits, earth deities, animal spirits, and just about everything else!

They pray to spirits, and to the lonely souls and desolate ghosts in the graves, enticing the ghosts and spirits to use their spiritual, ghostly, or demonic powers to harm the victims.

They kill living beings. People not only pray to spirits, they bribe them with fish, meat, and liquor. The spirits greedily drink the liquor, and once they are drunk, they cause a lot of trouble.

People slaughter animals **in order to make sacrifices of blood and flesh to the yaksha and rakshasa ghosts.** *Yakshas* have many names. They are known as "flying ghosts," "speedy ghosts," "life-demanding ghosts," and "money-guarding ghosts."

Rakshasas are powerful ghosts that eat people.

They write down the names of their enemies and make images of them. And then they hex those names and images with evil mantras. They recite deadly mantras and curse the victim. Mantras are true words that bring a response when recited with sincerity. Once the evil ghosts and spirits accept your offerings and drink the liquor, they go about manifesting their powers and causing mischief. They're just a bunch of filthy ghosts and spirits that drink liquor, eat meat, and act in unruly ways.

They summon paralysis ghosts- *kumbhanda* ghosts. This type of ghost sits on sleeping people so that they cannot move or make any sound. The more nervous the victim becomes, the more the paralysis sets in. These powerful ghosts may paralyze people until they die.

Some people **cast hexes**. This refers to a practice called sticking someone with 蠱 poison. If you are poisoned, you will be controlled by the person who placed it. If you don't listen to him, he can activate the poison and cause you unbearable pain.

Or command corpse-raising ghosts

This kind of black magic really exists. In the provinces of Yunnan and Guangxi in China, people use mantras to summon corpse-raising ghosts. As soon as they recite the mantra, the corpse can stand up and walk, but only at night. The mantra doesn't work during the day, because the ghost is afraid of light.

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To kill or injure their enemies

They command the corpse-raising ghost to kill the victim or to bring him under their control.

There are ghosts that eat the essence of humans and the five grains. Humans have seven drops of sweet water that unite and nurture the spirit. If the ghosts eat one drop, that creates headaches. Two drops result in depression and hopelessness. Seven drops result in death.

When you lose your temper, you tend to want to punish or harm others. Some may resort to mantras to invoke the ghosts and spirits to do your dirty work. True cultivators should refrain from such behavior! We cultivate in order to help others, not to impose our will on them. Regardless of which path you choose to follow, the more you progress, the smaller your ego becomes. In contrast, if the more you cultivate, the more you become full of yourself, then you are clearly on the wrong path.

I have a student who is a herbal doctor. He loves to learn healing. He later confided to me that he was rather disappointed that the worldly medical knowledge is so limited. The worldly dharmas can only treat symptoms. They can't get to the root problems. The problem arises from the ghosts and demons coming over to cause trouble.

Question: If we provide healing, aren't we messing with ghosts and demons? Won't they retaliate?

Answer: Yes, it's bound to happen. We are meddling into their affairs. They won't be happy!

What gives us the right to meddle in the first place?

We should know that to intervene would entail having to bear the consequences. The dentist in healing her patients is meddling. She'll have to pay a price for her actions. However, if you really want to help others, you can't be timid about it. You know full well that you'll have to pay a price and yet you are still willing to help. That is the way of virtue. Of course, you have to be a little more cautious. For example, if you can heal someone from cancer, how much is it worth to you?

Can we help others, heal them out of great compassion? Great compassion is to see that oneself and the others are of the same substance. Who among you can do that? More than likely, you believe that your family members are certainly more important than a total stranger, right? Then you do not have great compassion.

If we help others, that is to practice giving, and thus we generate a lot of blessings. For instance, healing someone involves erasing his or her past debt. He or she is most likely in our debt and will have to repay it in the future, assuming that we do not owe them in the past.

This is why the Arhats do not want to be in your debt. They know that they'll have to come back to repay you with interest. Is there a way to accept the gift and not be in debt? You can choose a gift from someone who will never consider calling on the debt. These are sages who are not as attached to

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profit like us.

Question: How do we know if we are creditors or debtors?

Answer: No need to think along those lines. When you give, do not calculate, for if you calculate, the blessings generated will not be that much. The Earth Store Sutra states if you give one, you will get 10,000 in return. However, this requires that you be extremely sincere, since the multiplier is proportional to your sincerity.

Many worldly people believe that the quickest way to being rich is to borrow and not have to repay. Little do they know that they are simply planting the seeds of dire poverty. Regardless of what I say, if someone comes along and offers you money, adulation, recognition, etc... Would you take it? Most of you would. That is the difference between us and the Arhats. They can put it all down and we can't yet. We still are very attached to fame and profit. The Arhats can put it all down. That is the nature of wisdom.

On the other hand, their wisdom is still not complete. That's why they prefer to refuse our offerings. In contrast, the Bodhisattvas are not afraid to accept our offerings. Why? Perhaps, they realize that we like to keep score. When we give one dollar we definitely want to get back 10,000 as the sutras promise. Therefore, we will pursue them until we do. Therefore, we must come to the temple and cross our legs, hoping to get what is owed to us.

Explained by Master YongHua

That's just one of the expedients that the Bodhisattvas use to get us to cultivate. That's why the Bodhisattvas' wisdom is much more profound than the Arhat's.

The Bodhisattvas have so many more blessings. Worldly people want to get rich and spend their lives "guarding and protecting their money and assets". But wealth only seems to bring on more problems doesn't it? Wait, don't jump the gun and tell me that you don't mind having that kind of problem. True wealth is to have the things you need when you really need them. If you have much more than necessary beforehand, then you have to guard and protect it. If you have it afterwards then it's not much use.

Sutra:

"However, if the victims hear the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, then all those evil things will lose their power to do harm. The evildoers will become kind to one another. They will attain benefit, peace, and bliss and no longer cherish thoughts of malice, affliction, or enmity. Everyone will rejoice and feel content with what they have. Instead of encroaching upon each other, they will seek to benefit one another."

Commentary:

However, if the victims hear the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, then

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all those evil things will lose their power to do harm.

The paralysis ghosts, hexes, legal disputes, harmful plots, and prayers to the ghosts and spirits of mountain forests, trees, graves, and so forth will all be rendered useless.

The evildoers will become kind to one another.

The people who cast hexes or cursed people with mantras will develop a sense of compassion. **They will attain benefit, peace, and bliss and no longer cherish thoughts of malice, affliction, or enmity.** Those evil ghosts, spirits, demons, and followers of deviant cults will no longer be afflicted, nor will they be suspicious or resentful of others.

Everyone will rejoice and feel content with what they have. The evil beings will reform and become joyful, and will not employ any more hexes, paralysis ghosts, or other demonic dharmas to harm people. They will be satisfied with what they have, and will no longer be greedy or malicious. **Instead of encroaching upon and harming each other, they will seek to benefit one another.** They will forgive each other, help each other out, and get along harmoniously.

Sutra:

“Moreover, Manjusri, there may be those among the fourfold assembly of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas and Upasikas, as well as other good men and women of pure faith, who receive and uphold the eight precepts either for one year or

again and again for three months, receiving and upholding the places of study. With these good roots, they may vow to be born in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss where the Buddha of Limitless Life dwells, to hear the Proper Dharma, but their resolve may not be firm. However, if they hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, then as the end of their lives draws near, before them will appear eight great Bodhisattvas, whose names are:

Commentary:

“Moreover, Manjusri, there may be those among the fourfold assembly of Buddhist disciples, namely, Bhikshus (fully ordained monks), **Bhikshunis** (fully ordained nuns), **Upasakas** (Buddhist laymen), and **Upasikas** (Buddhist laywomen), as well as other good men and women of pure faith who receive with the body and uphold with the mind the eight precepts either for one year or again and again for three months, they repeatedly practice this Dharma.

the eight precepts are also known are the eight vegetarian precepts are:

1. No killing 不殺.
2. No stealing 不盜.
3. No sexual conduct 不淫.
4. No lying 不妄語.
5. No drinking alcohol 不飲酒 or taking

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- intoxicants.
6. Not using flower, fragrance, balms & ointment; no singing, dancing, playing musical instruments 不著香花鬘.
 7. Not using high seats, wide beds 不坐高廣大床.
 8. No eating after noon 不非時食.

The first seven are precepts, the eighth gives it the name “vegetarian”: not eating after noon. They are designed to shut eight types of offenses, avoiding infractions. If you have not yet received the five precepts, you can still receive the Eight Precepts.

Those who have received the Five Precepts can observe six or ten vegetarian days each month. That is why the Eight Precepts are usually transmitted on 8th, 14th, 15th, 23rd, 29th, 30th (28th short month) days of the lunar month.

“Three months”:

These are the first, fifth or ninth months of the lunar calendar. These three months are also called long vegetarian months 三長齋月. It is said that during these three months, the Four Heavenly Kings come to inspect Jambudvīpa. The merit and virtue of maintaining the rules of purity and fostering blessings during these three months is greater than in ordinary times.

The human realm is under the jurisdiction of the heavens. If we misbehave, they can punish us. The

Explained by Master YongHua

Asians have tales of people who are so evil that they were struck to death by lightning. That's an example of heavenly punishment. Every month the heavenly beings would come to the human realm for inspection. Those times correspond to the recommended vegetarian days during which we should behave and restrain ourselves.

Question: If the above dates are when we are supposed to do good, then it is OK to misbehave the rest of the time?

Answer: What do you think? When you drive on the freeway and want to stop your car, you pump your brakes. How long does it take? It usually takes at least one hundred feet for you to come to a full stop. Afterwards, you also need some time before you can reach full speed again. Therefore the precepts show the Buddha's cleverness. Dispersing the various vegetarian dates throughout the months makes us less likely to misbehave. Notice that He does not force us in any way. He simply points out the consequences for committing offenses and the advantages for doing good. We see the advantages and decide to change ourselves. We should do the same when teaching our children.

"receiving and upholding the places of study."

The three months are the first, fifth, and ninth lunar months, also known as the months of purity.

Places of Study:

Bodhisattvas have seven areas of study:

1. Self-benefit

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2. Benefitting others
3. True and actual principles
4. Power
5. Accomplishing living beings. What is the difference between benefiting others and accomplishing living beings? Benefiting others is to give them benefits. Accomplishing them gives them wisdom. First you must benefit others before you can accomplish them.
6. Self-accomplish the Buddhadharma. Cultivators fall by the way side because they fail to see these steps.
7. Unsurpassed Bodhi. Those who are lazy or lack blessings do not have to worry about this final step. They can simply shoot for rebirth to the Pure Lands and things will take care of themselves.

If these good men and women are able to receive, uphold, and study these eight pure precepts, then, **with these good roots, they may vow to be born in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss where the Buddha of Limitless Life dwells, to hear the Proper Dharma.** With the merit from upholding the Eight Precepts, they may vow to be born in the Western Land of Amitabha Buddha, where they can hear the Proper Dharma. In contrast, in this Saha world, it is quite hard to listen to the Proper Dharma. For example, there are many who wear left-home people's garb to teach externalists dharms.

Question: Can lazy people obtain rebirth to the Pure lands?

Explained by Master YongHua

Answer: It depends. If they are lazy to the point of not being willing to be reborn to the Pure Lands, then there's not a lot that can be done.

Personally, I used to love to practice Chan. Unfortunately, Chan is primarily self-help whereas Pure Land can help the multitudes, including those who cannot or will not practice Pure Land. That is why Pure Land is a superior Dharma. However, people must want rebirth. We can't force them. Right now, you are too preoccupied with fulfilling your grand dreams. It is OK. However, do not forget to start reciting the Buddha's name and make the vow for rebirth. It does not matter what you can accomplish this lifetime. No accomplishment is greater than attaining rebirth to the Pure Lands. I am certainly willing to give up everything I have just to obtain rebirth.

Question: How can we be sure to obtain rebirth?

Answer: Earnestly cultivate the Pure Land Dharma Door.

Question: Allow me to reiterate. How can I be reborn at the end of this very lifetime?

Answer: Good question! If you do not have enough self-power then seek help.

Question: If I die after you do, who is going to help me?

Answer: Hopefully, there will be more people who

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can be developed and trained to be able to help with your rebirth. In other words, I'd like to make it so that you also have a stake in the training of my successors who can also help your offspring. Make offerings of facilities, temples, help circulate our Dharma, encourage people to come and practice with us.

Question: Do we need to leave the home life to practice Pure Land?

Answer: No. Even lay people can successfully accomplish the Pure Land Dharma. However, lay people have many more difficulties in cultivation as compared to left-home people. Left home people are practicing a specialized Dharma that is ideal for cultivation.

But their resolve may not be firm.

They may not have completely decided whether or not they really want to go.

What grade can one be reborn into upon arrival to the Western Bliss Pure Land? It depends. The three upper grades are replete with all the precepts practices. The middle upper and middle middle grades are from purely holding precepts. The lower grades are the result of holding precepts but having a weak mind for making transferences.

To bow to this Buddha could result in rebirth in the Western Bliss Pure Land, or (even though it's not spoken) to the Tushita Heaven to meet with Maitreya Bodhisattva.

However, if they hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, then as the end of their lives draws near, before them will appear eight great Bodhisattvas to guide them, whose names are:

Sutra:

Manjusri Bodhisattva, The Bodhisattva Who Observes the Sounds of the World, Great Strength Bodhisattva, Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva, Jeweled Udumbara Flower Bodhisattva, Medicine King Bodhisattva, Medicine Superior Bodhisattva, and Maitreya Bodhisattva. Those eight great Bodhisattvas will appear in space to show them the way, and they will naturally be born by transformation in that land, amid precious flowers of a myriad colors."

Commentary:

There are eight Great Bodhisattvas who will come to welcome us at the end of our lives to the Eastern Vaidurya Pure Land. They symbolize the eight great awakenings:

- 1. Manjusri Bodhisattva** (symbolizing wisdom awakening because he understands the Buddha nature). He is present at most Great Assemblies and acts as the leader of all the Bodhisattvas. He is foremost in wisdom amongst the Bodhisattvas. He travels throughout the Dharma Realm teaching living

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beings to bring forth the Bodhi mind. He does not teach Chan, Pure Land, tantras etc... He urges us to resolve for Bodhi because that is the start of cultivation. Unless you resolve for Bodhi, your cultivation cannot be accomplished. If you can make that resolve, then you will succeed in any form of cultivation.

Question: When we still revolve in the reincarnation wheel, should we resolve for Bodhi each lifetime?

Answer: Once is enough. However the more often you make the resolve, the more seeds you have to work with. Even though your faith is pretty weak or you may be quite skeptical about this “Bodhi thing”, it does not hurt to make such a resolve. Even the lower grades seeds will give us a chance.

Wisdom and Bodhi have what distinction? Wisdom has three kinds: worldly, transcendental and ultimate. Bodhi is the ultimate wisdom. The Bodhisattvas’ wisdom is not yet ultimate. The Arhat’s wisdom is transcendental but rather limited. Worldly wisdom is largely confusion.

2. **The Bodhisattva Who Observes the Sounds of the World** (Avalokitesvara; also known as the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion), is popular within Hinayana as well as Mahayana.

I once brought Master Heng Ge to visit a big Thai temple in Los Angeles. It is a big and famous temple. We met a handful of young Thai monks who were quite enthusiastic. We came to the gift counter and saw a lot of Buddha statues. There were a lot of Guan Yin statues. I asked the Guest Prefect monk: “Do you also believe in Guan Yin?” He said that they didn’t quite but their followers did.

It does not matter what you believe in. If you are in danger, and you call to the Bodhisattva for help, then she’ll come to the rescue. The Bodhisattva is constantly in samadhi, scanning the sound waves for the requests for rescue.

This Bodhisattva symbolizes non-sophistry awakening because you cannot fake your sound. She can listen to your sound and can tell whether or not you are sincere.

3. **Great Strength Bodhisattva** (Mahasthamaprapta), he can cause the heavenly demon palaces to quake and shake; symbolizing contentment: reducing your desires. He has great spiritual penetrations. We don’t because we are filled with desires which are outflows and cause us to lose our strength. If we can lessen our desires until there are none left, we can also be as invincible as this Bodhisattva.

4. **Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva** (Aksayamati; knowing that the nature of all

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dharmas is inexhaustible he thus brings forth inexhaustible resolves 發心無盡; he also knows that empty space is inexhaustible, the false is inexhaustible and the middle is inexhaustible); he symbolizes Stillness Awakening because he contemplates the truth of non-duality. If you can realize non-duality, your mind no longer moves.

5. **Jeweled Udumbara Flower Bodhisattva** (there is a chandana tree made up of the 100 jewels, filled with flowers and foliage, full of fragrance; this symbolizes the Bodhisattva's 10,000 practice causal flowers, adorning the Bodhi fruition tree); he symbolizes vigor Awakening because he vigorously cultivates the 10,000 conducts.
6. **Medicine King Bodhisattva** (Bhaisajyaraja), from both of his hands, all sorts of medicine rain down. He massages and washes all living beings' sicknesses, and gives them unobstructed Dharma medicine that expels body and mind of all evil. Those who venerate and take refuge with him obtain great self-mastery. He symbolizes Proper mindfulness because he pities and is mindful of the sick and suffering.
7. **Medicine Superior Bodhisattva** (Bhaisajyasamudgata) specializes in giving wonderful, superior, tasty medicine. He symbolizes contentment Awakening because

he helps living beings' obtain proper livelihood. Buddhist disciples should rely and be in accord with the Proper Dharma, purify their three karmas (body, mouth and mind), and distance themselves from tantric skills, divination and the five deviant kinds of livelihood. They should rely and accord with the Dharma in seeking the essentials of life: food and drink, clothing, medicine and bed and shelter.

8. **Maitreya Bodhisattva** symbolizes Chan Samadhi awakening because he entered the Consciousness Only Samadhi. Maitreya stands for “the kind clan 慈氏” because since he made the resolve for Bodhi, he never ate meat. Amongst all the various Dharmas of cultivation, He specialized on the dharma of kindness and aids living beings to not sever their Buddha seeds.

Those eight great Bodhisattvas, by means of their spiritual powers, **will appear in space** before these people at their time of death **to show them the way**, leading them to rebirth in the Eastern Pure Land. **And they will naturally be born by transformation in that land, amid precious flowers of a myriad colors.**

That Pure Land has a profusion of colorful flowers: green colored of green light, yellow colored of yellow light, red colored of red light, and white colored of white light. The eight great Bodhisattvas will guide cultivators to the Eastern Vaidurya Land,

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where they will be born purely and by transformation.

Question: To lessen desires would make us invincible, to cultivate samadhi would also make us invincible. What is the difference between the two?

Answer: The end result is the same; the paths are different. Lessening desires involves identifying desires and cutting them off. Cultivating samadhi means to not allow your mind to move to the point of non-production.

Question: The eight great Bodhisattvas symbolize the eight different great Dharma Doors. Do we need to cultivate them all?

Answer: Yes. However, we do not cultivate them all at the same time. For example, you often hear people proclaiming that they are Chan cultivators or Pure Land specialists, some claim they are practicing the Supreme Tantric Vehicle! None of these people are practicing Mahayana. True Mahayana cultivators cultivate the 10,000 Dharma Doors without any distinction. Even these great Bodhisattvas do not reject any Dharma Door. They actually cultivate one Dharma Door after another, one lifetime after another.

Sutra:

"Or they may be born in the heavens due to this cause. Although reborn in the heavens, their original good roots will not be exhausted, and so

they will not fall into the evil destinies again. When their life in the heavens ends, they will be born among people again. They may be wheel-turning kings, reigning over the four continents with awesome virtue and ease, bringing uncountable hundreds of thousands of living beings to abide in the practice of the ten good deeds. Or they may be born as *ksatriyas*, Brahmans, laymen, or sons of honorable families. They will be wealthy, with storehouses filled to overflowing. Upright and proper in appearance, they will be surrounded by a great retinue of relatives. They will be intelligent and wise, courageous and valiant, like great and awesome knights. If a woman hears the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and sincerely cherishes it, in the future she will never again be born as a female."

Commentary:

Or they may be born in the heavens due to this cause.

By virtue of Medicine Master Buddha's vows, cultivators who vow to be reborn in a pure land can do so, and those who prefer going to the heavens to enjoy their heavenly blessings, can do so.

Although reborn in the heavens, their original good roots will not be exhausted, and so they will not fall into the evil destinies again.

Ordinarily, those born in the heavens enjoy blessings "with outflows," and when those blessings end, they could fall into the lower realms again.

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When beings are born in the heavens through hearing the name of Medicine Master Buddha, however, their original good roots will not come to an end, and they will not fall into the paths of the hells, hungry ghosts, and animals. .

When their life in the heavens ends, when their heavenly blessings run out, **they will be born among people again. They may be wheel-turning kings, reigning over the four continents.** There are four kinds of wheel- turning sage kings:

1. Gold wheel-turning kings reign over the four great continents: Purvavideha in the East, Jambudvipa in the South, Aparagodaniya in the West, and Uttarakuru in the North.
2. Silver wheel-turning kings rule the three continents in the south, west, and east.
3. Copper wheel-turning kings rule the two continents in the south and west.
4. Steel wheel-turning kings, the lowest kind, rule over the one continent in the south.

Wheel-turning kings are the richest amongst humans. When they appear in the world, the average lifespan is 80,000 years. There is peace under heaven, people are peaceful and happy; there are no calamities 天災 or disasters 人禍.

Wheel turning kings have the seven jewels:

1. Golden wheel jewel.
2. Elephant jewel.
3. Purple horse.
4. As-you-wish pearl.

5. Treasury spirit.
6. Jade woman: called pure wonderful virtue.
7. General jewel.

As wheel-turning sage kings, they are endowed **with awesome virtue and ease, bringing uncountable hundreds of thousands of living beings to abide in the practice of the ten good deeds.** They influence countless beings to practice the ten good deeds.

The three deeds involving the karma of the body are:

1. Not killing, which means not taking the life of any creature;
2. Not stealing, which means not taking what has not been given to one;
3. Not engaging in sexual misconduct, which means not having improper sexual relations with any man or woman.

The four deeds involving the karma of the mouth are:

4. Not lying, which means always speaking truthfully;
5. Not speaking harshly, which means not berating or speaking rudely to others;
6. Not speaking duplicitously, which means not speaking of others' faults or sowing seeds of dissension;
7. Not speaking frivolously, which means avoiding obscenities, off-color jokes, and idle chatter.

The three deeds involving the karma of the mind are:

8. Not being greedy,

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9. Not being hateful,
10. Not being deluded.

The opposites of these ten good deeds are the ten evil deeds.

That's to list them in terms of stopping.

From the perspective of practice, the body:

1. Liberates life
2. Practices giving
3. Maintains pure practice

The mouth speaks:

4. True words
5. Straight words
6. Harmonious words
7. Gentle and agreeable words

The mind contemplates:

8. Impurity
9. Kindness and compassion
10. Causes and conditions

Cultivators may become wheel-turning sage kings, or **they may be born as *ksatriyas*, Brahmans, laymen, or sons of honorable families.** They may be born into a royal family, into a family of Brahmins (those who cultivate purity), into a family of orthodox Buddhists, or into an old and respectable family whose members are well-educated.

They will be wealthy, with storehouses of gold, silver, and valuables filled to overflowing. They

enjoy all the material comforts, such as an inexhaustible supply of food and provisions, and clothes of the finest quality.

Upright and proper in appearance, they will be surrounded by a great retinue of relatives. Everyone is delighted to see them. Outstanding in appearance and handsome; making others respect and venerate them. All their relatives get along well and help each other. **They will be intelligent and wise.** They are learned in many subjects and understand many principles. They have great wisdom, and are talented in both mental and physical disciplines. They are **courageous and valiant, like great and awesome knights.** They are strong and heroic like Vajra spirits who are endowed with great strength and power.

If a woman hears the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and sincerely cherishes it, in the future she will obtain an inconceivable response and never again be born as a female. In life after life, she will not have to undergo the suffering of being female. That is, in effect, to turn from being female into being male.

Anecdote: The One Hundred Conditions Sutra 百緣經, recounts that a queen gave birth to a daughter who was extremely ugly. The daughter was often locked inside the palace so that she couldn't be seen. She was depressed and blamed herself. She heard of the Buddha and decided to bow to him from afar (in

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her palace). The Buddha suddenly appeared from the earth radiating a golden light. Her ugly appearance immediately disappeared and became upright and adorned without comparison. She also certified to 1st Stage Arhat.

Here is another case. An expecting woman was listening to the Buddha speak Dharma. The female fetus in her belly put her hands together and prayed that the Buddha speaks Dharma for her mother's 75 female servants in order for them to obtain a male body. The Buddha spoke Dharma and they all became males.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Manjusri, when Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata attained Bodhi, by the power of his past vows he contemplated all the sentient beings who were undergoing various kinds of sicknesses and suffering. Some suffered from diseases such as emaciation, atrophy, severe thirst, or yellow fever; others were harmed by paralysis ghosts or by poisonous hexes; some died naturally when young, while others experienced untimely deaths. He wished to dispel all their sicknesses and suffering and to fulfill their wishes."

Commentary:

Moreover, Manjusri, when Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata attained Bodhi, by the power of his past vows he contemplated all the

sentient beings who were undergoing various kinds of sicknesses and suffering.

In past lives, Medicine Master Buddha made great vows to become a great king of physicians so that he would be able to cure living beings' 84,000 sicknesses. 84,000 represents an infinite number of sicknesses.

Some suffered from diseases such as emaciation, atrophy, severe thirst, or yellow fever.

Emaciation causes a person to waste away until he is mere skin and bones. Atrophy refers to a kind of disease that cripples a person so that he cannot straighten his hands or feet. Day by day, his limbs wither and shrink. People with yellow fever have a jaundiced appearance. These and other diseases, such as typhoid fever and plagues are caused by an imbalance of the four elements.

Others were harmed by paralysis ghosts or by poisonous hexes.

Paralysis ghosts attack people in their sleep, pressing down on them so that they cannot move or make a sound. Sicknesses caused by poisonous hexes occur in areas where witchcraft is prevalent. In China's Yunnan province and in some parts of Southeast Asia, there are people who raise poisonous insects, such as centipedes, spiders, and scorpions, and place them in a vessel, which is then sealed with an incantation. The insects devour each other until only one is left. The last remaining insect contains all the poison of the others and is "the king of poison." Then spells and incantations are used to direct that insect, by then a monstrosity, to attack

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victims and cause them to become sick or die.

Some died naturally when young, due to their heavy karma from past lives, **while others experienced untimely deaths**, dying in various accidents such as plane crashes, train derailments, shipwrecks, car collisions, floods, fires, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Most people are totally unprepared to lose their lives under such circumstances.

When I was a novice monk at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, I heard Master Heng Sure tell a story. A Buddhist disciple was driving and her car went off a cliff. At that moment of life and death, she saw her soul detach from her body and her car plunge down the ravine and crashed. Then her soul reunited with her body after the crash. The car was totaled but she was unharmed. Do you know what Dharma Door she practices? She bows the Medicine Master Buddha's repentance every day.

Most people are enamored with cultivation because they are greedy for spiritual penetrations. I differ. I cultivate to develop the ability to help others. I am not greedy for spiritual penetrations because I saw how having spiritual penetrations can lead one astray if one has inadequate wisdom. It's better to develop wisdom first. In fact wise people refrain from using their spiritual penetrations.

Medicine Master Buddha was extremely clear about such causes and effects, and **he wished to dispel all their sicknesses and suffering, and to fulfill their wishes.**

Sutra: ten conditions for sicknesses:

1. Sitting too long
2. Over-eating
3. Excessive worries
4. Extreme tiredness
5. Sexual desire
6. Anger
7. Holding bowel movements
8. Holding urination
9. Catching the upper wind (This comes from the Chinese text. I'm not sure what it means but decided to include it here with the hope that we can help clarifying this in the future).
10. Catching the lower wind (ibid).

Sutra:

At that time, the World Honored One entered a samadhi called "extinguishing the suffering and distress of all beings." After he entered this samadhi, a great light came forth from his flesh-cowl. From amid that light he proclaimed this magnificent *dharani*:

Na mo bo qie fa di. Bi sha she. Ju lu bi liu li. Bo la po. He la she ye. Da tuo jie duo ye. E la he di. San miao san pu tuo ye. Da zhi tuo nan. Bi sha shi. Bi sha shi. Bi sha she. San mo jie di. Suo he.

After he had spoken that mantra from amid the light, the earth quaked and moved and emitted great light. All beings' sicknesses and suffering were cast off, and they felt peaceful and blissful.

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Commentary:

At that time, the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, entered a samadhi called "extinguishing the suffering and distress of all beings." After he entered this samadhi, a great light came forth from his flesh-cowl.

Samadhi is Sanskrit and means proper concentration and proper reception. From the invisible appearance on the crown of Medicine Master Buddha's head, from his flesh-cowl, one of the 32 hallmarks, he emitted a boundless light.

From amid that light he proclaimed this magnificent *dharani*.

Wishing to save and protect all living beings and to relieve them of sickness and suffering, he spoke the mantra. *Dharani* is a Sanskrit word that means:

1. To uphold and maintain: can contain all merit and virtues
2. To cover: can cover obstructions.

If you recite this very short mantra faithfully and single-mindedly, you will find that it has infinitely many wonderful functions. A doctor can use this mantra to enable his patients to have a speedy recovery. With the mantra's help, he can become an extremely good doctor. Everyone, whether one is a doctor or not, should recite this mantra. If you recite it on behalf of sick people, they will soon get well.

Mantra has four meanings:

Explained by Master YongHua

1. Names of ghosts and spirit kings: making the ghosts behave. This is Mundane Complete Giving, enabling living beings to be happy.
2. Secret passwords like in the army: if know then you can pass. This is Universal Complete Giving, enabling living beings to produce good.
3. To cover evil. This is Curative Complete Giving, enabling living beings to destroy evil.
4. The secret words of the Buddhas. This is Primary Meaning Complete Giving, enabling living beings to enter the principles.

Question: You said earlier that cultivators should avoid imposing their will on others. If we practice mantras which make the yin beings and evil people stay away from us, doesn't that count as oppression?

Answer: No. We practice tantras without the intention of oppressing others and therefore do not commit such offenses. In fact, we can't always recite mantras everywhere. If we happen to be in the yin territory, do you think that they'll allow us to cause trouble?

Let me tell you a story. A couple of decades ago, my younger brother went to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and learned a very powerful mantra. He managed to recite it from memory like a waterfall when he drove back to Los Angeles. When he drove by the airport, he had a false thought: mantras are designed to subdue demons, and there was a nude dancing place by the airport which surely must have quite a few of them around. That would be a great place to test the effectiveness of the mantra. So he

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drove there, got inside, ordered a beer and sat in the front row to watch the show. As he finished his beer, he wanted to try out the mantra. What do you think happened? He could not even recite a single word. He tried and tried but simply could not. Finally he gave up and left. As soon as he drove off the parking lot, he remembered the mantra again!

Mantras are transliterated and not translated. There are five things that are not translated:

1. Secrets: like dharanis.
2. Multiple meanings: like Baghavan.
3. Not existent in our land: like Jambudana tree.
4. Accord with ancient use: like Annutara-samyak-sambodhi.
5. Producing goodness: e.g. Prajna.

The mantra consists of transliterated sounds, which often cannot be explained. You are not supposed to understand what the mantra means. It is wonderful precisely because it is not understood. Since you can't think about what it means, you'll be able to recite single-mindedly and obtain a response. Mantras are expedients. They rely on samadhi as their substance.

The mantra goes:

Na mo (take refuge) bo qie fa di (Baghavan). Bi sha she. Ju lu (Medicine Master) bi liu li (Lapis Lazuli). Bo la po (light). He la she ye (king). Da tuo jie duo ye (Thus Come One). E la he di (Worthy of offerings: one of the ten titles of the Buddha). San miao san pu tuo ye (Proper Equal Right Enlightenment). Da zhi tuo (recite like this) nan (original mother; ghosts stand to attention). Bi sha

shi. Bi sha shi. Bi sha she (Medicine! medicine! medicine!). San mo jie di (universally rescue and cross over living beings). Suo he (quickly accomplish).

Simply put, the mantra says: “Take refuge with the World Honored One, Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Light King Thus Come One, Worthy of Offerings, of Proper and Equal Enlightenment. Recite like this: “nan”, use medicine to cure all living beings’ sicknesses and suffering, enabling them to immediately get well.”

Question: There are a lot of languages in our world. Does that affect the effectiveness of the mantra (since it may not be understood)?

Answer: Not at all. The sound is only an expedient to help us concentrate. Its substance does not rely on the sound. It only relies on the mind. Practicing this mantra will invoke responses as the Buddha intended.

After he had spoken that mantra from amid the light, the earth trembled and emitted great light (both are auspicious phenomena). After Medicine Master Buddha had spoken the True Words for Anointing the Crown, the earth shook in six ways (text only mentions two to represent all six):

1. **Quaking** 震 (shaking with sound),
2. Roaring 吼 (pulverize or collide with sounds/echo),
3. Striking 擊 (awaken living beings),

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4. **Moving** 動 (moving and not stable),
5. Surging 涌 (thereby creating new mountains or bottoms), and
6. Rising 起 (from low to high).

The first three are sound based. The last three are movement based.

All beings' sicknesses and suffering were cast off, and they felt peaceful and blissful.

Also, there is

1. Movement 動
2. Universal movement 徧動: the four continents under heaven 四天下
3. Equal universal movement 等徧動: of the great thousand worlds 大千.

So there are a total of 18 ways of quaking, symbolizing purifying the 18 realms.

The quaking symbolizes the afflictions being overturned and destroyed. Emitting light symbolizes the unfolding of true wisdom 真智開發.

Sutra:

"Manjusri, if you see a man (or a woman) who is ill, you should single-mindedly and frequently clean and bathe him and rinse his mouth. Provide him with food, medicine, or water that is

free of insects, over which the dharani has been recited 108 times. After the sick person has taken it, all his sicknesses and suffering will be gone. If this person has a wish, he should recite this mantra with utmost sincerity. Then he will obtain whatever he wished for, and his life will be prolonged and free from illness. At the end of his life, he will be reborn in that Buddha's land. He will obtain irreversibility and will ultimately attain Bodhi. Therefore, Manjusri, if there are men and women who, with utmost sincerity, diligently worship and make offerings to Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, they should always recite this mantra and never forget it."

Commentary:

Defiled has two aspects:

1. Impure defilement 不淨染.
2. Food/drink defilement 飲食染: brush teeth after eating.

"Manjusri, if you see a man (or a woman) who is ill, you should single-mindedly and frequently clean and bathe him or her and rinse his or her mouth. Then the person's body will be clean and his mind will have pure thoughts. Take care to purify the three karmas when you practice:

1. "Single-mindedly": mind karma purity
2. "Clean and bathe": body karma purity
3. "Mouth": mouth karma purity

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Provide him or her with food, medicine, or water that is free of insects, over which the *dharani* has been recited 108 times. Take the sick person's food, medicine, or water that has no insects in it, and recite the True Words for Anointing the Crown over it 108 times (symbolizing destroying the 108 kinds of afflictions: view delusions 88 + thought delusions 10 grades + 10 bondages). Then give it to the sick person. **After the sick person has taken it, all his sicknesses and suffering will be gone.**

108 times also represent the 108 samadhis destroying the 108 afflictions.

If this person has a wish, he should recite this mantra 108 times with utmost sincerity. Then he will obtain whatever he wished for, and his life will be prolonged and free from illness. Even if he is supposed to die, he will not die.

And at the end of his life, he will be reborn in that Buddha's land. When it is really time for his life to end, he will be reborn in Medicine Master Buddha's Pure Land. **He will obtain irreversibility and will ultimately attain Bodhi.** He will advance steadily, never retreating, until he accomplishes the Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment.

Irreversible:

1. In position: sever view and thought delusions and never regress to ordinary states.
2. In practice: sever delusions as many as the Ganges' sands

Explained by Master YongHua

3. In thought: sever ignorance, never regress from the thought of the Middle Way.

Question: Can Arhats become Bodhisattvas?

Answer: They can if they practice the Bodhisattva dharmas.

Bodhi has five categories corresponding to the attainment level of cultivation:

1. The ten Faiths: To bring forth the Bodhi mind.
2. The three Worthies: To subdue the mind
3. The 1st through the 7th Grounds: To understand the mind – 明心菩提.
4. 8th-10th Grounds and Equal Enlightenment: To escape and arrive at Bodhi.
5. Wonderful Enlightenment: This is ultimate Bodhi.

Now that you know about Bodhi, you realize that most of us already have Bodhi. That's how blessed we all are. But it cannot be taken for granted. For instance, the Hinayana practitioners may not have Bodhi yet because they stop far short of it.

Question: Do we make the resolve for Bodhi when we enter the threshold of Mahayana?

Answer: The Hinayana practitioners do not believe in Bodhi. They aspire to attain Arhatship or PratyekaBuddhahood, whereas Mahayana Bodhi is ultimate. We aspire to get it all. It will take time but we definitely want to get there eventually. It's best to go to the Pure Lands and cultivate in order to get

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to Bodhi.

Therefore, Manjusri, if there are men and women who with utmost sincerity, diligently worship and make offerings to Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, if they are single-minded and very attentive and respectful in doing this, they should always recite this mantra and never forget it.

I have a Dharma brother by the name of Yuan Jue (Perfect Enlightenment). We became shamis (novice monks) under Great Master Xuan Hua at the same time. After our Master passed away, he left and looked for another teacher. He searched in Europe and Asia and finally chose to receive full ordination under Dharma Master Zhong Guan (Middle Contemplation) in Paris.

He has many blessings. His older sister really adores him and acts as his Dharma protector. She took care of all of his expenses while he searched for a teacher. Afterwards, she and the rest of the family bought a house in Apple Valley for him to cultivate without having to rely on external help.

Over a year ago, I paid him a visit. He indicated that he was quite worried about his sister's health. She went through three operations but her eyesight was still not improving. She was about to go into surgery again the following week. It looked as if she was gradually losing her eyesight. He had been visiting her every week in order to recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name and her Universal Door chapter, praying for help. They both did not know who else

to turn to for help. I offered to use our Medicine Master Buddha Dharma for help. That particular weekend, we had a small (one-day) Dharma Assembly. After two hours of practice in the morning, we would transfer the merit and virtue to lengthen life and quell disasters with the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma. It might have helped a little bit because he later informed me that the operation was successful.

The first few years of utilizing the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma to help living beings resulted in many responses.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Manjusri, men or women of pure faith, who have heard all the names of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment, should recite and uphold them. In the early morning, after brushing their teeth and bathing, they should make offerings of fragrant flowers, incense, perfumed balms, and various kinds of music before an image of that Buddha. They should personally write out this Sutra or ask others to do so, and they should single-mindedly receive and uphold it. If they listen to explanations of its meaning from a Dharma Master, they should make offerings to him of all necessities, so that he is without the slightest want. In this way, they will receive the mindful protection of the Buddhas. All of their wishes will be fulfilled, and they will ultimately attain Bodhi."

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Commentary:

"Moreover, Manjusri, men or women of pure faith, who have heard all the names of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment, should recite and uphold them.

The ten titles of Medicine Master Buddha are: Tathagata, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Understanding and Practice Are Complete, Well Gone One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Knight, Regulating and Subduing Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, and World Honored One. After hearing all these names, they should be able to recite them constantly.

pure faith: (Avatamsaka sutra) faith which is:

1. Without defilements 無垢濁, we cleanse ourselves inside out until there are no defilements left. This is the basis for cultivation: purifying the three karmas of the mind, body and mouth.
2. Pure mind 心精淨, your own person has been purified but other people have not, so when you come into contact with them, you get defiled again. Therefore we need to purify ourselves again until we are no longer defiled through contact with others. For example, you sit there listening with rapture to the Sutra lecture and suddenly the young boy makes a lot of noises. You feel afflicted and wonder

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how would a temple allow kids to make noises inside the Buddha Hall. That is to allow yourself to be defiled again by the noises. You'll have to keep working at it until the noises no longer bother you.

This involves rectifying yourself and not blaming others. Do not say that you are right and the others are wrong. Do not blame others for your afflictions. That is the way of the Bodhisattvas.

For example, Great Master Xuan Hua has a lot of disciples who are superior cultivators. One nun, Ven. Heng Chi, could sit for 90 days straight during a Chan session. She enjoyed studying the Avatasamka Sutra and elatedly told him about it. He said: "Very good, indeed! Now go to work!"

The Bodhisattva way is to work. The Arhats do not get this. When Master Xuan Hua first met with his shifu, Great Master Xu Yun, the latter said: "You are thus, I am also thus", meaning that we are of the same substance. That's how the mind to mind seal was transmitted. Later, Ven. Xu Yun asked Ven. Xuan Hua to remain at the temple to work for the Great Assembly. Ven. Xuan Hua said: "No problem, I'll stay here if you can guarantee me that I'll become a Buddha." Ven. Xu Yun replied: "No one can make that guarantee." Ven. Xuan Hua did stay on as he was told and worked around Ven. Xu Yun's

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temple. Later on, Ven. Xuan Hua also taught his disciples to work for the Assembly too.

When your teacher asks you to go to work, are you doing him a favor or the other way around?

3. Extinguished arrogance 滅除驕慢, as long as you still have a trace of arrogance, you do not have pure faith. Arrogance is more refined than the prior two items. It is quite difficult to eliminate. To be arrogant means that you do not believe in your good knowing adviser and are confident of your own wisdom and abilities.
4. Fundamentally reverent 恭敬本. You need to work at the above three before we have a chance at perfecting this. Can you be respectful toward those who intentionally come to harm you? It's not easy to do! Why should you be reverent? You should be respectful to their Buddha nature, not their evil intentions. They will also become Buddhas in the future. If you can be like that, you will have no more enemies.

Can you see how vast the Mahayana mind is? This Dharma of Pure Faith enables you to be free of obstructions: you are free from anger and resentment, from worry and discrimination and you have no more enemies. We are respectful toward the evil and the good, young

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and old, black or white, yellow or red etc... We accept them all. This is very high gongfu!

This sounds wonderful but you must put it into action. You may resolve to be respectful but the moment someone comes along and scolds you, all your lofty resolves go out the window and you become afflicted. You may feel great when you hear of the principles. But you will feel even better after you can actually put them into practice. It's like that slice of cheesecake. It looks great and sounds very attractive. But it tastes much better if you eat it.

In other words, if you spend time to learn the principles, then you need to spend a lot more time putting them into practice. This is the essence of Mahayana: practice. We really do not truly understand it until we can put it into practice. Understanding and practice must be done in parallel.

Question: OK! We refrain from judging others. If they come to harm us, should we not defend ourselves?

Answer: Why? Who are you defending? Why should you? Someone says: "If we don't we could be harmed". Someone else humorously says: "Actually, I'm worried that if I didn't defend myself you'll be blamed for my getting hit in the head!" My reply is: "Then you really do not believe in my Dharma, do you?" Moreover, you have no

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guts. You fear taking a loss. You should ask yourself why are you so afraid to take a loss? Look inside, not outside. The next step is not to take evasive actions because if you really have gongfu, you would not be afraid to get hurt.

Furthermore, if you have a little wisdom, you will understand that there is no need to defend yourself. People come to harm you because you harmed them in the past. They are simply filing a claim against you. In this case, shouldn't you pay up instead of insisting on putting up a fight or running away? True cultivators gladly pay up their debts. On the other hand, if you do not owe them, they can't hurt you.

Similarly, if we did not steal from them, they can't steal from you. Please understand that I am not advocating carelessness. Because that is to create stupid karmas and invite others to come and rob you.

Again, practice deepens our understanding. Just like that kid, no matter how noisy he gets, we are still respectful and forgiving. That will help win him over. Children can recognize and are attracted to strength. We are stronger because we do not get afflicted. We have the strength to liberate ourselves and them as well. That is called self-mastery.

We should love others even though they do

not do as we wish. Kids may misbehave and yet we still are forgiving, non-judgmental and accepting. Eventually they will get it and will imitate us.

Pure faith is replete with three aspects:

1. Faith in the Truth 信實
2. Faith in Virtue 信德
3. Faith in Self 信能

Faith in the truth is to believe in the words of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and patriarchs. Mahayana is about the truth. In contrast, the other non-Mahayana faiths, including the Hinayana, present only a partial picture of the truth. There is only one truth. One can't say that the partial truth is the truth either. I am not saying this to criticize others. We cultivate to discover the truth. We owe it to ourselves to understand the truth. Let's not cultivate and progress toward it and then stop mid-way like the Small Vehicle.

We can put faith in the truth postulated in the Mahayana principles. They are called True Principles, or Primary Meaning. When we realize their meanings, we attain True Suchness: the state of the Buddhas. That truth is unchanging, unlike fashion which changes with the seasons.

Next, we need to have faith in virtue. This virtue is totally wholesome. It does not even have a trace of evil. You know who has such virtue? Great Master Xuan Hua. He spent his lifetime benefiting others.

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That is the virtuous conduct of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. We can believe such virtuous conduct and emulate it. That's how we can repay their kindness.

To have faith in the self is to believe that we are endowed with the Buddha nature. We are perfectly capable of becoming just like them. But for now, our Buddha nature is covered up. However, if we work at it, we can recover it and become just like the Buddha. We do not have to settle for less. The Buddha proclaimed: "I guarantee that you will succeed in your cultivation. You will become a Buddha just like me." Whereas the Christian god says he is the top dog and we can never be like him; we can only serve him. And the scientists prefer to serve themselves saying that they want to conquer space or the environment. The non-Buddhists are misguided because they seek outside. We know better, preferring to look inside to discover the truth.

The world inside is infinite. Our inner capacity is limitless. We should not waste time running outside after externals. Externals are limited. Ordinary people chase after fame and profit. Such endeavors are limited.

What about love? And power? Someone says that he does not seek power, he only wishes that everyone leaves him alone. That too is seeking power. It is a rather subtle form of power. The opposite would be to take it, ignore it, have no fear, make no demands: that is true power. We are so powerful that no matter what they do, they can't

affect us. Ultimate power is to have no power at all. Those who are weak prefer to be in control.

Question: What can we do to increase our faith?

Answer: Good question. We should ask ourselves how much we really believe in the truth, virtue, and the self. This must be demonstrated in our actions and not by our words only. The Avatamsaka Sutra says: “Faith as source of the Way, merit & virtues mother; nurture & brings to fruition all good roots
信為道源功德母，長養一切諸善根。” Cultivating Mahayana requires developing true faith. To answer this gentleman’s question: in order to increase your faith, give a lot more.

In the early morning when they get up, **after brushing their teeth** by chewing on a willow twig [a custom in the Buddha’s time], rinsing their mouth.

Someone asked me what to bring to the temple for the Ullambana celebration. The Ullambana festival is that time of the year when the faithful make offerings to the temple in order to generate blessings for their parents and ancestors. It is not uncommon for the temple to receive a lot of things that we don’t need.

When I was at a temple in Canada, someone brought a truck load of sweatshirts to the temple. She was selling sweatshirts and could not sell those off-colored sweatshirts. So she figured that she could donate them to the temple to plant blessings. Their color is not suitable even for left home people.

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However, to my surprise, the lead monk of the temple was ecstatic. He said that he was glad to be able to forward to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas that many sweatshirts, a small contribution from the Canadian temple!

Question: So my ancestors will have sweatshirts to wear too?

Answer: Yes. Though they won't be as pleased with the color. Do not give things that are bulky so that they look substantial. Left home people should not be greedy for offerings either. If they are, they are not good fields of blessings.

Speaking of offering things that the temple does not need, the Canadian monk used to be quite afflicted. He complained to me that the temple had enough toothpaste and toothbrushes for ten years. And yet, every year people continued to give toothpaste and toothbrushes. I am not dropping any hints here. Feel free to bring anything that you'd like to give to the temple. Just give with sincerity and that will be good. You don't have to worry: I won't be displeased because you bring so little nor will I be pleased because you bring a lot. If you can bring forth the mind to make offerings, I am happy for you.

Five benefits of chewing on willow twig:

1. Mouth not bitter
2. Mouth has no odor
3. Expel wind
4. Expel heat

5. Expel phlegm

Or:

1. Expel wind
2. Expel heat
3. Make mouth taste (clear)
4. Digest food
5. Clear eyes

Please do not offer willow twigs. That would entail having to damage willow trees. Spirits dwell on trees. We do not want to damage their abode. Those who know would avoid damaging trees. Left home people are not supposed to cut down trees or tread on grass.

and bathing so that they are clean and pure, **they should make offerings of fragrant flowers, incense, perfumed balms,** an ancient form of fragrance, **and various kinds of music** and performances **before an image of that Buddha** in order to worship Medicine Master Buddha or this Sutra.

They should personally write out this Sutra or ask others to do so, and they should single-mindedly receive and uphold it.

They may also single-mindedly recite Medicine Master Buddha's name.

receive and uphold: to receive is to internalize it and not lose it; to uphold is to contemplate and memorize it without forgetting.

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Question: When you lecture on sutras, are you reciting the Buddha's name?

Answer: No. I am practicing what I preach: we need to learn to be single-minded in everything we do.

Question: When I concentrate on one thing, I forget to recite the Buddha's name. It sometimes makes me quite afflicted.

Answer: When you become aware of your afflictions, recite the Buddha's name. It will quell those afflictions.

If they listen to explanations of its meaning from a Dharma Master, they should make offerings to him of all necessities, so that he is without the slightest want.

If there is a Dharma Master who explains, writes out, receives and upholds, or recites the Sutra, the laypeople should reverently provide him with the Four Kinds of Offerings—food (pure vegetarian meals), clothing, bedding, and medicines. They should make sure the Dharma Master does not lack these basic necessities.

listen to explanations of its meaning is the starting point: listening brings forth faith, then enjoy the practice.

To explain sutras has three times of benefit:

1. Listening time: we plant seeds to unfold our wisdom. It does not matter if you comprehend or not.

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2. Practicing time: as you practice, you suddenly connect with the principles you've heard earlier. In other words, the seeds are maturing.
3. Change body time. At death time, it is very beneficial to invite the monks and nuns to come and recite the Buddhist sutras and mantras.

Ven. Xuan Hua does not allow his left home disciples to go outside to do the funeral services. This is so they will not get greedy for money offerings and forget to concentrate on their practice. Our temple will go outside to conduct funeral services, not because we seek donations, but because it is a good opportunity to speak Dharma to the surviving family and relatives. We take the middle road because death time is one of the most critical times to help people.

Blessings from speaking Dharma:

1. Long life because the listener does not kill.
2. Obtain great wealth because the listener does not steal.
3. Obtain upright and handsome features because the listener becomes harmonious.
4. Obtain fame because the listener takes refuge with the Triple Jewel.
5. Obtain intelligence because the listener understands wonderful wisdom.

In this way they will receive the mindful protection of the Buddhas. If one supports a Dharma Master who writes out, receives, upholds, or

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recites the *Medicine Master Sutra*, the Buddhas of the ten directions will mindfully protect one. **All of their wishes will be fulfilled, and they will ultimately attain Bodhi.**

Disciples of the Buddha should treat the study of the Dharma as more important than anything—more important than their studies at school, more important than their jobs and careers. Furthermore, even lay people also need to learn to speak Dharma. To speak Dharma to one person also results in the five afore-mentioned benefits.

Sutra:

At that time, the Pure Youth Manjusri said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I vow that in the Dharma Image Age, using various expedient means, I shall enable good men and women of pure faith to hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Even during their sleep, I will awaken them with this Buddha's name."

Commentary:

At that time, the Pure Youth Manjusri, the Dharma Prince, said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, who is honored both in and beyond the world, I vow that in the Dharma Image Age of the future, using various expedient means, I shall teach the Dharma to living beings in accord with their dispositions. I will wisely select expedient methods to teach them.

"I shall enable good men and women of pure faith to hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Even during their sleep, I will awaken them with this Buddha's name.

I will enable them to hear the name of that Buddha in their dreams."

The Buddhadharma goes through three phases:

1. Proper Dharma Age,
2. Dharma Image Age, and
3. Dharma Ending Age.

During the Proper Dharma Age, which started when the Buddha was dwelling in the world and lasted for 500 or 1,000 years, many people liked to meditate and develop samadhi. During this era, people were strong in samadhi and most cultivators certified to the fruition.

During the Dharma Image Age which followed and lasted for the next 500 years, people became attached to appearances. They enjoyed constructing temples and monasteries. Although they built many temples to support Buddhism, they were concerned only with appearances. There were many true cultivators in the Proper Dharma Age, but few in the Dharma Image Age.

We live in the Dharma Ending Age, which is very distant from the Buddha's time. People are skilled not in meditation or building temples, but in fighting. People fight with people, families fight

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with families, countries fight with countries, and planets fight with planets. People are constantly fighting and terrorizing each other. This is truly an age of terror. The Dharma Ending Age lasts 10,000 years. Afterwards, the Buddhadharma disappears.

How does that begin? By people not believing in sutras any more. There are no more Mahayana sutras to study. The decline has already started a long time ago. Sutras in English are few and far between. Their translation is inaccurate. Even the Vietnamese translations are not that much better. Even Master Xuan Hua lamented that the Vietnamese translations of the major sutras by the well-known Vietnamese monks are quite inaccurate.

The Chinese Buddhist Cannon is very profound because it was translated by many Bodhisattvas from Sanskrit into Chinese. Then Master Xuan Hua trained his American pupils in the translation work. As a result the DRBA's English translation from the Chinese Cannon is a lot more accurate than the Vietnamese translation. Even when the Chinese translated from the original Sanskrit version, there were a lot of monks who were at least Third Stage Arhats who were in charge. Nowadays, people go to the universities to obtain a PhD and then start translating the sacred texts. No wonder their work is sub par because they have no real understanding of the Buddha's intention and a very shallow interpretation of the Buddhist principles.

Today is the first day of our Buddha recitation Dharma Assembly. Let's take a few moments to

discuss the Pure Land Dharma Door.

The Pure Land school is one of the five major schools in Chinese Buddhism. It is the most popular one in our era because it can help a lot of people end suffering and attain bliss. It can cross over people of differing roots: superior to inferior roots.

Buddhism points out the facts about reincarnation. It is a rather scary proposition. One can be reborn in the heavens and enjoy heavenly bliss. However, when our heavenly blessings expire, we will have to fall. We could fall into the three evil destinies. Once there, it is most difficult to get out. That is why cultivators in the know try their best to avoid falling to the evil paths.

Should we become a hungry ghost, we will have to undergo intense suffering for a long long time! We will be constantly suffering from thirst and hunger. This is a lot worse than death because it hurts so much that you wish to die but can't. How do you become a hungry ghost? You planted the seeds for this honor. How? From being greedy: you were greedy for flavors, for sex, for money, etc...

Question: How can we help those who have fallen into the hungry ghost realm?

Answer: There are many ways. I'll give one example that recently happened.

Two years ago, Danny and his sister joined our Assembly. The sister who was very close to their

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grand mother often dreamt of her. She passed away years ago and appeared to be in a bad state every time she came back in the dreams. The sister requested a permanent rebirth plaque on her behalf. The very first day it was set up, the grand mother was so happy because she could satisfy her thirst and hunger for the first time in ages. Apparently she had become a hungry ghost.

Many people dream of their deceased relatives. It is a rather common occurrence. One person related that his mother passed away a long time ago. He often dreamt of her in a bad state. Last year, he went to get a deceased precepts for her at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Two weeks later, he dreamt of her again in a much happier state.

Danny and his sister are very filial. When they heard that their grandmother fell to the hungry ghost realm, they were sad and tried to find ways to help her out. Six months after they requested a permanent rebirth plaque for her, Danny understood and requested a special rebirth plaque on her behalf during a Dharma Assembly. I asked him why. He said that he wanted to plant even more blessings to help her obtain liberation sooner.

Buddhism has the 49-day Dharma to help the recently deceased. Another Dharma that can also help is the rebirth plaque. It can help those who died long ago. Because of their sincerity, I got curious and checked with the grandmother. You know what? She was so ecstatic. I checked before we started our Assembly and yet she was so happy

already. Apparently she already knew. She obtained rebirth to the Western Bliss Pure Land the very same day of that Dharma Assembly.

Question: I am Catholic. When I die, since my family does not believe in rebirth, who will request help for me?

Answer: While you still can, take care of it yourself in advance. Presently, most temples do not allow people to request rebirth plaques for themselves, perhaps because people might feel it's unlucky. In our temple, we encourage requesting these plaques while you still can in order to start accruing rebirth blessings. If you have to wait until death to get the plaque, how can you have rebirth blessings in time to purchase the ticket?

To accrue rebirth blessings, you can request a rebirth plaque or Medicine Master Buddha (commonly known as long life) plaque. The Vietnamese temples do not have long life plaques like the Chinese.

Question: Should I get the long life plaque or rebirth plaque if I wish for rebirth?

Answer: It depends on your ability. If you wish to maximize your rebirth chances this lifetime, you should request both the rebirth plaque and 49-day Dharma. We will elaborate more on these Dharmas later.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, there may be those who receive and uphold this Sutra, read and recite it, explain its meanings for others, write it out themselves, or tell others to write it out. They may revere it by making offerings of various flowers, paste incense, powdered incense, stick incense, flower garlands, necklaces, banners, canopies, and music. They may make bags of five-colored thread in which to keep the Sutra. They may sweep clean a place and arrange a high altar on which to place this Sutra. At that time, the Four Heavenly Kings with their retinues and other innumerable hundreds of thousands of gods will come to that place to make offerings and protect it.

Commentary:

Before, the sutra discussed making offerings to images and lecturers. Now, it refers to making offerings to the scriptures.

"World Honored One, there may be those who receive and uphold this Sutra, read it from the book and recite it from memory, explain its meanings for others,..."

There are five kinds of Dharma Masters:

1. Dharma Masters who receive and uphold (mind karma; internal practice)
2. Dharma Masters who read (mouth karma; external practice)
3. Dharma Masters who recite (mouth karma; external practice). The Chinese have the

Explained by Master YongHua

tradition of inviting the sangha over to recite sutras on behalf of the dead or sick.

Years earlier, one well-to-do family in China invited seven senior monks to come to their house to recite sutras because the grandfather was very ill. After a week of recitation, there was no response. One of the monks intimated to the family to request help from Master Xuan Hua. He came and wrapped his recitation beads around the head of the sick grandfather. The sickness ghost immediately knelt down and begged for clemency. It promised to leave if Ven. Xuan Hua spared it. It later requested to take refuge with him. The Master said: “There are seven senior seated monks here. Why don’t you take refuge with them?” It said: “They should take refuge with me instead!”

4. Dharma Masters who explain
5. Dharma Masters who write (body karma; external practice). Back then there were no printing presses, sutras had to be copied by hand. Reproducing sutras generates a lot of blessings.

Write it out themselves or tell others to write it out

You may write out the Sutra on paper with brush and ink, or you may tell others to write it out. You may also donate money for printing.

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They may revere it by bowing to it, or by setting the Sutra on the altar and making offerings of various flowers, paste incense, powdered incense, stick incense, flower garlands, necklaces, banners, canopies, and music. One may play various kinds of music in praise to the Buddha as an offering to this Sutra.

Necklaces: made with jade in the past

Banners: floating in the wind

Canopies: round top, provide shade from the sun.

Ten kinds of offerings:

1. Flowers
2. Incense
3. Necklaces
4. Powdered incense
5. Paste incense
6. Stick incense
7. Banners and canopies
8. Flower garlands
9. Music and performances
10. Respect: such as bowing

Making offerings has both inner and outer aspects. Inner: the body is upright and adorned while making bows; the mind is sincere and respectfully contemplates, and the mouth admires and deferentially praises.

Outer offerings has ten aspects:

1. Offering the 10,000 practices causal flowers so

as to manifest and obtain the wonderful Bodhi fruition.

2. Offering all the paramita incenses, wishing to obtain the Dharma Body without outflows.
3. Offering precept grade rubbing incense, wishing to obtain all Buddhas' vinaya and ceremonies.
4. Offering the hundred-thousand samadhi powder incense, vowing to obtain all the Buddha's samadhis.
5. Offering the contemplating wisdom stick incense, vowing to obtain the Buddha's unobstructed wisdom.
6. Offering the four vast flower garlands, vowing to obtain the Buddha's superior marks.
7. Offering precept, samadhi and wisdom dharani necklaces, vowing to obtain the Buddha's perfection of awesome virtues and adornments.
8. Offering the six penetrations wonderful banners, vowing to obtain the Buddha's spiritual power, thus destroying and subduing the demons and externalists.
9. Offering the four dharmas of attraction plays and demonstrations, vowing to obtain pity, joy and predictions of Buddhahood.
10. Offering the three vehicles Dharma medicine, vowing to obtain the Buddha's eight sounds and four eloquences.

They may make bags of five-colored thread in which to keep the Sutra. They may sweep clean a place in their house and arrange a high altar on which to place this Sutra. To show their respect,

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they keep the Sutra in a high place.

five-colored thread

of blue 青, yellow 黃, red 赤, white 白, and black 黑; utilized as Vajra thread, altar thread or cords etc...

At that time, the Four Heavenly Kings with their retinues and other innumerable hundreds of thousands of gods will come to that place where offerings are made to the Sutra, to make offerings and protect it.

Four Heavenly Kings: guard the four waist (1/2 way) sides of Mount Sumeru; Buddhist Dharma Protectors. The larger temples usually have their images at their entrance.

Sutra:

“World Honored One, it should be known that if, in the places where this precious Sutra circulates, people can receive and uphold it, then due to the merit and virtue of the past vows of that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, because they have heard his name, none of those people will meet with untimely death. In addition, none of them will be robbed of their vital energy by evil ghosts and spirits. Those people whose vital energies have already been robbed will have their health restored, and they will be blissful and at peace in body and mind.”

Commentary:

World Honored One, it should be known that if, in the places where this precious Sutra circulates, people can receive and uphold it, then due to the merit and virtue of the past vows of that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and because they have heard his name, none of those people will meet with untimely death. Accidental deaths will not occur in any place where this Sutra is found. Accidental deaths could be premature deaths in children perhaps due to infections. Or even in the United States, some people can no longer afford medical care because of lack of health insurance. Or it could be that they get into trouble with the law and are put to death.

One can't help but have a false thought: if we print more copies of this Sutra and distribute it, then wouldn't we save a lot of money on homeland security?

In addition, none of them will be robbed of their vital energy by evil ghosts and spirits. Those people whose vital energies have already been robbed will be restored to health, and they will be blissful and at peace in body and mind. If people's essence and energy have been depleted by evil ghosts and spirits, they will be restored to health. They will be free from afflictions, disasters, and misfortunes. If you think your home is haunted by ghosts, take home a copy of this sutra and make offerings to it. This is the best way to chase away evil influences.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Manjusri, "So it is, so it is! It is exactly as you say. Manjusri, if there are good men and women of pure faith who wish to make offerings to that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, they should first make an image of that Buddha and arrange a pure and clean dais on which to place the image. Then they should strew all kinds of flowers, burn various incenses, and adorn the place with a variety of banners and streamers. For seven days and seven nights they should hold the eight vegetarian precepts and eat pure food. Having bathed until clean and fragrant, they should put on clean clothes. Their minds should be undefiled, without thoughts of anger and malice. Toward all sentient beings, they should cherish thoughts of benevolence, peace, kindness, compassion, joy, renunciation, and equanimity.

"Playing musical instruments and singing praises, they should circumambulate to the right of the Buddha's image. Moreover, they should recall the merit and virtue of that Tathagata's past vows. They should read and recite this Sutra, ponder its meaning, and lecture on and explain it. Then they will obtain whatever they seek: those who seek long life will attain longevity; those who seek wealth will gain wealth; those who seek an official position will obtain it; and those who seek a son or a daughter will have one."

Commentary:

The following sections describe the procedure for making offerings to images and how to uphold sutras. These sections end by describing the four things sought.

The Buddha told Manjusri Bodhisattva, "So it is, so it is! You're right! It is exactly as you say. Manjusri, if there are good men and women of pure faith who wish to make offerings to that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, they should first make an image of that Buddha

Make the images as described in the first two great vows.

and arrange a pure and spotlessly clean dais on which to place the image so that offerings can be made to it. The presence of the images results in the place being guarded by the gods and avoided by the ghosts.

Then they should strew all kinds of flowers, burn various incenses, and adorn the place with a variety of banners and streamers."

We offer fine incense, fresh flowers, and so forth to show our sincerity, but that doesn't mean the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas enjoy these things. They aren't delighted if we burn incense for them, and they don't get upset if we don't. They don't need any of the worldly things that people offer to them. We make such offerings only because we have no other way of showing our sincerity.

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For seven days and seven nights, they should hold the eight vegetarian precepts and eat pure food that does not contain meat or pungent plants (such as onions, spring onions, garlic, leeks, shallots, and chives).

Having bathed until clean and fragrant, they should put on clean clothes.

They take a good bath, and then put on clean, but not necessarily fancy, clothes.

Their minds should be undefiled, without thoughts of anger and malice.

Purify your mind. Cast out the defilements and be reverent. Don't harbor thoughts of anger and harm.

These are the types of mindsets that are quite detrimental. Initially, the Buddha's mind and living beings' minds are closely interconnected. As we become more afflicted, we get further and further away from the Buddhas. We thus lose our clarity of mind, our spiritual abilities and our treasures. Afflictions are precursors of disasters and illnesses. In particular, anger and malice are indicators of lack of self-control. These afflictions open the doors to the myriad obstructions and difficulties.

Toward all sentient beings, they should cherish thoughts of benevolence, peace, kindness, compassion, joy, renunciation, and equanimity. They should wish peace and well-being upon all beings.

kindness, compassion, joy, renunciation: the four unlimited minds.

Because the end-recipients, living beings; 所緣, are limitless, the mind that can create the conditions (能緣之心) should also be limitless. The first pair, kindness and compassion, make living beings happy and rescue them from suffering. Joy, the first of the second pair, means no jealousy when seeing living beings leave suffering and attaining bliss. And renunciation means having a mind of equanimity, not discriminating between friend or foe, the liked or the loathed, and consistently equally having that kind of outlook and treatment.

When I was a young boy, I was living with my grandmother. She was living by herself and wanted me to keep her company. She was uneducated and had a huge temper. Whenever she became angry her face was terrifying. She would then abuse the servants. When she lost her temper, she would recite repeatedly: “Kindness, compassion, joy, renunciation,” and that eventually calmed her down. It acted like a mantra that defused her temper.

The inherent order of the Dharma is significant.

Buddhists should start out working on their mind of kindness. Kindness is to want to make others happy. Ordinary people chase after their own happiness. Mahayana practitioners in contrast chase after others’ happiness. That’s the subtle difference between wisdom and confusion.

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In particular, kind people strive to bring happiness to those with whom they have no affinities: total strangers. They even seek to please their own enemies. Can you do that? Can we find it our heart to bring happiness to those we loathe? For example, I have a disciple who is very kind. She likes to give to others. They keep on asking for more and she keeps on giving more. What's so great or wise about this?

There are a lot of advantages. First, it makes them less angry at us. There are those who dislike us, hold a grudge against us. If we behave kindly toward them, it sure makes it more difficult for them to continue being angry and resenting us. It reduces the damage they could do to us. The English have a saying: "Killing with kindness". The Americans have another: "Suffocating them with kindness".

Furthermore, when we can make others happy, they will reciprocate. They can bring us the kind of joy that we can't give ourselves. Never mind about how practicing kindness helps reduce the ego and other lofty things. The plain truth is that if you are kind, you can be happier.

In particular, you should be kind to all without discrimination. And, especially, do not insist on being reciprocated. Can you learn to give freely with no expectations?

I noticed how couples often treat each other without kindness. They are more intent on proving they are

right instead of trying to be nice and kind to each other. If they are not preoccupied with being right, they then pursue profits. It's a rather poor lifestyle! You work your butt off, come home and start squaring off with your spouse. You fail to invest the time and effort in bringing happiness to your loved ones. And yet you expect them to love you just like when you used to court each other.

Another important aspect of this kindness Dharma is that kindness is the beginning of goodness. Goodness originates from kindness. There are some who are proud of their evil nature. Of course they enjoy it because evil can also bring happiness. However that kind of happiness is limited to the evil doer while the victims suffer. That kind of pleasure is rather limited and has undesirable consequences. It cannot compare with the pleasure that comes from doing good. That's why the Buddhas choose to stay on the good side of happiness. Great kindness can bring on great happiness.

In brief, kindness is to not do evil and always do good. Start with your family and loved ones. Learn to bring them more joy every day. Do not think that Mahayana is primarily concerned with lofty and profound principles. Rather, it is about learning how to live better every day. Confucius says: “Not knowing about life, what do you know about death? 不知生，焉知死?”

The second Dharma is compassion, which is about being able to discern that others are suffering (quite often we can't because we are just too preoccupied

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with ourselves) and then wishing to eradicate that suffering.

Compassion is different from kindness. Compassion usually entails seeing your own suffering before you can really see the others' suffering. In contrast, kindness is to see others' joy before our own. Kindness moves from outside to inside. Compassion moves in the opposite direction: from inside to outside.

You may ask yourself: "I am successful, have money, look good, have a nice body, etc... How can I be suffering?" You could be suffering from aging. Perhaps you are losing your teeth and hair, your hands and fingers are always cold, your feet are getting numb at the extremities etc... One of the worst is to be abandoned when you are old. Isn't that right ladies? Men have their own kinds of suffering too. Compassion should start first with oneself. One learns to eliminate one's own suffering before one can effectively eliminate others'.

Someone has an objection. She believes in helping others and not being that worried about herself. That's how most people like to think. I say that would lack compassion. If you can't learn to be compassionate to the most important person, yourself, how can you possibly do it for others? Go slow. Take the time to recognize your own suffering and figure out how to resolve it before going outside.

What is great compassion? It is to realize that we

are all of the same substance. It means that we are not different, we are all one and the same. This is the ultimate in compassion. Only the Buddha truly understands this. Can you feel that you and that annoying neighbor who likes to play music loudly on the weekend are one and the same? Of course few of us can. If you can't, then you must help relieve others' suffering until you understand.

The third component is joy and the fourth is renunciation.

Joy is the absence of jealousy. Why do we suddenly feel jealous? Perhaps it's because we feel they are better than us, that we can't measure up. Perhaps they have something we want, like recognition, but can't have.

Ven. Xuan Hua says that the Chinese call jealousy "drinking vinegar". There was once an official who worked very closely with the emperor. He would come home late because of the heavy workload. His wife was not happy about it. She liked to cook for him but the food would get cold because of his tardiness. One small tip for the husbands of the world: if your wife cooks for you, make sure to come to the table on time and eat it before it gets cold or else... So this official came home rather late one day. His wife was there waiting, hands on her hips, eyebrows knitted together. She stomped her feet and asked: "Why do you come home so late?" He said: "I am very sorry. I had to finish something for the emperor." She said: "You also came home late last night. You must have a concubine." No

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matter what the official offered in explanations, she would not believe him. She made him kneel the rest of the night. The following day, the official came to the office and told the emperor that his wife was not happy with his work schedule. The emperor was not happy with the wife's objections and asked to have a word with her. The official immediately brought his wife to the emperor. The emperor assured the lady that her husband had been working for him those nights he came home late. She would not believe the emperor. The emperor got exasperated and gave her a bowl and said: "How dare you question my words? If you don't believe me then drink this bowl of poison!" Now this intensely jealous wife did not even hesitate, she took the bowl and drank it in one gulp. She did not die because it was only filled with vinegar and not poison. Since then the Chinese call jealousy 'drinking vinegar'.

Some say that when you are jealous, you are as sour as vinegar.

I'll let you in on a secret. If you are jealous by nature, your perspiration smells sour.

Question: Could it be because we eat sour stuff?

Answer: That would be a plausible explanation would it not? You'll have to eat a lot of acidic food for that to be the case. I am referring to those who have gongfu. If you nurture jealousy, even though you eat no sour stuff, you still smell sour.

Finally, renunciation is to let go of our attachments.

When Shakyamuni was practicing the Bodhisattva path, he was able to renounce a lot of things. He was once born as the crown prince of a very wealthy and powerful country. They had an invincible weapon. They had an elephant that could defeat all the enemies' armies. That was why all the other countries feared them and would often come to make peace offerings.

The crown prince was first in line to succeed the emperor and the elephant was still young. His future looked pretty good. The crown prince liked to practice giving. He often organized charity events and would give away food and money to all. His generosity was well known throughout India.

His father's rival, another king, was jealous and wanted to harm them. He decided to come to the crown prince and ask for the state elephant. Knowing full well that his father cherished the elephant like his own son, the crown prince agreed to give it away as well. He was well aware of the rival king's evil intentions but turned the elephant over to him anyway. Can you do that? That is called renunciation.

The emperor was pretty upset when he found out. He immediately revoked all the prince's privileges and sent him into exile. The prince went home and informed his wife. He said that his father only wanted to punish him and not his family. However, his wife insisted on leaving with her husband. Their two young sons wanted to come along as well. Now

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that's loyalty! So the entire family put their belongings on a small cart that was given to them. The ex-crown prince would pull it while his wife and children would push it from behind.

They endured the rain, the heat and cold. They however stuck together and never complained.

Along the way, a man came and asked the prince if he would give him his two young sons. They looked so docile and well mannered, they could fetch a real good price. The prince's wife violently objected to it. So he waited a while and distracted her by sending her down the river to get water. He then gave away his two sons to the man. His wife was devastated when she found out but she still stuck with her husband. Later on, someone came and asked the prince for her. He also gave her up as well.

Somebody said that in modern times, the prince would be trouble with child protective services and women's organizations. Then you could give yourself up and leave the homelife! Remember, renunciation is about being able to give up what you prize most.

Playing musical instruments or putting on performances **and singing praises, they should circumambulate to the right of the Buddha's image** in the circular fashion of a clock.

The section also mentions precepts.

After taking refuge with the Triple jewel, the Buddhists disciples should next take the precepts. Precepts could be the Five Precepts, Eight Vegetarian precepts, the novice precepts, Bhikshu precepts, Bhikshuni precepts or Bodhisattva Precepts. After receiving the precepts, we usually have infractions which create seeds for falling to the evil paths.

Originally, the Bhikshus had no precepts to speak of. But the more left home disciples that joined the order, the more people with shallower roots came in. Some of them began to cause trouble. The others complained to the Buddha who then decreed the precepts to regulate the disciples. Essentially, the precepts were designed to help prevent people from creating offenses.

The Eight Vegetarian Precepts are designed to allow the lay disciples to have a flavor of the novice monks' and nuns' lifestyle. They basically keep the same precepts as the novices shy of one precept: that of keeping money. Another advantage of the Eight Precepts is that if one can purely uphold them for let's say one day and night, one creates the blessings to be reborn to the Pure Lands upon death.

The Novice Ten Precepts include prohibitions from alcohol and intoxicants. We can't smoke or drink. When we are promoted to Bhikshus and Bhikshunis, there are no longer precepts against smoking. That is why some monks and nuns smoke, claiming there is no such prohibition. They are wrong because there implicitly is. If they do smoke then they

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regress instead of progress in their cultivation. Furthermore, they are supposed to help train the novices. How could they, if they themselves do not keep the novice precepts?

The Bodhisattva Precepts are the same for both the left home and lay disciples. We normally transmit the set consisting of the ten major and 48 minor precepts.

Moreover, they should recall and recite the Sutra of the merit and virtue of that Tathagata's past vows. They should read and recite this Sutra, ponder its meaning, meditate on it, and lecture on and explain it, explaining how to apply the principles to one's life. **Then they will obtain whatever they seek. Those who seek long life will attain longevity; those who seek wealth will gain wealth; those who seek an official position will obtain it; and those who seek a son or a daughter will have one.** As long as you are sincere, your prayers will be answered.

The seven kinds of blessings:

1. The four great elements are in harmony, often at peace.
2. Pure, upright, handsome and adorned features.
3. The body is fragrant, one has clean clothes to wear.
4. Body and muscles have luster, great awesome virtue.
5. Many benefits, people follow and whisk clean defilements.
6. The mouth is fragrant and nice, words are

respected.

7. One has a good place of birth: such as being born into privilege.

The Great Accumulation Sutra 大集經:

Question: “When the Buddha was in the world, he received offerings and the donors obtained blessings. After his Nirvana, who receives the offerings? Does one still obtain blessings?”

Answer: “Whether the Buddha is in the world or after Extinction, you can be assured that all offerings result in the same blessings”.

lecture on and explain it:

the Prajna Sutra says: “Good men and women, if one offers up one’s life as many times as the sands of the Ganges river, and there is another person who receives a four-verse gatha and the like, and speaks for others; then the latter’s blessings far exceeds the former.”

The four seekings:

1. **Long life 長壽** at the phenomenon (manifestation) level, this means getting a hundred, thousand and 10,000 years old; at the noumenon (principle) level, the lifespan of the transformation body has a beginning and end, that of the reward body has a beginning and no end, that of the Dharma Body has no beginning nor end. This arises from vegetarian precepts, speaking and explaining.

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2. **Wealth 富饒**. Phenomenon: limitless wealth and jewels, store house overflowing. Noumenon: Dharma wealth replete, blessed with the 10,000 virtues. This is from offering incense, flowers and banners, and from reciting the Buddha's name, virtues and vows.
3. **Official position 官位**. Phenomenon: high position and fat remuneration. Noumenon: unsurpassed position and profound wisdom. This comes from making images and contemplating meanings.
4. **a son or a daughter 男女**. Phenomenon: upright and proper features. Noumenon: good, sincere and truthful males; kind and compassionate females. This is from the three karmas of making offerings, reciting and reading.

These seekings also includes seeking intelligence, eloquence, wisdom, spouse, abode, clothing, food, PratyekaBuddha, Arhat, samadhi and Nirvana: this sutra is just like the wish-fulfilling pearl.

Sutra:

"Moreover, if a person who suddenly has nightmares, sees ill omens, notices strange birds flocking together, or perceives many uncanny events in his dwelling can worship and make offerings of many fine things to that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light

Tathagata, then the nightmares, ill omens, and inauspicious things will disappear and will no longer trouble him.

"When a person is endangered by water, fire, knives, or poison; or finds himself on a steep cliff or in a dangerous place; or faces fierce elephants, lions, tigers, wolves, bears, poisonous snakes, scorpions centipedes, millipedes, mosquitoes, gnats, or other frightful things, if he can single-mindedly recollect, worship, and make offerings to that Buddha he will be liberated from all those frightful things. When other countries invade or when there are thieves or riots, if a person can recollect and worship that Tathagata, then he will be free of all of these as well."

Commentary:

First, the sutra describes the evil manifestations.

Moreover, if a person who suddenly has nightmares, who dreams that he himself or someone else is killed, or is in a car accident -all kinds of unlucky dreams, or **sees ill omens** ... Maybe seeing ghosts, monsters, disasters or other bad omens.

Or it may be that he **notices** a lot of **strange birds flocking together** over his house, unusual birds such as owls and crows. **Or he perceives many uncanny events in his dwelling**, such as ghosts in the daytime, or demons in the night, or a broomstick walking around by itself without any witch.

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These nightmares, uncanny events or bad omens occur because:

1. Of past karma.
2. The four elements being out of balance.
3. Disturbances from ghosts and spirits.

If he or others in such a household **can worship and make offerings of many fine things**, the most precious and valuable things, **to that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata**, then the nightmares, ill omens, and inauspicious events will disappear and will no longer trouble him. All the bad dreams, ill omens will be gone. Everything is created from the mind alone. If you look upon these as empty, you'll be fine. On the other hand, if you can't you can always turn to the Medicine Master Buddha for help.

Next the text mentions how frightening situations can be averted.

When a person is endangered by being drowned in deep **water**, burned by **fire**, harmed by **knives** such as torture or wars **or poison; or finds himself on a steep cliff or in a dangerous place** besieged by evil men; **or faces fierce elephants**-such as an intoxicated elephant that is ready to kill anyone it sees, **man-eating lions, tigers, wolves, bears, poisonous snakes, scorpions, poisonous centipedes, millipedes**, which burrow into people's brains and suck them dry, **mosquitoes, gnats, or other** harmful creatures or **frightful things; if he can single-mindedly recollect** Medicine Master

Vaidurya Light Tathagata, **worship, and make offerings to that Buddha, he will be liberated from all those frightful things.** Even a single thought of utmost sincerity is sufficient to bring about a response.

Frightening things:

1. Water disaster: due to greed.
2. Fire difficulty: result of anger/displeasure.
3. War: from evil views.
4. Poison: stupidity.
5. Hanging on cliff, chased by evil people, fall from Vajra mountain: arrogance.
6. Dangerous pits, encountering enemies, surrounded by bandits, pushed down a fire pit, dangerous places in the wilderness, besieged by evil beasts: doubt.
7. Evil elephant: haughty.
8. Lion: disturbed.
9. Ferocious tiger eating man: harming.
10. Wolves, overly greedy, likes to trample and gossip: stinginess.
11. Bear, killing and drinking blood: covering up.
12. Poisonous snake: hatred.
13. Scorpion: vexation.
14. Centipede: dementia.
15. Small (poisonous) centipede: toadyism.
16. Mosquitoes, gadflies: jealousy.

If you can with utmost sincerity, recollect 能至心

◦ 憶念彼佛, make offerings to Medicine Master Buddha, then neither the inner poison as represented by the evil animals nor the outer poison as

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represented by evil people can harm you. You can obtain liberation.

He can also help to liberate us from invasion and chaos.

When other countries invade

Invasion could be physical encroachment on the land boundaries or could be cultural: your culture and way of life is being assimilated.

or when there are thieves or riots within the country, **if a person can recollect and worship that Tathagata** in thought after thought, **then he will be free of all of these** disasters as well. All misfortunes will turn into good luck.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Manjusri, there may be good men and women of pure faith who, all their lives, do not worship other gods, but single-mindedly take refuge with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. They receive and uphold precepts, such as the five precepts, the ten precepts, the four hundred precepts of a Bodhisattva, the two hundred and fifty precepts of a Bhikshu, or the five hundred precepts of a Bhikshuni. Perhaps they have violated some of the precepts they received and are afraid of falling into the evil destinies. If they concentrate on reciting that Buddha's name and worship and make offerings to him, they definitely will not be reborn in the three evil destinies.

Commentary:

The Medicine Master Buddha Dharma can eradicate violations of precepts.

"Moreover, Manjusri, there may be good men and women of pure faith, virtuous men and women **who, all their lives, do not worship other gods.** They do not worship heavenly or earthly deities, ghosts, spirits, or gods of non-Buddhist religions,

Gods can be:

1. Externalists: They can ascend to the No thought heaven.
2. Heavenly Demons of the sixth Desire Realm heaven.
3. Common gods: the rest of the heavens in the Triple Realm.

do not worship other gods: because these gods cannot end birth and death and accomplish the Wisdom of All Modes (the Buddha's wisdom).

but single-mindedly and with utmost sincerity **take refuge with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.**

Speaking of the merit and virtues of taking refuge with the Triple Jewel, the sutras say: if the three thousand great thousand worlds are full of Thus Come Ones as numerous as rice, sesame seeds, bamboos or reeds, and they are offered the four things for 20,000 years, and after each enters

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Nirvana, jeweled stupas are then erected and then offered with flowers, incense and all sorts of offerings, the accrued blessings would not be insignificant. But this is nonetheless inferior to the blessings generated by taking refuge with the Triple jewel with a pure mind.

Further, if you do not rely on the Triple Jewel to receive precepts, those precepts are not solid.

They receive and strictly uphold the Buddha's precepts, such as the five precepts, which prohibit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants, **the ten precepts** of a Shramanera, that is a novice monk, **the four hundred precepts of a Bodhisattva**, **the two hundred and fifty precepts of a Bhikshu**, or **the five hundred precepts of a Bhikshuni**.

Perhaps they have violated, whether deliberately or not, **some of the precepts they received and are afraid of falling into the evil destinies**. Precepts are the foundation of cultivation. If you do not receive precepts and violate them, you lack virtues. But if you receive precepts and then violate them, it's even worse because you clearly know it's wrong and still intentionally commit the offenses. You definitely will fall to the hells.

If they concentrate on reciting that Buddha's name, sincerely and single-mindedly reciting, "Homage to Medicine Master Buddha Who Quells Disasters and Lengthens Life," **and worship and make offerings to him** wholeheartedly, **they defi-**

nitely will not be reborn in the three evil destinies.

Again this is one of the distinctive competences of this Dharma. It is of great help to all cultivators who need to observe precepts. We should bring forth the resolve to more widely disseminate this Dharma so as to help others.

When I was at the Master Xuan Hua's temples, in the morning recitation we would recite this Buddha's name. Later on as I went to other temples, I noticed that not all of them practice this Dharma. It did not feel right for some reason. Afterwards, I understood the importance of restoring the precept substance through this Dharma. It makes me very grateful to my teacher for teaching us this Dharma so that I too can pass it on to others.

Sutra:

"If there is a woman about to give birth who suffers great pain, if she sincerely recites his name and worships, praises, venerates, and makes offerings to that Tathagata, all her suffering will be dispelled. The newborn child will be sound and healthy, and will have upright and handsome features. Seeing him will make people happy. He will be keen and intelligent, peaceful and secure, and with few ailments, and no evil spirit will come to rob him of his vitality."

Commentary:

The Medicine Master Buddha Dharma can dispel

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birth dangers.

If there is a woman about to give birth who suffers unbearably great pain,

Birth difficulties and pains are quite common. If it is smooth, it can bring on long lasting benefits.

if she sincerely recites his name and worships, praises, venerates, and makes offerings to that Tathagata, all her suffering will be dispelled. The newborn child will be sound and healthy.

Should the expectant mother have birth difficulties, she should recite Medicine Master Buddha's name with utmost sincerity or the family or relatives can make images, sponsor Medicine Master Buddha Assemblies, print sutras, recite sutras etc... Relying on this Buddha's vow power, you can avoid disasters and have a good birth.

Sincerely reciting the Buddha's name (one of the six dharmas mentioned here: 1. Sincerity 至心

2. Recite his name 稱名 3. Bow 禮像 4. Praise 讚德 5. Pure vows 淨願 6. Offer body 供身) will suddenly eradicate past obstructions. The baby's physical faculties will be complete and perfect. He will not be missing an eye, ear, nose, or mouth.

He will have upright and handsome features. Seeing him will make people happy. Everyone will like to see this child. **He will be keen and intelligent, peaceful and secure, and with few ailments, and no evil spirit will come to rob him of his vitality.** He will be extremely bright and will

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seldom be ill. His essence will not be stolen by demons, ghosts, or other evil spirits.

Sutra:

At that time the World Honored One said to Ananda, “The merit and virtue of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, which I have just extolled, is the extremely profound practice of all Buddhas. It is difficult to fathom and to comprehend. Do you believe it or not?”

Commentary:

Dealing with lack of faith and skepticism.

Disciples of the Buddha must have true faith and make sincere vows before they can obtain actual benefit.

At that time, the World Honored One said to Ananda, “All the inconceivable merit and virtue of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, which I have just extolled, is the extremely profound practice of all Buddhas. This is the state of the most profound and wondrous practice of all Buddhas. It is difficult to fathom and to comprehend. Only Buddhas and those who have gone through the experience can understand it. Ordinary people have a hard time relating to it.

Do you believe it or not?

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Do you truly believe it?

Ananda: is Sanskrit for joyful celebration 慶喜. He's the Buddha's first cousin. He is foremost in erudition.

Medicine Master Buddha has ten kinds of **merit and virtues**:

1. Name/title
2. Past vows
3. Meritorious practices
4. Mantra
5. Images
6. Extinguishing disasters and difficulties
7. Accomplishing the good
8. Removing suffering
9. Giving joy
10. His Buddhaland

extremely profound 甚深 : beyond the comprehension of ordinary people, externalists, or the Three Vehicles.

extremely profound practices have ten features:

1. Principles: applicable to the entire Dharma Realm.
2. Vows: to the exhaustion of time and space.
3. Wisdom: which thoroughly penetrates all Dharmas sources and depths, all of the Primary Principles.
4. Severing: extinguishing the six coarse and three subtle (refer to the Shurangama Sutra), emptying the eight consciousnesses

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(check with the Sixth Patriarch Sutra) and two attachments (emptiness and existence).

5. Practices: practice the ten inexhaustible practices of Universal Bodhisattva.
6. Position: above the 9 realms.
7. Cause: for Bodhi.
8. Fruition: Buddhahood.
9. Compassion: eradicate the six karmas, four retributions, rescue the seven difficulties and nine untimelies.
10. Teaching: (nothing is not Buddhism) 84,000 Dharma Doors.

The Buddhas have extremely profound practices because:

1. Their wisdom is inconceivable.
2. They understand True Mark.
3. Their merit and virtues are limitless.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "Great virtuous World Honored One, I have absolutely no doubts regarding the Sutras spoken by the Tathagata. Why? Because all Buddhas' karmas of body, speech, and mind are pure. World Honored One, the sun and moon could fall, Wonderfully High, the king of mountains, could be toppled or shaken, but the words of the Buddhas never change."

Commentary:

This section affirms that one should not ever doubt the Buddha's sutras.

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Ananda said in reply, "Great virtuous World Honored One, I have absolutely no doubts regarding the Sutras spoken by the Tathagata. The Sutras (Sanskrit word meaning 'tallying texts') tally with the principles of all Buddhas above and with the potentials of all living beings below. I have not the slightest doubt regarding them. Why? Because all Buddhas' karmas of body, speech and mind are completely pure, without even a speck of defilement or falseness.

Great virtuous: he's replete with the 10,000 virtues.

"World Honored One, between heaven and earth, the sun and moon could fall, Wonderfully High, the king of mountains, which is just Mount Sumeru, could be toppled or shaken, and everything else could change, but the words of the Buddhas never change. The words of every Buddha are absolutely true and cannot be altered."

Sutra:

"World Honored One, there are sentient beings deficient in faith who hear about the extremely profound practices of all Buddhas and think to themselves, 'How could one obtain such supreme merit and benefit merely by reciting the name of a single Buddha, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata?' Due to this lack of faith, they give rise to slander. During the long night, they lose great benefit and bliss and fall into the evil destinies, where they wander ceaselessly."

Commentary:

Mistakes and losses can occur due to lack of faith.

"World Honored One, there are sentient beings deficient in faith, who are particularly skeptical and lack the foundations of faith, who hear about the extremely profound practices of all Buddhas and think to themselves... When they hear about the conduct of all Buddhas, about the unfathomably deep wisdom and the blessings, virtue, and wonderful functioning of the spiritual penetrations of all Buddhas, they immediately become doubtful. They think, **'How could one obtain such immeasurable supreme merit and benefit merely by reciting the name of a single Buddha, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata?'** Due to this lack of faith, they give rise to slander. Their doubts lead them to slander causing people to lose faith in the Triple Jewel.

The Giving Rise To Taith Shastra says: one must practice for 10,000 kalpas to accomplish the mind of faith.

Reciting the Buddha's name can eradicate obstructions. Practice a good mind and you can destroy the hundred evils, just like a small piece of Vajra can destroy a mountain.

There are three kinds causes for sicknesses that are difficult to cure:

1. Slandering the Big Vehicle
2. Five rebellious acts

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3. Icchantika: they cannot bring forth the faith in Buddhism

There are three evil men:

1. Icchantika 一闍提: they can't bring forth the faith.
2. Those who slander sutras.
3. Those who commit the four unrepentable offenses (of the Bhikshus).

During the long night, they lose great benefit and bliss and fall into the evil destinies, where they wander ceaselessly.

During the endless night, which is an analogy for the endless rounds of birth and death, they forsake all benefits and bliss and suffer in the hells, the hungry ghost realm, and the animal realm.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "If these sentient beings hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and sincerely receive and uphold it without any doubts, they cannot possibly fall into the evil destinies.

Commentary:

Elaboration: if they are not skeptical, 1) They can avoid falling 2) However, producing faith is difficult. 3) Who can have faith? (How the faithful are selected). 4) Hearing this Buddha's name is difficult. 5) The Buddha can widely speak endlessly

about his merit and virtue.

The Buddha further told Ananda, "If these living beings, the ones mentioned above, are able to hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and sincerely and single-mindedly receive and uphold it without any doubts, they cannot possibly fall into the evil destinies. There would be absolutely no chance that such people would fall into the three evil destinies should they sincerely believe.

The three skepticisms:

1. To not believe that one can enter principles.
2. To not believe that teachers can teach.
3. To doubt that the Dharma can liberate.

Sutra:

"Ananda, this is the extremely profound practice of all Buddhas which is difficult to believe and to understand! You should know that your ability to receive this comes from the awesome power of the Tathagata. Ananda, all Hearers, Solitarily Enlightened Ones, and the Bodhisattvas who have not yet ascended to the Grounds are incapable of believing and understanding this Dharma as it really is. Only the Bodhisattvas who are destined in one life to attain Buddhahood are capable of understanding.

Commentary:

Faith is difficult to produce.

Ananda, this is the extremely profound practice of all Buddhas which is difficult to believe and to understand!

The Buddhas' deeds are based on extremely profound wisdom, which ordinary people find hard to believe and understand.

You should know that your ability to believe and receive this comes not from your own power, but from the awesome power of the Tathagata. It is through the aid of the Buddha's awesome spiritual power that you can have such absolute faith.

Who can have faith?

Ananda, all Hearers, Solitarily Enlightened Ones, and the Bodhisattvas who have not yet ascended to the Grounds are incapable of believing and understanding this Dharma as it really is.

Even the Arhats, PratyekaBuddhas, and Bodhisattvas who have not yet entered the First Ground are unable to bring forth such genuine faith and understanding.

Who has insufficient faith power?

1. The Two Vehicles: Sound-hearers and PratyekaBuddhas: “outer common position 外凡位”
2. The three Worthies: “inner common position 內凡位”
3. Those below the Ground Bodhisattva positions who have not broken through ignorance.

Only the Bodhisattvas who are destined in one life to attain Buddhahood, are capable of understanding.

Only those who have reached the position of Equal Enlightenment, Bodhisattvas who will attain Buddhahood in one more life, can have such faith.

Question: “The Ground Bodhisattvas are already enlightened. Why can’t they bring forth the faith?”

Answer: “The 1st Ground Bodhisattvas cannot recognize the 2nd Ground Bodhisattvas or higher. They simply have no clues about the extent of the Buddha’s realm of practices. Bodhisattvas of Equal Enlightenment only have one part of ignorance left, and are pretty close!” This is based on the response body.

From the perspective of the reward body, this includes Bodhisattvas from 1st Ground to Equal Enlightenment because the 1st Ground Bodhisattva has destroyed ignorance and manifested the Dharma Body, thereby entering the Thus Come One’s family. His wisdom life will continue. Although his reward body is still subject to change birth and death in the Pure Land, his share section birth and death has ended.

Sutra:

"Ananda, it is difficult to obtain a human body. It is also difficult to have faith in and to revere the Triple Jewel. It is even more difficult to be able to hear the name of the World Honored One,

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Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Ananda, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata possesses boundless Bodhisattva practices, limitless skillful expedients, and immeasurably vast, great vows. If I were to speak extensively of those for an eon or more, the eon would soon end, but that Buddha's practices, vows, and skillful expedients have no end!"

Commentary:

Hearing the Buddha's name is most difficult!

Ananda, it is difficult to obtain a human body. If you want to be born as a human, it is very difficult.

It is also difficult to have faith in and to revere the Triple Jewel. To have genuine faith and reverence for the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha is even more difficult.

It is even more difficult to be able to hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata.

It is even harder to hear the name of Medicine Master Buddha than to do the things mentioned above.

Refer to the 42 Sections Sutra for the list of difficulties: the difficulty levels increase exponentially!

Finally, the fifth portion: widely speak without end.

Ananda, you should know that **Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata** possesses **boundless Bodhisattva practices**.

In the past, he cultivated immeasurable Bodhisattva practices, employed **limitless skillful expedients**, and made **immeasurably vast, great vows**. **If I were to speak extensively of those for a period of an eon or more, the eon**, which is such a long period of time, **would soon end, but that Buddha's practices, vows, and skillful expedients have no end!** One could never finish speaking of them because He already accomplished the innumerable Dharma Doors to cross over the innumerable living beings.

Skillful expedients:

Skillful 善巧 refers to all sorts of:

1. Knowledge, skills, arts, professional talents
2. Innumerable Dharma Doors
3. Obtained mastery of the skills

Expedients 方便: refers to the dispensing skills

Sutra:

At that time within the assembly, a Bodhisattva Mahasattva named One Who Rescues and Liberates arose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt with his right knee on the ground, leaned forward with his palms joined together, and said to the Buddha, "Great virtuous World Honored One! During the Dharma Image Age, there will be living beings afflicted with various diseases, emaciated from chronic illnesses, unable

to eat or drink, their throats parched and their lips dry. Such a being sees darkness gathering all around him as the signs of death appear. While lying in bed, surrounded by his weeping parents, relatives, and friends, he sees the messengers of Yama leading his spirit before that Dharma King. Every sentient being has spirits that stay with him throughout his life. They record his every deed, both good and evil, to present to Yama, the Dharma King. At that time, King Yama interrogates this person in order to tally his karma and mete out judgment according to his good and evil deeds.

Commentary:

At that time within the assembly, a Bodhisattva Mahasattva, a great Bodhisattva among the Bodhisattvas, named One Who Rescues and Liberates

This Mahasattva 救脫 is on his third asamkhyeya kalpa of cultivating the Bodhisattva practices. He specializes in rescuing living beings from suffering and difficulties, aiding them to leave the paths of birth and death. He is named after his virtues: wisdom, ascetic practices, vows, and great compassion.

Please note the following protocol when requesting Dharma.

arose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, and knelt with his right knee on the ground, showing respect in body and mind. He leaned forward with

his palms joined together in single-minded submission and said to the Buddha, "Great virtuous World Honored One!"

Describing the different kinds of suffering:

"During the Dharma Image Age there will be living beings afflicted with various diseases. Beset by all kinds of illnesses, they are never at ease.

Emaciated from chronic illness, unable to eat or drink, their throats parched and their lips dry.

They are always sick, reduced to skin and bones, yet are unable to take either food or drink. Their throats and lips are terribly parched, but they cannot even swallow water.

Such a being sees darkness gathering all around him as the signs of death appear.

He sees no light at all. It is completely dark, he strains his eyes but can't see a thing. He is frightened, knowing that death is at hand.

While lying on the bed, surrounded by his weeping parents, close relatives, and friends and good advisers, all of whom are crying piteously,

signs of death have three general types:

1. Warmth gradually dissipates
2. Breathing about to stop
3. Consciousness would like to leave

Death has ten more detailed aspects:

1. The sense organs are chaotic, and grasping at

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- states. One is brought before King Yama.
2. Arrogance toward the respected physician
 3. Anger toward relatives and friends
 4. Awareness of death's approach
 5. The left eye becomes white
 6. The complexion changes
 7. The tongue blackens: sodium and potassium are critically low
 8. The nose bridge becomes fragrant (I'm not clear about the meaning of this, perhaps the future readers will kindly help elaborate)
 9. The hearing becomes as sharp as in the old days
 10. The ears and lips droop.

he sees the messengers of King Yama leading his spirit before that Dharma King.

Dharma King: within Buddhism, there are three Dharma Kings:

1. Wheel-turning Dharma King: preaches and practices the ten good deeds, uses the proper Dharma to rule the world
2. King Yama: iron-faced, unselfish and in charge of the hells
3. The Buddha.

King Yama: in his former life was a king who went into battle with another king. His army was defeated. He vowed to take charge of the hells so as to punish his enemies. His 18 great officials and multitudes also made the vows. The great officials became the heads of the 18 hells; his followers became hell employees/soldiers.

It turns out that King Yama is really a brother and sister: each is in charge of their respective gender.

Spirits record offenses and blessings.

Every sentient being has spirits that stay with him throughout his life. They record his every deed, both good and evil, to present to Yama, the Dharma King.

At that time, the souls of other people who are acquainted with the dying one are also summoned by King Yama. Then the dying one sees everything that he did in his life appear before him.

Whether we commit evil and do good, there are four spirits which know our actions:

1. Heavenly spirit
2. Earth spirit
3. Witness
4. Self

The gods and spirits can see us but we can't see them.

King Yama makes a judgment.

At that time, King Yama interrogates this person, putting him on trial in order to tally his karma, the offenses that he created, and mete out judgment according to the severity of his good and evil deeds. The judge will decide which body he should get next.

Sutra:

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"At that time, if the sick person's relatives and friends, on his behalf, can take refuge with the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and request members of the Sangha to recite this Sutra, to light seven layers of lamps, and to hang up the five-colored banners for prolonging life, then it is possible for his spirit to return. As if in a dream, the person will see everything very clearly himself."

Commentary:

Creating blessings to rescue the deceased.

"At that time, if the sick person's parents, close relatives and friends, on his behalf, can create merit and virtue ... If they very earnestly take refuge with the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and request members of the Sangha, virtuous left-home people who hold the precepts and cultivate, to recite this Sutra, or to light seven layers of lamps—with seven lamps in each layer, a total of forty-nine lamps—and to hang up the five-colored spiritual banners for prolonging life for his sake, then, it is possible for his spirit to return. If such a Dharma assembly is held, his soul will be able to return. As if in a dream, the person will see everything very clearly himself. He himself sees this kind of state and remembers it.

seven layers: light the path of the seven limbs of Bodhi.

The Seven Bodhi Shares: also known as seven Enlightenment shares:

1. Selecting a Dharma 擇法: one can discern among the five Skandha Dharmas, the false and proper Dharmas. The proper Dharma has no outflows.
2. Vigorously 精進 cultivate it.
3. Joy 喜 is derived from practicing it. After practicing the True Dharma long enough, one can obtain a response and will be able to clearly understand that the bliss obtained is not from deviant Dharmas.
4. Casting out coarse delusion 除: to cut off view delusions and afflictions.
5. Renouncing subtle delusion 捨: having cast out the afore-mentioned view and affliction delusions, one becomes clearly aware that these states are false, just like a dream and one no longer pursues or values them.
6. Samadhi 定: Externalists have thoughtless samadhi, some can reach the thought nor non-thought samadhi but all will eventually fall. Only the Buddhist Dharma can end love and view delusions.
7. Mindfulness 念: while cultivating the Proper Dharma, always maintain balance between samadhi and wisdom.

five-color: Blue, yellow, red, white and black symbolize the five skandhas.

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The deceased could return after one, three, five or seven weeks. Make sure to wait and not bury him or her prematurely.

Sutra:

“If his spirit returns after seven, twenty-one, thirty-five, or forty-nine days, he will feel as if awakened from a dream and will remember the retributions that he underwent for his good and bad karma. Having personally witnessed the retributions of his own karma, he will never again do any evil, even if his very life is endangered. Therefore, good men and women of pure faith should receive and uphold the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata and, according to their capability, worship and make offerings to him.”

Commentary:

If his spirit returns after seven, twenty-one, thirty-five, or forty-nine days ... His friends and relatives recite the Sutra or bow in repentance, hoping to recall his soul from King Yama's realm. After one, three, five, or seven weeks of Dharma assistance, his soul may come back. It's not for sure how long it will take. When the person's soul returns, **he will feel as if awakened from a dream and will remember the retributions that he underwent for his good and bad karma.** He will remember everything that he experienced. Having returned, the resuscitated remembers causes and

effects.

Having personally witnessed the retributions of his own karma, he will never again do any evil, even if his very life is endangered. He has personally seen that every time he creates offenses in delusion, he has to undergo the retribution. Therefore, even if his life is at stake, he will never again commit any offense, great or small.

Thus, the sutra concludes with an exhortation to uphold and make offerings.

Therefore, good men and women of pure faith, and all living beings in general, should receive and uphold the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, reciting his name, and according to their capability, to the utmost of their strength and ability, worship and make offerings to him.

Anecdote: There was a destitute old woman beggar. She used two coins to buy oil to light the Buddha's oil lamp. As she lit the oil, she vowed to accomplish the Buddha Way and the oil lamp thus radiated universally. Later, Mahamaudgalyayana was putting out the lamps but could not use his spiritual powers to extinguish hers. Shakyamuni Buddha explained to him that this old woman would become a Buddha named Mount Sumeru Lamp Light Thus Come One 須彌登光如來.

Sutra:

At that time, Ananda asked the Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates, "Good man, how should we worship and make offerings to the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata? And how should we make the banners and lamps that prolong life?"

The Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates said, "Great Virtuous One, if there is a sick person who wishes to be freed from sickness and suffering, for his sake one should receive and uphold the eight precepts for seven days and seven nights, and make offerings to the Bhikshu Sangha of as many items of food, drink, and other necessities as are in his power to give.

"During the six periods of the day and night one should worship, practice the Way, and make offerings to the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Read and recite this Sutra forty-nine times, light forty-nine lamps, and make seven images of that Tathagata. In front of each image place seven lamps, each as large as a cartwheel. These lamps must be kept burning continuously for forty-nine days. Hang up five-colored banners that are forty-nine spans long. Liberate a variety of living creatures, as many as forty-nine species. Then the sick one will be able to surmount the danger and will not suffer an untimely death or be held by evil ghosts."

Commentary:

Here the sutra details the upholding and making offerings Dharma. First Ananda makes the request.

At that time, Ananda was still a bit unclear, so he further asked the **Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates**, "Good man, how should we worship and make offerings to the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata? And how should we make the banners and lamps that prolong life?"

What are these lamps and banners that prolong life? How should they be made and deployed?"

To those who may be a bit taken aback by Ven. Ananda's addressing the Bodhisattva as "good man", it is the proper protocol: after all the Bodhisattva takes on the appearance of a lay person.

The Bodhisattva elaborates: 1) explaining the Dharma of making offerings to images, 2) liberation from difficulties and dangers, and 3) question and answer

1) Explaining the Dharma of making offerings to images.

The Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates said to Ananda, "Great Virtuous One, he who wishes to leave behind and be freed from all his sickness and suffering, for his sake one should receive and uphold the eight precepts for seven days and seven nights.

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And one should make offerings to the Bhikshu Sangha of as many items of food, drink, and other necessities as are in his power to give. You should make offerings according to your own capacity. During the six periods of the day and night, one should bow in worship to Medicine Master Buddha, and practice the Way. And with utmost sincerity, one should make offerings to the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, to the extent of one's ability. Read and recite this Sutra forty-nine times, light forty-nine lamps, and make seven images of that Tathagata.

Six periods: in India, the day has three periods (early morning, mid-day, day-end), as does the night (beginning night, mid-night, late night).

In front of each image place an offering of seven lamps, each as large as a cartwheel. Since there are seven images, forty-nine lamps are required. Cartwheels can be large or small, so the size is not fixed. The most important thing is to be sincere. **These forty-nine lamps must be kept burning continuously for forty-nine days.** None of the lamps should be allowed to go out.

Hang up five-colored banners that are forty-nine spans long. Make the banners from material of five different colors (red, white, black, blue and yellow). **Liberate a variety of living creatures, from as many as forty-nine species.** There should be forty-nine species, or even more than that number. Living creatures' species are limitless. One should liberate

different 49 species (land born, water born, space born etc...) with an impartial mind.

(Forty-nine) spans: in India, they used to measure from stretching the fingers and measure between the thumb and middle finger as a unit of length. Ordinary people's span is one unit while the Buddha's measure two.

Then the sick one will be able to surmount the danger and will not suffer an untimely death or be held by evil ghosts. His life will no longer be in danger. He will not be held by resentful ghosts or other sorts of evil ghosts. Nor will he suffer an untimely death.

Reciting Sutras can unfold your wisdom and break your attachments, creating boundless merit and virtue. Attachments cause you to become deluded, create offenses, and undergo retribution. As soon as you break through your attachments, all offenses are wiped out. Thus, the Buddha spoke Sutras in order to destroy attachments. Finally, be careful. Even the tiniest trace of attachment is bad news. If you break through even a tiny trace, you can attain liberation and gain limitless merit and virtue.

Sutra:

"Furthermore, Ananda, in the case of *ksatriya* princes who are due to be anointed on the crowns of their heads, at a time when calamity arises, such as pestilence among the population, invasion by foreign countries, rebellion within their

territories, unusual changes in the stars, a solar or lunar eclipse, unseasonal winds and rains, or prolonged drought, those *ksatriya* princes should bring forth an attitude of kindness and compassion toward all sentient beings and grant amnesty to all prisoners. They should follow the above-mentioned methods to make offerings to that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Due to these good roots and the power of that Tathagata's past vows, the country will be safe and peaceful, the winds and rains will be timely, the crops will ripen, and all sentient beings will be blissful and free of disease. Within this country there will be no violence, nor any *yaksas* or other spirits that harm sentient beings, and all evil omens will vanish. The *ksatriya* princes who are due to be anointed on the crowns of their heads will enjoy longer lives and good health, and they will be at ease and free from illness."

Commentary:

2) Liberation from difficulties and dangers: 2.1) difficulties of rulers 2.2) difficulties of queens, princes, ministers and people generally 2.2.1) describing difficulty 2.2.2) cultivating blessings and virtues 2.2.3) obtaining liberation.

Furthermore, Ananda, in the case of *ksatriyas* princes who are due to be anointed on the crowns of their heads ... The *Ksatriyas* (warrior or royalty class) and Brahmins (clergy class) were the upper classes in the ancient class structure of India.

Among the *Ksatriyas*, there were crown princes, who were ritually anointed on the crowns of their heads when they became kings. Water was taken from the great oceans of the four directions, put it in a vase and then sprinkled on top of the crown prince's head. More recently, they would add a crown to the ceremony.

At a time when calamity arises, there may be events **such as** droughts, floods, fires, severe windstorms, **pestilence among the population**, epidemics of locusts or deadly, infectious diseases, **invasion by foreign countries, or rebellion within their territories**. There may be subversive factions working against the government.

There may be **unusual changes in the stars**, such as stars becoming abnormally large or taking on a strange appearance, stars disintegrating, or comets coming close to the earth. Such stellar aberrations are the causes of wars, floods, fires, epidemics, and other disasters in the world.

A solar or lunar eclipse

The sun or the moon may vanish from view in an eclipse.

Unseasonal winds and rains

The rains and winds come when they are not supposed to. Perhaps there is unseasonal heavy rain or a hurricane.

Or a prolonged drought.

There may be frequent droughts, excessive heat.

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Cultivating blessings and virtues.

If such disasters happen, **those *ksatriyas* princes** who are due to be anointed as kings should become deeply repentant. **They should bring forth an attitude of kindness and compassion toward all sentient beings and grant amnesty to all prisoners,** including those sentenced to death. **They should follow the above-mentioned methods to make offerings to that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata.**

Obtaining liberation.

Due to these good roots gained from making offerings to Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata **and the power of that Tathagata's past vows, the country will be peaceful and safe,** free from trouble, **the winds and rains will be timely.** The winds and rains will be regulated, and **the crops will ripen.** There will be abundant harvests of all the various grains. **And all sentient beings will be blissful and free of disease. Within this country there will be no violence.** Murder, arson, robbery, and other violent crimes will be unknown in the land. **Nor [will there be] any *yakshas* or other spirits that harm sentient beings.** *Yakshas* are "speedy ghosts." No malevolent ghosts or spirits will come to cause trouble, **and all evil omens will vanish.** **The *ksatriya* princes who are due to be anointed on the crowns of their heads will enjoy longer lives and good health, and they will be at ease and free from illness.**

Speaking of how the king's virtues affect the fortunes of the country, here is an anecdote.

Long ago, the Buddha was born as the crown prince of a country called Kuru. When he came of age, his king father named him viceroy. When his father passed away, he was named king. As king, he observed the Kuru rules of propriety and etiquette. They were what the Buddhists know today as the Five Precepts. Not only did the king keep the precepts. So did the queen mother, the queen, royal brother, viceroy, national adviser, ..., all the way down to the lowly slave girls.

Every one strictly adhered to the moral code.

Furthermore, the king even built six alm-distribution centers: four in each of the city's four gates, one at the royal palace and one at the center of the city. He gave out countless alms. His reputation spread far and wide throughout India.

At one time, another country named Kalinga had severe a drought. The whole country was worried because the drought caused crop failures and people started getting sick because of lack of food. The populace came to the King to ask for help. The Kalinga King asked his advisers: "In the past, what did my predecessors do in the time of drought, famine and pestilence?"

His advisers said: "They gave out alms, abstained from eating meat and slept on a straw bed for one

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week”.

The Kalinga King did as advised but to no avail. It still did not rain. The King asked what else he could do.

“In the country of Kuru, there is a national elephant. If we bring the elephant back, the rain will come with it,” the King was told.

“But the king of Kuru has a very strong army. His subjects are very loyal. How can we defeat them?” the King asked.

“We do not need to go to war against them. The Kuru King is known to be generous. He is probably willing to lend us his national elephant.” Said the advisers.

“Who can get the King Kuru to give us a hand?” the King asked.

“The Brahmins would know what to do” was the reply.

The Kalinga King then selected the seven most senior and respected Brahmins in his country, gave them money and ordered them to go get the Kuru state elephant.

The seven Brahmins traveled day and night. When they got to the country of Kuru, they checked into a travel lodge to rest. The following day, they bathed and went to the city gate’s alms distribution center

because that happened to be the fifteenth day of the lunar month and the Kuru King would be going as scheduled to personally give out alms.

As usual, the Kuru King put on his best clothes, rode his state elephant and led the royal procession toward the city gates to practice giving. The Brahmins managed to get the King's attention. The King stirred his state elephant toward the Brahmins and asked: "What do you wish?"

The Brahmins said: "Great King, we are traveling Brahmins from the country of Kalinga. We traveled from very far and used up all of our money to get here. We wish to borrow your state elephant to help bring rain to our country."

The Kuru King said: "Since you exhausted your resources to come here, I'll give you our elephant free of charge. In fact, I'll also give you all of its precious adornments as well."

The Kuru King got down from his seat, walked around the elephant to check and make sure that none of its adornments were missing. He then handed the elephant over to the Brahmins.

The seven Brahmins triumphantly rode the elephant to the capital city of Kalinga.

But it still did not rain.

The advisers then told the Kalinga King: "Your Highness, it seems that even the Kuru state elephant

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does not have enough virtue to bring the rain. In the country of Kuru, it rains every ten days and winds are well regulated. It must be because of the Kuru King's virtues."

The Kalianga King ordered: "Since the state elephant cannot bring rain, let's return it to the Kuru King. Return the elephant and ask the Kuru King to write the Kuru rules on a golden plaque and bring it back to me."

The seven Brahmins brought the elephant back to the Kuru King and requested the Kuru rules.

The Kuru King was glad to see his elephant again. He also said: "No problem! I'll be glad to write down our Kuru rules for you. However, be forewarned that I have a small doubt. You see, recently we organized a national celebration as scheduled. On the occasion, I shot four arrows in the four directions. We recovered three arrows. The fourth one plunged down a lake and we could not find it. I fear that it might have harmed a fish. It has been troubling me ever since. You'd better go to the queen mother and ask her to transmit the Kuru rules to you because I know that she keeps them purely."

The Brahmins objected: "Great King, it is not for sure your arrow harmed any being. Moreover, you did not intend to kill or harm!" But just in case, they went to see the queen mother.

She gladly wrote down the precepts on the golden

plate and said: “Here you are! Be forewarned that I too have some doubt. Recently, I was given a priceless necklace and some powder chandana incense (used as fragrance back then). I gave the necklace to the queen consort. I then gave the chandana incense to the royal brother’s wife because unlike the queen, she is not of royal blood. Both of them were very happy with the gifts. However, afterwards, I felt remorse. I blamed myself for still discriminating social status even though I keep the rules of propriety. I am not doing it purely. You’d better go see the queen because I believe she keeps them purely.”

The Brahmins protested: “You should not blame yourself like that! Your standards are exceedingly high!” Just in case, they went to see the queen as suggested.

The queen graciously obliged and transmitted the precepts and said: “I too have some doubt about my purity. Not long ago, my husband King led a royal procession past my windows. I looked out and caught a glimpse of the viceroy (another brother of the king). He looked so handsome! I could not help it and had a false thought: ‘I should try to meet with him privately and get him to notice me. That way, should anything happen to my dear husband, the viceroy will marry me and I can continue to be the queen consort.’ I am very ashamed of that thought. I don’t think I am that pure! You’d better go see the viceroy and ask for help because I know that he observes the Kuru rules most purely.”

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The Brahmins again objected: “You had one false thought and never acted on it. We are sure that the infraction is quite minimal compared to your many other virtuous deeds.”

When they came to see the viceroy who also amiably obliged and wrote down the Kuru rules on the golden plate for the Brahmins. However he too confessed that he also had some doubt. This is what happened. He regularly visits the King at the royal palace after hours. There is a convention he uses. If he plans to go home after the meeting, he’d leave his gloves inside his royal chariot. On the other hand, if he intends to stay overnight, he’d leave his gloves outside the chariot, then his driver and escort would know, they’d go home and come back the following morning to drive him directly to the office. Once he visited the King and planned to go home after the visit. However, it started raining so the King asked him to stay over night. The following morning he came out and discovered that his driver and escort soldiers were standing by the coach in the rain through the night. He felt so bad and blamed himself for not treating his attendants properly. He suggested that the Brahmins go see the royal brother.

The Brahmins objected too: “Your Highness, we see nothing wrong with that.”

And the story goes on, the Brahmins ended up with the lowliest person in the country to transmit the precepts. She also had a small doubt.

Finally, the Brahmins brought the golden plate to the Kalinga King. The King respectfully received the plate and practiced accordingly. In no time, the rain came. The soil became even more fertile and the country prospered.

Some people objected to the viceroy's attendants waiting for him in the rain. A nun said that it was extreme and non-sensical. She herself would find a shelter from the rain instead of waiting for the viceroy in the rain. She felt she could better serve her master that way, by staying dry, warm and healthy. Many people echoed her sentiments. The Master explained that he thought differently. He loved that part because it showed the level of loyalty of the attendants. They were truly single-minded. They only had one thought of waiting for the boss and ignored whatever happened. That is concentration arising from great respect. That is dedication!

Sutra:

Ananda, if the queens, the princes, the ministers or court counselors, the ladies of the palace, the provincial officials or the common people suffer from diseases or other difficulties, they should also hang up five-colored spiritual banners, light lamps and keep them burning, liberate living creatures, strew flowers of various colors, and burn precious incense. Then those people will be cured of their diseases and relieved of their difficulties."

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Commentary:

Difficulties of queens, princes, ministers etc ...

Ananda, if the queens, the princes, the ministers or court counselors, the ladies of the palace, the provincial officials or the common people suffer from diseases or other difficulties,

If the rest of the people of the kingdom also get into trouble...

The sutra next describes cultivating blessings and virtues.

they should also hang up five-colored spiritual banners, light forty-nine lamps and keep them burning before seven statues of Medicine Master Buddha, as a way to make offerings to him. They should **liberate living creatures** that were destined for slaughter.

Queens: they are the emperor's concubines, other than the empress.

Ladies of the palace: attendants to the emperor, wives and concubines.

They should also **strew flowers of various colors** as an offering to that Buddha **and burn precious incense**, such as aloe-wood incense and *chandana* incense.

How the Dharma can help one obtain liberation.

Then those people will be cured of their diseases and relieved of their difficulties.

They too will obtain help.

Sutra:

Then Ananda asked the Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates, "Good man, how can a life that has come to an end be prolonged?"

The Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates answered, "Great Virtuous One, did you not hear the Tathagata say that there are nine kinds of untimely death? That is why people are exhorted to make life-prolonging banners and lamps and to cultivate all kinds of blessings. Through such cultivation of blessings, they will be freed from suffering and adversity for the rest of their lives."

Commentary:

3) Question and answer: to benefit sentient beings.

Then Ananda, wishing to request more Dharma on behalf of living beings, asked the Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates, "Good man, how can a life that has come to an end be prolonged? How can a dying person extend his life and become healthy again? Living beings' life span is fixed isn't it **人命生死，業數有定?**

The Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates ans-

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wered, "Great Virtuous One, did you not hear the Tathagata say that there are nine kinds of untimely death?

Haven't you heard the Buddha explain that there are nine kinds of death caused by accidents and disasters?

That is why, in the Buddhist Sutras, all people are exhorted to make life-prolonging, five-colored, spiritual banners and forty-nine life-prolonging, spiritual lamps and to cultivate all kinds of blessings. Through the merit and virtue of such cultivation of blessings, they will be freed from suffering and adversity for the rest of their lives. They will not meet with the nine kinds of untimely deaths."

As a rule of thumb, good deaths are few and far between whereas accidental deaths abound. It is quite difficult to extend life. Chan practitioners can increase their lifespan one kalpa or longer.

Sutra:

Ananda asked, "What are the nine kinds of untimely death?"

The Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates said, "There may be living beings who, although not seriously ill, have neither medicine nor a doctor to treat them, or else they meet a doctor who gives them the wrong medicine; consequently, they meet with an untimely death. Some of them believe in worldly cults, whose deviant teachers frighten them with false prophecies. Unable to set

their minds at ease, they consult oracles to find out what calamities are in store for them. In order to propitiate the spirits, they kill various creatures. They pray to *wang liang* ghosts for aid and protection. Although they wish to prolong their lives, their efforts are to no avail. They deludedly hold to deviant beliefs and perverse views.

Thus they meet with an untimely death and fall into the hells, never to come out. This is the first kind of untimely death."

Commentary:

Ananda then asked the Bodhisattva so that living beings of the future can also listen to the explanation. He asked, "What are the nine kinds of untimely death?"

The Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates said, "There may be living beings who, although not seriously ill, suffering from only a slight cold, a cough, or some other minor ailment, have neither medicine nor a doctor to treat them because there is none available or perhaps they can't afford it, or else they meet a doctor who gives them the wrong medicine. For example, there are a lot of fake medicines being circulated throughout the world. Consequently, they meet with an untimely death. They end up dying earlier than they were supposed to.

Illness can be the result of:

1. Retribution: up to the six desire heavens.

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2. Evil karma: throughout the three realms. If one can hold precepts and practice goodness, then it will prevent these illnesses and distresses from arising.
3. Affliction: pervades the Three Vehicles.

Some die prematurely because they create evil offenses.

Some of them believe in worldly cults whose deviant teachers frighten them with false prophecies. They believe in fortune-tellers, astrologers, geomancers, and so on. The leaders of such deviant cults are actually demons, ghosts, and goblins who try to alarm people, making false predictions.

Unable to set their minds at ease, they consult oracles to find out what calamities are in store for them. These people consult fortune-tellers and deviant teachers seeking advice.

In order to propitiate the spirits, they kill various creatures.

They are often told to make sacrifices to appease the evil spirits.

They pray to *wang liang* ghosts for aid and protection.

Some people pray to the ghosts, the *li mei* and *wang liang* (ghosts residing trees, stones, mountains or rivers) for protection and assistance.

Although they wish to prolong their lives, their

efforts are to no avail.

Their prayers to these ghosts are in vain.

They deludedly hold to deviant beliefs and perverse views. This is nothing but superstition! They are confused and extremely stupid, with no wisdom at all.

Ordinary people are upside-down in four ways:

1. Permanence 常顛倒: They take what is not permanent as permanent.
2. Bliss 樂顛倒: They mistake suffering as bliss.
3. Self 我顛倒: They take what has no self as having self.
4. Purity 淨顛倒: They take what is impure as pure.

Thus they meet with an untimely death and fall into the hells, never to come out.

They had hoped to live longer, but their deviant practices only hasten their death. After they die they will fall into the hells. **This is the first kind of untimely death.**

Sutra:

"The second kind of untimely death is to be executed at the hands of the law. The third kind is to hunt for sport, to indulge in drinking and lust, or to become excessively dissipated, and then to be waylaid by nonhuman beings that rob one's

essence and energy. The fourth is to be burned to death; the fifth is to drown; the sixth is to be devoured by wild beasts; the seventh is to fall from a steep cliff; the eighth is to be harmed by poison, voodoo, evil mantras, or corpse-raising ghosts; the ninth is to die from hunger and thirst. These are the nine kinds of untimely deaths generally spoken of by the Tathagata. There are also innumerable other kinds which cannot all be spoken of here."

Commentary:

The second untimely kind of death is to be executed at the hands of the law.

The law is supposed to be fair and just, but sometimes people are condemned and put to death without any justifiable grounds. Maybe this is due to having previously encroached or destroyed other's rights and privileges. This is a kind of retribution that arises from prior offenses or this lifetime's offenses. These types of killing karma retributions can be remedied by cultivating blessings.

The third kind is to hunt for sport. Hunters shoot down deer, birds, bears or other animals for sport. How can we witness their cruel deaths and still consider hunting a sport? How can we justify taking other creatures' lives for our own amusement? Some people **indulge in drinking and lust**, being promiscuous and not following the rules of propriety. **Or** one may **become excessively dissipated** so that, unable to restrain oneself, one

steps beyond the bounds of proper behavior. And then one is **waylaid by nonhuman beings that rob one's essence and energy**. These nonhuman beings, ghosts, goblins, demons, sprites of the hills and rivers, and other weird beings, like to consume people's essence and energy.

The fourth is to be burned to death in a great blaze. Perhaps one's house is set on fire. This is a possible retribution for having used fire to harm others. One is roasted alive because one enjoyed barbecued and roast meat in past lives. If you barbecue others, others will barbecue you!

The fifth is to drown, for having drowned other beings in past lives. We can count water boarding as a potential cause for this kind of retribution. Now, you swallow a lot of water until your belly is bloated like a drum, and then you die.

The sixth is to be devoured by wild beasts. One might be torn to pieces by wolves, tigers, or crocodiles. This is for having eaten other living beings' flesh. Such is the retribution for cruel-hearted connoisseurs of such "delicacies" as "fruit-foxes", "monkeys' brains", "bears' paws" scorched in the fire, or live fish that are still flopping around. The animals fight over the gourmets' flesh, making a feast out of them.

The seventh is to fall from a steep cliff from making living beings fall into traps and pits. Falling over a cliff could be:

1. You fall by accident 自墮.

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2. You are pushed 人堆.
3. The mountain collapses 山崩.
4. Animals chase you over the edge 獸逼.

The eighth is to be harmed by poison, voodoo, evil mantras, or corpse-raising ghosts.

People can be harmed by witchcraft, hexes, evil mantras and so forth. Corps-raising ghosts are commanded by evil mantras to harm others. This is the retribution for poisoning, suffocating or using mantras to create harming offenses.

The ninth is to die of hunger and thirst.

Some people suffer from thirst or starvation and eventually die of it. Death from thirst or famine is quite agonizing.

These are the nine kinds of untimely deaths generally spoken of by the Tathagata. There are also innumerable other kinds which cannot all be spoken of here.

If one were to go into all the other kinds of accidents and disasters, there would not be enough time.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, King Yama keeps track of the karmic records of all the inhabitants of the world. If there are beings who are not filial to their parents, who commit the Five Rebellious Acts, who revile the Triple Jewel, who destroy the laws of the country, or who violate the

truthful precept, then Yama, the Dharma King, examines and punishes them according to the severity of their offenses. Therefore, I encourage people to light lamps and make banners, to liberate beings and cultivate blessings so that they can overcome suffering and peril and forestall all disasters."

Commentary:

Exhortation: King Yama does keep a tally of our deeds.

"Moreover, Ananda, King Yama keeps track of the karmic records of all the inhabitants of the world, both those in the realm of the living and those in the underworld.

If there are beings who are not filial to their parents, who commit the ten evil deeds and fail to practice the ten good deeds, or who commit the Five Rebellious Acts ...

The Five Rebellious Acts are:

1. Killing one's father.
2. Killing one's mother.
3. Killing an Arhat: sometimes listed as killing your teacher monk (acharya).
4. Destroying the harmony of the Sangha: causing conflict among them.
5. Shedding the Buddha's blood.

who revile the Triple Jewel

People may slander the Triple Jewel, saying, "The

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Buddha was superstitious, and so are his followers. The members of the Sangha do not really cultivate or hold the precepts. Don't believe in the Sutras; they are inauthentic texts."

who destroy the laws of the country

They often like to violate the laws.

or who violate the truthful precept.

Precepts are Dharmas that can be believed in and should be observed. Yet there are some who encourage cultivators to break them.

Confucius mentions the three fears of the superior man:

1. Heavenly mandate 天命.
2. Great men 大人.
3. Sages' words 聖人之言 (they represent the Triple Jewel) .

and the three cautions:

1. When young, the blood and qi are not yet complete, we should be cautious of form (meaning we should abstain from sex).
2. When mature, the blood and qi are strong, we should be cautious of fighting.
3. When old, the blood and qi are weak, we should be cautious of obtaining or hoarding.

Then Yama, the Dharma King, examines and punishes them according to the severity of their offenses. King Yama verifies that they really committed those offenses, and then he passes judgment accordingly, deciding where you should

go next life.

Therefore, I encourage people to light forty-nine lamps and make long-life banners, to liberate various kinds of beings and cultivate all kinds of blessings so that they can overcome suffering and peril and forestall all disasters." It does not hurt to play it safe and start accruing blessings with Dharma now.

Propagation

Propagation section: 1) protecting the Dharma 2) requesting the sutra name, propagation 3) obeying the Buddha's command.

Sutra:

At that time, twelve great *yaksa* generals were present in the assembly. They were: General Kumbhira, General Vajra, General Mihira, General Andira, General Anila, General Sandira, General Indra, General Pajra, General Makura, General Kinnara, General Catura, and General Vikarala. These twelve great *yaksa* generals, each with a retinue of seven thousand *yaksas*, simultaneously raised their voices and addressed the Buddha, "World Honored One! Today, by relying on the Buddha's awesome power, we are able to hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata! As a result, we are no longer afraid of the evil destinies. All of us are of one mind to take refuge with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha to the end of our lives. We vow to support all living beings and to benefit them, so that they may live in peace and bliss.

Commentary:

1.1) Lists name of the protectors

At that time, twelve great *yaksa* generals—great generals among the speedy ghosts—were present in

the Dharma assembly. These generals are constantly mindful of Medicine Master Buddha's kindness and wish to repay it by working hard to benefit living beings and helping them attain peace and bliss.

One could say these twelve generals are the response bodies of Medicine Master Buddha manifesting in accordance with his twelve great vows. They are also spiritual protectors of the twelve periods of time of the day and night.

They were: General Kumbhira, General Vajra, General Mihira, General Andira, General Anila, General Sandira, General Indra, General Pajra, General Makura, General Kinnara, General Catura, and General Vikarala.

General Kumbhira: name means “dragon with horns 蛟龍，金龍身首”. The top of the head has a golden dragon mark. He lives in a mountain in Sravasti. When Shakyamuni was in the world, this dragon general was acting as his Dharma protector everywhere. He accrued the most merit and virtues amongst them. One day, Shakyamuni was passing through Magical Mountain. Devadatta ambushed him and pushed a huge rock down the slope in order to crush the Buddha to death. This Yaksha general saw it and used his Vajra Pestle to hit it. Only a small rock made it to the Buddha and drew his blood. This Yaksa general is extremely loyal to Shakyamuni. I'll include some Chinese text that contains more information for those who can understand.

宮毗羅大將——此大將的本地為彌勒菩薩，是亥時之守護神。通身赤色，現忿怒形，頭戴豬冠，右手執大刀橫于頭上，左手開掌當腰。

General Vajra: holds a Vajra pestle in his hand.

伐折羅大將——此大將的本地為勢至菩薩，是戌時之守護神。通身青色，現忿怒形，頭髮茂盛聳上，頭戴狗冠，右手持劍，左手作拳當腰。

General Mihira: means gold bag “腰束金帶”，carried on his waist.

迷企羅大將——此大將的本地為阿彌陀如來，是酉時之守護神。通身赤色，現忿怒形，頭戴雞冠，右手持獨鈷，左手作拳押下腹部。

General Andira: name means breaking space mountain 破空山.

安底羅大將——此大將的本地為觀世音菩薩，是申時之守護神。通身赤色，現大忿怒形，頭戴猴冠，右手屈肘于右胸前開掌向前，屈左手，開掌，掌上放寶珠。

General Anila: meaning chandana incense 沉香

頹你羅大將——此大將的本地為摩利支天，是未時之守護神。通身白色，現忿怒形，頭髮上聳，頭戴羊冠，右手執箭羽，左手持矢根，將此箭彎成弓形。

General Sandira: name means 螺女形 shell female form. The flower garland on his head is shaped like a shell.

瑚底羅大將——此大將的本地為虛空藏菩薩，是午時之守護神。通身赤色，現忿怒形，頭戴馬冠，右手把三股戟，左手持螺貝。

General Indra: capable God 能天主，亦云地持; also called Ground Maintaining.

因達羅大將——此大將的本地為地藏菩薩，是巳時之守護神。通身赤色，頭戴蛇冠，右手屈肘開掌，置于胸邊，左手執三股戟。

General Pajra: means whale 鯨魚. He's as big as a whale.

波夷羅大將——此大將的本地為文殊菩薩，是辰時之守護神。身呈白肉色，容貌忿怒，頭戴龍冠，右手屈臂，作拳攜矢，左手持弓。

General Makura: means python dragon 蟒龍

摩虎羅大將——此大將的本地為藥師如來，是卯時之守護神。通身青色，稍作忿怒相，頭髮赤色上聳，頭戴兔冠，右手做拳當腰，左手持斧。

General Kinnara: one horn. His head has one horn.

真達羅大將——此大將的本地為普賢菩薩，是寅時之守護神。現笑怒容貌，頭戴虎冠，右手捧寶珠，左手把寶棒。

General Catura: means adorned flag 嚴幟，又云殺者; it also means killer.

招杜羅大將——此大將的本地為金剛手菩薩，是丑時之守護神。通身赤色，現忿怒形，頭戴牛冠，右手把橫劍，左手開掌執劍尖。

and General Vikarala: meaning good skill 善藝.

毗羯羅大將——此大將的本地為釋迦如來，是子時之守護神。通身青色，現忿怒形，頭戴鼠冠，右手下垂持三鈷，左手作拉右袖之形態。

These twelve great *yaksa* generals, each with a retinue of seven thousand *yaksas* at their command (12 times 7,000 makes 84,000; 12 symbolizes

liberation from the 12 places; 7,000 retinues symbolize turning 轉 the 84,000 dusts with the 84,000 Dharma Doors), **simultaneously raised their voices and addressed the Buddha, "World Honored One! Today, by relying on the Buddha's awesome power, which has drawn us to this Dharma assembly, we are able to hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata! As a result, we are no longer afraid of falling into the three evil destinies. All of us are of one mind to take refuge with the Triple Jewel with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, to the end of our lives. We vow to support all beings and to benefit them. We will teach and benefit them without asking for any reward. We wish to bring abundant benefit to them, so that they may live in peace and bliss.**

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Sutra:

In whatever villages, cities, countries, counties or secluded forests this Sutra circulates, or wherever people receive and uphold the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata and venerate and make offerings to him, we, together with our retinues, will guard and protect them, deliver them from all distress, and fulfill all their wishes. If a person wishes to dispel illnesses and difficulties, he should read or recite this Sutra and tie a five-colored thread into knots, forming the letters of our names. He should untie the knots when his wishes have been fulfilled."

Commentary:

In whatever villages, cities, countries, counties or secluded forests this Sutra circulates, or wherever people receive and uphold and recite the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata and venerate and make offerings to him, we, together with our retinues, will guard and protect them, deliver them from all distress, and fulfill all their wishes. If a person wishes to dispel illnesses and difficulties, he should read or recite this Sutra, the *Sutra of the Merit and Virtue of the Past Vows of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata*, and tie a five-colored thread into knots, forming the letters of our names. He should untie the knots when his wishes have been fulfilled."

Villages (six entrances), **cities** (five skandhas),

countries (18 realms), **counties** (12 places) or **secluded forests** (six dusts).

A five-colored thread symbolizes the five directions, each of which has a demon associated with it. When the five colored thread is tied into knots, it brings stability to insecure places. Once fulfilled, one should untie the knots in order to release the spirits that were evoked.

Sutra:

At that time, the World Honored One praised the great *yaksa* generals, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed mighty *yaksa* generals! All of you who want to repay the kindness of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, should always benefit beings and bring peace and bliss to them in this way."

Commentary:

1.2) Praise and exhortation to bring benefit and bliss.

At that time, after the *yaksa* generals had vowed to support Medicine Master Buddha and to repay his kindness, **the World Honored One**, Shakyamuni Buddha, **praised the great *yaksa* generals, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed, mighty *yaksa* generals!** It is truly rare for you twelve *yaksa* generals to bring forth such vows. **All of you who want to repay the kindness of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata...** Since the twelve of you have not

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forgotten that Buddha's kindness and wish to repay it, you **should always benefit beings and bring peace and happiness to them in this way.** Never forget your vows to enable living beings to leave suffering and attain bliss."

Sutra:

Then Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what should we call this Dharma Door? How should we uphold it?"

The Buddha told Ananda, "This Dharma Door is called, 'The Merit and Virtue of the Past Vows of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata.' It is also called 'Twelve Spiritual Generals' Vows to Use Spiritual Mantras to Benefit Living Beings.' It is also called, 'Eradicating All Karmic Obstacles.' You should uphold it in this way."

Commentary:

2) Requesting for the name of the Sutra.

Then, after Shakyamuni Buddha had praised the twelve *yaksa* generals, the Venerable Ananda, said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what should we call this Dharma Door? What should this Dharma-door be called? How should we uphold it? How should we receive, uphold, read, and recite it?"

Dharma Door: Dharma is the standard for worldly people 世人準則. Door is for the multitudes and

sages to enter the Way gate 眾聖入道之通住處

The Buddha compassionately told Ananda, "This Dharma Door, this Sutra, is called, 'The Sutra of the Merit and Virtue of the Past Vows of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata.' It is also called, 'Twelve Spiritual Generals' Vows to Use Spiritual Mantras to Benefit Living Beings.' This Sutra describes how the twelve *yaksa* generals vow to benefit beings by using "Medicine Master's True Words for Anointing the Crown" to dispel all enmity, hatred, and retribution for evil deeds. It is also called, 'Eradicating All Karmic Obstacles.' You should uphold it in this way. You should receive and uphold this Sutra sincerely, for it can remove all karmic hindrances."

Sutra:

When the Bhagavan had finished speaking, all the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, great Hearers, kings, ministers, Brahmans, laypeople, gods, dragons, *yaksas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, humans, and non-human beings, and all the great assembly, on hearing what the Buddha had said, were greatly delighted. They received it with faith and respectfully practiced it.

Commentary:

3) Finally, carrying out the Buddha's command.

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When the Bhagavan, the Buddha, had finished speaking, all the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas—the great Bodhisattvas among all the Bodhisattvas, the great Hearers—the great Arhats who cultivated the Four Noble Truths of suffering, accumulation, cessation, and the Way—the kings, ministers, Brahmans, laypeople possessing ten kinds of virtue, the gods, dragons, *yaksas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*. These are the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits.

Humans and non-human beings, and all the great assembly, on hearing what the Buddha had said, which was later set down as this Sutra, were greatly delighted. Everyone was happy, and they received it with faith and respectfully practiced it. They had no doubts about the Dharma-door that the Buddha had spoken, and they practiced it throughout their lives.

If you listen to this sutra and spontaneously give rise to joy and bliss, if you bring forth the faith and accept and receive, then you will certainly certify to the fruition.

The BuddhaDharma emphasizes practice.

The Medicine Master Buddha Dharma Door consists of:

1. Reciting his name
2. Making offerings
3. Reciting the sutra
4. Reciting the mantra

If you practice this Dharma Door, you'll obtain the following benefits:

1. Realize Buddhahood
2. Turn from the deviant toward the proper
3. Obtain all sorts of precepts
4. Obtain the four seekings: long life, son/daughter, wealth and riches, official position.
5. Obtain the limitless: never lacking in the essentials
6. Eradicate all suffering
7. Turn from female to male
8. Good birth: easy birth, smart, good-looking children
9. Rebirth: a) In human realm: have riches and blessings; b) In the heavens: never fall to the evil paths; c) To the Western Bliss Pure Land; d) To the Eastern Vaidurya Pure Land.
10. Obtain liberation from the evil paths: escape from the evil paths and be born in the human realm to cultivate and quickly accomplish the Bodhisattva path.

China's 泉州 Quan Zhou 承天寺 Receiving
Heaven Temple 覺圓法師 Enlightenment
Perfectured Dharma Master: Before leaving the home
life his body was weak and he was often sick. Two
years after leaving the home life he was still
afflicted with internal illnesses, bound by suffering
and things were not smooth. Afterwards he heard of
the Medicine Master Buddha Dharma Door. He
single-mindedly recited, upheld the Buddha's name
and repented vigorously. His body became healthy

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and all undertakings went well. The Dharma Master prepared Medicine Master Buddha Dharma Door write-ups. He assembled sutras, explanations and ceremonies etc. to print and distribute to repay the Buddha's kindness. Those of us who also benefit from this Dharma should follow suit and help propagate this Dharma Door.

This concludes the general explanation of the *Sutra of the Merit and Virtue of the Past Vows of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata*.