

*Pure Land of the Patriarchs*

---

Excerpts From

**Master Han-Shan's**  
**Dream Roamings**

Translated by

**Dharma Master Lok To**

*Pure Land of the Patriarchs* is a translation of selected passages from the sermons and writings of Zen Master Han-shan Te-ch'ing, one of the three "dragon-elephants" of Ming Buddhism. These passages originally appeared in the Han-Shan Ta-Shih Meng-Yu Chi (Collection of Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings).

### **About the Author**

Elder Zen Master Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing (1546-1623) was one of the three "dragon-elephants", or most illustrious monks, during the final years of the Ming dynasty – "an age of corruption, internal oppression and external weakness" (Sung-peng Hsu).

Originally trained in the Scriptural Studies school as well as in Zen, he came to excel in other traditions as well, achieving great renown as a teacher and exponent of the Avatamsaka Sutra. He is particularly credited with reviving the Zen school in China.

Born to a humble family, he came to mingle with the greatest political figures of China through his acquaintance with the Empress Dowager. This master/disciple relationship led to his imprisonment, banishment and laicization. Only toward the end of his life was he rehabilitated.

In the following excerpts from his sermons and writings, Master Han-Shan recommended the dual practice of Pure Land and Zen, emphasizing self-cultivation and personal effort. Readers unfamiliar with the Pure Land school are referred to Appendix I for an overview of Pure Land teachings.

Minh Thanh & P.D. Leigh, editors  
Van Hien Study Group  
Rye Brook: Feb. 1994

# Introduction

All teachings in the Tripitaka (Buddhist Canon) are tools to induce sentient beings to sever attachment. To those attached to Emptiness, Buddha Sakyamuni taught Existence to break that grasp. To those attached to Existence, He taught Emptiness so as to loosen that grasp. To those grasping at both Emptiness and Existence, He taught “neither Emptiness nor Existence” to break that grasp. Lastly, to those grasping at “neither Emptiness nor Existence,” He taught both Emptiness and Existence to break that attachment. <sup>(1)</sup>

In short, the purpose is to draw all sentient beings away from attachments. That is the Buddhist teaching of salvation. There is no other way to return to the source [the Mind], though there are many different expedient methods. We Buddhist students and practitioners should not become attached to these methods. When thoughts arise in our mind discriminating between what method is right and what method is wrong, that is against the purpose of the Buddhas and is a deviation from the Buddhist path.

For example, when Buddha Sakyamuni taught the Dharma of Emptiness, His message was not that it was the opposite of Existence, but rather that it was Truth and Reality. What are Truth and Reality? Let me quote the T'ien T'ai Patriarch Chih I:

When one dharma is empty, then all dharmas are empty; there is no separate Non-Emptiness. Without Non-Emptiness to contrast with Emptiness, Emptiness itself is unattainable [i.e., does not exist].

Similarly, when Buddha Sakyamuni taught Existence, this was not the opposite of Emptiness, but was rather to say:

When one dharma exists, then all dharmas exist; there is no separate Non-Existence. Without Non-Existence to contrast with Existence, Existence itself is unattainable.

We should understand the true meaning of Emptiness and Existence. Nothing we say about Emptiness or Existence is attainable (i.e., truly valid). And since this is so, why are we still attached to them?

The Great Master Han-Shan thoroughly understood the goal of the Buddhas. In tune with the minds of the Patriarchs, he spread the Dharma (teaching), grasping at neither Emptiness nor Existence, neither Non-Emptiness nor Non-Existence – thereby manifesting the Middle Way. Thus, he promoted the cultivation of both Zen and Pure Land, pointing to the non-duality of Emptiness and Existence. That teaching is “Wonderful Enlightenment” (see Glossary).

When practicing Zen, at the beginning of cultivation the expedient of Emptiness is used. But Zen does not mean Emptiness, nor does it mean Existence. Pure Land uses the expedient of Existence at the start of practice, but Pure Land does not mean Existence nor does it mean Emptiness. When Sakyamuni Buddha spoke of Emptiness and Existence, it was to reach human beings of different capacities. The Dharma itself transcends Emptiness and Existence. All methods taught by Buddha Sakyamuni are like prescriptions; since people suffer from different diseases, they need many kinds of prescriptions. It does not matter whether the medicine is expensive or cheap. As long as it is effective, it is a good medicine.

Those who practice Zen or Pure Land should all understand this truth: “all Dharma methods are equal and none is superior or inferior.” No one who really understands the deep meaning of the Dharma can have the kind of obstinate prejudice that sees inferiority and superiority between the various Buddhist methods. No one with that kind of obstinate prejudice can gain any real benefit from the Dharma.

For example, the Zen school teaches meditation on a “hua-t’ou” (wato). Hua-t’ou means “before words,” before a single thought rises up in one’s mind. <sup>(2)</sup> What is there before a single thought rises up? It is No Thought. No thought is one’s own Pure Mind, one’s own Buddha Nature, one’s own Original Face. Meditating on a hua-t’ou does not mean repeating it, because the repetition of a hua-t’ou is also a great false thought. Rather, to recognize one’s own Original Face is the purpose of a hua-t’ou.

The Pure Land school teaches Buddha Recitation – the repetition of Amitabha Buddha’s name. However, it does not teach merely to recite by mouth, like a parrot mindlessly squawking out words. Buddha Recitation centered on the mind is real Buddha Recitation. This is because Mind is Buddha, Buddha is Mind. As the sutras state: “The Mind, Buddhas and Sentient Beings are undifferentiated and equal.” Outside of Mind, there is no Buddha, outside of Buddha, there is no Mind. Buddha is Mind, Mind is Buddha. If a practitioner recites the Buddha’s name in this manner, he will gradually arrive at the stage where there is neither Mind as subject nor Buddha as object. And there is neither a subject reciting nor an object of recitation. This is the stage before the arising of a single thought. This is the hua-t’ou and this is one’s own Original Face. If the practitioner can really understand the Dharma as transcending subject and object, what difference is there between Zen and Pure Land?

Ever since Sakyamuni Buddha held up a flower and the Elder Mahakasyapa smiled, the method of Mind-to-Mind transmission, “without a word and outside the Teachings [of the Buddhist Canon],” has been the traditional way to pass the succession from patriarch to patriarch in the Zen school. <sup>(3)</sup> Since Bodhidharma came from the West (i.e., India), there has been continuous transmission, up to and including the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-Neng. In later generations, each Zen patriarch relied on his own techniques to train his students and followers. There are many methods, such as using Mind to seal Mind, meditating on a hua-t’ou, exploring one’s Original Face, pondering “who is the one reciting the Buddha’s name,” or meditating on the single word “Wu” (“no”) or on any of the other 1700 kung-ans (koans). However, the only purpose of all these teachings is to allow the practitioner to let go of everything, from body to mind, remove all false thought and rid himself of grasping and attachment. A practitioner who simply repeats a hua-t’ou or meditates on a kung-an without understanding its real purpose would be wasting his time and energy.

The Dharma of Pure Land, taught by Sakyamuni Buddha without being requested, <sup>(4)</sup> expresses His great compassion. The magnificent realm and adornments of the Western Pure Land are described in detail in the Amitabha Sutra. The Pure Land Dharma is extolled by all Buddhas in the Ten Directions and cultivated by Bodhisattvas and Patriarchs. For example, the great Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara (Kuan-Yin), Mahasthamaprapta (Ta Shih Chih), Manjusri, and Samantabhadra all advocated and followed Pure Land. In ancient India, the Patriarchs Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu, among others, all promoted Pure Land teachings. After the Dharma was transmitted to China, many Zen masters and great patriarchs promoted Pure Land. How perfect and lofty is the wonderful Dharma of Pure Land, taught by Sakyamuni Buddha and extolled by all Buddhas throughout the Ten Directions! We, on the other hand, are merely ordinary beings who have not yet broken away from ignorance and defilement. Yet,

surprisingly, there are arrogant individuals who look down on this Pure Land Dharma.

The Avatamsaka Sutra includes a well-known episode concerning the youth Sudhana who journeyed to visit fifty-three Virtuous Teachers. The first one he met, the monk Cloud of Virtue, introduced him to the very important teaching of Pure Land. From there, Sudhana continued his visits until he had covered all fifty-three Teachers, the last of whom was the great Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. The latter also taught him the wonderful Pure Land Dharma method. Thus, we should understand that Pure Land is crucial in this Dharma-Ending Age. As disciples of the Buddhas, we should begin practicing this Dharma as early as possible.

In summary, Pure Land is Zen, Zen is Pure Land. In the past, all Buddhas throughout the Ten Directions relied on these two methods to practice and attain Buddhahood. All Buddhas in the present are likewise dependent on them to practice and attain Buddhahood. The same is true for all Buddhas in the future. These two Dharma methods are specially set forth in the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Lotus Sutra and the Surangama Sutra, along with many other sutras that exhort people to study and practice.

*Master Lok To*  
New York: May 1993

Excerpts From

# Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings

---

## *Zen and Pure Land*

*(Talk at the Lotus Society of Great Enlightenment)*

When Buddha Sakyamuni dwelled in the world, He spread the Dharma (teaching) and converted sentient beings. The entire fourfold assembly (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen) obtained the benefit of the Dharma. He taught people according to their capacities, using different expedient methods so that all could obtain happiness and wisdom. As when there are timely rains and all trees and grass receive moisture and thrive, so all sentient beings derive benefits and grow by themselves.

There are numerous different methods, but they all spring from the same source. Since sentient beings all possess the Buddha Nature, there is no one who cannot be rescued. Since they have the same intrinsic Mind, no one is incapable of cultivation. But, sentient beings are confused and lacking in wisdom. Moreover, they need true teachers to guide them. Therefore, they are bound to drown in the ocean of suffering.

When Hui-Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of Zen, came to see the Fifth Patriarch, he was asked, "Where do you come from?" Hui-Neng replied, "I come from Ling-Nan (South China)." The Fifth Patriarch asked, "Do the southern barbarians also have the Buddha Nature?" Hui-Neng answered, "People distinguish between North and South, but the Buddha Nature has no North or South."

Since these words were uttered, as thunder to wake up all who hibernate, they have spread across the world. But not many people understand and very few have awakened. It is more than a thousand years now since Zen came out of southern China and was spread across the land by the Sixth Patriarch, but many people still do not [fully] understand it. Therefore, the Buddha Recitation Samadhi, singleminded recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name and visualization of the Buddha are still taught. <sup>(5)</sup>



To practice Pure Land, one must abhor the condition of suffering [in the Saha world] and seek to be reborn in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. One must practice Buddha Recitation every day, bow to Amitabha Buddha and recite sutras, to eliminate evil karma. Practitioners must be firm in their faith, reduce their evil karma day after day and make a vow to be reborn in the Western Pure Land. Anyone who can really practice in this manner, even though he may be living in this Saha world of Birth and Death, will have a meaningful goal for his practice. <sup>(6)</sup>



The word "Buddha" means enlightened. All sentient beings have the same Buddha Nature. Therefore, everyone can be enlightened. One who is confused about the Buddha Nature is a

sentient being. One who is awakened about the Buddha Nature is called Buddha. When one recites the Buddha's name, Buddha Amitabha is one's Self-Nature, the Pure Land is the blissful land of one's own mind. Anyone who can singlemindedly recite the Buddha's name in thought after thought and concentrate deeper and deeper will always find Amitabha Buddha appearing in his own mind. It is not necessary to seek the Pure Land far away, ten billion Buddha lands beyond. <sup>(7)</sup> Therefore, if the mind is pure, the land is pure. If the mind is defiled, the land is defiled. If an evil thought comes to mind, then many obstacles appear. If a good thought arises, peace is everywhere. Thus, heaven and hell are all in one's own mind.

All good men and women should ponder their future and the great matter of Birth and Death. Time passes swiftly and once the human body is lost, it cannot be recovered even in ten thousand eons. <sup>(8)</sup> It is like the sun and moon passing across the sky as fast as the fingers of weavers at the loom. Time cannot wait for you ... When the final moment comes, it will be too late for regrets, as they will do you no good. So you should all strive to cultivate.



The sutras teach that ordinary people, sages and saints are all equal. There is no difference [in their intrinsic nature]. Only the defilement or purity of mind is different. For this reason, it is said that "Mind, Buddhas and sentient beings are no different from one another." A Pure Mind is Buddha, a defiled mind is sentient being. Buddhas and sentient beings differ only in the extinction or non-extinction of defilements of the mind.

The mind is inherently clean and pure, but it is obstructed by greed, hatred, stupidity, arrogance, the five desires and many kinds of delusions. Therefore, those with such minds are called sentient beings. If defilements are discarded and the mind becomes pure, that is Buddhahood. It is not necessary to depend on others.

However, all sentient beings bear heavy karma and stubborn afflictions from time immemorial, and these are very difficult to purify. To do so requires cultivation, such as [serene, reflective] meditation, working on a hua-t'ou or Buddha Recitation. <sup>(9)</sup> So you see, there are many expedient ways to practice, but all are medicines to treat the diseases of the mind. For example, a mirror, intrinsically bright, cannot reflect anything if it is covered with dust. To restore its brightness, a cleaning agent (remedy) is required. Yet the cleanser itself is also dust, though it can rid other things of dust. Once the mirror is bright, there is no further need for the cleanser. This is like gold in its ore, covered with the dirt and dust of sand and stone. After it is smelted and pure gold appears, there is no need to smelt it again.

It is difficult to rid oneself of the defiled mind characteristic of sentient beings. However, it can be done through diligent practice. When this is accomplished, the bright and undefiled mind appears. It is in this sense that all sentient beings are said to be inherently Buddhas. This does not mean that in the midst of afflictions and defilement, you can go around calling yourself a Buddha!

Sitting in meditation and working on a hua-t'ou are important methods for illuminating the mind. Unfortunately, very few people nowadays practice diligently enough. This is because they have shallow roots and cannot concentrate on practice. Furthermore, without a good teacher to direct them, they are easily led astray.



We should, therefore, practice both Buddha Recitation and Zen. This is a proper and safe approach. One who can practice Buddha Recitation and then observe where Amitabha Buddha comes from and where He goes will, over a period of time, come to understand what Amitabha Buddha represents. This will allow his innate, bright wisdom to flow forth. This is no different

from meditating on a kung-an (koan) or hua-t'ou. But sincere practice and hard work are necessary.

If someone with false thoughts dismisses hard work, seeks leisure day in and day out and does not consider practice important, he will be confused until the end of his life. Anyone who thinks that laziness and false thoughts are enjoyable is not misleading himself in this life alone; even at the end of many eons he will still be in confusion.

If you have an affinity for Buddha Recitation, try to practice it. In the midst of afflictions and defilement, one utterance of the Buddha's name is like the proverbial gem that purifies even the most polluted water. As stated in the sutras: if you purify water by letting sand and mud settle to the bottom so that pure water appears, that is the first step toward overcoming "guest dust" afflictions. <sup>(10)</sup> When all sand and mud are removed and only pure water remains, that is the same as breaking away from all ignorance and delusion forever. Thus, you can practice Buddha Recitation silently by yourself without fear of the least mistake.

If you can really separate yourself from defilement or, as the sutras say, if the mind is pure and bright and you have arrived at the stage where you have no obstacles put in your way by "guest dust" afflictions, not only will Amitabha Buddha come to lead you to rebirth in the Pure Land, but all Buddhas throughout the Ten Directions will praise you.



### *The Important Dharma of Pure Land*

The Dharma of Buddha Recitation is for the purpose of achieving rebirth in the Pure Land, thus ending the cycle of Birth and Death. This is a most crucial matter. Therefore, sentient beings are urged to practice Buddha Recitation. Unfortunately, people today understand only that Buddha Recitation can lead to the end of Birth and Death, without understanding where the root of Birth and Death lies. How should you practice Buddha Recitation so as to end the cycle of Birth and Death? If you do not sever the root of Birth and Death, how can you expect to end that cycle?

What is the root of Birth and Death? An ancient master has said:

If your evil karma were not heavy, you would not have been born in the Saha world. If love-attachment is not severed, you cannot be reborn in the Pure Land.

Therefore, we know that love-attachment is the root of Birth and Death. All sentient beings are subject to the suffering of Birth and Death because of the affliction of love-attachment. The root of this attachment does not come from this life alone, nor indeed from one, two, three or four previous lives. Rather it stems from time without beginning, birth after birth, death after death. Abandoning one life only to reappear in another life, we are always swayed by love-attachment, up to our present lifetime. Thinking back, when did you have a single thought not tied to this root of love-attachment? The seeds of this love-attachment have accumulated over long eons and are planted very deep. Therefore, birth after birth, death after death, the cycle never stops. For now, you should direct your mind to Buddha Recitation, seeking only to be reborn in the Pure Land. If one part of your mind is geared to Buddha Recitation while the other is tied to Birth and Death, even if you continue this recitation until the final moment, you will only see that you are still rooted in love-attachment, still in the cycle of Birth and Death. At that time, you will realize that such Buddha Recitation is useless. You may then complain that Buddha Recitation does not bring results, but it will be too late for regrets.



I urge those who practice Buddha Recitation to understand first that love-attachment is the root of Birth and Death. Buddha Recitation requires that you sever love-attachment in thought after thought. During recitation at home, when you see your son or daughter or grandchildren, or your material possessions, you are attached to all of them. Thus, everything and every thought is a recipe for Birth and Death. You may recite the Buddha's name, but if the root of love-attachment is in your mind and you never lose this for one moment, you need not wonder why you cannot concentrate on it! <sup>(11)</sup>

When the mind is filled with attachments, Buddha Recitation remains superficial. One part of the mind is practicing Buddha Recitation while the other is increasingly filled with love-attachment. If thoughts of children and grandchildren are in the forefront of your mind, the mind trying to recite the Buddha's name cannot resist the mind of love, and thus you cannot sever love-attachment. This being so, how can you expect to put an end to the cycle of Birth and Death?

Because this condition of attachment stems from many previous lifetimes, for fruitful Buddha Recitation, just start in the present, even though you may not be wholly familiar with the method nor have a fully sincere mind. If you have no power and no control over yourself now, you will have no control during the final moments of your life either.

Therefore, I would like to urge all of you: if you really want to recite the Buddha's name and put an end to Birth and Death, <sup>(12)</sup> cut off the root of Birth and Death in thought after thought. Then, Birth and Death will end in thought after thought. It is not advisable to wait till the end of your life to do this. I urge you to do your best. Bear in mind that everything is Birth and Death. To end the cycle of Birth and Death in your current lifetime, concentrate on reciting the Buddha's name in thought after thought. If you practice like this every moment and still do not end the cycle of Birth and Death, then all the Buddhas would be lying. So whether you are a monk or a layman, just keep Birth and Death at the forefront of your mind. This is the method for ending Birth and Death and there is no more wonderful method than this.



Practice Buddha Recitation with your own mind. To recite the Buddha's name is to recite your own mind, thought after thought, without interruption. Buddha and Mind are the same. Both subject and object are still and empty. This is called reciting one's own mind, reciting one's own Buddha. If you miss one pure thought, you fall into the karma of demons.



Many people following the current fashion of Zen think of it as the supreme Dharma. They look down on Pure Land and do not practice it. Because they delight in fame, they learn some words and sentences from ancient sages so that they can talk smoothly and eulogize one another. The urge to enter the Dharma doors (i.e., to cultivate) is in decline. These people not only lack real practice, they even deprecate the Mahayana sutras, claiming that the sutras are mere words and need not be read. Though such persons may have some mundane knowledge, they cannot save themselves. It is really terrible. Most of them do not understand the Mahayana sutras, do not understand that there are many expedient methods for teaching sentient beings, do not know the meaning of the expression: "Everything returns to oneness, but there are many expedient methods that lead us to an understanding of the Truth." They only know that the Zen Patriarchs stressed Awakening. Yet the original intent of the awakened mind is to end Birth and Death. Is this not also the very purpose of Buddha Recitation?

Many Zen practitioners fail to escape the cycle of Birth and Death, while Pure Land followers find it easy to escape that cycle. What is the reason for this? It is because to practice Zen, you must stop the thought process, while to recite the Buddha's name, you must concentrate on

pure thoughts. Since sentient beings have been mired in false thinking for untold eons, it is very difficult to detach themselves from it [and thus end the thought process]. Buddha Recitation, on the other hand, changes impure thoughts to pure thoughts, fighting poison with poison to purify one's own thoughts. <sup>(13)</sup> Therefore, in Zen practice it is difficult to attain Awakening, while Buddha Recitation makes it easy to reach that goal. If you really want to end Birth and Death in one lifetime, concentrate on Buddha Recitation. There is no need to worry any further.



People today think of the Dharma of Pure Land as an expedient teaching. Little do they realize that it is also a wonderful teaching. Take the Great Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, whose teaching encompasses the whole Dharma Realm (cosmos). He made ten Great Vows directed toward the Pure Land. The Patriarch Asvaghosa relied on numerous Mahayana sutras to write the Treatise on the Awakening of the Faith, showing sentient beings the way to the Pure Land. Zen patriarchs in China are involved in transmission of the lamp (Mind-to-Mind transmission). While they may not always refer to the Pure Land, if after becoming awakened and bringing an end to the cycle of Birth and Death, they do not turn to the Pure Land, would that not be nihilism?

The eminent Zen Master Yung-Ming collected passages from the entire Tripitaka (Buddhist Canon) demonstrating that to point to the Mind is to return to the Pure Land. During the Dharma-Ending Age, many Zen masters glorify the Western Pure Land. Moreover, the Pure Land Dharma was preached by Sakyamuni Buddha himself without being requested and is extolled by all Buddhas throughout the Ten Directions. Are not the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Patriarchs more worthy than a few defiled sentient beings?



One who really wants to practice Pure Land should not consult others. He should only ask himself how serious he is about Birth and Death. If he is as serious about ending Birth and Death as he is about extinguishing a fire on his head, then he must resolve to devote all his energies to solving this problem.

For example, if a person becomes hopelessly ill, suffering greatly, and someone should find a panacea that will treat this illness, and if this person is of the right frame of mind, believes in this medicine and takes it right away, letting the body sweat out its ills, he will recover quickly. He will then naturally believe that this is a wonderful medicine. Similarly, anyone who sincerely believes in the Dharma of Pure Land and practices Buddha Recitation until the final moment will discover that it is true and wonderful. It is not necessary to ask others.

I urge all of you to exert yourself and not be misled.



### *People Should Practice Pure Land*

Buddha Sakyamuni said: “There are many expedient ways to cultivate, and each can lead to an end to the cycle of Birth and Death. Reciting the Buddha’s name seeking rebirth in the Pure Land is a shortcut.” <sup>(14)</sup> The wonderful and complete teachings of the Avatamsaka and Lotus sutras, as well as the sublime conduct of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, all point to and lead to the Pure Land. Similarly, from the Patriarchs Asvaghosa and Nagarjuna to the great Chinese masters Yung-Ming and Chung-Feng, all are in favor of Pure Land.

This Dharma has been adopted by people of all capacities and by the Fourfold Assembly (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen). It can be practiced to good effect by all people whether of dull or sharp capacities. It is not limited to those who are not of the deepest roots.

It is taught in the sutras that if you want to purify the Buddha land, you should purify your own mind first. If you want to have pure karma, you must first purify your own mind. To purify your own mind, you should first maintain pure discipline (keep the precepts). <sup>(15)</sup> Given the three evils of the body, four evils of speech and three evils of the mind, there are altogether ten evil karmas which are the causes of suffering in the Triple Realm.

From now on, you must maintain the rules of discipline and keep the three karmas of body, speech and mind pure and clean. Then the mind will be naturally pure. If you do not kill sentient beings, steal or commit adultery, then the karma of body will be pure. If you do not tell lies or use deceitful double meanings and do not indulge in coarse language or frivolous chatter, then the karma of speech will be pure. If you do not allow into mind feelings of covetousness and anger and do not hold perverted views, then the karma of mind will be pure. If you can sever the ten evil karmas forever, the Triple Realm will be cleansed and purified. This is very important for the purification of your own mind.



Once you have a clean and pure mind and have developed an abhorrence for the sufferings of the Saha World, make a vow for rebirth in the Pure Land. Then, practice the right action of Buddha Recitation for the purpose of ending Birth and Death. Block all distractions from outside and concentrate singlemindedly on reciting Amitabha Buddha's name in thought after thought twenty-four hours a day, as though your life depended on it. While you are walking, standing, sitting or reclining, whether you are moving or still, at leisure or busy, you must always be of clear mind without any confused thoughts and must not be affected by intruding conditions from outside. If you can practice over a long period of time, never forgetting Buddha Recitation even in your dreams, reciting gently and continuously, whether asleep or awake, without any distracting thoughts, the realm of the Pure Land will appear before you at the time of death. Then, as a matter of course, you will no longer be bound by the cycle of Birth and Death. Amitabha Buddha will respond by emitting rays of light and lead you to rebirth in the Pure Land.



Singleminded recitation of the Buddha's name is correct action. However, visualization is also needed to make your cultivation more solid. The Meditation Sutra [a basic Pure Land text] states:

Sakyamuni Buddha taught sixteen wonderful visualizations to Queen Vaidehi, so that she could attain rebirth in the Pure Land within one lifetime.

When cultivating alone or in the company of friends, choose one of the sixteen visualizations, depending on your purpose and vows. You may visualize only Buddha Amitabha and the Bodhisattvas or else the realm of the Pure Land with its golden ground and wonderful lotus blossoms. If you keep the object of visualization clearly in mind twenty-four hours a day, whether walking, standing, sitting or reclining, with eyes open or closed, the pure realm will always appear before you. If you can accomplish this, all you need is one recitation of the Buddha's name at the time of death to achieve immediate rebirth in the Pure Land.



It has been said that:

To be born [in the Pure Land] is definitely to be born, but to return [to the Pure Land] is not really to return.

This is the wonderful doctrine of Mind-Only Pure Land. <sup>(16)</sup> If one applies himself in this way, with rigorous discipline, his six senses will be clean and pure, and he will sever evil karma and defilements forever. With the mind-ground pure, visualization and recitation follow in succession and wonderful practice is easily accomplished. The true cause of [rebirth in] the Pure Land is none other than this.

Conversely, as Sakyamuni Buddha taught, if the practitioner only talks about Buddha Recitation and rebirth in the Pure Land but does not hold to the necessary discipline or sever afflictions – while constantly having defiled thoughts and an evil mind – he can never succeed. For this reason, he should maintain discipline as the foundation, make a vow as a contributing factor and engage in Buddha Recitation or visualization as correct practice. If the practitioner cultivates in this manner and does not achieve rebirth in the Pure Land, Buddha Sakyamuni would be guilty of false speech.



### *The Important Doctrines of Pure Land and Zen*

Those who engage in the [dual practice] of Buddha Recitation and Zen should take the name of Amitabha Buddha as a hua-t'ou [or kung-an]. During Buddha Recitation, you should ask “who is it that recites the Buddha’s name?” If you ask and investigate again and again, there will come a time when all false thoughts suddenly cease. No such thoughts can arise, or if they do, they will be quickly suppressed. You will have only a single, clear thought, like a bright sun in the sky, and never engender any false thought. The confused mind will reign no more. Rather, you will experience stillness and awareness. The Great Master Yung-Chia said:

To be still and alert is correct, while to be still and unaware of what is going on around you is wrong. To be alert and still is correct, while to be alert but filled with disturbing thoughts is wrong.

If stillness does not lead to lack of mindfulness and awareness does not lead to confused thinking, then awareness and stillness will flow together. You let go of both “sinking” and “floating” until not a single thought arises in mind, not of past, present or future; then, suddenly the pitch blackness cracks and you see your Original Face. Body, mind and world are immediately at peace, like illusory flowers falling from the sky. <sup>(17)</sup> Everything in the Ten Directions is bright because a great light is shining everywhere. When you arrive at this stage, this complete brightness is always present in your daily life and you will no longer have any doubts. You will believe your own mind, which is intrinsically thus. <sup>(18)</sup> Then your mind is no different from the Buddhas’ and Patriarchs’. When you reach this level, you will no longer grasp at Emptiness. If you grasp at Emptiness, you will fall into evil and heterodox views. Nor will you grasp at Existence or at the Wonderful. If you grasp at Existence, you will also fall into evil ways.



If during practice, you find some realm, whether wholesome or evil, appearing in the mind, you must not grasp at it but just let it be. Then the realm will vanish. You should neither fear evil realms nor take delight in auspicious realms when they appear, for this is the action of demons. If worry or joy arise, these are the views of demons. You should understand that these realms come from your own mind and not from outside. You must understand that our minds are intrinsically clean and pure, without a single dharma, neither confused nor awakened. We belong neither to this world nor to the realm of the holy, nor to any other realm. But, because we are at present confused, we must cultivate to reduce ignorance and bad habits.

If anyone could open up his own mind – originally bright, all-encompassing, clean and pure – that would be Wonderful Suchness and there would be no need for practice. However, because today’s cultivators have not yet seen their Self-Nature (Mind), they must practice diligently in order to reach the stage where they can end the cycle of Birth and Death.



Buddha Sakyamuni taught the Dharma of Mind. There are countless Dharma methods, but they are all for the purpose of awakening the mind. The very important method of Zen has been established by some Patriarchs, but Buddha Sakyamuni Himself taught the Bodhisattvas of the Three Worthy Positions and the Ten Stages [that is, all Bodhisattvas] the crucial method of Buddha Recitation to attain Buddhahood. In short, practice Buddha Recitation to become a Buddha. The Bodhisattvas of the Ten Stages have already attained the level of True Thusness. Can you say that they are not awakened? Yet even they can never depart from Mindfulness of the Buddhas, the Dharma and the Sangha. (Mindfulness of the Buddhas = Buddha Recitation; see also note 29).

[In the Avatamsaka Sutra,] the youth Sudhana visited fifty-three Good Spiritual Advisors. The first was the monk Cloud of Virtue, who taught him the liberation method of Buddha Recitation. The last one he visited was the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, who taught him that to attain Wonderful Enlightenment, he need only turn towards the Western Pure Land, behold the Tathagata of Infinite Light (Amitabha Buddha) and receive a prediction of Enlightenment. Take note of this: even the supreme teaching of the Avatamsaka Sutra, which encompasses the entire Dharma realm, also promotes Buddha Recitation. The Bodhisattvas of the Ten Stages, even those who have already attained True Thusness, still practice mindfulness of the Buddhas (Buddha Recitation).



There are those in this Dharma-Ending Age who dare to deprecate Buddha Recitation as an inferior practice. But why should they think that Zen and Pure Land are different? Such people lack knowledge and fail to understand the intent of the Buddhas. They are creating a false dichotomy. According to Mind-Only Pure Land, if the mind is pure, the land is pure. Therefore, if you are a beginning Zen practitioner and have not yet awakened, unless you engage in Buddha Recitation, you have no means of purifying your mind. <sup>(19)</sup> But, a pure mind is precisely an awakened mind.

Even Bodhisattvas who are already awakened still practice Buddha Recitation, because without Buddha Recitation (mindfulness of the Buddhas) they cannot attain correct Enlightenment [see Glossary, “Awakening vs. Enlightenment”]. We know that the Patriarchs awakened their minds through mindfulness of the Buddhas. Anyone who practices Buddha Recitation single-mindedly and without distraction will find that all afflictions vanish. With their minds thus bright, they are called awakened. Look at it this way: Buddha Recitation is Zen. No Bodhisattva abandons mindfulness of the Buddhas after awakening. None of the Patriarchs abandoned the Pure Land either. Thus, Buddha Recitation is Zen, Zen is Buddha Recitation.

Since ancient times, this question has remained unsettled; I want to speak out now and shatter the view that Pure Land and Zen are different. If all the Buddhas were to appear in the world, they would say the same thing: to abandon this Pure Land Dharma and embrace false words is the work of demons and not the true Dharma.



*Pure Land Can Save All Sentient Beings  
in the Ocean of Suffering*

Buddha Sakyamuni specially taught the Pure Land Dharma to rescue all sentient beings in the Saha world. He enjoined people to recite Amitabha Buddha's name and make a vow for rebirth in the Pure Land. This wonderful Dharma was taught in the Amitabha Sutra and extolled by all the Buddhas in the Ten Directions. Pure Land is a special teaching <sup>(20)</sup> adapted to all sentient beings in this Dharma-Ending Age.

There are many different methods of Pure Land practice. If a group of people practice together in a temple, there is a procedure set forth in the Pure Land commentaries. An individual who practices the Dharma of Pure Land alone bows to the Buddhas and recites either the Amitabha or the Diamond Sutra once each session. He then recites Amitabha Buddha's name five to ten thousand times, after which he makes a vow to be reborn in the Pure Land, saying:

I wish to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, with the nine grades of lotus blossoms as my parents. When the lotuses are in full bloom, I shall see Buddha Amitabha and be enlightened to the Absolute Truth, with non-retrogressing Bodhisattvas as my companions.

This is done in the morning and then in exactly the same manner in the evening. Apart from these sessions, during the entire day, the practitioner just recites the Buddha's name and keeps Buddha Amitabha in mind, in thought after thought, without interruption, holding the name of Amitabha as his very life. Whether walking, standing, sitting or reclining, he always recites Buddha Amitabha's name. If he should meet with adversity or favorable circumstances and is moved to anger or happiness, he need only concentrate on reciting Buddha Amitabha's name for the anger and defilement to cease.

Since defilement is the root of Birth and Death, the practitioner should recite the Buddha's name to rid himself of defilement and avert the suffering of Birth and Death. If one who recites the Buddha's name rids himself of defilement, he can end the cycle of Birth and Death. If he can overcome defilement during Buddha Recitation, he can overcome it in his dreams. If he can overcome it in his dreams, he can overcome it during illness as well. And if he can overcome defilement when ill, he can overcome it in his final moments. Thus it is very clear that he will be reborn in the Pure Land.

This is not difficult, but a sincere, earnest mind is necessary for ending the cycle of Birth and Death. In reciting Amitabha Buddha's name, think of nothing else over an extended period of time, and you will then obtain peace, freedom and bliss beyond anything found in this world. All practitioners should understand this method. Anyone who can recite the Buddha's name and practice the Dharma is a true practitioner. Anyone who abandons this method will find no better way to achieve this goal.



Do not listen to people with false teachings, lest you develop wrong views. There is a wonderful method that I would like to teach all of you: picture a great lotus, shaped like a wheel and colored blue, yellow, red or white. During meditation and Buddha Recitation, always visualize this lotus blossom clearly. Also, think of yourself as sitting on this lotus seat. Think about Amitabha Buddha emitting light, illuminating your own body. While visualizing, do not be bound by walking, standing, sitting or reclining positions. Also, do not be bound by time. Just visualize the Pure Land clearly. Whether your eyes are open or closed, the image should never be blurred. Even in your dreams you should still see Amitabha Buddha, the Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin) and Mahasthamaprapta (Shih Chih) and all other Bodhisattvas sitting each on his own lotus blossom – all radiant and clear.

If the practitioner can visualize the lotus with complete concentration until the final moment, he can end the cycle of Birth and Death. At the time of death, the lotus will appear before him and he will see himself seated upon it. He will also see the three Pure Land Sages, Amitabha, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, coming to lead him to rebirth in the Western Pure Land – never to return to the Saha world, never again to endure the suffering of Birth and Death.

Anyone who practices the Dharma of Pure Land with utmost sincerity will achieve rebirth in the Pure Land in one lifetime. This is not the personal view of this old monk. It is stated many times in the sutras that this is a direct method and the shortest route to the Pure Land. <sup>(21)</sup> One need only take the shortcut of reciting the Buddha's name. Anyone who abandons this wonderful Dharma has no better path to follow.



### *The Reason for Teaching the Dharma of Pure Land*

There are three Vehicles in the Dharma [the paths of the Sravakas, Pratyeka Buddhas and Bodhisattvas/Buddhas] for people to study and practice. But my fear about all of them is that if the practitioner cannot achieve results in one lifetime, he may drown in the ocean of Birth and Death, unable to escape. Zen practitioners may end the cycle of Birth and Death in one lifetime. But too many false thoughts and deeply ingrained habits make it difficult to practice Zen.

If one does not attain Enlightenment in this life, he will continue to revolve in the cycle of Birth and Death. Therefore, Sakyamuni Buddha taught the Dharma of Pure Land. It does not matter if one is of superior, average or limited capacities. It does not matter if one is wealthy and in high position, or destitute and humble. As long as he practices this Dharma, he is assured of results in one lifetime. There is no other more expedient or wonderful Dharma than this shortcut of Buddha Recitation.

Why? It is because when we remain in this Saha world, we are in a world filled with suffering. There is the suffering of birth, the suffering of old age, the suffering of disease, the suffering of death, the suffering of unfulfilled wishes, the suffering of meeting with the uncongenial, and so forth; there are so many kinds of suffering. In short, these sufferings are indescribable. Even when a person of high position and wealth seems to find the joys of life, they are all the causes of future suffering. <sup>(22)</sup>

Because all this suffering in the Saha world is very difficult to escape, Sakyamuni Buddha taught the Dharma of Pure Land. In that land all beings live free from suffering and enjoy every bliss; therefore it is called the Land of Utmost Bliss. Because that realm is without defilement, it is called the Pure Land. All beings are born from a lotus blossom; therefore, there is no suffering

of birth. All beings have infinite life; therefore, there is no suffering of old age and death. Food and clothing are provided naturally; therefore, there is no suffering of unfulfilled wishes. Because one is able to join the company of superior beings all gathered in one place, there is no suffering of meeting with the uncongenial. Because that Land is adorned with the Seven Treasures, it is not defiled by rubble or thorns. All this is stated in the Amitabha Sutra and every single detail is true. Those who wish to be reborn in the Pure Land need only concentrate singlemindedly on reciting the Buddha's name, while dedicating all the merits and virtues accumulated day after day toward achieving this goal.

For correct practice, during recitation visualize yourself seated on a lotus blossom. Then, in your final moment, a great lotus will appear before you and you will see Amitabha Buddha emitting light, arriving to lead you to the Pure Land. All you need at that time is a single recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land. You will never again retrogress or drown in the ocean of Birth and Death. This is the result of practicing Pure Land and obtaining the merits of Buddha Recitation.

One who sincerely recites the Buddha's name will not find it necessary to seek Awakening or to see his Self-Nature. It is necessary only to visualize Amitabha Buddha or recite His name. Making donations and offerings to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), as well as accruing other merits by adorning the Buddha lands, are only supporting activities.



However, even if you practice Buddha Recitation and make a vow for rebirth in the Western Pure Land, you must still sever the roots of Birth and Death to ensure rebirth. What are the roots of Birth and Death? Greed and grasping at everything in the world. Many things that bring enjoyment, such as beautiful colors, pleasant sounds, flavors and bodily comforts are causes of suffering. Other causes are anger, hatred, grasping and the delusions of heterodox teachings. Do not believe in them at all. You need only concentrate on Buddha Recitation, recite the Amitabha Sutra twice a day and the Buddha's name a few thousand times or [if you are very fervent] more than ten thousand times, in thought after thought without interruption. This is the hua-t'ou and this is your Original Face.



You might ask, what is life and what comes after death? Those who creates evil causes in life will find the evil realms appearing before them after death. But those who recite the Buddha's name seeking rebirth in the Pure Land will, in their final moments, see the realm of Amitabha Buddha, the Pure Land, appearing before them. The Surangama Sutra states clearly: "Anything that has form is illusory." This is a Zen teaching. All you need is to have a pure, true mind and not be attached to anything – for all phenomena are illusory.

To practice Zen, you must sever all false thoughts, and that is very difficult. To practice Pure Land is to use pure thoughts to transform impure thoughts. When the lotus blossom appears, that is the perfection of your visualization.



There are countless expedient methods, but according to the Buddhas and Patriarchs, the Dharma of Pure Land is particularly important. It is not necessary to understand your own mind or to see your Self-Nature. It is only necessary to recite the Buddha's name. The word "Buddha" means enlightened. If you recite the Buddha's name in thought after thought, never forgetting Him for an instant, then, every thought is an enlightened thought. If your mind forgets Amitabha Buddha, that is not Enlightenment. If you can engage in Buddha Recitation in your



dreams as you do in the daytime, that is constant Enlightenment. *If your mind is not confused in the present, it will not be confused in your final moments, and you will certainly be reborn in the Pure Land.*

END

# Appendix I

## *The Pure Land Tradition*

The goal of all Buddhist practice is to achieve Enlightenment and transcend the cycle of Birth and Death – that is, to attain Buddhahood. In the Mahayana tradition, the precondition for Buddhahood is the Bodhi Mind, the aspiration to achieve Enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, oneself included. <sup>(23)</sup>

Since sentient beings are of different spiritual capacities and inclinations, many levels of teaching and numerous methods were devised in order to reach everyone. Traditionally, the sutras speak of 84,000, i.e., an infinite number of methods, depending on the circumstances, the times and the target audience. All these methods are expedients – different medicines for different individuals with different illnesses at different times. <sup>(24)</sup> Within each method, the success or failure of an individual’s cultivation depends on his depth of practice and understanding, that is, on his mind.

### **A) Self-power, other-power**

Throughout history, the Patriarchs have elaborated various systems to categorize Dharma methods and the sutras in which they are expounded. One convenient division is into methods based on self-effort (self-power) and those that rely on the assistance of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (other-power). <sup>(25)</sup> This distinction is, of course, merely for explanatory purposes, as the Truth is, ultimately, one and indivisible: self-power is other-power, other-power is self-power. <sup>(26)</sup>

Traditionally, most Buddhist schools and methods take the self-power approach: progress along the path of Enlightenment is achieved only through intense and sustained personal effort. Because of the dedication and effort involved, schools of this self-power, self-effort tradition all have a distinct monastic bias. The laity has generally played only a supportive role, with the most spiritually advanced ideally becoming monks and nuns. Best known of these traditions are Theravada and Zen.

Parallel to this, particularly following the development of Mahayana thought and the rise of lay Buddhism, a more flexible tradition eventually arose, combining self-power with other-power – the assistance and support provided by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to sincere seekers of the Way. Most representative of this tradition are the Esoteric and Pure Land schools. However, unlike the former (or for that matter, the Zen school), Pure Land does not stress the master-disciple relationship and de-emphasizes the role of sub-schools, roshis/gurus and rituals. Moreover, the main aim of Pure Land – rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss through the power of Amitabha Buddha’s Vows – is a realistic goal, though to be understood at several levels. Therein lies the appeal and strength of Pure Land. <sup>(27)</sup>

### **B) Pure Land in a Nutshell**

Pure Land is the most popular form of Buddhism in East Asia. Like all Mahayana schools, it requires first and foremost the development of the Bodhi Mind, the aspiration to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. <sup>(28)</sup>

How is Pure Land practiced?

The main form of cultivation is Buddha Recitation, which consists of repeating the words “Amitabha Buddha” or visualizing (concentrating on) this Buddha or His pure realm – His Pure Land.

How does Pure Land work?

- (i) By practicing Buddha Recitation singlemindedly, with utter sincerity and faith, the cultivator reins in his wandering mind. He puts a stop to the continuous stream of illusory thought filled with greed anger and delusion characteristic of the human mind. His mind thus becomes empty and still and he awakens. Buddha Recitation in that sense is a kung-an – it is a Zen practice.
- (ii) Alternatively, during singleminded recitation, with utter sincerity and faith, the cultivator strongly identifies with Amitabha Buddha – becomes one with Amitabha Buddha and His Vow to rescue all sentient beings. Rebirth in the Pure Land is therefore a natural occurrence. It is this aspect that particularly characterizes the Pure Land school.

In its totality, Pure Land reflects the teachings of Buddhism as expressed in the Avatamsaka Sutra: mutual identity and interpenetration of all and everything – the simplest method contains the ultimate and the ultimate is found in the simplest. <sup>(29)</sup>

### C) Transference of Merit

Central to the Pure Land tradition is the figure of Amitabha Buddha, who came to exemplify the Bodhisattva ideal and the doctrine of transfer (or dedication) of merit. This is particularly apparent in the life story of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara, <sup>(30)</sup> the future Amitabha Buddha, as related in the sutras.

The Mahayana idea of the Buddha being able to impart his power to others marks one of those epoch-making deviations which set off the Mahayana from so-called ... original Buddhism ... The Mahayanists accumulate stocks of merit not only for the material of their own enlightenment but for the general cultivation of merit which can be shared equally by their fellow-beings, animate and inanimate. This is the true meaning of Parinamana, that is, turning one’s merit over to others for their spiritual interest. (D.T. Suzuki, tr., The Lankavatara Sutra, p. xix.)

The rationale for such conduct, which on the surface appears to run counter to the law of Cause and Effect, may be explained in the following passage concerning one of the three Pure Land sages, the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin):

Some of us may ask whether the effect of karma can be reverted by repeating the name of Kuan-Yin. This question is tied up with that of rebirth in Sukhavati [the Pure Land] and it may be answered by saying that invocation of Kuan-Yin’s name forms another cause which will right away offset the previous karma. We know, for example, that if there is a dark, heavy cloud above, the chances are that it will rain. But we also know that if a strong wind should blow, the cloud will be carried away somewhere else and we will not feel the rain. Similarly, the addition of one big factor can alter the whole course of karma ...

It is only by accepting the idea of life as one whole that both Theravadins and Mahayanists can advocate the practice of transference of merit to others. With the

case of Kuan-Yin then, by calling on Her name we identify ourselves with Her and as a result of this identification Her merits flow over to us. These merits which are now ours then counterbalance our bad karma and save us from calamity. The law of cause and effect still stands good. All that has happened is that a powerful and immensely good karma has overshadowed the weaker one. (Tech Eng Soon - Penang Buddhist Association, c. 1960. Pamphlet.)

This concept of transference of merit, which presupposes a receptive mind on the part of the cultivator, is emphasized in Pure Land. However, the concept also exists, albeit in embryonic form, in the Theravada tradition, as exemplified in the beautiful story of the Venerable Angulimāla. <sup>(31)</sup>

#### **D) Faith and Mind**

Faith is an important component of Pure Land Buddhism. <sup>(32)</sup> However, wisdom or Mind also plays a crucial, if less visible, role. This interrelationship is clearly illustrated in the Meditation Sutra: the worst sinner, guilty of matricide and parricide, etc. may still achieve rebirth in the Pure Land if, on the verge of death, he concentrates on the Buddha's name one to ten times with utmost faith and sincerity.

This passage can be understood at two levels. At the level of everyday life, just as the worst criminal once genuinely reformed is no longer a threat to society and may be pardoned, the sinner once truly repentant may, through the vow-power of Amitabha Buddha, achieve rebirth in the Pure Land – albeit at the lowest possible grade. Thus, Pure Land offers hope to everyone; yet at the same time, the law of Cause and Effect remains valid.

At the higher level of principle or Mind, as the Sixth Patriarch taught in the Platform Sutra:

A foolish passing thought makes one an ordinary man, while an enlightened second thought makes one a Buddha.

Therefore, once the sinner repents and concentrates on the Buddha's name with utmost sincerity and one-pointedness of mind, for that moment he becomes an awakened person silently merging into the stream of the Sages – can Enlightenment then be far away? As the Meditation Sutra states: “the Land of Amitabha Buddha is not far from here!” <sup>(33)</sup>



This, then, is the Pure Land tradition, harmonizing everyday practice and the transcendental, self-power and other-power. This tradition is, by all accounts, one of the pillars of the great Mahayana edifice, that lofty tradition of the great Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Samantabhadra – so much so that Pure Land has been, for centuries, one of the most enduring and widespread forms of Buddhism in Asia.

Van Hien Study Group  
Autumn 1992

# Appendix II

## *The Youth Sudhana Meets his First Teacher*

*(Avatamsaka Sutra, ch. 39)*

The Avatamsaka Sutra, the basic text of the Avatamsaka School, is one of the longest sutras in the Buddhist Canon and records the highest teaching of Buddha Sakyamuni, immediately after Enlightenment. It is traditionally believed that the Sutra was taught to the Bodhisattvas and other high spiritual beings while the Buddha was in samadhi. The Sutra has been described as “the epitome of Buddhist thought, Buddhist sentiment and Buddhist experience” and is quoted by all schools of Mahayana Buddhism, in particular, Pure Land and Zen.

The main protagonist in the next-to-last and longest chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra is the youth Sudhana. Seeking Enlightenment, he visited and studied with fifty-three spiritual advisors and became the equal of the Buddhas in one lifetime. When he was born, myriad treasures suddenly appeared in his father’s home. Thus the name “Sudhana” or “Good Wealth.”

Below are excerpts from the Flower Adornment Sutra [Avatamsaka Sutra], ch. 39, Part II, p. 1ff. (Translation by Master Hsuan Hua.)



At that time, Manjusri Bodhisattva, after speaking the verses, told Sudhana,

“Good indeed! Good Indeed! You have already brought forth the resolve for Supreme Enlightenment to seek the conduct of a Bodhisattva. Good man, if sentient beings can bring forth the resolve for Supreme Enlightenment, this is a difficult thing indeed. Moreover upon bringing forth the resolve, if they further wish to seek the Bodhisattva conduct, this is twice as hard. Good man, if one wishes to accomplish the wisdom of all wisdom, then one must decisively seek a true good knowing [spiritual] advisor. Good man, in seeking for a good knowing advisor, do not become weary or lax. And upon seeing a good knowing advisor, do not become satiated. As to a good knowing advisor and all his teachings, you must follow and accord. As to expedient devices employed by a good knowing advisor, do not find faults.

“Good man, south of here is a kingdom called Supreme Bliss. Within that kingdom is a mountain called Wonderful Summit, and on that mountain is a Bhiksu named Cloud of Virtue.

“Go to where he is and ask him how a Bodhisattva studies the Bodhisattva conduct, how a Bodhisattva cultivates the Bodhisattva conduct, up to and including how a Bodhisattva can swiftly perfect the conducts of Samantabhadra. The Bhiksu Cloud of Virtue will explain all of this to you.”

At that time upon hearing this, the youth Sudhana was overjoyed. He bowed at [Manjusri’s] feet, circumambulated him countless times, and gazed up at him with longing admiration. He sorrowfully wept. Bidding farewell, he took his leave and went south.

He went towards the kingdom of Supreme Bliss, and ascended Wonderful Summit Mountain. To the east, west, south, north, the four intermediate directions, above and below, he looked around and sought with thirsty aspirations, wishing to see the Bhikshu Cloud of Virtue. After seven days, he saw the Bhikshu on another mountain, leisurely taking a stroll. <sup>(34)</sup> Upon seeing this, he went to bow at his feet, circumambulated him three times to the right and then stopped before him and said,

“Sagely One, I have already brought forth the resolve for Supreme Enlightenment, but I do not know yet how a Bodhisattva studies the Bodhisattva conduct, how he cultivates the Bodhisattva conduct up to and including how he can swiftly perfect the conduct of Samantabhadra. I heard that the Sagely One is skilled at guiding and teaching. I only hope you will compassionately proclaim how it is that a Bodhisattva accomplishes Supreme Enlightenment.”

At that time the Bhikshu Cloud of Virtue told Sudhana,

“Good indeed! Good indeed! Good man, you have already brought forth the resolve for Supreme Enlightenment. Moreover you can inquire about the Bodhisattva conduct. To do such a thing is difficult within the difficult ...

“Good man, I have only obtained this Dharma-door of Recollecting All the Buddhas’ States of Wisdom Light and Universal Vision [i.e., mindfulness of the Buddha or Buddha Recitation]. But how could I possibly know the doors of the conduct of all great Bodhisattvas’ boundless, pure wisdom? ...

“There is the Door of Causing all Beings to be Mindful of the Buddha whereby one accords with what pleases living beings’ minds and causes them to obtain purity from seeing the Buddhas ... There is the Door of Mindfulness of the Buddha of Dwelling throughout All Times, whereby in every time, one always sees the Thus Come Ones, draws near to them, without leaving them ... There is the Door of Mindfulness of the Buddha of Dwelling in Subtlety, whereby on a single hairtip ineffable Thus Come Ones appear, and one can go to all their places and serve them ... There is the Door of Mindfulness of the Buddha of Dwelling in the Comfortable Mind ...

“How can I possibly know or speak of [all] such conduct of merit and virtue?

“Good man, south of here is a kingdom called Gate of the Sea, there is a Bhikshu known as Sea Cloud. Go to where he is and ask him how a Bodhisattva studies the Bodhisattva conduct, and how he cultivates the Bodhisattva path. The Bhikshu Sea Cloud can speak discriminately the causal conditions of bringing forth vast, great good roots ...”

At that time the youth Sudhana bowed to the Bhikshu Cloud of Virtue, circumbulated him to the right, gazed up at him, bade farewell and took his leave.

# Notes

(to the introduction, text and appendices)

- (1) The reasoning in this paragraph follows the well-known Four Propositions of Buddhist logic: a) Existence; b) Emptiness; c) both; d) neither. These propositions represent four ascending levels of cultivation, “an ascending grasp of reality” (H. Dumoulin). These propositions are transcended upon attainment of Enlightenment and Buddhahood.

In this formula, the philosophy of the Middle Way Madyamika and the metaphysics of the Avatamsaka School flow together. (H. Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, p. 219.)

- (2) Hua-t’ou. The words hua-t’ou and kung-an (Jap. koan) are sometimes used interchangeably.

[Hua-t’ou], lit., “word-head;” the point, punch line, or key line of a koan, the word or phrase in which the koan resolves itself when one struggles with it as a means of spiritual training .... In the famous koan Chao-chou, Dog, for example, mu is the [hua-t’ou]. Many longer koans have several [hua-t’ous]. (Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen, p. 246.)

- (3) The Buddha holding up a flower.

The “special transmission outside the orthodox teaching” began with the famous discourse of Buddha Shakyamuni on Vulture Peak mountain. At that time, surrounded by a great host of disciples ... the Buddha is said only to have held up a flower without speaking. Only Kashyapa understood and smiled ... With this, the first transmission from heart-mind to heart-mind took place. The Buddha confirmed Mahakashyapa, as his enlightened student was called henceforth, as the first Indian patriarch in the lineage of [Zen] transmission. (Ibid., p. 261.)

- (4) Almost all sutras in Buddhism were taught following a specific request from one of the leading disciples. A notable exception is the Amitabha Sutra, which Buddha Sakyamuni preached without being asked. According to Buddhist commentaries, this is because Pure Land teachings, while simple in appearance, can be understood in full only by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Therefore, it would not have occurred to anyone to request that it be taught.

- (5) See “Awakening of the Faith Treatise.” Please note, however, that the Pure Land school preceded the coming of the Sixth Patriarch by a few centuries.

- (6) See the following passages:

Dr. Suzuki is generally associated with the Zen school, so it is often a matter of surprise to hear that he translated many Pure Land Buddhist texts into English and nourished a belief that Pure Land rather than Zen might be the form of Buddhism most suitable for Westerners. (John Snelling, *The Buddhist Handbook*, p. 216.)

Most Buddhists in the world, by far the vast majority, practice a Faith or devotional form of worship. Dr. D.T. Suzuki strongly believed that the direction

American Buddhism would take was towards Shin Buddhism [Pure Land] and its practice of Faith. It may turn out at this time that most Westerners, originally seeking personal enlightenment, will find themselves choosing a devotional path. (Ryushin Sarah Grayson in Butsumon, Fall 1989.)

- (7) This passage refers to the noumenon (transcendental) aspect of Pure Land: “if the mind is pure, the land is pure.” The phenomenal (popular) aspect of Pure Land is expressed in the following passage from the Amitabha Sutra:

The Buddha then said to Shariputra the Elder: “Westward from here and beyond ten billion Buddha-lands there is a world called Utmost Happiness. In that land there is a Buddha called Amida, who is right now preaching the Dharma.” (Hozen Seki, tr., Buddha Tells of the Infinite: the “Amida-kyo,” p. 13).

- (8) To illustrate the extreme difficulty of rebirth in the human realm (as opposed to the lower realms of hell, hungry ghosts or animality), Sakyamuni Buddha compared it to the likelihood that a blind sea turtle, surfacing from the depths of the ocean only once every century, would encounter a tree trunk in which to nest. Skeptics beware: millions of humans may be born each year in this world, but how many more viruses come into being each moment on a tiny mound of earth?
- (9) “Serene, reflective meditation,” “working on a hua-t’ou (kung-an).” These two approaches possibly refer to the principal meditation practices of the Soto and Rinzai schools of Zen, respectively.
- (10) Afflictions may be termed “guest dusts.” They are “guests” because they come and go, unlike our empty and still True Nature. They are “dusts” because they stick to and defile the True Mind, just like the dust which covers a bright mirror and prevents it from reflecting the objects before it.
- (11) This passage is a reference to the Surangama Sutra, a key Zen text which teaches three basic causes of Birth and Death: love-attachment, greed and killing. Master Han-Shan highlighted the first cause for the benefit of his audience.
- (12) People may practice Buddha Recitation for various reasons, including warding off danger or achieving rebirth in favorable circumstances in the human or celestial realms. Master Han-Shan emphasized that the true goal should be ending the cycle of Birth and Death.
- (13) Poison; panacea: at the ultimate level, Buddha Recitation, too, is a false thought that should be discarded.

This Dharma-door [Pure Land] fights poison with poison. False thinking is like poison, and unless you counter it with poison, you will never cure it. Reciting the Buddha’s name is fighting false thinking with false thinking. It is like sending out an army to defeat an army, to fight a battle to end all battles. (Master Hsuan Hua.)

Sentient beings’ minds are never at rest but are filled with a continuous stream of deluded thought (monkey mind, horse-like mind). According to Han-Shan and most Patriarchs, it is easier to change and convert this stream gradually (from impure thought to pure thought) than to stop the process entirely at all times.



Buddha Recitation is a panacea because, when practiced correctly, it can heal all the diseases of the mind (greed, anger, delusion). It is also a remedy for persons of all capacities under all circumstances.

- (14) This idea is expressed by the image of horizontal escape:

“Vertically” and “horizontally” are figures of speech, which can readily be understood through the following example. Suppose we have a worm, born inside a stalk of bamboo. To escape, it can take the “hard way” and crawl all the way to the top of the stalk. Alternatively, it can look for or poke a hole near its current location and escape “horizontally” into the big, wide world. The horizontal escape, for sentient beings, is to seek rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha.

- (15) Discipline, i.e., keeping the precepts. There are many sets of precepts, for monks, nuns and laymen. The five basic precepts for laymen are not to kill, steal, engage in illicit sex, lie or consume intoxicants. All of these numerous precepts, however, may be summarized by three injunctions: to avoid all evil; to cultivate all virtues; to benefit all sentient beings.

- (16) Mind-Only Pure Land: see Buddhism of Wisdom and Faith, para. 27, “Buddha Recitation and the Four Realizations.”

- (17) See the following passage from the Surangama Sutra:

Suppose a man with good fresh eyes looks steadily into the bright, shining space of the sky without glancing about or winking. After long staring, there arise contaminations of the eyes and in the emptiness of space, he sees fantastic blossoms and many other strange phantasms. These fantastic blossoms that the contaminated eyes see in the open space of the sky come neither from the sky nor from the eyes. (Goddard, *A Buddhist Bible*, p. 156.)

- (18) Thus, thusness, suchness:

Reality is beyond all words and descriptions, so in referring to it, Buddhists often use the term “thusness.” (Garma C. Chang)

- (19) See note 5 above.

- (20) See the following passage:

Han-shan did not write any commentary on the Pure Land Sutra, and it is not clear how he places it in the Hua-yen [Avatamsaka] classification scheme. On the one hand, he regards the Western Paradise as the most expedient land in the innumerable Hua-yen pure lands. On the other hand, he seemed to have considered the Pure Land teaching as a special teaching that lies outside the usual scheme of classification. (Sung-peng Hsu, *A Buddhist Leader in Ming China*, p. 149.)

- (21) There are more than 200 sutras teaching about Pure Land in the Buddhist canon (*Encyclopedia of Buddhism*).

- (22) See the concept “Third lifetime” in Glossary.

- (23) See the following passage, by the late founder of the Buddhist Lodge and Buddhist Society (London), on the true goal of all Buddhist practice:

In the West, the need for some guidance in mind-development was made acute ... by a sudden spate of books which were, whatever the motive of their authors, dangerous in the extreme. No word was said in them of the sole right motive for mind-development, the enlightenment of the meditator for the benefit of all mankind, and the reader was led to believe that it was quite legitimate to study and practice mindfulness, and the higher stages which ensue, for the benefit of business efficiency and the advancement of personal prestige. In these circumstances, *Concentration and Meditation*, ... was compiled and published by the [British] Buddhist Society, with constant stress on the importance of right motive, and ample warning of the dangers, from a headache to insanity, which lie in wait for those who trifle with the greatest force on earth, the human mind. (Christmas Humphreys, *The Buddhist Way of Life*, p. 100.)

(24) See the following passage from D.T. Suzuki:

Buddhist theology has a fine comprehensive theory to explain the manifold types of experience in Buddhism, which look so contradictory to each other. In fact the history of Chinese Buddhism is a series of attempts to reconcile the diverse schools ... Various ways of classification and reconciliation were offered, and ... their conclusion was this: Buddhism supplies us with so many gates to enter into the truth because of such a variety of human characters and temperaments and environments due to diversities of karma. This is plainly depicted and taught by the Buddha himself when he says that the same water drunk by the cow and the cobra turns in one case into nourishing milk and in the other into deadly poison, and that medicine is to be given according to disease. This is called the doctrine of [skillful] means ... (The Eastern Buddhist, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 121.)

(25) Other-power: “Invisible assistance – provided by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of Healing – can be a potent aid in this process [of elimination of greed, anger and delusion]. This assistance often is described as stemming from the force of their fundamental vows.” (Raoul Birnbaum, *The Healing Buddha*, p. xv.) This power, is, of course, common to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

(26) See the following passage from D.T. Suzuki:

Jiriki (self-power) is the ... [wisdom] aspect of enlightenment and tariki (other-power) is the ... [Great Compassion] aspect of the same. By [wisdom] we transcend the principle of individuation, and by [Great Compassion] we descend into a world of particulars. The one goes upwards while the other comes downwards, but this is our intellectual way of understanding and interpreting enlightenment, in whose movement however there is no such twofold direction discernible. (The Eastern Buddhist, Vol. 3. No. 4, p. 314.)

(27) As a historical perspective, the roots of Pure Land go back to Ancient India, albeit the tradition was not emphasized there:

Although a cult dedicated to Amitabha Buddha worship did arise in India, piety toward this Buddha seems to have been merely one of many practices of early Mahayana Buddhism. (Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, in Joji Okazaki, *Pure Land Buddhist Painting*, p. 14.)

When Mahayana Buddhism spread to China, however, Pure Land ideas found fertile ground for development. In the fourth century, the movement crystallized with the formation of the Lotus Society, founded by Master Hui Yuan (334-416), the first Pure Land Patriarch. The school was formalized under the Patriarchs T'an Luan (Jap. Donran) and Shan Tao (Jap. Zendo). Master Shan Tao's teachings, in particular, greatly influenced the development of Japanese Pure Land, associated with Honen Shonin (Jodo school) and his disciple, Shinran Shonin (Jodo Shinshu school) in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Note: An early form of Buddha Recitation can be found in the Nikayas of the Pali Canon:

In the Nikayas, the Buddha ... advised his disciples to think of him and his virtues as if they saw his body before their eyes, whereby they would be enabled to accumulate merit and attain Nirvana or be saved from transmigrating in the evil paths ... (D.T. Suzuki, *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 317.)

- (28) See the following passage on Bodhisattva practice, taken from the well-known "Practices and Vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra":

Because of living beings, they bring forth great compassion. From great compassion the Bodhi Mind is born; and because of the Bodhi Mind, they accomplish Supreme, Perfect Enlightenment. (*Avatamsaka Sutra*, ch. 40.)

- (29) This is clearly shown in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, particularly chapter 26 which describes the last phases of practice of a Bodhisattva before final Buddhahood. In that chapter, it is taught that in each and every single stage, the actions of the Bodhisattva "never go beyond Buddha Recitation":

This is a summary of the Tenth Stage of enlightening beings [Bodhisattvas], called Cloud of Teaching ... Whatever acts they undertake, whether through giving, or kind speech, or beneficial action, or cooperation, it is all never apart from thoughts of Buddha [Buddha Recitation], the Teaching, the Community ... (Thomas Cleary, tr., *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, Vol. II, p. 111.)

Note: Mindfulness of the Buddhas = Buddha Recitation.

- (30) See the following passage:

The [*Longer Amitabha Sutra*] ... which was in existence before a.d. 200, describes a discourse offered by the Buddha Sakyamuni ... in response to questions of his disciple Ananda. Sakyamuni tells the story of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara, who had for eons past been deeply moved by the suffering of sentient beings and who had determined to establish a Land of Bliss where all beings could experience emancipation from their pain ... In the presence of the eighty-first Buddha of the past, Lokeshvararaja, Dharmakara made forty-eight vows relating to this Paradise, and promised that he would not accept enlightenment if he could not achieve his goals ... When, after countless ages, Dharmakara achieved enlightenment and became a Buddha, the conditions of his [18th] vow were fulfilled: he became the Lord of Sukhavati, the Western Paradise, where the faithful will be reborn in bliss, there to progress through stages of increasing awareness until they finally achieve enlightenment. (Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, in Joji Okazaki, *Pure Land Buddhist Painting*, p. 14-15.)

- (31) The life story of the Venerable Angulimala is one of the most moving accounts in the Theravada canon. After killing ninety-nine persons, Angulimala was converted by the Buddha, repented his evil ways and joined the Order:

One day as he went on his round for alms he saw a woman in labor. Moved by compassion, he reported this pathetic woman's suffering to the Buddha. He then advised him to pronounce the following words of truth, which later became known as the Angulimala Paritta (Mantra) ... "Sister, since my birth in the Arya clan [i.e., since my ordination] I know not that I consciously destroyed the life of any living being. By this truth may you be whole and may your child be whole."

He went to the presence of the suffering sister ... and uttered these words. Instantly, she delivered the child with ease. (Narada Maha Thera, *The Buddha and His Teaching*, p. 124.)

- (32) Faith is an important element in all Buddhist traditions, but it is particularly so in Pure Land. See the following passage from the Avatamsaka Sutra:

Faith is the basis of the path, the mother of virtues, Nourishing and growing all good ways ... Faith can increase knowledge and virtue; Faith can assure arrival at enlightenment. (Thomas Cleary, tr., *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, vol. 1, p. 331.)

- (33) The pervasiveness of Pure Land teaching is such that its main practice, Buddha Recitation, is found in both the Esoteric and Zen schools. In Pure Land, Buddha Recitation is practiced for the purpose of achieving rebirth in the Land of Amitabha Buddha as a stepping-stone to Buddhahood. In the Esoteric school, the aim is to destroy evil karma and afflictions, obtain protection against demons and generate blessings and wisdom in the current lifetime. In Zen, the koan of Buddha Recitation is meant to sever delusive thought and realize the Self-Nature True Mind. The ultimate goal of all three schools is, of course, the same: to achieve Enlightenment and Buddhahood.

- (34) See Master Hsuan Hua's explanation:

The Bhikshu was slowly taking a walk. Here the seven days refer to the seven limbs of enlightenment. The Bhikshu is leisurely taking a stroll. Leisurely refers to "stopping" (samatha); while strolling refers to "contemplation" (vipasyana). The Bhikshu dwells neither in confused thought nor does he linger in quiescence. He is cultivating the Pratyutpanna Samadhi in which the Buddhas of the Ten Directions are clearly revealed before one's eyes.

# Glossary

- **Afflictions (Defilements).** There are six basic afflictions: greed, anger, delusion, arrogance, doubt and wrong views.
- **Amitabha (Amida, Amita, Amitayus).** Amitabha is the most commonly used name for the Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life. A transhistorical Buddha venerated by all Mahayana schools (T'ien T'ai, Esoteric, Zen ...) and, particularly, Pure Land. Presides over the Western Pure Land (Land of Ultimate Bliss), where anyone can be reborn by singlemindedly concentrating on His name, particularly at the time of death.

Amitabha Buddha at the highest or noumenon level represents the Mind of the Buddhas and sentient beings, all-encompassing and all-inclusive. This deeper understanding provides the rationale for the harmonization of Zen and Pure Land, two popular schools of Mahayana Buddhism.

- **Attachment.** In the Four Noble truths, Buddha Sakyamuni taught that attachment to self is the root cause of suffering:

From craving [attachment] springs grief, from craving springs fear; For him who is wholly free from craving, there is no grief, much less fear. (Dhammapada Sutra.) If you don't have attachments, naturally you're liberated ... In ancient times, there was an old cultivator who asked for instructions from a monk, "Great Monk, let me ask you, how can I attain liberation?" The Great monk said, "Who tied you up?" This old cultivator answered, "Nobody tied me up." The monk said, "Then why do you seek liberation?" (Hsuan Hua, tr., Flower Adornment [Avatamsaka] Sutra, "Pure Conduct," chap. 11).

For the seasoned practitioner, even the Dharma must not become an attachment. As an analogy, to clean one's shirt, it is necessary to use soap. However, if the soap is not then rinsed out, the garment will not be truly clean. Similarly, the practitioner's mind will not be fully liberated until he severs attachment to everything, including the Dharma itself. Avatamsaka Sutra (Flower Ornament Scripture). The basic text of the Avatamsaka School. It is one of the longest sutras in the Buddhist Canon and records the highest teaching of Buddha Sakyamuni, immediately after Enlightenment. It is traditionally believed that the Sutra was taught to the Bodhisattvas and other high spiritual beings while the Buddha was in samadhi. The Sutra has been described by D.T. Suzuki as the epitome of Buddhist thought, Buddhist sentiment and Buddhist experience and is quoted by all schools of Mahayana Buddhism, in particular, Pure Land and Zen.

- **Awakening of the Faith (Treatise).** A major commentary by the Patriarch Asvaghosha (1st/2nd cent.), which presents the fundamental principles of Mahayana Buddhism. Several translations exist in English.

The text deals with the doctrine of One Mind ... and the idea of the two aspects of One Mind: the absolute, or noumenal, and the relative, or phenomenal. (Sung-peng Hsu.)

- **Awakening vs. Enlightenment.** A clear distinction should be made between awakening (Great Awakening) and Enlightenment. (Note: There are many degrees of Awakening and Enlightenment. Attaining the Enlightenment of the Arhats, Pratyeka Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, etc. is different from attaining Supreme Enlightenment, i.e., Buddhahood.)

To experience Awakening is to achieve (through Zen meditation, Buddha Recitation, etc.) a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha and how to reach Buddhahood. It is to see one's Nature, comprehend the True Nature of things, the Truth. However, only after becoming a Buddha can one be said to have truly attained Supreme Enlightenment (attained the Way).

A metaphor appearing in the sutras is that of a glass of water containing sediments. As long as the glass is undisturbed, the sediments remain at the bottom and the water is clear. However, as soon as the glass is shaken, the water becomes turbid. Likewise, when a practitioner experiences a Great Awakening (awakens to the Way), his afflictions (greed, anger and delusion) are temporarily suppressed but not yet eliminated. To achieve Supreme Enlightenment (i.e., to be rid of all afflictions, to discard all sediments) is the ultimate goal. Only then can he completely trust his mind and actions. Before then, he should adhere to the precepts, keep a close watch on his mind and thoughts, like a cat stalking a mouse, ready to pounce on evil thoughts as soon as they arise. To do otherwise is to court certain failure, as stories upon stories of errant monks, roshis and gurus demonstrate.

Another illustration:

To make sure that his disciple would reach the great ocean and not be misled by smaller bodies of water, a Zen Master explained the difference between rivers, lakes and seas, the characteristics of fresh water, salt water, etc. Finally, he took the disciple to the highest mountain peak in the area and pointed to the ocean in the distance. For the first time, glimpsing the ocean with his own eyes, the disciple experienced a Great Awakening. However, only after he followed the long, arduous path and actually reached the ocean, tasting its waters, did he achieve Enlightenment.

- **Bodhidharma.** The First Patriarch of the Ch'an (Zen) school.
- **Buddha Recitation.** General term for a number of practices, such as oral recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name and visualization or contemplation of His auspicious marks and those of the Pure Land. Oral recitation consists of repeating the words "Na Mo (Homage to) Amitabha Buddha" or just "Amitabha Buddha."

Reciting the buddha-name proceeds from the mind. The mind remembers Buddha and does not forget. That's why it is called buddha remembrance, or reciting the buddha-name mindfully. (Cited in J.C. Cleary, Pure Land, Pure Mind.)

See also Kung-An of Buddha Recitation under "Kung-an."

- **Conditioned (compounded).** Describes all the various phenomena in the world – made up of separate, discrete elements, with no intrinsic nature of their own. Conditioned merits and virtues (wealth, honor, etc.) for example, are subject to Birth and Death, whereas unconditioned merits and virtues are beyond Birth and Death. See also "Unconditioned."
- **Demons.** Evil influences which hinder cultivation. These can take an infinite number of forms, including evil beings or hallucinations. The three poisons of greed, anger and delusion are also equated to demons, as they disturb the mind. See the following passage:

Thus, when you are practicing Zen, all thoughts other than the method [koan] should be considered as demons, even if it feels like you have entered a 'heavenly' state. Some people, as they are sitting, may suddenly enter a completely new world which is very beautiful and comfortable. Afterwards, they want to return

to it in each meditation. They may be able to get into that state again, but nonetheless it is an attachment. There are also other states that are terrifying. Such visions, good and bad, are generally manifestations of our own mental realms. (Master Sheng-Yen.)

The Self-Nature has been described in Mahayana sutras as a house full of gold and jewelry. To preserve the riches, i.e., to keep the mind calm, empty and still, we should shut the doors to the three thieves of greed, anger and delusion. Letting the mind move opens the house to “demons,” that is, hallucinations and harm. Thus, Zen practitioners are taught that, while in meditation, “Encountering demons, kill the demons, encountering Buddhas, kill the Buddhas.” Both demons and Buddhas are mind-made, Mind-Only.

Even if a buddha or bodhisattva should suddenly appear before you, there’s no need for reverence. This mind of ours is empty and contains no such form. Those who hold onto appearances are devils. They fall from the path. Why worship illusions born of the mind? Those who worship don’t know, and those who know don’t worship. By worshipping you come under the spell of devils ... At the appearance of spirits, demons, or divine beings, conceive neither respect nor fear. Your mind is basically empty. All appearances are illusions. Don’t hold on to appearances. (Patriarch Bodhidharma.)

For a detailed discussion of demons, see Master Thich Thien Tam, *Buddhism of Wisdom and Faith*, sect. 51.

- **Dharma.** a) Duty, law, doctrine. b) Things, events, phenomena, everything. c) The teachings of the Buddhas (generally capitalized in English).

- **Dharma-Ending Age, Degenerate Age.** The present spiritually degenerate era.

The concept of decline, dissension and schism within the Dharma after the passing of Buddha Sakyamuni is a general teaching of Buddhism and a corollary to the Truth of impermanence. See, for example, the Diamond Sutra (sect. 6 in the translation by A.F. Price and Wong Mou-lam). The modern reader, unfamiliar with the concept of the Dharma-Ending Age may wish to recall the famous story of Hui K’o, the second Chinese Patriarch of Zen, who, according to tradition, knelt in the snow behind Bodhidharma for a whole night before being accepted as a disciple. Contrast this with the contemporary situation when even the holiest of all Buddhist holidays, Vesak (Birthday of Sakyamuni Buddha), must be held on the week-end to ensure adequate attendance.

- **Dharma Realm (Cosmos, Dharmadhatu, Realm of Reality, Realm of Truth).**

The term has several meanings in the sutras: i) the nature or essence of all things; ii) the infinite universe, consisting of worlds upon worlds ad infinitum; iii) the Mind.

- **Emptiness (Void, Sunyata).** In Mahayana Buddhism,

“Dharmas [phenomena, things] are empty and void, because they have to depend on causes and conditions for their existence. Take away the causes and conditions and the dharmas do not exist. They do not possess their own self-nature, they are empty of their own being, hence they are said to be empty or void (sunya). This is one of the great truths propounded by the Mahayana, that sunyata, emptiness, is the mark of all the dharmas. Anyone who realizes this truth may be said to have achieved wisdom.” (Perennial Dictionary of World Religions, p. 129.)

Contrasted with “hollow emptiness,” or “stubborn emptiness,” which is one-sided and leads to nihilism (the belief that nothing exists after death). Thus, we have the Mahayana expression, “True Emptiness, Wonderful Existence.” True Emptiness is not empty!

- **Evil Paths.** Hells, hungry ghosts, animality.
- **Expedient means (Skillful means, Skill-in-means).** Refers to strategies, methods, devices, targetted to the capacities, circumstances, likes and dislikes of each sentient being, so as to rescue him and lead him to enlightenment. “Thus, all particular formulations of the Teaching are just provisional expedients to communicate the Truth (Dharma) in specific contexts.” (J.C. Cleary). “The Buddha’s words were medicines for a given sickness at a given time,” always infinitely adaptable to the conditions of the audience.
- **Five Desires (Five Sensual Pleasures).** Desires connected with the five senses, i.e., form, sound, aroma, taste and touch.
- **Four Propositions.** The well-known Four Propositions of Buddhist logic are: a) Existence; b) Emptiness; c) both; d) neither. These propositions represent four ascending levels of cultivation, “an ascending grasp of reality” (H. Dumoulin). These propositions are transcended upon attainment of Enlightenment and Buddhahood.

In this formula, the philosophy of the Middle Way Madyamika and the metaphysics of the Avatamsaka School flow together. (H. Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, p. 219.)

- **Four-fold Assembly.** The assembly of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.
- **Good Spiritual Advisor.** Guru, virtuous friend, wise person, Bodhisattva, Buddha – anyone who can help the practitioner progress along the path to Enlightenment. This notwithstanding, wisdom should be the primary factor in the selection of such an advisor: the advisor must have wisdom, and both advisor and practitioner must exercise wisdom in selecting one another.
- **Hua-t’ou (wato).** The words hua-t’ou and kung-an are sometimes used interchangeably. [Hua-t’ou], lit., “word-head;” the point, punch line, or key line of a koan, the word or phrase in which the koan resolves itself when one struggles with it as a means of spiritual training ... In the famous koan Chao-chou/Dog, for example, mu is the [hua-t’ou]. Many longer koans have several [hua-t’ous]. (Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen, p. 246.)

See also “Kung-an.”

- **Hui Neng.** See “Sixth Patriarch.”
- **Kung-an (Koan).** Traditionally said to be 1700 in number.

In Zen, a koan is a phrase from a sutra or teaching on Zen realization, an episode from the life of an ancient master ... each pointing to the nature of ultimate reality. Essential to a koan is paradox, i.e., that which is “beyond thinking,” which transcends the logical or conceptual. Thus, since it cannot be solved by reason, a koan is not a riddle. Solving a koan requires a leap to another level of comprehension. (Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen, p. 117.)

A famous kung-an is the Kung-An of Buddha Recitation, which

is a good example of the harmonization of the Ch’an [Zen] and Pure Land schools. The practitioner still recites Amitabha’s name, may still wish to see



the Buddha in meditation, but his overriding concern is to ask, “Who is it that recites the Buddha’s name?” Enlightenment comes when the devotee realizes that his own true nature is the ultimate reality. (Sung-peng Hsu, p. 44-45.)

See also “Hua-t’ou.”

- **Lotus Grades.** Refer allegorically to nine possible degrees of rebirth in the Pure Land. The more merits and virtues the practitioner accumulates, the higher the grade. The highest grade is achieved by cultivators who have attained samadhi.
- **Lotus Sutra.** A major Buddhist text and one of the most widely read sutras in the present day.  
One of the earliest and most richly descriptive of the Mahayana sutras of Indian origin. It became important for the shaping of the Buddhist tradition in East Asia, in particular because of its teaching of the One Vehicle under which is subsumed the usual Hinayana and Mahayana divisions. It is the main text of the Tendai [T’ien T’ai] school. (Joji Okazaki.)  
This School has a historically close relationship with the Pure Land School, so much so that Elder Master T’ai Hsu taught that the Lotus Sutra is the Longer Amitabha Sutra in expanded form, while the Longer Amitabha Sutra is a summary of the Lotus Sutra.
- **Mahasthamaprapta (Mahasthama).** One of the Three Pure Land Sages, along with Amitabha Buddha and the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin). Literally, “one who has gained great power.”
- **Maitreya.** The future Buddha of this Saha World. One of the few transhistorical Buddhas (i.e., Buddhas with no basis in human history) recognized by the Theravada School.
- **Manjusri.** The Bodhisattva who represents the Ultimate Wisdom of the Buddhas. (The Elder Sariputra exemplifies the wisdom of the Arhats.)
- **Meditation Sutra.** See “Three Pure Land Sutras” and “Vaidehi.”
- **Middle Way (Madhyamika).** The way between and above all extremes, such as hedonism or ascetism, existence or emptiness, eternalism or nihilism, samsara or Nirvana, etc. The Middle Way is a basic tenet of Buddhism. See also “Nagarjuna.”
- **Mind.** Key concept in all Buddhist teaching.

Frequent term in Zen, used in two senses: (1) the mind-ground, the One Mind ... the buddha-mind, the mind of thusness ... (2) false mind, the ordinary mind dominated by conditioning, desire, aversion, ignorance, and false sense of self, the mind of delusion ... (J.C. Cleary, A Buddha from Korea.)

The ordinary, deluded mind (thought) includes feelings, impressions, conceptions, consciousness, etc. The Self-Nature True Mind is the fundamental nature, the Original Face, reality, etc. As an example, the Self-Nature True Mind is to mind what water is to waves – the two cannot be dissociated. They are the same but they are also different.

See also the following passage:

The mind ... “creates” the world in the sense that it invests the phenomenal world with value. The remedy to this situation, according to Buddhism, is to still the mind, to stop it from making discriminations and nurturing attachments toward certain phenomena and feelings of aversion toward others. When this state

of calmness of mind is achieved, the darkness of ignorance and passion will be dispelled and the mind can perceive the underlying unity of the absolute. The individual will then have achieved the state of enlightenment and will be freed from the cycle of birth and death, because such a person is now totally indifferent to them both. (Burton Watson, *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi*). Nagarjuna. (2nd/3rd cent.) “One of the most important philosophers of Buddhism and the founder of the Madhyamika school. Nagarjuna’s major accomplishment was his systematization ... of the teaching presented in the Prajnaparamita Sutras. Nagarjuna’s methodological approach of rejecting all opposites is the basis of the Middle Way ...” (Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen).

See also “Middle Way.”

- **Nihilism.** The belief that everything disappears upon death. Nothing remains, not body or mind, good or bad karma, and there is no rebirth.
- **Pure Land.** Generic term for the realms of the Buddhas. In this text it denotes the Land of Ultimate Bliss or Western Land of Amitabha Buddha. It is “a paradise realm of the spirit world” (Raoul Birnbaum), an ideal place of cultivation, beyond the Triple Realm and samsara, where those who are reborn are no longer subject to retrogression. This is the key distinction between the Western Pure Land and such realms as the Tusita Heaven. There are two complementary conceptions of the Pure Land: as different and apart from the Saha World and as one with and the same as the Saha World. When the mind is pure and undefiled, any land or environment becomes a pure land (Vimalakirti, Lotus, Avatamsaka Sutras ...). At the noumenal level, everything, the Pure Land included, is Mind-Only, a product of the mind. See also “Triple Realm.”
- **Pure Land School.** When Mahayana Buddhism spread to China, Pure Land ideas found fertile ground for development. In the fourth century, the movement crystallized with the formation of the Lotus Society, founded by Master Hui Yuan (334-416), the first Pure Land Patriarch. The school was formalized under the Patriarchs T’an Luan (Donran) and Shan Tao (Zendo). Master Shan Tao’s teachings, in particular, greatly influenced the development of Japanese Pure Land, associated with Honen Shonin (Jodo school) and his disciple, Shinran Shonin (Jodo Shinshu school) in the 12th and 13th centuries. Jodo Shinshu, or Shin Buddhism, places overwhelming emphasis on the element of faith.

Note: An early form of Buddha Recitation can be found in the Nikayas of the Pali Canon:

In the Nikayas, the Buddha ... advised his disciples to think of him and his virtues as if they saw his body before their eyes, whereby they would be enabled to accumulate merit and attain Nirvana or be saved from transmigrating in the evil paths ... (D.T. Suzuki, *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 317.)

- **Pure Land Sutras.** See “Three Pure Land Sutras.”
- **Saha World.** “World of Endurance.” Refers to this world of ours, filled with suffering and afflictions, yet gladly endured by its inhabitants.
- **Samadhi.** Meditative absorption. “Usually denotes the particular final stage of pure concentration.” There are many degrees and types of samadhi (Buddha Remembrance, Ocean Seal ...)

- **Samantabhadra.** Also called Universal Worthy or, in Japanese, Fugen. A major Bodhisattva, who personifies the transcendental practices and vows of the Buddhas (as compared to the Bodhisattva Manjusri, who represents transcendental wisdom). Usually depicted seated on an elephant with six tusks (six paramitas). Best known for his “Ten Great Vows.”
- **Sixth Patriarch.** Refers to Master Hui Neng (638-713), the Sixth Patriarch of the Chinese Zen school and author of the Platform Sutra.
- **Sravakas.** “Lit., ‘voice-hearers’: those who follow [Theravada] and eventually become Arhats as a result of listening to the buddhas and following their teachings” (A. Buzo and T. Prince).
- **Sudhana.** The main protagonist in the next-to-last and longest chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra. Seeking Enlightenment, he visited and studied with fifty-three spiritual advisors and became the equal of the Buddhas in one lifetime.

When he was born, myriad treasures suddenly appeared in his father’s home. Thus the name “Sudhana” or “Good Wealth.”

- **Ten Directions.** Means all directions.

“The eight points of the compass (north, south, east, west, northeast, southeast, northwest, and southwest), plus the zenith and nadir. Ten directions is a figurative term meaning in all directions, ‘in all space.’ ”

The expressions Ten Directions and Six Directions are interchangeable and mean “everywhere”. However, Six Directions is found in Theravada and early Mahayana texts, while the expression Ten Directions is used in major Mahayana sutras such as the Avatamsaka, in which phenomenal realities are expressed in terms of ten.

- **Ten Great Vows.** The famous vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra in the Avatamsaka Sutra. These vows represent the quintessence of this Sutra and are the basis of all Mahayana practice. Studying the Vows and putting them into practice is tantamount to studying the Avatamsaka Sutra and practicing its teachings. See also “**Samantabhadra.**”
- **Ten Stages (Bodhisattva Grounds, Ten Grounds).** According to the Mahayana sutras, there are a total of 52 (some sutras say 53) levels of attainment before a cultivator achieves Buddhahood. The 41st to 50th levels constitute the Ten Stages or Grounds. Above these are the levels of Equal Enlightenment, Wonderful Enlightenment (and Buddhahood).
- **Third Lifetime.** In the first lifetime, the practitioner engages in mundane good deeds which bring ephemeral worldly blessings (wealth, power, authority, etc.) in the second lifetime. Since wealth and power tend to corrupt, he is likely to create evil karma, resulting in retribution in the third lifetime. Thus, good deeds in the first lifetime are potential “enemies” of the third lifetime.

To ensure that mundane good deeds do not become “enemies,” the practitioner should dedicate all merits to a transcendental goal, i.e., to become Bodhisattvas or Buddhas or, in popular Pure Land teaching, to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land – a Buddha land beyond Birth and Death.

- **Three Pure Land Sutras.** Pure Land Buddhism is based on three basic texts:
  - a) Amitabha Sutra (or Shorter Amitabha Sutra, or Smaller Sukhavati-Vyuha, or the Sutra of Amida);

- b) Longer Amitabha Sutra (or Larger Sukhavati-Vyuha, or the Teaching of Infinite Life);
- c) Meditation Sutra (or the Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life, or the Amitayur Dyana Sutra).

Sometimes the last chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra (“The Practices and Vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra”) is considered the fourth basic sutra of the Pure Land tradition.

- **Triple Realm (Three Realms, Three Worlds).** The realms of desire (our world), form (realms of the lesser deities) and formlessness (realms of the higher deities). The Western Pure Land is outside the Triple Realm, beyond samsara and retrogression. See also “Pure Land.”
- **Unconditioned (Transcendental).** Anything free of the three marks of greed, anger and delusion. See also “Conditioned.”
- **Vaidehi.** The Queen of King Bimbisara of Magadha (India). It was in response to her entreaties that Buddha Sakyamuni preached the Meditation Sutra, which teaches a series of sixteen visualizations (of Amitabha Buddha, the Pure Land, etc.) leading to rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.
- **Wonderful Enlightenment.** The stage of Enlightenment immediately preceding Buddhahood. See also “Ten Stages”.
- **Yung Ming.** A well-known Sung Dynasty Zen Master (904-975). He was most influential in fostering the harmonization of Zen and Pure Land practice.
- **Zen.** “Zen is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word ‘Ch’an,’ which in turn derives from the Sanskrit ‘dhyana.’ A school of Mahayana Buddhism in China founded by Bodhidharma [circa 530]. This school stresses the cultivation of intuitive wisdom” (Garma C. Chang).

THE SUPREME AND ENDLESS BLESSINGS OF SAMANTABHADRA'S DEEDS,

I NOW UNIVERSALLY TRANSFER.

MAY EVERY LIVING BEING, DROWNING AND ADRIFT,

SOON RETURN TO THE LAND OF LIMITLESS LIGHT!

*The Vows of Samantabhadra*  
Avatamsaka Sutra