

Dharma Talks in Europe

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**Given by
the Venerable Master Hua in 1990**

English translation by the
Buddhist Text Translation Society

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Dharma Talks in Europe Given by the Venerable Master Hua in 1990

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4. A volunteer must not establish him/ herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/ her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/ her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing and distributing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Contents

The Eight Guidelines of BTTS.....	v
Editor's Preface	ix
Foreword.....	xiii
Dharma Talks in Europe	
Everyone Has the Responsibility to Propagate the Buddhadharma	1
Merging the Northern and Southern Traditions of Buddhism	8
The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not Beyond A Single Thought	15
Buddhism and World Peace	31
How to Get Rid of Fear and Karmic Obstacles	43
To Stop Wars, First Stop the Fighting in Your Mind	51
To Repay the Kindness of the Three Jewels, We Should Refrain from Killing	55
I Want to Take on the Karmic Offenses of Living Beings	65
Living as if Drunk and Dying in a Dream, It's Hard to End Birth and Death	67

The Spiritual Mantra of Great Compassion Penetrates Heaven and Earth	75
The Real Father of the Communist Party	83
Major Figures and Events in China during the Past Century	91
The Meaning of Taking Refuge Is Beyond Words	98
Dedicating Our Lives to Propagating the Buddhadharma	100
How Can We Determine Our Own Destiny?	116
Education—A Nation's Best Defense	121
Buddha	128
The Retribution for Killing Is Difficult to Escape	135
Let's Bring All Religions Together to Practice the Bodhisattva Way	144
Genuine Freedom and Longevity	152
What I Learned from the Trip to Europe	157
Glossary	161
The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association	167
A Brief Account of the Life of the Venerable Master	179
The Venerable Master Hua's Eighteen Great Vows.....	187



Merging the Northern and Southern
Traditions of Buddhism and Drawing
in the World's Religions

Editor's Preface

In 1990, the Fifth International Delegation of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the Dharma Realm Buddhist University made its first European tour. The delegation returned to the United States at the end of October 1990, after a month-long tour which included visits to England, Belgium, Poland, and France. Wherever the delegation went, its members sincerely and straightforwardly explained the true principles of Buddhism.

In order to perpetuate the heritage of the Buddha's wisdom and cause the Proper Dharma to last long in the world, the Venerable Master Hua advocated to his European audiences that the northern and southern traditions of Buddhism unite and draw in other religions as well. He exhorted people to pay attention to the problems of education, for it is only by reforming education that we can hope to save the world and its people. For the sake of carrying on the Buddha's work, he invited aspiring translators to come to the International Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and cooperate in translating the entire

Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) into all the world's languages. This would enable the Buddhadharma to nourish people's minds and draw in all beings.

The Venerable Master's vast and deeply compassionate vows, his lofty virtue, and his extensive practices won the respect of people wherever he went. The Master observed people's needs and dispositions and taught them accordingly. This volume, *Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1990 Trip to Europe*, is a compilation of the twenty talks and lectures that he gave in Europe.

Foreword

These lines appear near the beginning of the *Vajra Sutra*: “At that time, at mealtime, the World Honored One put on his robe, took up his bowl, and entered the great city of Shravasti to beg for food. After he had finished his sequential begging within the city, he returned, ate the food, put away his robe and bowl, washed his feet, arranged his seat, and sat down.” These lines illustrate how the Buddha taught by his personal example when he was alive in the world. In every moment of his daily life, he instructed living beings without attachment to appearances. Even when the Venerable Master Hua was over seventy years of age, he continued travelling everywhere for the sake of propagating the Buddhadharma. Isn’t that basically the same as what the Buddha did in his time, as recorded in the *Vajra Sutra*? After reading *Dharma Talks in Europe*, I can’t help but think what a rare individual the Venerable Master was.

This book is a compilation of twenty talks given by the Master during his tour of Europe. The wide variety of themes illustrates how the Master adapted his teachings to the circumstances and reveals—through the Master’s frank, ordinary-sounding, and sincere words—how he constantly practiced the Bodhisattva conduct.

The Master received two and a half years of schooling starting at age fifteen. After he left the home-life, he vowed to have the Buddhist scriptures translated into various languages, so that the full and perfect teachings of the Buddha could be universally known throughout the world. What a magnanimous aspiration! For the past several decades, the Master spared no effort as he worked to carry out his vow. The Master came alone to the United States in 1962 and stayed in an unlit basement in San Francisco, calling himself the "monk in the grave." He lectured on the Sutras without caring how many people came to listen or what attitudes they had. Taking one step at a time, he slowly but surely propagated the Buddhadharma. The Master said, "In coming from China to America, my most important mission has been to lecture the Sutras and speak the Dharma." Every day his lectures would be translated into English. As far as I know, up to this point the Buddhist Text Translation Society founded by the Master has translated more Buddhist scriptures from Chinese into English than any other group in the world. Despite the fact that he himself did not know English and had neither the human resources nor the capital, the Master worked quietly without asking for any reward. The Master knew very well how extremely difficult the task he had set for himself would be. He said, "We didn't dare talk to anyone about it. Why? It's because if we brought it up, people would sigh in despair and be afraid. Nothing like this had ever been done before. No one had been bold enough to attempt it... But I just went ahead and did it." Now, wouldn't you say that everything the

Master said and did in his daily life teaches us how to practice the great vows and great conduct of the Bodhisattva Way?

In the process of studying the Buddhadharma, I often heard the phrase, "the great compassion of being one with all." This is a very difficult concept for ordinary people to accept. In our society, we are taught to compete and discriminate from the time we are young. When we are little, the notion of "self" is ingrained deeply into our hearts. The Master said during a talk in London, "Do you all understand? As long as you can change your faults and renew yourself, no matter how serious the offenses you have committed, I'm willing to be responsible for them. If you are supposed to fall into the hells as retribution for your past offenses, I guarantee that you won't fall into the hells. If you are supposed to become a hungry ghost, but you truly reform, I'm willing to become a hungry ghost in your stead and undergo your retribution." Would a person who still had any notion of "self" be able to say such a thing? The Master's daily life very naturally reveals "the great compassion of being one with all."

I remember when I first started studying Buddhism, I usually dozed off after half an hour when I was reciting a Sutra. My wisdom was too puny for me to understand the Prajna wisdom of the Buddhadharma. I am grateful to the Venerable Master for compassionately summarizing the great wisdom of the Buddhadharma into the Six Guidelines: no contention, no greed, no seeking, no selfishness, no pursuit of personal

advantage, and no lying. These six types of wisdom are like bright lamps in the darkness. They enable ignorant, ordinary people like myself to receive the nourishment of the Buddhadharma and to slowly advance upon the path of cultivation. Under the light of these Six Guidelines, ordinary people can gradually reduce their ego so that “they do not oppose anyone, but instead love all people as they love themselves, and do not hate anyone.”

As he propagated the Dharma in Europe, the Master’s wisdom lamp illuminated two issues that most people are afraid to confront. The first is that the Master advocated the elimination of sectarian views in religion. First of all the Master suggested that all sects and schools of Buddhism, especially the northern and southern traditions, unite and propagate the Buddhadharma together. Many years ago the Master suggested to Cardinal Paul Yubin that he be a Buddhist Catholic, and that the Master would be a Catholic Buddhist. If a person did not possess great wisdom, how could he perceive this issue clearly and be bold enough to make such a suggestion? The second issue is that the Master saw that modern education is on the brink of bankruptcy. The Master said that the large budgets many nations were spending on education were virtually ineffective. It is only by teaching moral and ethical values in the elementary and secondary schools that we can save today’s society from darkness. The Master not only said this, but he founded elementary and secondary schools at the City of Ten

Thousand Buddhas to provide our future generations with a foundation in virtue and ethics.

The Bodhisattva Way of great vows, great conduct, great compassion, and great wisdom appears naturally and without attachment in every aspect of the Venerable Master's daily life. The Master's words and deeds are like a shining lamp, lighting up the path that all of us ought to walk.

On the occasion of the publication of the English and bilingual editions of this book, I am grateful for this opportunity to share my personal thoughts with the reader. I hope that each reader will, under the illumination of the Master's bright lamp, step onto the great Bodhi Way and cultivate both blessings and wisdom.

Raymond T. Yeh, Ph.D.
Chairman and CEO,
International Software Systems, Inc.
Austin, Texas
January 1, 1997

Everyone Has the Responsibility to Propagate the Buddhadharma

I feel that it's extremely important to spread the Buddhadharma so that it can flow into the heart of every person.

Wherever I go, it's the same as being at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. There isn't any difference. We are of the same substance as the Dharma Realm, and so I am extremely happy to have this rare opportunity to come here today. We want to help the northern and southern traditions of Buddhism communicate with each other. The southern tradition shouldn't keep going south, and the northern tradition shouldn't keep going north. The followers of the northern and southern traditions are all disciples of the Buddha, descendants of the Buddha. Everyone should walk toward the middle. As Buddhists, we should do the work of Buddhism. If you say I'm not genuine and I say you're not genuine, then we basically don't recognize what Buddhism is.

The Buddha spoke the Dharma in response to the needs and potentials of living beings. Therefore, whether we are of the northern or the southern tradition, we should bring forth the Bodhi resolve to help beings end birth and death, leave suffering, and attain happiness. Everyone should understand the genuine teachings of the Buddha. We shouldn't say, "We represent orthodox Buddhism, and you don't." If we inflict harm upon ourselves like that, it's of no benefit to Buddhism. We want to help the northern and southern traditions of Buddhism to communicate, so that they can unite as one. The southern tradition shouldn't keep going south, and the northern tradition shouldn't keep going north. Everyone should meet in the middle, because we are all disciples of the Buddha. It shouldn't be that north and south each do their own thing, dispersing the strength of Buddhism into different sects.

When I first became a monk, I looked into why it was that, although the doctrines of Buddhism are so perfect and complete, so few people in the world study them. What was the reason? I pondered this and discovered that it was because the Buddhist scriptures have not been translated into every language. Even though Buddhism is such a complete teaching and one that humanity cannot be without for a single moment, only a small minority of the world's population genuinely understands Buddhism. Since the Buddhist canon hasn't been translated into every language, it has not become widespread in the world. Why are Catholicism and Protestantism so widespread? It's because the Bible has been translated into

every language, so that the people of all nations can read and understand it. The Buddhadharma, on the other hand, has not been translated into that many languages. For that reason, I made a vow that, although I didn't understand English, I wanted to see the Buddhist scriptures translated into every language. That was the vow I made when I left the home-life. Although I have not fulfilled this vow completely, I continue to walk upon this path, and I hope one day that the Buddhist canon will be translated into every language. If there are people who share the same wish, no matter what country you come from, I hope you will join and work with us to accomplish this important project.

For this reason the International Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts was founded in Burlingame, south of San Francisco, to carry out the translation work. Whether you are Buddhists of the northern or southern tradition, I hope that everyone can cooperate to translate the Buddhist scriptures into the world's languages. This is a very important task. We should not create schisms among ourselves, saying that you're true and I'm false, or that I'm true and you're false. That's a waste of time and energy, and totally useless. When the Buddha was teaching living beings, he spoke Dharma for forty-nine years and expounded the Sutras in over three hundred assemblies. The people he taught originally believed in other religions, but they all came to take refuge in Buddhism. So why can't we Buddhists be tolerant of one another and encourage each other to make progress? Why do we stop

midway to denounce and criticize each other instead? Doesn't that amount to harming our own brothers? Mahamaudgalayana, Shariputra, and Mahakashyapa were followers of other religions, but they all came to take refuge in Buddhism.

Even though I am someone who doesn't know any foreign languages, I dare to sponsor the translation of the Buddhist canon into all the languages of the world. This very idea of mine has already made the Buddhas happy. If someone like me who doesn't know foreign languages wants to do this, then how much the more should those who do know foreign languages apply themselves to this work with serious and diligent effort. The propagation of the Buddhadharma is a very important mission, but in my opinion translating the Buddhist canon is of even greater significance in the propagation of the Buddhadharma. Of course our personal cultivation is extremely important as well. If we can cultivate and attain the Way, we can naturally be of great help to Buddhism. But still, it will only be a temporary contribution. If we can translate the Buddhist canon into the languages of the world, this will be a lasting achievement. Therefore, I feel that it's extremely important to spread the Buddhadharma so that it can flow into the heart of every person.

There's a Chinese saying, "The prosperity or decline of a country is every man's responsibility." We are all responsible for whether our nation flourishes or declines. Each person should take the propagation of the Buddhadharma and the development of

Buddhism as his or her own duty and obligation. Then Buddhism will definitely flourish and spread to every atom and enter every person's heart; and it will shine brilliantly throughout space and the Dharma Realm. That's why, up to the present moment, I have been traveling about to spread the Dharma and explain the Sutras.

There was an elder Upasaka Li in Taiwan who continued to expound the Sutras and speak the Dharma even when he was over ninety and could no longer walk. How did he do it? Every time there was a lecture, two people would carry him up to the Dharma seat. After he finished speaking, they would carry him down again. He was still so vigorous at over ninety years of age. He considered it his personal responsibility to speak the Dharma and explain the Sutras. Seeing how vigorous that layperson was, how can we monastics not do the things we're supposed to do? Does this sound like a checkmate? I'm not playing chess with people when I say this. Now that I've said this, if you like it, you can follow it; but if you don't like it, it doesn't matter. I certainly won't force things, because nothing that people are forced into doing is ever successful.

No matter what it is, you yourself have to want to do it. For example, this is something I want to do. No one is telling me to do it; it's something I myself am determined to do. As a monastic disciple of the Buddha, I may or may not be worthy of being the Buddha's disciple, but I wish to do a

little something for Buddhism. Even if the Buddha doesn't want me as his disciple, I still want to do this. I hope there are a few more people like this in the world. That's why I've shared my thoughts with everyone today. I hope the Buddhists of the southern and northern traditions wake up from their confused dreams soon, and everyone will do the things we ought to do together. Do you agree? "If it's the Way, advance. If it's not the Way, retreat." I feel embarrassed sitting up here when all of you are sitting down below. I would like to be equal with everyone.

I have a few more things to say. I don't care whether or not the Buddha acknowledges me as his disciple, but from the time I was twelve, I started bowing to all living beings. Every time I would bow over eight hundred and thirty times. To whom was I bowing? There were too many bows to count. But now I've summed them up in five bows. The first bow is to all the infinitely many Buddhas throughout space and the Dharma Realm in the ten directions and the three periods of time. The second bow is to the Dharma spoken by the infinitely many Buddhas throughout space and the Dharma Realm in the ten directions and the three periods of time. The third bow is to all the infinitely many worthy sages and ordinary members of the Sangha throughout space and the Dharma Realm in the ten directions and the three periods of time. The fourth bow is to all the infinitely many living beings, human and nonhuman, throughout space and the Dharma Realm in the ten directions and the three periods of time. I am a simple and ordinary

monk. Although I'm neither Never-Slighting Bodhisattva nor Bhikshu So-and-so, I want to pay respect to all living beings. That's why I'm willing to bow to anyone, no matter who it is. The fifth bow is to the Pratimoksha—the moral precepts—spoken by the infinitely many Buddhas throughout space and the Dharma Realm in the ten directions and the three periods of time. It is because of the Buddha's precepts that we can cultivate according to the teaching and study the Buddhadharma. That's why I want to bow to them. Although I'm quite old, I still want to do this. I just wanted to let everyone know that I have no arrogant or conceited thoughts.

Right before the Buddha entered Nirvana, Ananda inquired about four matters. One of his questions was who would be their teacher after the Buddha entered Nirvana. The Buddha replied, "After I've entered Nirvana, all of the Buddha's disciples should take the precepts as their teacher." The Pratimoksha is a teacher for those who study the Buddhadharma.

[Editor's note: In October 1990, during the Venerable Master's first Dharma tour in Europe, about fifty people from Poland took refuge with the Master and became Buddhists. Afterwards they formed a group to translate Buddhist Sutras with the Venerable Master's commentaries into Polish.]

A talk given on October 6, 1990,
at the Amaravati Buddhist Centre
in Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire, England

Merging the Northern and Southern Traditions of Buddhism and Drawing

First of all we should get rid of sectarian views within Buddhism. The next step will be to regard the followers of all religions as if they were the Buddha's disciples.

The Venerable Master to Venerable Ajahn Sumedho: When we get back to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, we're going to change the way we do our morning and evening recitations. We will alternate days, using Chinese and English on one day, and Pali and English the next day; we will alternate between the northern and southern styles of chanting. We want to start a new trend and gradually melt the boundaries between the Mahayana and the Theravada traditions. We want to include Catholicism, Protestantism, and all other religions, so how much more should we dissolve sectarian divisions within Buddhism. Just as in the past Shariputra, Maudgalyayana,

and Kashyapa were followers of other religions who later became the Buddha's great disciples, we also hope to draw in all traditions by beginning to use northern and southern style ceremonies on alternate days, and not being attached to distinctions between Mahayana and Theravada.

Anyone who disagrees with my suggestion can state your reasons, and everyone can consider them. We can add to our morning and evening recitations, but we can't shorten them. It's like eating: at each meal we always want to eat more, not less. If you're willing to eat only till you're eighty percent full, you can eat a little less. But we still have to recite the Shurangama Mantra and the other mantras every day.

This is the Space Age, and Buddhism is also entering a new era. We want Buddhism to encompass all religions. Within Buddhism, we should communicate among ourselves and give up our attachments to Mahayana and Theravada. We should learn from each other. At least we should learn from others what we don't know ourselves; it doesn't matter whether they learn from us. This is a new era in Buddhism.

[Editor's note: After its European delegation returned to the United States in November 1990, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association actively began carrying out its mission of bringing together the northern and southern traditions of Buddhism. From February to December 1991, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas included Pali chants as part of its morning recitation. On May 3,

1991, the Sangha at the City accepted a gift of Theravadan robes and almsbowls from the Amaravati Buddhist Centre. From June 21 to July 6, 1991, a Theravadan meditation retreat was held at the City, and Theravadan monks were asked to serve as Precept Masters in the Ordination Ceremonies held in July 1991. These attest to the Association's diligent efforts to eliminate sectarian differences and promote cooperation and unity in Buddhism.]

Venerable Master: In the past the Mahayana Buddhists considered themselves the Greater Vehicle, which included the Lesser Vehicle. Those of the Lesser Vehicle were attached to their own ways and did not acknowledge the Greater Vehicle. It was like killing our own kin. We are all disciples of the Buddha; we should include and influence one another, and not differentiate between the Greater and Lesser Vehicles.

First of all, we should get rid of sectarian views within Buddhism. Next, we should treat the followers of all religions like the Buddha's disciples Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, and Maudgalyayana, seeing them as people we can learn from and as not being any different from us.

If we can maintain such an attitude and resolve under all circumstances, Buddhism will definitely flourish. If we insist on differentiating between ourselves and others, then each side will only be a separated half, not whole and complete. I hope that we can see how everything is interconnected, so that Buddhism can reach a state of perfect interpenetration, sharing

kindness with those lacking affinities and compassion for all creatures who share the same essence. Then both sentient and insentient beings will be able to achieve perfect wisdom. These are all old ideas, nothing new, but I'm bringing them up because people have forgotten about them.

Dharma Master Shun: I think it's a good idea to use Buddhist music, chanting, and ceremonies as a way to bring Buddhism and all other religions together in harmony.

Venerable Master: I would now like to present the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas as a gift to all Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists. Anytime the Mahayana Buddhists want to use the facilities of the City, they can do so. The Theravadan Buddhists are also welcome to use the City's facilities for any activity they like. The only conditions on this unprecedented offer are that people must refrain from gambling, smoking, and so forth, and that they should honor the Buddha's precepts in their practice.

Dharma Master Jau: Venerable Sumedho would like to hold a two-week meditation retreat at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas next year.

Venerable Master: Not to mention two weeks, he can use the City for two months or even two years if he wants.

Dharma Talks in Europe

[Editor's note: The Ven. Ajahn Sumedho and Ven. Ajahn Amaro led a sixteen-day Theravada-style meditation retreat at the City from June 21 to July 6, 1991.]

Dharma Master Jau: They are requesting a special area and invite us to attend as well.

Venerable Master: We will follow their lead and do whatever they do.

Dharma Master Chau: It's truly inconceivable. We often hear in Dharma talks that we should not have attachments. And it also says (in the *Vajra Sutra*), "If someone says that the Thus Come One has spoken the Dharma, he is slandering the Buddha." The Master's suggestion is really making the Sutras come alive. We would never have thought of this method to bring everyone together. We have only known how to pick on others' faults.

Dharma Master Lai: In the future we should take care not to use the names "Great Vehicle" and "Small Vehicle." We can use "northern tradition" and "southern tradition" instead.

Venerable Master: Last night I said the southern tradition shouldn't keep going south, and the northern tradition shouldn't keep running north. They should accord with the Middle Way. As it is said,

Those who respect others will always be respected.

Those who love others will always be loved.

Those who beat others will always get beaten.

Those who scold others will always be scolded.

If we don't want other people to hit us, we shouldn't hit others. If we don't want to be scolded, we shouldn't scold other people. If we don't want others to be disrespectful towards us, we should first show respect to others.

Dharma Master Ming Jau: What the Master just said is not easy to put into practice. And it is even more difficult to influence people through practicing it. Yesterday I saw the Theravadan Bhikshus being very respectful to the Master. They were deeply moved by him. They were delighted to listen to the Master and admired him greatly. This is the first time I have witnessed such respect for someone; it's very touching. I believe it is because the Master does not distinguish between different sects; he can encompass them all. This is not something most people can do.

Venerable Master: This is not something that happens overnight; it came about because of my bowing to them—that's why they were moved. In the past, if you were a monastic of the northern tradition and you bowed to monastics of the southern tradition, they just ignored you.

Dharma Master Sure: At the last ordination ceremony held at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the Bodhisattva precepts were transmitted in three languages: Pali, English, and Chinese; it was a rare and unprecedented event.

Venerable Master: We weren't deliberately trying to be different by doing something unprecedented; we were just picking up on something that others had forgotten about. We weren't out to show that we were special and different from others. We are the same as everyone else; don't get the impression that I like to be unconventional—that's not it at all. I just do the things that others aren't willing to do. Perhaps people forgot, so I just help them remember. Actually I don't have any opinions myself. These are everyone's ideas. I think everyone has already thought about these things, so that's why we're all in agreement.

A talk given on October 6, 1990,
at the Amaravati Buddhist Centre
in Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire, England

The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not Beyond A Single Thought

We have to have a global vision; we have to expand the measure of our minds to encompass the entire Dharma Realm.

Good and wise advisors! There's no knowing how many times we have gathered together throughout limitless aeons in the past, but it was all like a dream. All kinds of states appeared in the dream, but when we woke up we forgot about them. Our present meeting, too, is like a dream. When we wake up from this dream, some of us will have vague memories of it, while others will remember it very clearly. Probably we all received the Buddha's teaching measureless aeons ago, but we didn't really understand the Buddhadharma then. That's why it seems like a dream and we don't really remember one another.

Now that we have gathered together, we want to clear up the hazy impressions; we want to understand where the objects of the six senses come from. In order to do that, we first have to study Prajna wisdom. Once we have Prajna wisdom, we can

sweep away and empty out all the sense impressions that have accumulated up to now. This is our common aim in studying the Buddha's teachings.

Shakyamuni Buddha once said, "Strange indeed, strange indeed! All beings have the Buddha nature and can become Buddhas. It is only because of idle thinking and attachments that they cannot realize it." The Buddha also said, "All men are my fathers, and all women are my mothers." From these words, we should know that all beings have been our parents in past lives and will become Buddhas in the future. This being the case, if we fail to treat men and women equally—if we think that men are more important than women or that women are more important than men—aren't we being unfilial? If we look down upon any being, then we have not yet embodied the perfectly interpenetrating and unobstructed state of the Buddhadharma.

If we know that all beings can become Buddhas if they have no idle thoughts or attachments, why can't we bear to give up our own idle thinking and attachments? Why have we stopped halfway, unable to either advance or retreat? There is nothing to be gained by advancing, and nothing to be lost by retreating, and yet we are just stuck here, thinking this is our niche. Aren't we just being lax and throwing away our future?

Buddhism originated in India and later spread to various

countries, each of which adopted the Buddhadharma in its own fashion. Burma has Burmese Buddhism, Cambodia has Cambodian Buddhism, Vietnam has Vietnamese Buddhism, Thailand has Thai Buddhism, China has Chinese Buddhism, Japan has Japanese Buddhism, and Korea has Korean Buddhism. When the Buddha spoke the Dharma, was he speaking only to one country? No, the Buddha bestowed teachings that accord with people's needs and with the situation at hand. He regarded people of all countries equally. The Buddhadharma itself has none of these national divisions. Different nations took Buddhism as their national possession and did not want Buddhism to spread and flourish. They said that Buddhism belonged to their own country.

For these reasons, when I visited a Buddhist monastery in Burma several decades ago [in 1953] and was asked to write a few words in their guestbook, I wrote that in the years to come, we have to have a global vision; we have to expand the measure of our minds to encompass the entire Dharma Realm. My meaning was this: If we want Buddhism to spread and flourish, we have to look far into the future. We have to bring Buddhism to every nation, every corner of the globe, and even to every mote of dust. Everywhere we go we have to turn the great Dharma wheel and teach living beings how to leave suffering, attain bliss, and end birth and death. And so I boldly declared that Buddhism is not something that belongs just to our own country. Buddhism belongs to all of humanity, to all living beings. We should not consider Buddhism a private

treasure. Instead, we should do everything we can to let the Buddhadharma shine in the world.

When I met the Catholic Cardinal Yubin during my first trip to Taiwan, I said to him, “You should be a Buddhist among the Catholics. You shouldn’t hold sectarian views.” At that time he was a Cardinal, which is only one level below the Pope. He was taken aback by my suggestion that he be a Buddhist Catholic. It sounded almost like an insult. I said, “Don’t worry—I will be a Catholic among the Buddhists. If the two of us can see eye-to-eye and cast out all sectarian views, conflicts, and boundaries, then there will be no more wars in the world. Religions will no longer exclude one another. I won’t say that you are wrong, and you won’t say that I’m no good. Even after we have eaten our fill and have nothing better to do, we won’t go around creating controversies in the world. Do you believe this?” He thought about it for awhile, then slapped his thigh and said, “Let’s do it!” And he began to bow to the Buddhas and study the Buddhadharma. But he still hadn’t given up his hopes for greater fame, and so he became a candidate for the papacy. Perhaps he didn’t have the blessings, as he wasn’t chosen to be the Pope. And Heaven did not favor him with long life. We don’t know whether he went to Heaven or to the Land of Ultimate Bliss; whichever place had the strongest pull, that’s where he went.

Soon after I came to the United States, a Christian scholar—I forget whether he was a Catholic or a Protestant—came to see

me. It wasn't clear whether he just wanted to ask a question or to argue with me, but he asked, "Which of the world's religions do you think is the best?" Most Buddhists probably would have said Buddhism is the best. But if I had said that, he wouldn't have been satisfied; he would have argued with me and tried to find my weak spot. I wasn't surrendering or trying to be clever, but I didn't want to argue with him. As it's said, "The good do not argue; those who argue are not good. The wise do not talk back; those who talk back are not wise." Since I wasn't going to argue with him, how could I stop the verbal battle? I said, "The religion you believe in is the best."

"Why?" he asked.

"If it weren't, why would you believe in it? The fact that you believe in it shows that it's the best. There's no need for debate. You believe in the religion you think is best, and I believe in the religion I think is best. That way no armies are mobilized, no arguments are started, and there's no need to debate." When he heard that, he had nothing more to say.

The Flower Adornment Sutra says,

*If people wish to understand
The Buddhas of the three periods of time,
They should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma-realm:
Everything is made from the mind.*

All the different thoughts that we living beings have are completely known and seen by the Thus Come Ones. The ancients had a verse:

*Three dots like a cluster of stars,
A hook like the crescent moon.
Furred creatures come from it;
Buddhas are made from it too.*

Why is “everything made from the mind?” If you look at the way the Chinese character for “mind” (心) is written, it has three dots like stars lined up in the sky, and a hook like the crescent moon. Sometimes the moon is full, and at other times it wanes. It is just like our mind. Sometimes we have good intentions, but at other times our habits take over and the wild side of our nature shows itself, so that we neglect to do what is clearly good and insist on doing what is obviously evil.

As we are now investigating the mind, let me give a personal example. When I was young, I wasn’t a very good person. I liked to play practical jokes. By that I mean I gave people trouble. I started school when I was fifteen and continued going to school when I was sixteen and seventeen, so I studied for a total of two and a half years. When I was seventeen or perhaps nineteen, I became a Shramanera [novice monk]. It is customary in China to write scrolls for the lunar new year. Usually people wrote auspicious phrases or mottoes. Since I

had begun to study Buddhism, I closed my eyes and wrote in a drunken fashion, "Wisdom like the sea." It was the new year, so the scroll was hung on the wall. One of my fellow novices saw it, and I don't know whether he thought it was good or not, but he recited it over and over. Maybe he was struck by my mad brush strokes that were written as if I were drunk. After he had recited, "wisdom like the sea" several dozen times, I said, "Your karma is like the sea!" When he heard that, he was furious. He had been in a kind of trance while reciting "wisdom like the sea," but now suddenly he came out of the trance and blew his top and wanted to punch me.

"Your karma is like the sea," I said, "but you haven't heard my explanation yet. It could be that your good karma is like the sea, or that your bad karma is like the sea. If I said that your good karma is like the sea, what's there to get mad about?" When I said that, I don't know what happened, but his temper vanished. So we can see that the human mind is such that changing one word can make all the difference. It can mean the difference between making someone angry and making him or her happy. Think about it. What makes us act this way?

There was another time when I got into mischief. This, too, happened when I was a Shramanera [novice monk]. I was carrying a roll of blank paper and walking down the road. Another Shramanera shouted, "What's written on that roll of paper you're holding? Let me see." Then he tried to grab the

paper from me to see what was written on it. If I had told him that there was nothing on it, he might not have believed me. And so I said, "I can't show you this paper, because it's a contract in which I am selling you to someone else."

When he heard that, he got upset. "What right do you have to sell me?" he demanded.

"I really do have the right to sell you," I said.

He tried to snatch the paper from me. I said, "Since I am a monk, I have the right to sell you."

"I don't buy that," he said.

"I'll tell you, and then even you will agree that I have the right to sell you."

"That's real funny! Whom have you sold me to?" he asked.

"To the Buddha!" I said.

When he heard that, he could say nothing. After a spell of silence, he said, "Then it's okay." So you see, such a tiny change made the difference between what was okay and what was not. What happened here, ultimately?

The two incidents I just related were things that happened to

me as I was cultivating. And so there is truth to the statement that “everything is made from the mind.” As to “Dharma-realm,” there are ten Dharma-realms:

1. the Dharma-realm of Buddhas
2. the Dharma-realm of Bodhisattvas
3. the Dharma-realm of Those Enlightened to Conditions
4. the Dharma-realm of Hearers
5. the Dharma-realm of gods
6. the Dharma-realm of asuras
7. the Dharma-realm of people
8. the Dharma-realm of animals
9. the Dharma-realm of hungry ghosts
10. the Dharma-realm of hell-beings

These ten Dharma-realms are not beyond a single thought of our own minds. If our minds constantly harbor the kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity of the Buddhas, then we will eventually become Buddhas. If our minds always practice the six perfections practiced by Bodhisattvas—giving, holding precepts, patience, vigor, Dhyana samadhi, and wisdom—we will become Bodhisattvas.

If we cultivate the Dharma of Those Enlightened to Conditions, the Twelve Causal Conditions—ignorance leads to activity, activity leads to consciousness, consciousness leads to

name and form, name and form leads to the six senses, the six senses leads to contact, contact leads to feeling, feeling leads to craving, craving leads to grasping, grasping leads to becoming, becoming leads to birth, and birth leads to old age and death—then we can cultivate to become Those Enlightened to Conditions [Pratyekabuddhas].

If we cultivate the Dharma of Hearers [Shravakas], the Four Noble Truths—suffering, accumulation, cessation, and the Path—we can become Hearers.

If we cultivate the Five Precepts and Ten Good Deeds, we can be reborn in the heavens. The Five Precepts are not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, and not taking intoxicants. The Ten Good Deeds are the body not committing the three evils of killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct; the mind not committing the three evils of greed, anger, or delusion; and the mouth not committing the four evils of lying, indecent speech, harsh speech, or divisive speech. When the ten kinds of evil are turned around, they become the Ten Good Deeds.

If we can refrain from these ten evils, we are practicing the Ten Good Deeds. The difference lies in a single thought. If you cultivate the Five Precepts and the Ten Good Deeds, you can be born in the heavens. If you are stubborn and like to fight, you will become an asura in the heavens. If you refrain from

evil and practice goodness, you will be able to maintain a human body. If you act like an animal all the time, you will become an animal in the future. If you commit all kinds of offenses, you will fall into the hells. If you're stingy and unable to give, you'll eventually turn into a hungry ghost. All of this is created from your own mind. All the Dharma-realms are not beyond a single thought of the mind.

"If the mind is sincere, there will be an efficacious response." If you are sincere to the utmost, you will be able to accomplish whatever you set out to do. There's a saying, "When sincerity reaches the ultimate point, even metal and rock can give way." We should be earnest and concentrated in everything we do, and not get distracted. If you can be single-minded, you will succeed in everything. In practicing the Buddhadharmā, we want to be single-minded and focus on what we are doing. We should see Buddhism as more important than eating, making money, or winning at the horse races. Buddhism should be more important than studying, getting a scholarship, or earning a doctorate. We should regard it as more important than wearing clothes or sleeping. If we can remember this in every thought and never speak recklessly, we can all become Buddhas. It all depends on how vigorously we practice.

As everyone knows, the Buddha said, "All beings have the Buddha nature and can become Buddhas. It is only because of idle thinking and attachments that they cannot realize it." I think many people probably do not understand the principle

of nonobstruction. You may or may not understand what I am saying today, but whether you agree with me or not, I still want to say it. I could put it this way: "All beings have the Bodhisattva nature and can become Bodhisattvas. It is because of idle thinking and attachments that they become Bodhisattvas. All beings have the nature of Those Enlightened to Conditions and can become Those Enlightened to Conditions. It is because of idle thinking and attachments that they go off and become Those Enlightened to Conditions. All beings have the nature of Hearers and can become Hearers. It is because of idle thinking and attachments that they go off and become Hearers. All beings have the nature of gods and can ascend to the heavens. Why are they born in the heavens? It's also because of their idle thinking and attachments. All beings have the asura nature, and due to their idle thinking and attachments they become asuras. All beings have the human nature and can become people. Because of their ignorant, idle thinking and attachments, they head off in the direction of people. The same applies to the three evil paths. All beings have the animal nature and can become animals. Why? Because they have the attachments of animals. All beings have the nature of hungry ghosts and can become hungry ghosts. If you do a lot of the ten evils of killing, stealing, lust, greed, anger, delusion, lying, indecent speech, harsh speech, and divisive speech, then you will turn into a hungry ghost. All beings have the nature of hell-beings and can fall into the hells. If you are not careful when you are a human, then you may run off to the hells."

The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not Beyond A Single Thought

Because of our idle thinking and attachments, we beings of the nine Dharma-realms become whatever we think about. If we can clear away the idle thoughts we have as beings of the nine Dharma-realms, then even if we aren't trying to, we can soon become Buddhas. Why do I say this? Let me give an example that relates to our human world. In the past, only someone who was born into the position could become the emperor. None of the common people could become the emperor. If they did, it was because they had revolted and seized the throne. In modern democratic countries, anyone can run for president and get elected. Every citizen has the right to run for president. In the same way, anyone can become a Buddha, as long as they practice diligently. In this respect, becoming a Buddha is similar to becoming a head-of-state. I don't know whether what I've said is true. If not, just treat it as dream-talk.

Now you can ask questions, but only ask simple questions. If your questions are too profound, we can let the Venerable Ajahn Sumedho answer them. [Everyone laughs.]

A Bhikshu: In "The White Universe" [a verse by the Ven. Master], what does the line, "With two clenched fists, smash through the covering of space" mean?

Venerable Master: It doesn't mean anything. [Everyone laughs.] If it had any meaning, you wouldn't be able to smash through space.

A layman: Are there any differences between your meditation practice and that taught by Ajahn Sumedho? If so, what are they?

Venerable Master: “For returning to the source, there are no two paths. But among expedient methods, there are many doors.” This is just like the way you have your face, I have mine, and he has his. Although our faces are different, we are the same in that we are all human and have human minds. You can’t expect everyone to be the same in all respects. It’s the same principle here.

A layman: Is Guanshiyin Bodhisattva within the scope of your consideration?

Venerable Master: Who said he wasn’t?

A nun: I have heard that the Venerable Master “always sits and never lies down.” How does the Master practice this, and for what reason?

Venerable Master: Has anyone said that I “sit little and lie down a lot”? This is not fixed. If you want to sit, then sit; if you want to lie down, then lie down. It doesn’t matter whether other people say you sit or lie down. Why become attached to this? Whatever you are attached to becomes a burden. The most important thing for cultivators is never to get afflicted. Don’t

The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not Beyond A Single Thought

get afflicted while sitting, and don't get afflicted while lying down. The crucial thing is to cut off afflictions. Afflictions are endless; I vow to change them. Change afflictions into Bodhi. Afflictions are nonenlightenment; Bodhi is enlightenment.

*If you can see through the things you
encounter, you transcend the world.
If you are confused by the things you
encounter, you sink into confusion.*

All the myriad phenomena in this world are speaking Dharma. Each person is speaking Dharma, every incident is speaking Dharma, and every object is speaking Dharma. All things speak Dharma. When we understand that all things speak Dharma, we should know what to do. As it's said,

*When the mind is calm, demons are subdued
and every day is happy.
When idle thoughts do not arise,
every place is peaceful.*

I have a verse which goes:

*Everything is a test to see what you will do.
Mistaking what's before your face,
you'll have to start anew.*

*Truly recognize your own faults.
Don't discuss the faults of others.
Others' faults are just my own.
Being one with everyone is called great compassion.*

*What need is there to defend oneself?
What's true and what's false
Becomes clear by itself in time.
The wise ones see what's true;
The ignorant ones do what's false.
The good ones learn from Bodhisattvas;
The bad ones dare to slander the Buddha.
Level and equal great kindness and compassion
Universally gather in all sentient beings.*

You already know all the things I have said. I am just reviewing them. Since I am Chinese and you are all British or American, you can listen to the principles you already know and become more familiar with them.

A talk given on October 8, 1990, at the Amaravati Buddhist Centre
in Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, England

Buddhism and World Peace

**Whatever other people don't want, we'll take;
whatever others want, we don't want.
Just that is peace.**

Na mo sa dan tuo. Su qie duo ye. E la he di. San miao san pu
tuo xie (3x)

[the first four lines of the Shurangama Mantra, recited
to pay homage to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas before
beginning a Dharma talk or Sutra lecture]

Religious leaders, good and wise advisors, and greatly virtuous ones from all nations, I ask for your compassion today as we gather together to investigate the relationship between Buddhism and world peace. Buddhism is peace, and peace is Buddhism. There is no conflict between them. People who study the Buddha's teachings are actually studying peace. Those who do not study the Buddha's teachings cannot be peaceful. Why do I say this? People who study Buddhism have to learn the samadhi of noncontention. Noncontention means the absence of all conflict and argument whatsoever. It means that

whatever other people don't want, we'll take; whatever others want, we don't want. Just that is peace.

Why do people contend? Where does the contention come from? It begins in people's minds. As soon as you contend, you have no peace. If you don't contend, there is peace. Peace is the absence of all contention. The lack of peace means there is contention.

When the Buddha was in the world, the Proper Dharma prevailed. After the Buddha entered Nirvana, the Dharma Image Age prevailed. Now we are in the Dharma Ending Age, in which contention prevails.

There's a verse which goes,

*Contention involves victory and defeat;
It is contrary to the Way.
When the mind of the four marks arises,
How can you attain samadhi?*

As soon as you start contending, you go against the Way. As soon as you contend, you have the mark of self. With the mark of self, there is the mark of others as well. Once you have the mark of others, the mark of living beings arises, and with that comes the mark of a life span. When the mind of the four marks arises, how can you attain right concentration?

In studying Buddhism or other religions, in learning any kind of practice, as soon as we have thoughts of fighting and competing, peace is lost. That's why I said,

*Contention involves victory and defeat;
It is contrary to the Way.
When the mind of the four marks arises,
How can you attain samadhi?*

If your mind is contentious, how can you derive any benefit from religion? Not only is there no benefit, there is actually harm, because contention hurts people and endangers their lives. This is not peace. If we want peace in the world, we have to start by not contending.

The first of the four marks is the mark of self. How does the "self" come into being? A few lines describe the "self":

*Before I was born, who was I?
After being born, who was I?
When I grow up and become an adult, that is me.
But when I shut my eyes and everything
grows dim, who am I then?*

These lines of verse investigate the question of self. Before I was born into this body, where was I? Who was I, ultimately? After I was born, as a child I still didn't know who I was.

However, having grown up and become an adult, I do feel that there is an "I."

Parts of our body, the four limbs and hundreds of bones, the head, feet, hands, arms, eyes, ears, mouth, teeth, tongue, and body as a whole each have their own names, but which of them is called the "self"? You can look over the entire body, but you won't find the "self" there. You know there is a "self," but you can't find it. Just exactly what is the self? When you close your eyes and die, who are you then? The "self" is a vague, indistinct thing. The name and the reality don't match. You don't know what is meant by self, others, living beings, or a life span. But even though people don't know, they still want to live and don't want to die. They want to eat and not go hungry. They want to wear clothes and not feel cold. They want to sleep and not feel tired. Why is this? They even want to do bad things and avoid doing good things. They want to be naughty and not be filial to their parents. Who taught them to be that way?

If there is an "I," then why can't "I" keep my eyes from growing dim, my ears from growing deaf, or my teeth from falling out? When I get sick and am about to die, why can't "I" do anything about it? If the "I" isn't a false name, what is it? Isn't this confusion and lack of understanding? Buddhahood is true understanding.

The reason the world is not at peace is that people are foolish

and ignorant. If there is to be peace in the world, people have to have wisdom and be able to yield to others instead of contending. In the history of China, for example, Emperor Yao passed the throne to Shun, and Shun passed it to Yu. One emperor voluntarily yielded the throne to the next. Those emperors were willing to give their kingdom to others. Because they yielded and did not contend, theirs was a time of peace and prosperity.

The ancients were able to yield the entire nation to others, because they regarded all external possessions such as land as being worth no more than a pair of tattered shoes. Yet they wanted to take care of that pair of old shoes, and they wanted to protect their country, so they wanted to search for someone worthy of the gift. Emperor Yao searched the entire land looking for a virtuous person, one who had no greed, to whom he could entrust the kingdom.

At that time in China there lived two sages, Chaofu and Xuyou, who had no greed. Chaofu didn't have a house to live in. He lived in a tree, just like a bird living in a nest. He built a nest in a tree. That's why he was called Chaofu, "Man of the Nest." Xuyou was a cowherd. He raised his own cow and drank a little bit of milk every day to sustain himself.

Chaofu didn't even have a bowl. Someone gave him a gourd shell that could be used for drinking, but when the wind blew the gourd which he had hung from his tree, it scraped against

the tree and made such a racket that he didn't want it anymore. He preferred to use his hands to scoop up water. That's how frugally he lived. He had no greed. Xuyou would eat some wild vegetables and drink a bit of milk every day, and that was enough. He wasn't greedy either.

When Emperor Yao heard about these two people who were not greedy and did not contend with others, he wished to give the kingdom to them. And so he went to look for Chaofu and told him that he wanted to hand the kingdom over to him and let him be the emperor. Hearing that, Chaofu turned and ran to the river to wash his ears. Why? He felt that the Emperor's proposition to give the country to him had defiled his ears, and he wanted to wash those filthy words away.

When Xuyou saw Chaofu washing his ears in the river, he asked, "Why are you doing that? What happened to your ears?"

"Emperor Yao had nothing better to do, so he came and asked if he could give me his kingdom and let me rule as emperor," Chaofu said. "I feel my ears were defiled by his words, so I'm trying to wash them clean." Xuyou had been watering his cow, but when he heard that, he immediately led his cow upstream to drink.

"Why are you taking your cow upstream?" Chaofu asked.

"If you wash your dirty ears in the river, it'll make the water

dirty,” said Xuyou, “and I can’t let my cow drink dirty water. Even though she’s a cow, she doesn’t want to drink dirty water, either.”

Think it over. See how incorruptible the ancients were. They were so free of greed and contention that when someone tried to give them the whole kingdom, they didn’t even want it. Modern people are getting farther and farther away from the right track, all because of their “self.” What is the self? We ourselves don’t understand it, and yet all day long we’re so attached to the self that we forget everything else. It’s just that attachment to self that causes us to have no wisdom. If you can see through the self and let it go, then you’ll be free and at ease and there will be no more problems. Because you can’t see through it and let it go, you aren’t free and at ease. Instead, the self is muddled and confused, living as if drunk and dying in a dream. When you get up from bed, you putter around for a while—I don’t know what you do. Then when you’re done, you go to sleep again. Eating is like that too. You eat your fill today, but then you have to eat again tomorrow. This goes on every day for several decades, and then it’s all over. Who knows where your “self” goes then? You don’t even know where your “self” goes, and yet this false “self” drives you to find it good food to eat and nice clothes to wear. You slave away for the false “self,” fussing over it when it gets hungry, or cold, or thirsty. You try to keep it in the best of health, but when the time comes, it still has to die. Take a look! You scramble around frantically your entire life, wearing yourself out until your ears grow deaf, your eyes grow dim, your teeth

fall out, your hair turns gray, your legs can no longer walk, and you don't know quite what to do with yourself. Because you have not recognized your real "self," you've been cheated. When the time comes to die, you aren't free and in control of what happens.

We should think it over. For thousands of years, people have been born, have died, and have been reborn, over and over. People live one hectic life after another. In all these thousands of years, we have merely undergone birth and death, death and birth. We have cried and laughed, laughed and cried. A verse says,

*Fish leap in the water;
People clamor in the world.
They don't know enough to do virtuous deeds,
But create bad karma callously.*

*You may pile up gold and silver high as
a mountain,
But when you close your eyes, it's all gone.
Empty-handed you go to see King Yama,
And regretfully you let your tears fall.*

Only then, like a criminal who is thrown in jail, do you regret what you've done, but it's already too late. I don't know much English, but I do know the words "too late."

Great Britain is a highly civilized nation, a cultural leader in the world. I hope that it will infuse its cultured civilization with wisdom and use the culture of wisdom to guide the people in the world who lack wisdom. If people have wisdom, the world will be at peace. If people are foolish and ignorant, there will be no peace in the world.

The first requisite for having wisdom is not to kill. Killing is unwise, because if you take the lives of other creatures, they will seek revenge. Due to our foolishness, we become deluded, create karma, and undergo the retribution. If you kill others, they will kill you in return. If you eat others, they will eat you.

A professor residing at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas heard about the benefits of vegetarianism. He heard that if one is vegetarian, one won't create ties of enmity with living beings and won't have to undergo the resulting retribution. His family was vegetarian, and so he raised his child as a vegetarian, too. He instilled this principle in his child's mind: "If you eat a lot of pork, you will become a pig in your next life. If you eat too much beef, you'll turn into a cow. If you eat a lot of mutton, you'll become a sheep. If you don't eat meat, you won't turn into any of those animals. You become whatever you eat." But the child didn't think much of her father's explanation. She was only three years old, and she asked, "You said that if I eat pork I'll become a pig, if I eat mutton I'll become a sheep, and if I eat beef I'll become a cow. Well, if I eat vegetables, won't I become a vegetable?" Her

father didn't know how to answer this question, so he brought his daughter and her question to me.

I said, "Pigs, cows, and sheep all have legs, and when you go to kill them, they try to run away. When you kill them, their hearts are filled with hatred and in the future they will drag you off to become one of them. The sheep drag you off to become a sheep, the pigs drag you off to become a pig, and the cows drag you off to become a cow. But what about vegetables? When you eat them, they don't call out, cry, jump, or grow legs and run away. And so if you eat vegetables, you probably won't become a vegetable."

The Chinese character for "meat" (肉) is composed of two "people" (人) in a "mouth" (口). The "mouth" character is missing the bottom stroke, which means that the mouth is open wide for eating people.

*Within the word for "meat" (肉) two people (人) reside;
The inner person pulls in the one outside.
When living beings consume each other,
Think it over, aren't we just like cannibals?*

[translated by Rev. Heng Sure]

The two people in the "meat" character represent one who is eating and one who is being eaten. I remember someone once asking, "What are the advantages of being vegetarian? Isn't it kind of like cheating yourself into taking a loss?"

I replied, "You might feel like you're taking a loss while you're alive, but you won't be taking a loss after you die. If you aren't a vegetarian, then you won't take a loss while you're alive, but you will after you die. When the accounts are settled, you have to pay back what you owe." In light of this principle, if we want there to be peace in the world, we all have to stop killing and stop eating meat. Not killing is true peace. If you don't kill others, others will not kill you. If you don't eat others, they will not eat you. No matter what our religion is, if we can all be vegetarian, there will be peace in the world."

When I went to Taiwan several decades ago, the people there were very worried about a Communist invasion. Their lives seemed to be hanging by a thread, and everyone was in a panic. They wanted to know when the Communists would attack, so they asked me, "What will happen to Taiwan?" At that time there was one person who was very nervous about this question being asked, because if I answered inappropriately, I might have been thrown in prison. It was a very sensitive issue, and if anyone said something wrong, they would be arrested, accused of being communist, and sent to the prison on Green Island. This person feared that I would say something wrong. I said to the person who asked the question, "If the people of Taiwan become vegetarian, recite the Buddha's name, and refrain from killing, everything will be fine. But if the Taiwanese people do a lot of killing and commit all kinds of bad karma, things will go badly. If everyone refrains from evil and does good, Taiwan will be

fine. But if you do lots of evil and don't do any good, Taiwan will be in danger."

What I have said tonight may have some principle to it, or it may not. I hope everyone will use his or her own wisdom to determine where the principle lies. As it is said,

*If it's the Way, advance upon it.
If it's not the Way, retreat from it.*

I hope all of you will choose what is good and follow it, and take what is bad and change it. Finally I want to wish everyone health, happiness, and luck in all you do. Good night!

A talk given on October 9, 1990,
at the Westminster Theatre in London, England

How to Get Rid of Fear and Karmic Obstacles

Fear arises from worry. If you have no worries, you won't be afraid of anything. If you aren't selfish, you won't be afraid either.

Question: How can we use skillful means to overcome lust, fear, and doubt?

Venerable Master: Don't eat meat, onions, or garlic. Avoid taking stimulants. Contemplate all men as your fathers and all women as your mothers. If you think that way, you will not give rise to lust.

Fear arises from worry. If you have no worries, you won't be afraid of anything. If you aren't selfish, you won't be afraid either. If you don't fight, aren't greedy, don't seek, aren't selfish, don't pursue personal advantage, and don't lie, you have nothing to fear.

You have doubt because you don't have faith. You waver

between faith and doubt. The “Worthy Leader” chapter of the *Flower Adornment Sutra* says, “Faith is the source of the Way and the mother of merit and virtue.” Believe in the wisdom inherent in all living beings. Then you won’t have doubt.

*Every day I speak true words,
Not afraid of being beaten or scolded.
Even if they want to kill me, I’m not scared.
What hindrances are there after liberation?*

Always speak truthfully, and don’t lie. Be honest and frank. Don’t be afraid that someone will scold you or hit you. Even if they do, you want to speak the truth. Even if someone wants to kill you, what is there to be afraid of? What worries are there after true liberation? What is there left to fear?

Question: Sometimes the laypeople ask us what to do when, faced with their karmic hindrances, they cannot advance and want to retreat instead. If this is fixed karma, how should we answer them? Should we urge them to continue being vigorous?

Venerable Master: It depends on the circumstances. You have to prescribe the medicine according to the individual’s illness. Afflictions and Bodhi are like ice and water. Afflictions can turn into Bodhi. At the point of death, there is new life. If at the point of not being able to bear something, one can bear it; if

when one doesn't think one can leap the hurdle, one leaps it, that's what really counts. Don't get trapped into a corner. There are no dead ends. When you drive up to the mountain, there's bound to be a road.

I recall some seven or eight years ago, a layman in New York invited a monk to stay at his temple. But because he often quarreled with the monk, the monk finally left. The temple had been constructed by a layperson, but because he wanted to use a monk as a front to attract people, he would boss the monk around. When the monk had first gone to the temple, he had been reluctant to be bossed around by a layperson. That's why they constantly had arguments and the monk ended up leaving.

The layman was very discouraged and called to tell me that he wanted to close down the Buddhist temple because he had lost heart. He poured out his complaints to me, intending to get me to side with him and criticize the monk. Then he would be the victor and could feel justified. But I told him to go ahead and close the temple. I said, "You should have closed it a long time ago!" He was speechless. There was silence on the line for about ten minutes. When I saw that he had nothing to say, I said, "When you were poor, you used the name of Buddhism and made a fortune. Now that you're so rich, you should obviously close down the temple and 'burn the bridges behind you,' as it were. You should forget about the kindness Buddhism has shown you. If you don't, then you'll have to

repay that kindness. If you forget it, you won't have to repay it. So it's your own fault that you have to shut down the temple." I scolded him like that, and from then until now, he has not closed the temple.

Question: When we cultivate, we sometimes have thoughts of resistance, which leads to obstacles. How should we deal with this?

Venerable Master: If a tiger came to eat you, would you try to eat the tiger? That would be resistance. Would you act like that?

Question: We often discuss Arhats and Bodhisattvas. Could the Master please explain the differences and similarities between the two? What are the differences between Bodhisattvahood and Arhatship?

Venerable Master: "Arhat" and "Bodhisattva" are names. They refer to people with different levels of wisdom. Bodhisattvas want to benefit others, while Arhats only cultivate to benefit themselves. These two are both stages on the path of cultivation. As an ordinary person, you don't know what the state of an Arhat is like. You may speculate all you want, but you're only wasting your time. No matter how you try to imagine what Arhats and Bodhisattvas are like, you cannot fathom their states. You're like someone who hasn't been to school yet, but who thinks he knows what it will be like to study and what books he will study in high school and college.

If you merely think about it without really studying hard, you can fantasize forever, but you still won't be able to graduate. You don't have to think about what you're going to study in high school or college. All you have to do is attend classes every day and study hard. When you get to those levels of study and read those books, you'll very naturally know what it's all about. All your speculations are just a waste of energy. Having eaten your fill and having nothing better to do, you just look for some useless activity to occupy yourself. That's the way I see it.

And so as ordinary people who have left the home-life, we first want to be good Bhikshus. Being a Bhikshu is like being an elementary school student. After we have finished studying the elementary school curriculum, of course we can enter high school. In high school we need not think about what we're going to do after we have earned a Ph.D. Although we should have a plan, we have to realize that when the time comes, things may not happen the way we plan. So it's better to concentrate on doing a good job of being a Bhikshu than to investigate the states of Arhats and Bodhisattvas.

Question: My parents don't approve of my leaving the home-life. They don't think leaving home is a good thing. I really wish to use Buddhism to influence my parents, but if I leave home they will probably become even more opposed. Will the Master please tell me how I can help them to gradually accept Buddhism and meditation?

Venerable Master: Yes. It's very easy to cause your parents to not oppose your leaving the home-life. In Malaysia there was a monk who, when he saw monastics from the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas wearing their precept sashes, also wanted to wear his sash. But his teacher wouldn't allow him to wear the sash under any circumstances. His teacher maintained that monastics didn't need to wear the sash. When he asked me what he should do, I said, "Tell your teacher that if you wear the sash, you'll be reminded that you are a monk and you won't have thoughts of lust; if you don't wear it, you keep thinking about women. Tell your teacher that, and see if he'll let you wear the sash." When he went back and told this to his teacher, his teacher didn't stop him from wearing the sash anymore. As for your question, you can tell your parents, "If I don't leave home, then I'll want to eat, drink, visit prostitutes, gamble, take drugs, and even commit murder and arson and all kinds of crimes. But if I leave home, then I have to give up killing and liberate life, so naturally I won't dare to do those bad things." Tell your parents that and then ask them if they think leaving home is a good idea or not.

Question: Reciting the Buddha's name is not a common practice in Theravada Buddhism. What method of practice would the Master recommend to help one develop faith?

Venerable Master: Faith can be compared to the five flavors. All the different Dharma-doors (methods of practice) that the Buddha taught are like different flavors. There are sour, sweet,

bitter, hot, and salty flavors. You can't say that sour is the best flavor, nor can you say that sweet is number one. You can't say that bitter, hot, or salty flavors are number one either, because each person likes different things. Those who like to eat sour things say sourness is good for them. Those who prefer sweet things feel that sweetness is good for them. People who like to eat bitter-tasting things think bitterness is good for them. And those who like hot, spicy food cannot eat food without spices. No matter what Dharma-door we believe in, if we apply it correctly, there will naturally be a response. If we don't use it appropriately, there will be no response. The choice of a method of practice depends on each person's disposition. Every individual has his or her causes and conditions. No matter which Dharma-door it is, if you can concentrate on it, you will obtain a response. For example, if you cultivate the Dharma-door of reciting the Buddha's name, it doesn't take a lot of work or money, and it doesn't hinder your other activities, because you can do it whether you are moving or still, in the daytime or at night. This is a practice that many people are able to do with ease, so it is suitable for people in general. But if you don't concentrate, you might not have a response. There's a saying that goes,

*If your mouth recites "Amitabha,"
but your mind is distracted,
Then even if you recite till your throat is sore,
it's no use.*

For that reason, no matter what method you use, it's necessary to have faith. "Faith is the source of the Way and the mother of merit and virtue. It nurtures all roots of goodness." Why is our faith not strong and firm? Because we have not sent our roots down deeply, so we cannot deeply enter the Buddha's teachings. What should we do about this? We should create merit, foster virtue, and speak wholesome words. To create merit means to help other people. To foster virtue is to quietly benefit others without letting them know. And to speak wholesome words means:

Speak compassionate and skillful words.

Do more virtuous deeds, whether you are rich or poor.

If we can speak true words and not tell lies, if we can speak the truth that we have realized after "going through the fire," no one will be able to refute that truth. The truth is unchanging, yet it accords with conditions. It accords with conditions, but never changes. That's the difference between truth and falsehood. If you recognize the truth and investigate it day after day, you'll naturally have faith.

A talk given on October 10, 1990,
in Chithurst, England

To Stop Wars, First Stop the Fighting in Your Mind

What kind of strength can stop wars?

**The strength of sincerity. In our every thought
we should keep our minds free of hatred.**

Wars result in the loss of life, property damage, and the waste of our own energy; they also increase the contamination of the environment. Although we are but a tiny percentage of the total human population in the world, we will win against all odds. In our small group we want to pray to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions to put an end to wars. If we can be 120,000 percent sincere in our wish to end all war, we will have a response against all odds.

Everyone please repeat after me: “We disciples, Hsuan Hua and so on, beseech the infinite, inexhaustible, eternal Three Jewels—the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha—of the three periods of time, pervading the ten directions of space throughout the Dharma Realm, to bring forth great vows to protect all living beings in the world. We pray that the war in the Middle East will cease and that all living beings will soon

enjoy peace and happiness. In life after life, we shall eternally strive to repay the kindness of the Three Jewels. With the utmost sincerity, we hope the infinite, inexhaustible, eternal Three Jewels—the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha—of the three periods of time, pervading the ten directions of space throughout the Dharma Realm, will compassionately fulfill our request.”

Today’s Dharma assembly is extremely important. Everyone should cherish the wish to rescue the world. Everyone should regard the lives of all living beings as more important than their own. We should all resolve to end the wars in the world. In wanting to end wars, we cannot oppose wars. If you have are opposed to war in the world, then there is a war going on inside you. Once you oppose any person or any war, you start a war right within yourself. We want to stop wars. What kind of strength can stop wars? The strength of sincerity. In our every thought we should keep our minds free of hatred. If there is no hatred in our minds, there will be a bit less enmity in the world. Eventually, when all enmity ceases and we have no more enemies, hatred will naturally cease.

Therefore, in Buddhism there are no armies. There is nothing equivalent to the Crusaders. We treat everyone with kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. The karmic offenses of living beings have resulted in the Communist Party, the Republican Party, the Democratic Party, and so forth. You have your party, and he has his. People of the same views join

together and fight against those who are different from them. If you don't side with them, they consider you an enemy. Buddhism has no parties or factions. It opposes no one. It loves everyone as one of its own and doesn't hate anyone. And so the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas advocates the six bright paths, also known as the six kinds of wisdom, the six demon-subduing pestles, and the six demon-spotting mirrors. What are they? The first one is not contending. Why shouldn't you contend? As soon as you contend about something that someone else wants, that person will contend with you. But the practice of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is, "If people discard it, I'll pick it up. If people want it, I'll give it away." We take in whatever others don't want; we won't take anything that people want. That's the way the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is.

The second one is not being greedy. We are not greedy for things that other people are greedy for. If you are greedy, then you will be selfish. If you have no greed, that is true unselfishness. Being unselfish, you will not seek anything. Why do people go everywhere seeking for things? Because of greed. We want to be unselfish and not seek. So the third is not seeking. The fourth is not being selfish, and the fifth is not pursuing personal advantage. These all work the same way. The sixth is not lying. Why do people tell lies? Because they want to protect their selfish interests. Why are they selfish? Because they are seeking for something, or greedy for something, or contending about something.

If one is not selfish, does not pursue personal advantage, does not seek anything, does not contend, and has no greed, then one doesn't need to lie and cheat people as one might in doing business. When an item is clearly worth ten dollars, the vendor tries to sell it to you for a hundred dollars, saying, "This is really a bargain. I'm not making any money off this." He has to make a sales pitch. Since we don't contend, are not greedy, do not seek anything, are not selfish, and do not want personal advantage, we have no reason to lie. We cherish other people's lives more than our own. That's why, now that you have taken refuge with me today, I am willing to take on your karmic offenses as my own. I want to do this because I have read about the ancient sages and worthies, and they all took the blame for other people's mistakes, but did not shift the responsibility for their own mistakes onto others. Emperor Tang of the Shang dynasty said, "If I have offenses, do not blame the people. If the people have offenses, the blame lies with me." He appealed to the Supreme Lord, to God, and perhaps to the Buddha, asking them not to judge his people.

A talk given on October 11, 1990 in London, England

To Repay the Kindness of the Three Jewels, We Should Refrain from Killing

**The flesh of living beings contains certain
toxins, which may or may not be perceptible.**

All of you have just taken refuge with the infinite Three Jewels—the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—that pervades the space throughout the Dharma Realm. People who believe in the Buddha should constantly be mindful of the kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and giving of the Three Jewels. We should feel grateful and fortunate to have encountered the Three Jewels. It is not easy to encounter the Buddhadharma even in a hundred million eons. Now that we have encountered it, if we don't apply ourselves diligently, we are just like a student who, instead of studying, always cuts class and goes out to play, wasting the time in vain.

At all times we should act as if we were facing the Buddha or our teacher. We cannot be the least bit sloppy, lax, or lazy.

Then we are practicing the paramita of vigor. We should be vigorous in body and mind. Being vigorous in body means diligently cultivating precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. Mental vigor means putting greed, anger, and delusion to rest.

No matter which method we choose to practice, we should stick to it and cultivate accordingly. Whoever can do that can attain Buddhahood. Every method of practice is second to none and a way to realize the ultimate truth. It shouldn't be that you study the Manifest Teaching for a while, then decide that you're not getting anywhere and so you switch over to the Secret Teaching; then after studying that for a while, you don't obtain any response and so you decide to study the Doctrines. After studying Doctrines, you're still dissatisfied so you switch to Chan. Chan, Doctrines, Moral Precepts, Secret, and Pure Land—you study each of them for only two-and-a-half, not even three, days. You don't stick to any one practice for long. You quickly grow weary of old things and always want something new. As a result, you spend all your time running back and forth, and you waste your whole life. When it comes time to die, you still haven't cultivated a single Dharma to success, just because you spent all your time running around. What a pity!

Take listening to the Dharma, for example. Although you've heard a great deal of Dharma, you understand very little of it. Or maybe you understand much, but you've practiced very little of it. That's why I always say, "Being able to speak is not

as good as being able to listen; being able to listen is not as good as being able to practice. Being able to practice is not as good as being able to attain realization." A person may be able to speak so well that flowers fall from the heavens and golden lotuses well forth from the earth, but if he doesn't actually put his words into practice, he is like someone who merely talks about food or counts others' treasures. It's also like a stone man. He may be able to talk, but he can't walk, because he is made of stone. So there's a saying,

*You may speak well, you may speak wonderfully,
But if you don't practice, it's not the Way.*

If you know how to listen to the Dharma, then for you,

*General principles and fine details
All convey the ultimate truth.*

No matter how the person speaks Dharma, regardless of his approach and direction, whether he speaks of dust motes or of entire world-systems, when you listen to it you feel it is wonderful beyond words. And so knowing how to speak is not as good as knowing how to listen.

You may be able to understand what you hear, but if you can really put it into practice, then it's even more useful. Take the

analogy of food. No matter how nutritious and tasty the food may be, if you only read the recipe but don't actually make it and eat it, you won't get what you need.

If you can listen and also practice, you are like a student in school. You may have studied all the lessons, but until you graduate and receive your diploma, you haven't completed your education. And so I said that being able to practice is not as good as realizing the goal. Once you have realized the fruition of sagehood, you are much better off than someone who merely talks about food and counts others' treasures. And so there's a verse,

*All day long you count others' treasures,
Without half a cent to call your own.
Not cultivating the Dharma
Is making the same kind of mistake.*

Yesterday I talked about the Chinese character for "meat" being an ideograph of one person eating another, hoping that you wouldn't eat too many people. But many people cannot accept this idea. When they heard me saying it last night, some people looked up to the heavens, as if to ask God if such a principle really existed. Some people looked downwards, as if to ask the earth deity if it was really that way. Some people looked to the north, south, east, and west, looking at their neighbors to see what they thought. "What proof does the

Dharma Master have for this strange principle?" they wondered. They really wanted to get up and leave, but they were embarrassed to do so. Yet even if they stayed, they felt that what they were hearing made no sense.

What makes sense, then? They think, "If I eat more meat, then I'll get more nutrition and my body will be healthier. That's the truth." Actually it's not true that meat is nutritious and good for health. In the modern world, many people who eat meat are developing cancer. This is because the flesh of living beings contains certain toxins, which may or may not be perceptible. These toxins come from the enmity that builds up as living being kill and devour one another. Because living beings have no place to release their hatred, it is transmitted back and forth.

When the toxins pass from the animals' bodies into human bodies, people have no resistance against them, so they develop strange ailments. That's why so many people who consume meat have all sorts of bizarre diseases now. Such diseases were not so common before, because science was not as advanced. Modern chemical toxins, scientifically produced toxins, and the poisonous enmity in people's minds, have combined to create a poisonous energy that has polluted the air and contaminated animal flesh. The combination of chemical toxins and by-products, along with pollution of the air, land, and water, have resulted in all kinds of strange diseases.

“Dharma Master,” someone is thinking, “what you’re saying is outrageous. I simply don’t believe it.”

If you don’t believe it, that’s okay. After all, I’m not asking for your money and you haven’t paid me, right? If you don’t believe and you feel uncomfortable sitting there, please bear with me a little longer. I’ll soon be finished.

At this point, I have thought of a true story. During the reign of Emperor Wu (502—550 C.E.) of the Liang Dynasty, Buddhism flourished in China. People would ask Buddhist monks to recite Sutras at weddings and funerals, whenever anybody got sick, and also when people had recovered from illness. Everyone believed in Buddhism at that time, and it became a new enterprise for monks to recite Sutras on these occasions.

At that time there was a rich man whose grandson was getting married. He invited an eminent and virtuous monk to recite Sutras at the wedding. Guess whom he invited? Dhyana Master Bao Zhi. Dhyana Master Bao Zhi had been born in an eagle’s nest, and his hands resembled the claws of an eagle. When his (foster) parents heard a baby crying up in the eagle’s nest, they thought the eagle had snatched the baby from somewhere and was going to eat it. When they climbed up to the nest, they found a plump, fair-skinned baby there, totally human-looking except for his hands, which looked like eagle’s claws. The couple took the baby home and raised him. As

soon as he grew older, he liked to bow to the Buddhas and study the Buddhadharma, so his foster parents sent him to a monastery, where he renounced the householder's life and became a monk.

After he became a monk the good roots he had cultivated in previous lives matured, and he attained the Five Eyes and the spiritual powers of the Heavenly Eye, the Heavenly Ear, and so forth. Possessing the Five Eyes and the Six Spiritual Powers, he could see what people had been in their past lives and what they would become in their future lives.

When Dhyana Master Bao Zhi went to the rich man's home to recite Sutras, he saw the bride and groom and exclaimed, "How strange and unexpected! The grandson is marrying the grandmother." I'm sure many people will not believe this story, but I'm still going to tell it. Even if not a single person believes it, I cannot refrain from telling it. This is a big fault of mine: If I have something to say, I'll say it whether you believe it or not. Anyway, the Dhyana Master said that the grandson was taking his grandmother for a wife. How could this be? We have to understand how we become people. It happens because of our emotions. If our emotions are appropriate, then everything is normal. But if they are inappropriate, then some strange things can happen. Why would the grandmother be willing to be her grandson's wife? Right before the old grandmother died, her grandson had just been born, and she felt a

great fondness for him. She thought, “I don’t have any misgivings about dying, except that I’m worried about my newborn grandson—who will take care of him after I’m gone?” Although she couldn’t bear to die and leave him, the ghost of impermanence came and took her before King Yama. She said, “King Yama, you really aren’t a good lord of death. My grandson was just born when you called me away. What will happen to him? Who will take care of him?”

King Yama said, “Fine, since you love him so much, I will follow your wish and help you out. You can go back and be his wife.” When the grandmother heard that, she wanted to say that she didn’t want to, but she could hardly oppose King Yama’s orders. So she reluctantly went off to rebirth. She was reborn as a little girl, and when her grandson grew up, she married him. That’s why the verse said that “the grandson is marrying the grandmother.”

Dhyana Master Bao Zhi looked out the window and saw a little girl munching on a pig’s foot. He said, “The daughter is eating the mother’s flesh.” The girl’s mother had been reborn as a pig. Little did she know that the foot she was chewing on was from a pig that had been her mother.

The Dhyana Master looked over at the bandstand and said, “The son is beating on his father’s skin.” The boy’s father had been reborn as a mule. The boy was beating a drum stretched with hide from that mule. Maybe the father had beaten the

boy all the time with sticks and clubs before, so now the boy was whacking his father with drumsticks all day long.

Dhyana Master Bao Zhi glanced at the couch and said, “Pigs and sheep sit on the couch.” The pigs and sheep the family had eaten before had been reborn as people and were joining the festivities. They were here to take revenge.

Dhyana Master Bao Zhi looked into the pot of meat stew and said, “The six relatives are cooking in the pot.” The six kinds of relatives—father, mother, elder siblings, younger siblings, spouse, and children—are bound together by their emotional ties. What are relatives all about? They are about emotion. Like Crazy Glue, emotion glues relatives together so they cannot separate. Now the past relatives of the family have been reborn as pigs and sheep for people to slaughter and make into meat stew. A verse on the word for “meat” goes:

*Within the word for “meat” (肉) two people (人) reside;
The inner person pulls in the one outside.
When living beings consume each other,
Think it over, aren’t we just like cannibals?*

[translated by Rev. Heng Sure]

Dhyana Master Bao Zhi summed up the situation in two lines:

*Everyone has come to offer their congratulations,
But I see that this is really suffering!*

After saying his “blessing,” he left, not caring whether the people wanted to hear them or not. He didn’t take the offerings of money they had given him. If the people inside the word for “meat” could be our relatives who have been reborn as horses, cows, sheep, chickens, dogs, pigs, and so forth, we should reflect: Could it be that my ancestors have come back as horses, cows, sheep, chickens, dogs, pigs, and so on? Might my parents have been reborn as animals? Could my beloved pet cat or dog have been reborn in those forms? Perhaps the horses, cows, and sheep that we raised have been reborn? If my pets have turned into pigs and sheep, how painful it would be if I ate their flesh!

If you think what I am saying could be right, you might want to reflect on it and see if it makes sense. If you think my words are wrong, simply forget them and act as if I never said them. Just let them blow by your ears like the wind.

A talk given on October 11, 1990, in England

I Want to Take on the Karmic

As long as you can change your faults and renew yourself, no matter how serious the offenses you have committed were, I'm willing to be responsible for them.

Now that you have all taken refuge with the Three Jewels, you should be good Buddhist disciples. You ought to refrain from evil and practice all good deeds. Do all the things that benefit others, and avoid doing anything that hurts other people. If you can be this way, then I will be responsible for all the offenses and mistakes you committed in the past. But be sure that you do not commit those offenses or mistakes again. Do you all understand? As long as you can change your faults and renew yourself, no matter how serious the offenses you have committed were, I'm willing to be responsible for them. The offenses you committed before were done because you hadn't studied the Buddhadharma and didn't know any

better. Now that you have taken refuge in the Buddhadharma, you should not commit any more offenses.

All your past offenses will definitely count as mine, because I didn't teach you before. Now that you have taken refuge, you must not create any more offenses. You should perform all kinds of good deeds, while refraining from all bad deeds. Do you understand? If you were supposed to fall into the hells as retribution for your past offenses, I guarantee that you won't fall into the hells. If you were supposed to become a hungry ghost, but you truly reform, I'm willing to become a hungry ghost in your stead and undergo your retribution. If you were supposed to become an animal because of your past offenses, but you practice good deeds and refrain from evil after you have taken refuge, I'm willing to stand in for you in becoming an animal. Whatever the offenses you committed in the past, I'm willing to be responsible for them.

Within the vast population of the world, we are but a few people. However, we can succeed against all odds. As a small group of people, we want to pray to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions to put an end to all wars. If we are sincere to the extreme in our wish to end war, there will definitely be a response. So let us all pray together.

A talk given on October 11, 1990,
at the New World Restaurant
in Chinatown, London

Living as if Drunk and Dying in a Dream, It's Hard to End Birth and Death

**When the time comes to part, we cannot
relinquish our emotional ties. Not being
able to relinquish them, we cannot be free.
That inability to be free is what hinders us.**

Good and wise advisors! There's no knowing how many times we've met together before, as if in a dream. Since time without beginning, all beings have mutually been relatives, parents and children, friends, brothers and sisters. We become stuck so closely together that when the time comes to part, we cannot relinquish our emotional ties. Unable to relinquish them, we cannot be free. That inability to be free hinders us so that we cannot see things clearly and be decisive. Why can't we be decisive? It's because of ignorance and lack of understanding.

For countless eons, we have undergone birth followed by

death, death followed by rebirth, going along in the cycle of the twelve links of conditioned co-production.

Lack of understanding is stupidity. Because of stupidity, there is activity. With activity, the seeds of stupidity are sown. Once seeds of stupidity are sown, there are names created out of stupidity. When there are such names, the six sense faculties (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind) come into being and we become attached to them. The six faculties perceive the states of the six sense objects. When they perceive pleasant states, we have a pleasant experience. When they come into contact with something unpleasant, we have an unpleasant experience. Thus there are favorable and adverse states. If it is something we like, we want to hang onto it. If it is something we don't like, we want to get rid of it. When favorable states come, we feel happy. When adverse states come, we become upset. Thus feelings of like and dislike come into being. With such feelings comes birth into the next life. Once there is birth, there will be old age and sickness. And so this is how we make a mess of things, like a fly buzzing around to the east, west, north, and south, not knowing quite what it is doing. It crawls around on the windowpane, but cannot see what is on the other side.

We can't see through things and let go of them, and so we live as if drunk and die in a dream. In this way, in life after life, we argue and fight, laugh and cry, and become vexed and afflicted. It never ends, but we don't get tired of it. We think it's a lot of fun and very interesting.

*Diligence creates merit.
Fooling around is of no benefit.
Be careful! Urge yourself on!*

The situation in the Middle East is very dangerous now. War is about to break out. This is because people have deluded thoughts and put out poisonous energy, emitting it everywhere. The individual releases his or her poisonous energy onto his or her family, and once the family is contaminated, there are family wars. But a family war isn't exciting enough, so it spreads into the society. You scheme against me, and I plot against you, both of us trying to find ways to benefit ourselves. All this fighting is for the sake of money. A verse describes the Chinese character (錢) for "money":

*Two spears fighting over gold: the killing
energy runs high.
Everyone is obsessed with money.
Those who know how to use it can transcend
the Three Realms.
Those who don't fall into the underworld.*

The way the ancients designed the Chinese character for "money" is very interesting. On the left side is the character for "gold" (金). The character for "gold" has a "person" (人) on top and three horizontal lines, a vertical line, and two dots below. The two dots represent gold nuggets, and the three horizontal lines are probably three people. The vertical line

symbolizes the single-minded focus on fighting. And so there is a central vertical line, a gold nugget on either side, and people on top fighting over it all. What do they fight with? They use spears. So the character for “money” consists of a “gold” character and two copies of the “spear” (戈) character. So there is a lot of meaning behind the way the ancients designed Chinese characters. The two spears are fighting over the gold nuggets, which could also be in the form of U.S. dollars or pounds sterling. So the verse says: “Two spears fighting over gold: the killing energy runs high.” You want to kill me, and I want to kill you, because we’re after the gold. So you take your knife, and I take my spear; you set off an atomic bomb, and someone else sets off a hydrogen bomb or uses poison gas, and waits to see if you survive. When that happens your gold nuggets are of no help, nor is the oil that you’ve seized. The energy of killing rises to the heavens.

“Everyone is obsessed with money.” Money brings tremendous trouble. People lose their appetite or commit suicide by jumping off buildings, all because of money. They place their bets at the horse races and lose several billion, almost losing their very life, all because of their greed for gold.

“Those who know how to use it can transcend the Three Realms.” If you know how to use money, you can become a Buddha. “Those who don’t fall into underworld.” If you don’t know how to use money well, you use it to create offenses

until you fall into the hells. That's how dangerous money is! What advantages are there to money? Everyone is so confused. Wealth and sex have confused the people of the world so deeply that they have lost their wisdom. If you do not crave wealth and sex, your inherent wisdom will reveal itself. You should not crave fame, either. Don't always strive to be number one. Don't try to get in the spotlight and make yourself known to everyone.

Perhaps you don't want fame, sex, or money, but you can't put down your attachment to food. You aren't greedy for wealth, sex, or a good reputation, but you're greedy for good flavors. When the food is served, your eyes open wider than a cow's, because you want to take a good look to see if it's the kind you like. If it is, you take more—one serving after another, never getting enough. If it's not, you taste a little bit and push it aside. You are clever when it comes to eating, but not so wise when it comes to listening to the Dharma. When it comes to food, you know what's good and what's not.

You may be able to put down your attachment to food, but as for sleep, you can't bear to give up even a minute of sleep. If you haven't had enough sleep, you can't get up to go to work or to do morning recitation. During the morning and evening recitations, you doze off. When you bow to the Buddhas, you fall asleep and don't get up from the bow. Or you stand there and enter samadhi as you're reciting the Buddha's name, so

you forget to walk forward. In this way people are confused all their lives, and then they die without knowing what will become of them.

The world situation now is incomprehensible. People cannot imagine what will happen to them. We don't know when some country will set off a nuclear or chemical weapon and annihilate the whole planet and everyone on it. I'm not trying to intimidate you; it's really that dangerous. For this reason, we have to trace the problem back to its source—fighting. Instead of fighting, everyone ought to yield.

This is the responsibility of the leader of every nation. Every head-of-state should cultivate virtue, carry out humane policies, and teach the people to follow the five precepts and practice the ten good deeds. For example, the Crown Prince of England believes in Buddhism, but the royal family made a rule that when he assumed the throne, under no circumstances could he sit in full lotus posture. So you see, even being a Buddhist is against the law! If every head-of-state could believe in Buddhism, every nation would be free of wars. On the other hand, if the head-of-state is not Buddhist and is infatuated with money, there will be war in the country. The heads-of-state have to be responsible for this.

Secondly, religious leaders have to be responsible. Why are religious leaders unable to set a good example for others?

Why are they so greedy for wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep? The religious leaders have to assume their responsibility. Furthermore, professors should not teach college students to be promiscuous and take birth control pills like crazy. Professors, thinking only about making money, have spoiled the students and condoned their misbehavior.

It is said, "If the child is raised but not taught well, it is the father's fault." Why aren't parents teaching their children? Why do they let them do whatever they want? For example, American youths commit murder and arson, peddle drugs, and engage in other illegal activities. This is all because their parents didn't teach them to behave well and respect the rules. That's why everyone disregards the law and doesn't follow any rules. In their daily lives, people break the five precepts against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxicants. These are the reasons the world has gone to ruin and education is morally bankrupt.

Parents have failed to educate their children; teachers and professors have not done a good job teaching; and the clergy have not fulfilled their role as educators. The government is not doing anything to reform education, either. Since the world is in such chaos, the religious leaders should make it their responsibility to bring about educational reform. All religions should work together. It should not be like before, with people praising a religion when they were in it and slandering it after

they left it. Catholics would say that Catholicism was good, Protestants would say that Protestantism was good, and Buddhists would say that Buddhism was good. Actually, we aren't supposed to praise ourselves. Only the praise and recognition of others counts. For example, everyone recognizes the fact that the Buddha attained Buddhahood. Your thinking of how you are limitless and boundless doesn't make you limitless and boundless. Your deciding that you have become a Buddha doesn't make you a Buddha.

A talk given on October 12, 1990
at the Avatamsaka Temple
in Brussels, Belgium

The Spiritual Mantra of Great Compassion Penetrates Heaven and Earth

If we recite the Great Compassion Mantra sincerely, it certainly works. We also have to refrain from lying for it to be efficacious.

Good and wise advisors! People who study the Buddhadharma should not have thoughts of greed or contention. Some people are such that the more they study, the more they want to contend; the more they study, the greedier they become.

This is my first visit to Belgium. The majority of the people in the audience here are Vietnamese. Although there may be some difficulty communicating because of the language barrier, people are very orderly. When I went to Malaysia and Taiwan, there were Buddhists there whose every move manifested their greed and contention.

Due to some miraculous events that occurred during my first

visit to Malaysia, I was able to see what those people were really like. What miracles am I talking about? In Malaysia there are many people who are victims of hexes cast by teachers of deviant cults.

There was one person I remember who had been under the influence of a hex for fifteen years. Every day the hex drove him to the point of committing suicide, but then another part of him would tell him not to kill himself. With one part of his mind telling him to commit suicide and another part telling him not to, every day was a struggle between life and death for him.

When I went to Malaysia, I believe it was in Muar, there was a person who got on his knees and begged me to help him get rid of a hex. He was in his fifties. When I heard his request, I picked up my gnarled cane and dealt him a blow on the head. That was on my first trip to Malaysia. I was sick at the time and barely had the strength to walk. Seeing me walking so slowly, someone gave me that stick to use as a walking cane. And so when I heard about the person's hex, I was so upset that I picked up the cane and gave him a whack with it. After being struck, he stood up and ran. After he had run a dozen steps or so, he vomited uncountable thousands of worms. After that, he was well.

When news of this incident spread, many people came to wait

for their turn to receive a beating, but I didn't have time to hit them all. This person had a sickness, and that one had another sickness. The room I was staying in was about a hundred paces from the restroom. Every day the path from my door to the restroom was lined with people on their knees who were waiting to ask for a beating. I don't know if it was sincerity or greed on their part, but they started lining up at my door first thing in the morning. When I came out of my room to go to the restroom, there was no space left for me to walk. They blocked my way and surrounded me, asking me to hit them. I had no choice but to recite a "mantra." It was the mantra for going to the restroom, and it went, "If you don't get out of my way, I'll relieve myself right on your heads. If you're not afraid of being sprayed with urine, then stay kneeling where you are." When they heard that, they finally opened up a path for me to pass. What is the point of this story? It shows that those Buddhists didn't understand the Buddhadharma. When they weren't contending, they were being greedy. They didn't care whether a person had time or not; they would block his path and struggle to be first. They were contending. To study Buddhadharma like that is not to understand the Buddhadharma.

In studying Buddhadharma, you should defer to others and be courteous in all you do. Don't contend with anyone. The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas has six "demon-spotting mirrors," and the first one is not contending.

When I was in Manchuria [northeast China], once there was a devastating epidemic of a contagious disease. In one household of eleven people, there were thirteen deaths in three days. How could that be? It was because there were two visitors when the epidemic struck, and so the whole family of eleven along with the two visitors died, making thirteen in all. There were deaths in many families. Observing the situation, I didn't wait to be called upon. I took a few disciples with me, and we went to recite the Great Compassion Mantra on the outskirts of the village. After that the epidemic subsided. Afterwards, many people became Buddhists. They took refuge with the Three Jewels and became my disciples.

Anyone who sincerely recites the Great Compassion Mantra can obtain a response. There was one couple who had quarreled, and the wife tried to commit suicide by drinking lye. Drinking even a mouthful of regular lye can be lethal, not to mention a whole bowlful, but she drank the kind used to make beancurd, which is not as strong. After the woman had drunk the lye in anger, her son came to find me, as I happened to be in their village at the time. He didn't really know whether I could help him, but in this emergency he was willing to try anything. Since he couldn't think of a better solution, he ran to find me, got on his knees, and told me what had happened. He begged me to save his mother. At first I declined, but he kept kneeling there for twenty or thirty minutes. Seeing that he was quite sincere, I went to his home to recite the Great Compassion Mantra.

When I arrived at his home, his mother's eyes had rolled upwards and the whites were showing; her pupils could not be seen. White foam was coming out of her mouth, and she was unconscious. It seemed hopeless. Nevertheless, I still decided to try and recite the Great Compassion Mantra. As I recited, the lye started flowing out of her mouth. She then regained consciousness and vomited all the lye she had swallowed. After that, she became well.

From this, we should know that if we recite the Great Compassion Mantra sincerely, it certainly works. The Great Compassion Mantra penetrates heaven and earth, and can cure all the 84,000 kinds of illnesses in the world. But those who recite the mantra have to be sincere for it to work. They also have to refrain from lying for it to be efficacious. If you lie all the time, then reciting the Great Compassion Mantra will not have any effect.

I remember a girl from Penang, Malaysia, whose last name was Wang. In her past life she had done a lot of hunting and had killed many creatures, and so in this life she was mute. She came to listen to the Sutra lecture. After the lecture, I told her to sincerely recite Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name and the Great Compassion Mantra. Everyone also recited for her. And then she herself was able to speak and recite Guanyin Bodhisattva's name.

The following morning, there were over a dozen people

asking me to help this mute person and that mute person to gain the ability to speak. There were over a dozen people, and it would have been impossible. But the fathers of these mutes could speak, and they said, "Last night you helped that mute girl regain the capacity of speech; today you should help these ones do the same. If you don't, we will criticize you in the newspapers and sue you in court." See how much trouble this Dharma Master brought upon himself, all because of his eagerness to help others! If I had not concerned myself with a single mute, I wouldn't have had all this trouble.

In Vancouver, Canada, there was a woman surgeon. When she was in medical school, people made fun of her, saying, "You dare to study medicine? In medical school you have to perform autopsies on human corpses. Are you daring enough to do that?" Hearing that, she immediately took a knife, cut a piece of flesh from a corpse, and ate it. Her classmates were stunned and exclaimed that she really had guts, daring to eat the flesh of a corpse. This woman was a surgeon, and her surgical skill was both swift and precise. However, the ghost of the corpse whose flesh she had eaten often bothered her in her sleep. From somewhere she heard that ghosts were afraid of me, and that if she took refuge with me she would get better.

She looked for an opportunity to take refuge with me. After she had taken refuge, the ghost stopped bothering her at night. Then she began to lecture on the Buddhadharmā, using her status as a doctor. She told people that the Buddhadharmā

is very flexible. She said that everyone can become a Buddha without having to cultivate or hold the precepts, because everyone is a Buddha to begin with. She said there was no need to lead a morally disciplined life, so she herself smoked and drank. She went everywhere saying such things, and eventually her retribution caught up with her. She got cancer. She had an operation and thought she was cured, but she was still in terrible pain. She ended up having five or six operations in all. The doctors told her that there was no hope and that she would die.

Then she called a friend in New York to say goodbye. She told her friend how the doctors had said she would die and how there was no cure, and that she was still in great pain after all the operations. Her friend, who didn't know me personally, wrote to me saying, "My friend is a doctor who understands the Buddhadharma. She has cancer. If she were to get well, she would be able to save other people. She could use her status as a doctor to propagate the Buddhadharma, and would be of great help to Buddhism." I wrote back asking who the person was. Her friend knew that she had taken refuge with me.

I remember that after she had gotten cancer, she had come to see me in Canada once. When I asked her if she was sick, she had denied it. She wasn't ready to admit it. Then I scolded her. I scolded her until she couldn't bear it anymore. When she stood up and was about to run away, I slapped her face and

said, "I'm chasing away the little ghost! Let's see what this big ghost can do!" Strangely enough, that slap chased her cancer away. That happened in Canada. How could this happen? It is because I have never told a lie. If you tell lies, nothing is efficacious. If you don't, everything is efficacious. That's why I hope Buddhists will not contend, be greedy, seek things, be selfish, pursue personal advantages, or tell lies. This is very important.

A talk given on October 14, 1990,
at the Avatamsaka Temple
in Brussels, Belgium

The Real Father of the Communist Party

**I've been a communist ever since I was born:
I give whatever I have to others, and I don't
want anything for myself.**

Good and wise advisors! We are now in the Space Age. The distances between people on the planet Earth have shrunk, and language barriers have been transcended. Although there is still some distance between the audience and myself and there are still some language barriers, in general these are obstacles that we should overcome in the Space Age.

Since it is the Space Age, all nations should unite their strength and stand together; the people of all nations should form one great family. When people of all nationalities join together to become one big family, all nations will be united into one great nation. Once this great nation is formed, it will be stronger than any nation or race. Everyone will live together in harmony.

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas has over five hundred

acres of land and about eighty buildings. Up to twenty thousand people can live in the City. We want to present the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas to all the Buddhists of the world. We want to offer all the buildings on this piece of land to the followers of all the world's religions. Not only do we offer it to all Buddhists and the followers of all religions, we offer it to all the living beings in the world. Anyone who wants to may use the buildings and land there without having to pay rent. They are for everyone to use free of charge.

The Buddhism of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is everyone's Buddhism. It is not the Buddhism of a particular country or a particular individual or a particular people. It is the Buddhism of all humankind. All beings—whether womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, transformationally born, endowed with thought, lacking thought, not entirely possessing thought, not entirely lacking thought, sentient, or insentient—down to the mosquitoes and ants, as long as they wish to come to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, I welcome them.

Do you believe what I'm saying? Why do you believe it? It's not something that people find easy to do. There isn't anyone in the world who is willing to do what I'm doing. Ordinary people reserve their own places for their personal use, and even want to usurp the property of others. Why would someone want to let everyone use his place, and not even want other people's places? Why do you believe that someone would do this? Tell me your reasons.

Today I'm not going to worry about breaking the laws of this country. The so-called "collective property" [共產 *gong chan*, the term used for communism] means taking other people's property for oneself, but not sharing one's own property with others. I, on the other hand, am giving my own property to others, without wanting other people's property. This kind of principle isn't found in the world. So how come I believe in it? And how can you be sure that I'm not cheating you? What method do you have to verify that my words are true? What if I'm using this scheme to trick all of you into going to the United States, and once you get there I keep you in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas? Then what will you do? But I wouldn't do that, so please don't worry.

Now I'll tell you why I'm doing this. It's because I see that people want to travel into outer space, and if the people on earth still can't get along with one another and work together, then we're really very stupid. If people on this planet cannot get along and everyone wants to go off into space, what will we do when there is no one left on earth? That's why I feel I should try to bring everyone together now, so we can live on this planet without having to run off into outer space. For this reason, we Buddhists have to work to unite all religions and all living beings.

This is an aspiration I've had ever since I was young. I wish to take the sufferings of living beings upon myself. I wish to give

any blessings that I am meant to enjoy to everyone else and ask everyone to give their sufferings to me. When the Japanese attacked China, they sent many Chinese people to labor camps, where they had to do hard labor. They didn't have enough to eat or enough to wear, and many froze or starved to death. Then the Japanese set the dogs upon their corpses. Witnessing the suffering of the Chinese, I began to eat only one meal a day. Prior to that, when I was eating three meals a day, I could eat five bowls of food at each meal. When I began eating only one meal a day, I ate only three bowls of food, leaving the twelve remaining bowls for people who didn't have anything to eat. If they could have food to eat, they could live a little bit longer. What I was doing was really "sharing my property," so I said to those Communists, "You aren't qualified to be in the Communist Party. I am one who truly shares his property, and so I'm the true father of the Communist Party." Do you all get it?

People who had nothing to eat all came to me to get food, and so wherever I went, I had several hundred people following me and eating with me. That's why I say I'm truly "sharing my property" and am the real father of the Communist Party. The Chinese Communists said, "You are not even as old as Mao Zedong. How can you be the father of the Communist Party?"

I said, "Mao Zedong learned communism from reading Marx and Lenin. I've been a communist ever since I was born: I give

whatever I have to others, and I don't want anything for myself. I've even renounced the home-life, so if I'm not the father of communism, what am I?"

Mao Zedong took the money of the rich and the poor for his own use, while I don't even want money. Whether I have a lot of money or just a little, I give it to others.

Let me tell you something else. In San Francisco in 1979, I told Supervisor Quentin Kopp, "Ten years from now, communism will gradually start to disappear. Do you believe it?" Of course he didn't. Why not? Because right then communism was like the sun at high noon, flourishing in its heyday. Who would have expected that it would disappear ten years later? But I dared to say it then, not fearing that the Communist Party might try to kill me. If the Communists had found out, it would have been dangerous, wouldn't it? Because the karmic offenses of living beings keep changing, in this world one party is in power for a while, and then another party.

Let me tell you about some of the changes that have occurred or will occur during this century in China. I'll begin with the reign of Emperor Xuantong (1908–1911) of the Qing Dynasty. The verse about the Qing Dynasty goes:

*Clouds heavy and dark,
Vapors dense and gloomy.*

*The dragon has gone back to the earth,
and mud is modeled into a monkey.
A three-year-old child enjoys
only three years of blessings.
Under the moon there is no ruler,
and the waters dry up.
In a single day, the vast expanse
of mists and ripples is taken over.*

The clouds were dark and dismal, and there was a somber fog. A dragon from the heavens burrowed into the earth and turned into mud. Then the mud was taken and fashioned into a little monkey. The three-year-old child was Emperor Xuantong [who ascended the throne at the age of three and abdicated at the age of six]. There is no character for “ruler” (主) under the character for “moon” (月). This implies that there is a “ruler” above the “moon.” The word “waters” refers to the three dots of the “water” radical, so the whole line refers to the character *qing* (清) of the Qing Dynasty. The waters drying up symbolize the end of the Qing Dynasty. “The vast expanse of mists and ripples” is the land of China. The characters for “a single day” (一旦) combine to make the character *xuan* (宣) minus the top element 宀 and so the line said that Emperor Xuantong’s reign would soon be over.

The things I’m telling you now are things that not even the most learned Chinese could tell you.

The second verse describes Sun Yatsen.

*You, sir, are the grandfather,
Whose inner qualities are balanced.
A ten-thousand-mile rainbow breaks the
waves in its quest;
From the top of Yellow Crane Tower, a
jade flute is played.
Throughout the land people sing the
song of victory,
As a new flag of five colors is unfurled.*

If you are the grandfather, that implies that there is a grandchild, so the first line alludes to the character *sun* (孫) for “grandchild.” “Whose inner qualities are balanced” is part of a phrase that comes from the Analects. The full line reads, “His external accomplishments (文) and inner qualities (質) are balanced.” Thus the character *wen* (文), by its omission, is hidden in this line of verse. These two lines contain the name Sun Wen [also known as Dr. Sun Yatsen, founder of the Republic of China].

“Ten thousand miles” refers to the distance from Honolulu to China. This line describes how Sun Yatsen traveled back and forth by ship across the ocean between Honolulu and China, like a rainbow in the sky, braving the wind and waves for the sake of revolution. The jade flute is an analogy for the call to

revolution made from Yellow Crane Tower [the Wuchang Uprising in Hubei Province on October 10, 1911]. People in all directions responded to the call and came to join the revolution. The “new flag of five colors” refers to the five-colored flag [of red, yellow, blue, white, and black, representing the alliance of the five major ethnic groups within China: the Han Chinese, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Muslim Hui minority, and the Tibetans] that was adopted as the national flag when the Republic of China was founded.

We all have affinities with each other, and so today we have talked about some important world affairs and some matters of cause and effect. The matters I have talked about are not understood even by scholars or Ph.D.s. Not everyone can explain these matters.

A talk given on October 16, 1990 in Poland

Major Figures and Events in China during the Past Century

Originally Yuan Shikai didn't have the gall to proclaim himself the emperor. But after his servant had told him he had seen him transformed into a golden dragon, Yuan was determined to make his dream of being emperor come true.

Good and wise advisors! Today each person has spoken of how he or she left the home-life. Originally I was going to speak about my own conditions for leaving home, but it's such a long story that I won't tell it. There is a book about the events of my life, and anyone who wants to know the details can read it. But it only gives a general sketch. Actually, only a very small portion of the things I have done has been recorded. If everything that I have done were to be compiled, the record would be as long as the entire Buddhist canon.

To start off, I'll talk about when I first arrived in the United States. At that time some Chinese people came to hear me

lecture. I lectured on the *Vajra Sutra*. When I lectured back then, about fifteen people came to listen, but I didn't care how many people there were. Whether it was a lot or only a few, I lectured just the same. Fifteen or sixteen wasn't a small number. But after I finished lecturing that Sutra, hardly any Chinese people ever came again. Why not? Because Chinese people are more interested in making money than in studying the Buddhadharma.

After that, I lectured on the *Prajna-paramita Heart Sutra*. I wrote an eight-line verse to explain every line in the *Heart Sutra*. Such an explanation has never existed before in all these thousands of years. It was called the *Prajna-paramita Heart Sutra Standless Verse Commentary*. So the *Heart Sutra* was the second Sutra I lectured on in the United States. During that period I lectured twice on Saturdays and Sundays, giving four lectures every weekend. Although Chinese people didn't come to the lectures, Americans did, but only three of them. And guess what they did? As I lectured from the platform, one of them lay down on the floor and dozed off, another one sat leaning to one side, and the last one propped his feet on the table. That's how they would listen to the lecture. Even though they were that way, I put up with it and didn't criticize them. I just let them do as they pleased.

Later on, someone who translated my lectures into English wanted to go to Taiwan to study Chinese. Before he left, he would come to meditate every day. I said to him, "You should

go to Taiwan to take refuge with the Three Jewels.” When he was about to leave for Taiwan to study, I told him about all the elder, great, and renowned Dharma Masters in the various Taiwanese temples. While he was in Taiwan, he went to pay his respects to them all. But he didn’t take refuge with any of them. When I asked him why, he said he didn’t have any “red envelopes” [donations of money] to offer, so none of them were willing to take him as a disciple. That’s why he didn’t take refuge. When he returned to the United States, he asked to take refuge with me. I told him to wait, to take things slowly and look around for someone with more wisdom. After a while, he requested again, but I still didn’t give my consent. When he requested a third time, I finally consented.

In 1968, he led thirty-odd students from Seattle to San Francisco to study the *Shurangama Sutra* with me. Some of them were studying for their doctorates; others were studying for their Master’s degrees. Others were undergraduates. There were over thirty of them. I lectured the *Shurangama Sutra* for them for ninety-six days. In the beginning I only gave one lecture each day. After half a month had passed, I felt that I wouldn’t be able to finish in time, so I started giving two lectures a day. After another half month, I still felt I couldn’t finish, so I began lecturing three times a day. In the last month, I was delivering four lectures daily on the *Shurangama Sutra*.

I personally did all the cooking, boiled water, made tea, cleaned the toilets, and washed the dishes. The students were

not allowed into the kitchen. They spent their time taking notes, organizing their notes, and studying the precepts. When I wasn't lecturing, I took care of the chores. I still remember on the very last day, one of the students came into the kitchen to help me take the plates and bowls out of the cupboard. But then—wham!—they all dropped to the ground and broke. So on the last day, no one had anything to eat.

Right now some of you are thinking, "You promised to talk about the important people and events of this century in China. Why are you talking about these other things?" I know many of you are thinking this, because I've picked up a lot of your mental "telegrams." And so now I'll return to my original topic.

The next verse talks about Yuan Shikai:

*Gentlemen use the pacifying policy.
Change thirty years a bit.
How could he be a common person?
The night-blooming cereus briefly appears.
In the east, west, north, and south,
Dragons spar and tigers battle.
At seven and eight the fate is fixed,
And throughout the land, things are
roughly stabilized.*

When the bottom half of *huai* (懷) in "pacifying policy" (which

is the character *yi* (衣) without the dot and the top line) is added below the character *ji* (吉) in the compound for “gentlemen,” you get the character *yuan* (袁). The word “Yuan” isn’t given straight out; you have to deduce it from the phrase “gentlemen use the pacifying policy.” How can we know this? The next line says, “Change thirty years a bit.” Most people thought this meant there would be a change in thirty years, but actually, it’s telling us to add a horizontal line on the bottom of the character for “thirty years” (卅), making the character *shi* (世). “How could he be a common person?” When the characters for “how” (豈) and “common” (凡) are juxtaposed, they form the character *kai* (凱). So that gives the three characters of the name Yuan Shikai. “The night-blooming cereus briefly appears.” The cereus blossom opens and withers very quickly. It symbolizes Yuan Shikai, who was emperor for only eighty-three days. Only eighty-three days passed from the time he ascended the throne until he lost power.

“In the east, west, north, and south, / Dragons spar and tigers battle.” This refers to how everyone was fighting each other in Shanxi, Shandong, the north, and the south. “At seven and eight the fate is fixed, / And throughout the land, things are roughly stabilized.” “Seven and eight” is a reference to the fifteenth year of the Republic (1926). This year was determined long in advance. At that time, China began to have a little bit of peace and calm.

Chiang Kaishek's Northward Expedition [the attempt to unite the northern part of China] was successful. Elsewhere, there were Feng Yuxiang in Shandong Province, Yan Xishan in Shanxi Province, Wu Peifu in the south, and Zhang Zuolin in the north, all battling one another.

Let me tell you a story about Yuan Shikai. Originally Yuan Shikai didn't have the gall to proclaim himself the emperor. He had a very precious and costly jade teacup that he always used, and he cherished that teacup as much as his own life. One day his servant went into his room to serve him tea in that teacup. As soon as he stepped into the room, the servant saw Yuan Shikai sleeping—but the sleeping form was not that of Yuan Shikai, it was a toad. The man was so shocked to see his master transformed into a toad that his hands let slip the jade teacup, and it fell to the floor and smashed to bits. The toad spirit continued to sleep, and the servant went to the household manager for help, saying, "I've smashed the master's jade teacup; my life is surely doomed. Do you have any way to save me?"

The manager said, "I have a very good method, but you have to pay me ten thousand taels of silver to hear it." There was a lot of corruption and bribery in those days. The employees of wealthy households all had extra money and large incomes. Ten thousand taels of silver was not that large a sum. So the servant said, "Okay, I'll pay you ten thousand taels of silver to ransom my life."

The manager instructed him, "When you see your master, tell him this: 'When I came into the Master's room, I saw that the Master had turned into a sleeping five-clawed golden dragon. I think the Master will definitely become the Emperor.' I guarantee that this will save your life."

The servant went and knelt before his master and explained how he had seen the master turn into a five-clawed golden dragon, and was so startled by this that he had dropped the jade teacup. When Yuan Shikai heard that, he was so elated that he rewarded the servant with a hundred thousand taels of silver. He pardoned the servant and did not have him killed. From that time on Yuan Shikai was intent upon becoming the emperor. Because his servant had told him he had seen him transformed into a golden dragon, Yuan was determined to make his dream of being emperor come true. In China it is believed that only a real dragon can become the Son of Heaven (the Emperor), and that a five-clawed golden dragon is a dragon who has become a person and is destined to be the Emperor.

A talk given on October 16, 1990,
in Jelenia Gora (near Wroclaw), Poland

The Meaning of Taking Refuge Is Beyond Words

If you want to be true Buddhists, then you definitely cannot contend, be greedy, seek anything, be selfish, pursue personal benefit, or tell lies.

After you have taken refuge with me, will you be true Buddhists or false Buddhists? If you want to be true Buddhists, then you definitely cannot contend, be greedy, seek anything, be selfish, pursue personal benefit, or tell lies. Can you do that? If you want to be true Buddhists, you have to follow these six guidelines. My vow is that anyone who takes refuge with me has to become a Buddha before I do.

Because I've always been a blunt person, I've offended many people. Not only have I offended people, I've also offended many ghosts, demons, and other strange creatures. So all of you should be careful. If you want to be my disciple, then if you hear people slander me, you have to bow to them and

thank them. We don't want to be enemies with anyone. There are no enemies in Buddhism. Whoever slanders me is my good advisor.

Why do people slander and criticize me? It's because they want me to become better. They want me to be better than everyone else, so they come to instruct me. That's how you should regard such people.

Secondly, most people think I have some skill, so they want to test me out to see if I'm really up to par. The third reason people criticize me is that they're afraid their own followers will believe in me and stop making offerings to them. So if I can indirectly offer food to them, that's good. There's no need for me to contend or argue with them. Do you all agree with the three reasons I have just pointed out? If you do, then don't forget them!

Ever since I was little, I have walked the six bright paths of not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not benefiting myself, and not telling lies. Since you have taken refuge with me, I want to honestly tell you about these six bright paths. Whatever it is, if someone else wants it, I won't take it. If nobody wants a thing, I'll keep it. That's how I am. Can all of you be like this, too? If you can, then I congratulate you for being good Buddhists.

A talk given on October 18, 1990 in Poland

Dedicating Our Lives to Propagating the Buddhadharma and Translating the Buddhist Canon

There are no rewards for the work of translating scriptures. We are volunteering our services to Buddhism. We are devoting our lives to working for Buddhism.

Good and wise advisors! As people living in this world, we feel that the world is very large and people are very small. When I was in China, I saw only the Chinese people and knew nothing about the people of other countries. Now I have seen not only other countries, but also the people in them. The immensity of the world and the vastness of all things under heaven are qualities we ought to emulate.

When I was still in China, I felt that Buddhism should spread to the rest of the world. Why? It's because the doctrines of Buddhism are so perfect and complete. There are still many people who do not yet believe in the Buddha. This is all because we Buddhist disciples have not translated the

Buddha's teachings into the languages of all nations, which would enable Buddhism to be known throughout the world.

For this reason, I want to exert all my efforts and abilities to facilitate the translation of the Buddhist scriptures into all languages. Even though I myself do not know any foreign languages, it is my wish to see this work done. How much the more should Buddhists who do understand foreign languages devote all their efforts to accomplishing this task. Therefore, when I left China and went to the United States, my first task was to lecture on the Sutras and speak the Dharma. I lectured on the *Vajra Sutra*, the *Heart Sutra*, the *Sixth Patriarch's Sutra*, the *Shurangama Sutra*, the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, and smaller Sutras such as the *Sutra of the Eight Awakenings of a Great Person*, the *Sutra of the Buddha's Final Teaching*, the *Sutra in Forty-two Sections*, and so on. I lectured on the Sutras every day and my lectures were translated into English. Our organization has published more English translations of Chinese Buddhist scriptures than any other group. Over a hundred volumes have already been published.

This type of work used to be supported by emperors and high officials. But now the emperors and government officials are infatuated with the pursuit of wealth. They want to amass fortunes or indulge in pleasure and amusement, and have neglected the things that are truly meaningful to humankind.

Translating the Buddhist scriptures is an extremely difficult

and weighty task. It requires financial support, human resources, and many other conditions in order to be carried out. We have neither the human resources nor the financial support, and the other conditions are not ideal either. Nevertheless, we must diligently apply ourselves to the task. As long as we are alive, we want to work to accomplish this mission bit by bit, not stopping until it is completed.

Not only are emperors and high officials unaware of the importance of the work we are doing, even among my own disciples, no one really understands. Why is this? Because we don't dare to speak about this matter to anyone. Why not? As soon as we bring it up, people sigh at the hopelessness of it. They are scared because this is something that has never been done before. It is something that no one dares to do. There has never been a person who, not understanding English or any other foreign language, has endeavored to translate the Chinese Buddhist canon into other languages. No one has dared to undertake such a task, because the human and financial resources required are not easy to obtain. Nor does anyone understand the magnitude and implications of such a project. We at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas just work quietly, keeping our nose to the grindstone, without advertising or seeking publicity. As I said before, not even my lay or monastic disciples understand the real significance of this work. Yet we are pushing ahead and doing it.

Why am I telling everyone about this now? Because the time

has come, so wherever I go, I want to speak about this issue. Recently we purchased a place that I like very much in the city of Burlingame, a twenty-five-minute drive south of San Francisco. It has 30,000 square feet of space. There are 76 parking spaces, and there is an adjoining lot of over 60,000 square feet. In the past someone had bought it for a considerable sum, but because it was slightly damaged in an earthquake, he later wanted to sell it, and so we purchased it from him. Originally the down payment was \$850,000, but later the owner decided not to take a down payment, but to sell the property completely on mortgage. Due to acquiring this property I feel that the translation of the Buddhist canon can be accomplished a little sooner.

Now I am inviting people from all countries who wish to be involved in the translation of the scriptures to join us in the work. There is no pay for this work. We are working as volunteers for Buddhism. Those who share our aspiration to walk this path are invited to join us, so that we can work together in translating the Buddhist scriptures. This is the work that we Buddhists should rejoice in the most.

As I tell you this, you should realize that this is a unique opportunity which is hard to encounter in a million years. If you wish to help translate the scriptures, I hope you can come to the United States and work together with us.

All you people from different countries of the world who wish

to help translate the Buddhist scriptures should not lag behind. You should go for it and strive to translate the Buddhist canon into all languages. This work is not like ordinary, mundane work. Don't ask, "How will I be compensated for doing this work? What kind of reward will I get in the future?" There are no rewards for the work of translating scriptures. We are volunteering our services to Buddhism. We are devoting our lives to working for Buddhism. We want neither money nor renown; we are not greedy for wealth, sex, fame, food, or sleep.

Our work must accord with the six bright paths of no contending, no greed, no seeking, no selfishness, no pursuit of personal advantage, and no lying. We must comply with these six demon-spotting mirrors and demon-slicing swords. These are the six demon-subduing pestles wielded by the Dharma-protecting spirits. Armed with these six kinds of power, we can do this work. And so when we work, we do not seek rewards or anything at all. All we want is to translate the Buddhist scriptures.

I have made this vow, but none of you really know what kind of person I am. Let me tell you about myself briefly. When I was little, I was not a filial child. I was born with a big temper and loved to fight with people. If anyone was being unfair, I would try to set things right. My motto was, "If I see injustice on the road, I'll take my knife and rush to the aid of the victim." That's the kind of person I was.

Before I turned twelve, all I did was fight; that was my main skill. If I didn't fight for a day, I wouldn't eat that day. When I turned twelve I realized my errors and totally reformed. I apologized to my parents and told them I had not been a good child and had caused them a lot of worry, but that starting then, I would change my faults and turn over a new leaf.

Starting from the time I was twelve, I bowed to my parents every day. Later on I also bowed to Heaven, Earth, the national leader, and my teacher. I didn't yet know who my teacher would be, but I bowed to him anyway. After a while I began bowing to all people, to the people of all nations. I felt that perhaps I had mistreated or wronged all the people in the world, so I bowed to them seeking to repent. The bows kept adding up until I was bowing eight hundred and thirty-some bows every morning and the same number every evening.

I bowed outside the house, bowing without fail despite the wind, rain, and snow. The gales of wind, the soaking rain, and the freezing snow didn't deter me. I bowed like this for over ten years. After I left the home-life, many people wanted to bow to me as soon as they saw me. I joked with them, saying, "Probably I bowed to every one of you in the past, so now you're coming to bow to me to pay back the debt."

When I was fifteen, I went to school for half a year. I studied two full years when I was sixteen and seventeen, so my studies lasted a total of two and a half years. During that time

I studied the Four Books [*The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, The Analects, and The Book of Mencius*] and the Five Classics [*The Book of Changes, The Book of Odes, The Book of History, The Book of Rites, and The Spring and Autumn Annals*]. I also studied seven of the eight Chinese classics. I also studied fifteen medical and pharmaceutical texts, but I didn't dare to become a doctor. Why not? If there were a hundred sick people and I cured ninety-nine and a half, but I couldn't cure the remaining one-half and ended up harming someone, I wouldn't be able to face people after that. That's why I didn't become a doctor.

After that I studied the Buddhadharma, because after studying during my sixteenth year, I learned enough to be able to read the Sutras. And when I was seventeen, I went to the temple to explain the *Sixth Patriarch's Sutra* to people. I also explained the *Vajra Sutra* as well as other kinds of Buddhist teachings. At that time I also learned to recite the Great Compassion Mantra. When I first encountered the mantra, I was delighted and started to read it after I got on the train. When it was time to get off the train thirty minutes later, I was able to recite it from memory. After I memorized the Great Compassion Mantra, I obtained the Dharma of the Forty-two Hands and Eyes. After practicing this Dharma for several years, wherever and whenever I met sick people, I tried to heal them without any hesitation. Using the Great Compassion Mantra and the Forty-two Hands and Eyes, I found that I could cure them right away.

One time I encountered a person with a demonic illness. In Manchuria there is a species called “yellow weasel,” known commonly as “yellow immortal.” In northern China there are two kinds of immortals: fox immortals and yellow immortals. The fox ones are foxes, and the yellow ones are weasels. In the north, these two types of animals are known as spirits, but they are kind of petty. If you say something that offends them, they will make you ill. Now I’ll tell you about the experience I had. The first time I encountered a yellow weasel, he fought with me but couldn’t beat me. I captured him with the “lariat hand,” and then he knelt before me and bowed and begged piteously, “Please let me go. I want to take refuge with you.” (The spirit was speaking through the sick person’s mouth.)

I said, “Fine, you can take refuge.” Then I let him go and told him to go to the temple to take refuge. But by the time I returned to the temple, he still hadn’t arrived. He had cheated me. He liked to tell lies and simply didn’t go.

When I was at his home, the sick person had gotten well. But after I left, the sickness returned. I went back there, recaptured the weasel three or four times, and said, “If you lie to me again, I won’t be nice to you. This time you’d better change your evil ways and become good.” He didn’t lie again. So you see, it’s not easy to save even one living being. When I was trying to save that weasel, he kept trying to trick me, but I didn’t get disgusted with him. I finally managed to get him to take refuge and gave him the Dharma name Guo Wang. That

was the first weasel disciple I had. Probably you haven't heard this story before, and you probably don't believe it. But this is something that personally happened to me.

When my mother was sick, there was a fox immortal at Baiyunhe ("White Cloud River") who used his spiritual powers to give people medicine. Some people traveled over three hundred miles to go seek medicine from him. What was the background of this fox immortal? When the Japanese army had occupied the area, the fox immortal also stayed in the barracks. Later he drove the Japanese soldiers away. How did that happen? The Japanese army went around capturing Chinese people and transported them to Baiyunhe by train. As soon as the doors of the train opened, the prisoners would step out and fall right into a cauldron of boiling oil, where they would be fried alive. No one knows how many people were fried to death like that. Probably the fox immortal was not too happy about that, so he transformed himself into a white-bearded old man and went to fight the Japanese. When the Japanese saw the old man, they pointed their guns at him to chase him away, but he ran into their ammunitions storage and blew it up. After two such explosions, the Japanese decided they could not stay there anymore, so they moved away. That's how powerful the fox immortal was. After the Japanese troops left, he dispensed medicines and performed miracles. People came from all over to seek his aid. All they had to do was cover a bowl with a piece of red cloth, and then get on their knees and pray to him. Then medicine pills or

whatever kind of medicine they sought would appear in the bowl. It was that efficacious.

When my mother was sick, I also went to seek medicine. After kneeling there for three days and three nights, I lifted the red cloth to take a look, but there was no medicine in the bowl. I tried again, but still no medicine appeared. Since I didn't get any medicine, I quit seeking. After I left the home-life, the fox immortal attached himself to the body of a relative of mine and wanted to take refuge with me. I asked who he was. He identified himself as the fox immortal who gave people medicine. I wanted to set things straight with him, so I asked, "Why was it that when you were dispensing medicine to people, you didn't give me any when I went to seek from you?" That was the second time a fox took refuge with me.

In the fourth village of Xianglanqi ("Blue-bordered Banner"), there were over eight hundred white foxes who assumed human form and took refuge with me. That day a child was going to leave the home-life. That morning, before he arrived, I said to one of my disciples, "Today a child is coming to leave the home-life. When he comes, let me know right away." Sure enough, at a little past one o'clock in the afternoon, a twelve-year-old child showed up and asked to leave the home-life. So my disciple came running from the front of the temple and said in his Shandong accent, "Teacher, this morning you said a child would be coming to leave the home-life. Well, he's here now."

"Where is he?" I asked.

"In the kitchen," he said. I went to the kitchen to take a look. There the child was, cocking his head to the side.

"Are you the one who wants to leave home?" I asked.

"Yes," he said.

"Why do you want to leave home?" I asked.

"My home is over three hundred miles away from here. One night I had a dream. In fact, I had the same dream three nights in a row. In the dream I was told that if I wanted to get over my sickness, I had to go to Three Conditions Temple to look for Dharma Master An Ci, bow to him as my teacher, and leave the home-life and cultivate. Then I would get well."

"Are you lying?" I asked. I saw that he was dressed very shabbily. "Is it because you have no food to eat and no clothes to wear, and it's hard to make a living that you want to leave home? Did you hear that people will make offerings to monks, so they don't have to worry about food or clothing or do any work? Is that why you want to become a monk?"

"No," he said, "I really had the same dream three times."

"In the dream, who told you this?" I asked.

“It was that fat monk, the one at the entrance of the temple. He was the one who came to me three times in my dream and told me to leave the home-life here,” said the boy.

Originally this child had been able to heal people from the time he was five. No matter what illness people had, he could cure them. But he himself was sick, too. Why could he cure people? When he had been a shaman in past lives, ghosts and spirits would possess him and allow him to heal people. That was in his past lives. And so now when he was only five in this life, those ghosts and spirits came to seek him out again. But he himself had a stomach illness which he couldn't cure on his own. Everyone called him “little demonic obstacle.” When he was twelve, Maitreya Bodhisattva, that “fat monk,” appeared three times to him in a dream, telling him to come to Three Conditions Temple to leave the home-life. And so he came, and I allowed him to leave home.

After living at the temple for half a year, he opened the Five Eyes and could cure people's illnesses. Everything went fine. Then one day we went to the home of Good Man Chen (Tianxi Chen). His wife said to the boy, “You are so young and yet you have the power to see people's past and future lives. Does your teacher have such great powers?” She was trying in a roundabout way to find out about me.

He recklessly replied, “My teacher probably can't do such things.”

Strangely enough, after he said that, he lost the Five Eyes and Six Spiritual Penetrations. And after he lost them, those deviant spirits returned to haunt him. He became kind of loony and acted like Ji Gong (the Living Buddha). Seeing him like that, I tried to cure him. But his was a perverse sickness caused by the ghosts and spirits that wanted him to live the kind of life he used to live. I didn't want him to go back to doing those things, so every day I battled with those fox immortals and yellow immortals. The fighting lasted for twenty-one days, and during that time I neither ate nor drank nor slept. I just kept fighting with them, until I finally chased them off.

When I was still dueling with them, there was a thirteen-year-old student who saw me and joined me in the fight. But when the sick boy breathed on him, he fell to the ground writhing in pain. His stomach hurt so badly he felt like he was going to die. I first saved the student, and then I cured the boy's illness.

During those twenty-one days, I offended a lot of ghosts, demons, and all kinds of weird creatures, such as snake spirits, cow spirits, mountain sprites, and sea monsters. These weird creatures kept waiting for an opportunity to get back at me.

I went to Dongjing ("East Well") Village, which was so named because the village was shaped like a well, high on the four sides and concave in the middle. Taking advantage of the fact

that I was staying in the low-lying central area, the mountain and water monsters caused a flood and tried to drown me. It was like the flood at Gold Mountain Monastery. The courtyard where I was staying was fenced in by loose wooden latticework that kept out neither water nor wind. Yet during the deluge, while the water rose to over eight feet outside the fence, inside the fence there was only two feet of rainwater. Although the fence was full of holes, strangely enough the water didn't come in. It was because we had "tied up the boundaries" earlier.

The sea monsters failed in their attempt to drown me, but they did drown over thirty other people. The waters rose quickly and subsided quickly. The flood lasted only four hours, yet it drowned thirty-odd people and washed away over eight hundred houses. Even people who had climbed on top of their brick beds were drowned. After that, I didn't dare to meddle too much in people's affairs anymore.

Most of you wouldn't know about this, but behind every sickness are resentful ghosts coming to demand your life, to collect a debt, or to seek revenge. These are the reasons people get sick.

I met another demented person who, when he walked, would take three steps forward and two steps back. He was always looking up at the sky, as if he were drunk or something. At

that time I looked into the reason for his sickness. He always repeated these words: “The three lights universally shine on the three powers. If it weren’t for offenses, I wouldn’t have come.” The three lights are the sun, the moon, and the stars. They illumine the three powers—heaven, earth, and man. “If he hadn’t committed offenses, I wouldn’t have come to make him sick.” From this I knew that sick people are sick because they are being forced to pay their karmic debts.

I also met another sick person whom I could not cure no matter how I tried. She would go to people’s homes and claim to be their kitchen god, their ancestor, or their father or mother. It was a kind of insanity. When I tried to heal her, a horn grew out of her head. It grew to two inches in length. Everyone who was present saw this happen. It was very bizarre, and when I looked into the matter more carefully, I discovered that this happened because she and her father had buried her elder sister alive over fifty years ago.

At that time (seventy years ago from now) people were very old-fashioned. When her unmarried sister had become pregnant, her father could not tolerate it and so he dug a pit and, with the help of his younger daughter, buried his older daughter alive. The younger sister had helped her father bury her older sister, and so now the angry spirits of her older sister and the unborn baby were coming to demand justice. They were making her act crazy. When I tried to cure her, her older

sister used her powers to cause the woman to grow a horn, thus telling me that the woman's karmic obstacles were too heavy for the Buddhadharma to be able to cure her.

Every karmic illness has its underlying causes and effects. For example, the reason many people are getting cancer nowadays is that they have killed too many creatures and eaten too much meat, thus poisoning themselves too deeply. This is also a case of karmic debts being repaid.

A Talk given on October 20, 1990,
at Avalokiteshvara Temple in Paris, France

How Can We Determine Our Own Destiny?

**Our final goal is to gain true understanding;
then we will not have lived our lives in vain.**

All of us should look within and ask ourselves: From the time I was born until now, what kinds of things have I done? Have I done more good deeds or more bad deeds? Have I benefited others more, or have I harmed others more? We should take stock of ourselves. There is a saying:

*A superior person knows how to mold his
own destiny.*

*We determine our own fate and seek our
own fortune.*

Calamities and blessings are not fixed;

We bring them upon ourselves.

The consequences of our good and evil acts

Follow us just like shadows.

Why is a superior person said to be able to control his fate?

Qiu Changchun, the Taoist Patriarch of the “seven truths,” was fated to die of starvation, but because he cultivated diligently, not only did he avoid starving, he became the foremost of divine immortals.

Some people are born fated to be poor, but because they do good deeds, they later become rich. Getting rich is not our final aim, but most people think that a person who strikes it rich must be happy. Why isn't getting rich our final goal? Our final goal is to gain true understanding; then we will not have lived our lives in vain. If you lack understanding, you can't control your own birth and are born in a muddle. Nor can you control your death; you also die in a muddle. No matter how much wealth, honor, and status you have, it's of no use. But if you understand, you have freedom over birth and death. If you want to live, you can live to be eight hundred years old. If you want to die, you can die at any time without any problems. That is freedom over birth and death. Obtaining freedom over birth and death is the most important matter. From ancient times until now, people have overlooked this matter in their pursuit of wealth and high rank. They have lived as if drunk and died in a dream, being muddled all their lives.

No one is aware of this problem. Now in the Space Age, we should look into it. AIDS and cancer are very common in the world right now. These are all forms of retribution. They indicate that living beings' karmic offenses are extremely grave.

Their offenses of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and false speech are extremely heavy. The karma created through taking alcohol and other intoxicants is also severe. That's why so many incurable and strange diseases have developed. These are living examples of Dharma that tell people to quickly gain true wisdom and not do such muddled things.

If you can refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants, then no matter what you say, your words will be efficacious. You don't have to recite any mantra or bow to any Buddha. If you can uphold these five precepts, then whatever you say will be efficacious. Let me tell you something. I don't have any other skill, but from the time I was born, I have not killed, stolen, practiced sexual misconduct, lied, or taken intoxicants. And so wherever I go, whatever I say is bound to come true.

When I went to Hong Kong in 1949, I built a small house and planted some papaya, bamboo, and many other trees and flowers on the mountainside near the village of Mashan in Xiwanhe. The papayas were very sweet, too. But one year a typhoon blew in and killed all the plants and trees. At that time I found it a bit hard to bear and lost my temper at Heaven. I pointed my finger at Heaven and said, "Lord of Heaven, if you know that a typhoon is due to hit Hong Kong, I hope that as long as I am here, Hong Kong will not have a typhoon. If another typhoon hits Hong Kong, let me tell you frankly that I won't be nice to you."

After I said that, strangely enough, every time a typhoon was forecasted to hit Hong Kong and the warning signs were put out, the typhoon would veer off course maybe four to six miles from Hong Kong and go somewhere else. I lived in Hong Kong for over ten years, and never once was there a typhoon. But once when I went to Australia for a month, Hong Kong was ravaged by a typhoon. The streets were covered with billboards that had blown down. There were many casualties and an incalculable loss of property. This proved that, because I had never told a lie, even the Lord of Heaven didn't dare to disregard my words. When I left Hong Kong for the United States, there was a flash flood at Hongshuiqiao ("Floodwater Bridge") in Hong Kong that drowned 150 or 160 people, and there were also typhoons. I'm telling you these experiences, hoping that all of you will refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants. If you do, then no matter what happens, you will be protected all your lives by the gods, dragons, and others of the eightfold division of Dharma-protecting good spirits. Everything will be auspicious and as you wish.

If people cultivate honestly, all their problems will be resolved. We first have to do a good job of being people, and then can we think of becoming Buddhas. We should not forget our human roots. Our human roots are filiality, brotherhood, loyalty, trustworthiness, propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame. These virtues are the essence of Chinese culture, so even though we are overseas in another land, we

Chinese people should be good models for all of human-kind. We should be doing a good job of being people. We have affinities with each other, so I have spoken to you from my heart.

We shouldn't take money so seriously. Money is no better than dung or dirt. We should base our actions on our Chinese heritage of filiality, brotherhood, loyalty, trustworthiness, propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame; and of humaneness, righteousness, the Way, and virtue. These are our human roots.

A talk given on October 22, 1990 at the
Overseas Chinese Association in Paris, France

Education— A Nation's Best Defense

Education is the most thorough and fundamental form of national defense.

Good and wise advisors: Wherever our delegation goes, we propagate Buddhist education. Buddhist education is about saving human nature; it is an education that saves people's souls, an education that saves people's lives.

Any individual with intelligence, good conscience, and common sense should know that the mistakes made by our present-day educational system and by the educators of this age can harm society in ways worse than AIDS. The errors of modern education plague us more grievously than cancer. They are potentially more dangerous than the disaster of nuclear war. Imperceptibly, through poor education, we are killing our own younger generation. We are causing our children to forsake their own natures, to compromise their souls, and even to forfeit their lives.

That is why our delegation travels about, advocating loudly at

every lecture site: We hope to wake the people of the world up, and we urge everyone we meet to reform the educational system. In this way we want to pull the next generation back from the brink of disaster, to save the world from extinction, and keep humanity from its end.

My purpose in saying these things is not to startle the world or to rock the boat, nor to intimidate anyone. Take a look at our school children. Already in elementary school, students learn to kill, set fires, and behave promiscuously. I ask you, what kind of education is this? It is alarming that these things are going on even at the elementary school level. What kind of future can we expect for this world? We are, in effect, cutting off the roots of our younger generation. Once those roots are cut through, we face the extinction of humanity and the end of civilization. There is no need for nuclear explosions or for poison gas to bring an end to the world. Our present education system is harmful enough as it is, for it leads students into dark by-paths away from the road of light.

In high school students learn to take drugs. Drug dealers are everywhere, making their poisonous substances available around the world and teaching innocent children to use them. If you think about it, this problem potentially endangers all of humanity. It is an international menace. Yet our governments are not taking care of the problem at its root. They are prepared to build up national defense systems to guard against invasion by other countries, but they do not realize

that education is the most thorough and fundamental form of national defense. If a nation does not educate its people well, then whatever national defense it has is useless. It may have nuclear weapons and technology for chemical warfare, but no one will know how to use them. So no matter what kind of weapons technology a country has, it will amount to nothing.

Citizens of all nations should quickly wake up from their dreams and not be so mesmerized by the objects of the five desires: wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep. We should not lose ourselves in the so-called "good life." If we don't pay serious attention to education, our world will be in great danger.

I often tell American audiences that education in the world has gone bankrupt. The major cause for this bankruptcy is the negative influence of television on children. The television set in every home is a monster in disguise. This monster not only teaches our children bad habits, it also saps their vital energy. Students study very little and spend most of their time poisoning themselves in front of the tube. This is why I say education has been driven bankrupt by the television.

Of course, some places have so far escaped the influence of television, but this kind of "virus" is transmitted easily and is rapidly spreading to every corner of the world. If we don't come up with some preventive measures, the consequences will be extremely severe. What preventive measures are there?

The solution is simple and easy to apply. We need not imitate the typical American method of first proposing a big budget item to solve this problem—not at all. All we need is to employ the eight virtues of traditional Chinese culture: filiality, brotherhood, loyalty, trustworthiness, propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame. If every family advocates these eight virtues and every person cherishes them, our educational system can be rescued from its predicament. These eight virtues are a universal remedy that can save people’s spiritual natures; they are a miracle medicine capable of saving our souls and our lives. They are an elixir for rescuing and revitalizing education throughout the world.

If, instead of revitalizing education with these eight virtues, we continue to teach children skills that lead them to crave fame and profit, to seek the biggest salary after graduation, and to pursue power and position, we will simply be guiding people down the wrong path without realizing it.

The basis of education should be teaching children not to contend, not to be greedy, not to seek, not to be selfish, not to want personal advantage, and not to lie. If every school can teach its students not to contend, not to be greedy, not to seek, not to be selfish, not to want personal advantage, and not to lie, and to avoid alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and promiscuity, then there is hope for the revival of education and the younger generation need not face oblivion. If this cannot be done,

however, then the world is in unthinkable peril and the fall of civilization is certain; it is only a matter of time.

At the end of the Zhou Dynasty in China, a wave of corruption and licentiousness swept over the country. Fathers did not fulfill their roles as fathers, and sons did not act like sons. The rulers did not know how to rule, and ministers failed to behave as ministers. People did not act like proper people, and even animals showed uncommon traits. As dishonesty and deception became widespread, no one in the country trusted anyone else. That was when Confucius was born. He traveled throughout the land, preaching humaneness, justice, and virtue. He taught filiality, brotherhood, loyalty, trustworthiness, propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame. These Confucian values have held Chinese society together for thousands of years. This cultural heritage kept Chinese civilization intact from ancient times to the present, and protected China from being swallowed up by foreign powers.

The modern world is flooded by licentiousness as people freely indulge their desires. Some leaders of nations consider national defense their top priority, but overlook the vital matter of the education of our younger generation. Nowhere do we find leaders who emphasize humaneness, justice, virtue, filiality, brotherhood, loyalty, trustworthiness, propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame. The people who govern our countries are either infatuated with wealth or indulge in sex. If wealth and sex aren't their

preoccupation, they will seek after fame or crave good food. Such people pass their lives working to appease the five desires for wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep. They fight for power and profit. There is an ancient saying:

*Propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame are the four pillars of a nation.
If the four pillars aren't set upright, the country will decline and fall.*

Any country that fails to honor these four virtues will certainly perish. Yet among today's young people, how many understand propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame? Do any of them practice these virtues? Most have never even heard of them, much less practiced them.

Our era resembles the period before the demise of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty. Men do not behave as they should, and women don't know their proper roles. No matter where you look, you will find both sexes heedlessly indulging their desires. They think that life is all about eating, drinking, and making merry without satiation. They don't realize that:

*Enduring suffering puts an end to suffering.
Enjoying blessings exhausts blessings.*

Confucius traveled among the feudal states of ancient China teaching humaneness, justice, virtue, propriety, righteousness,

integrity, and a sense of shame. His wonder drugs are responsible for keeping China together as a society for two thousand years. China's culture survived all the way up to the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic [1912]. Then a group of irresponsible villains among the intellectuals overthrew Confucius the Sage. They struggled with Confucius and nearly brought his good teaching to its knees. And by doing so, they condemned the Chinese people to a nightmare of misery and despair, to homelessness, exile, and unspeakable suffering.

Now I want to travel among the United Nations with these qualities of humaneness, justice, virtue, filiality, brotherhood, loyalty, trustworthiness, propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame, using this elixir to save the souls, lives, and inherent natures of young people throughout the world.

Please pay heed, everyone! What I am telling you is the critical formula for saving the world. You should not think that I am just trying to frighten all of you. This is the Space Age, and some people are already thinking of moving to outer space. When people all move to outer space, the Earth will be destroyed. Even if people continue surviving on this planet, we may all turn into retarded people or "vegetables" due to the severe pollution of the air, land, and water.

A talk given on October 24, 1990 at UNESCO in Paris, France

Buddha

What do we cultivate the Way for? It's for the sake of attaining permanence, bliss, true self, and purity. We want to attain the ultimate, true happiness.

When Shakyamuni Buddha was sitting under the Bodhi tree, one night he saw a bright star and exclaimed, "Strange indeed!" three times. He said, "All living beings possess the Thus Come One's wisdom and virtuous characteristics, but because of their false thoughts and attachments, they cannot realize them." Then the Buddha went to the Deer Park to teach the first five Bhikshus, of whom Ajnatakaundinya was one, by turning the Dharma wheel and explaining the Four Noble Truths. On the first turning of the Dharma Wheel, the Manifestation Turning, the Buddha said:

This is suffering; it is oppressive.

This is accumulation; it is incurred.

This is cessation; it can be realized.

This is the Way; it can be cultivated.

Suffering oppresses people, causing them to undergo endless births and deaths. It is oppressive. But people should know that

Enduring suffering puts an end to suffering.

Enjoying blessings uses up blessings.

We should accept the suffering we are supposed to receive. After we undergo it, it is over and done with. Enjoying blessings includes eating, drinking, and having fun, wasting our energy as we linger in this world of temptations, being born and dying, not knowing how to return. This is not knowing how to end suffering. In the midst of suffering, we take suffering to be happiness; this is being upside-down.

“This is accumulation; it is incurred.” We accumulate and gather afflictions. We bring them upon ourselves within our own minds. When the mind comes into being, all phenomena come into being. When the mind ceases to exist, all phenomena cease to exist. The root of all afflictions is attachment. We incur afflictions because of selfishness and delusion. If you are internally weak, you will contract sickness from the outside. If you didn’t have afflictions inside you, you wouldn’t attract external afflictions. As the saying goes, “When there is a great man in the house, great men come to the door. When there is a petty man in the house, petty men come to the door.” Whatever you have inside of you, that’s

what you will attract from the outside. That's how afflictions are brought on.

"Living beings are boundless; I vow to save them. Afflictions are endless, I vow to cut them off." Living beings are in the sea of suffering, and we must rescue them. Our afflictions have no end, and so we want to sever them. Yet the Sutras say, "Afflictions are Bodhi, and birth and death is Nirvana." If we cut off afflictions, are we cutting off Bodhi as well? Bodhi cannot be cut off, and afflictions don't need to be cut off either. We should turn afflictions into Bodhi, just like ice melts to become water. The ice is affliction, and the water is Bodhi. Ice is water, and water is ice. If you can recognize your afflictions, you have ended them. If you can't recognize them, they remain afflictions. Cutting off afflictions means turning them around. One side is afflictions, the other is Bodhi; all you have to do is flip sides.

In cultivation, do not seek things that are high and far away, and fail to recognize that the Way is right in front of you. If you seek the Way far away, you are renouncing what is close at hand. If, in your own daily life, you can be aware of everything you do, if you can understand all your habits and faults, and get rid of all your defilements, just that is the Buddhadharma. And so there is a saying:

*Everything is easy to deal with,
But a bad temper is hard to change.*

*If you can really never get angry,
You have a priceless jewel.
If you can also not blame others,
Then everything will turn out well.
If you are never troubled by afflictions,
How can offenses find you?
If you're always looking at others' faults,
Your own suffering hasn't ended yet.*

Where can you find a priceless jewel? If you don't have a temper, that is a priceless jewel. If you never bear a grudge, never curse heaven or blame people, then everything will go well. If you get afflicted, then your karmic creditors will come looking for you. If you never get afflicted, your karmic creditors won't be able to find you. If you spend all your time picking out others' faults and nagging at others morning till night, you're just washing other people's dirty laundry.

"This is the Way; it can be cultivated." Earlier we talked about suffering and afflictions. Suffering oppresses us, and so we bring afflictions upon ourselves. What should we do? We should cultivate the Way, and then we can end suffering, cut off afflictions, and attain Bodhi. That's why it's said that the Way is something we can cultivate.

"This is cessation; it can be realized." What do we cultivate the Way for? It's for the sake of attaining permanence, bliss,

true self, and purity. We want to attain the ultimate, true happiness.

It was for the sake of attaining ultimate happiness that Shakyamuni Buddha, when he was a youth cultivating in the Himalayas in a previous life, gave up his life for half a verse. The story goes like this:

Shakyamuni Buddha's previous incarnation heard a *rakshasa* ghost reciting a verse:

*All things are impermanent;
They are subject to production and extinction.*

Everything in this world is temporary; everything comes into being and then ceases to be. Hearing this verse, the Buddha's previous incarnation asked the ghost, "The verse you're reciting should have four lines. You've only recited two lines. Why don't you recite the last two lines for me?"

The ghost answered, "I'm starving. I don't have the energy to recite the last two lines. If you want me to recite them, I have to eat a human being before I can do so."

The Buddha said, "I'm willing to let you eat me. Recite those two lines, and then you can devour me."

The ghost said, "How can I recite them if I don't have any energy?"

The Buddha still pleaded with the ghost. Finally the ghost took pity on him and recited:

*When production and extinction are extinguished,
That quiescence is bliss.*

There is production followed by extinction, extinction followed by production. When production and extinction are both finished, that quiescence is happiness. After the Buddha heard these two lines, the ghost got ready to eat him. The Buddha said, "Now that you've recited the verse for me, we ought to preserve it in the world. If we don't, it will be gone. Wait as I carve this verse onto the tree trunk, and then you can eat me." Then the Buddha carved it into the tree. When he was done, the ghost was again going to eat him, but the Buddha said, "I still don't think it's good enough. I should carve this verse into stone. Although it's carved on the tree, the rain and the wind will wear it down until it disappears. If I carve it in stone, it will never be worn away." Then he carved it in stone, and after he was done, he invited the ghost to eat him.

The *rakshasa* ghost suddenly rose into the air and vanished. It had been a heavenly being coming to test the Buddha to see if he was really free of a notion of self, if he had really put down his body. Then the heavenly being manifested itself and said,

“You are a true cultivator of the Way. Not long from now you will attain Buddhahood.”

On the second turning of the Dharma Wheel, the Exhortation Turning, the Buddha said:

*This is suffering; you should know it.
This is accumulation; you should cut it off.
This is the Way; you should cultivate it.
This is cessation; you should realize it.*

On the third turning, the Certification Turning, the Buddha said,

*This is suffering; I already know it and need not know it further.
This is accumulation; I have already cut it off and need not cut it off anymore.
This is the Way; I have already cultivated it and need not cultivate it further.
This is cessation; I have already realized it and need not realize it anymore.*

That was how the Buddha turned the Dharma wheel of the Four Noble Truths three times in the Deer Park. The time is up this evening, so I can only recite the verses for you. Okay, I wish everyone a good night.

A talk given on October 25, 1990 in Grenoble, France

The Retribution for Killing Is Difficult to Escape

If you don't believe in cause, effect, and retribution, when it's your turn to undergo them, you won't be able to escape even if you want to.

Good and wise advisors! The most terrible retribution in the world is that for killing. This morning a Vietnamese man brought his two sons to see me. He said his sons were sick and asked me to help them, so that he could have an easier time. Seeing that the two boys had some sort of mental disorder, I asked if he had done any killing.

The boys' mother said that she hadn't. After some more discussion, however, the parents told me that after they had chopped down a large tree in front of their house, they had seen two snakes crawling into the hole where the tree had been. They had then poured boiling water into the hole to kill the snakes. After that, one of their sons locked himself in his room and was insane when he came out several days later.

Their second son went insane as well. They hoped I could do something about this.

Their children's insanity was due to killing. See how cruel the man was? He had no compassion at all. Even after the snakes had crawled into their hole, he still wanted to scald them to death with boiling water. Those two snakes were brothers. And so after the two snakes were scalded to death, the two human brothers went insane. The most serious karma in the world is that of killing. The retribution for killing is heavier than any other retribution. Mutual killing in vengeance is the most tragic thing in the world.

The karma of mutual vengeful killing has sent countries to war with each other, causing them to create ever deeper killing karma, killing without cease. I know a six or seven-year old boy in Los Angeles who cannot talk or do anything. His father always has to hold him. This is the boy's retribution for having hunted too much in the past. In his past life he killed the spirit of a white rat, and now the white rat spirit constantly gnaws at his throat, causing him to be mute and retarded. This is a contemporary example from Los Angeles.

A woman in Hong Kong named Ms. Xie loved to eat shrimp, lobsters, and crabs, and she gave birth to a son who is now over ten years old but can only crawl sidewise like a crab. This is a case of retribution during one's present life, an illustration of the retribution for killing.

In Malaysia I saw a mute person who had been a black bear in his past life. He is quite intelligent and bows to the Buddha and studies Buddhism, but due to having been a black bear in the past, he cannot talk. These individuals are all speaking the Dharma by their very existence, but people still fail to believe and continue to create killing karma. They don't understand that instead of taking life they should liberate life. If everyone can follow the five precepts —no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no false speech, and no taking of intoxicants— then the world will surely be at peace.

The following incident happened in Hong Kong in the summer of 1953. At that time I was lecturing on the *Earth Store Sutra* at Zhilian Hermitage. The nun in charge, Dharma Master Kuanhui, was a disciple of Elder Master Hsu Yun. Before she became a nun, she had been an illiterate maid who worked and cooked for people. Often she had to buy chickens and ducks, which she would slaughter herself. One time she bought some crabs and was going to cook them for her employer. As she was preparing the meal, one of the crabs pinched her middle finger with one of its pincers and wouldn't let go. She reacted savagely by chopping the pincer off with a butcher knife. Then she cooked the crabs and served them. Guess what happened after the crabs had been eaten? At the spot where the woman's middle finger had been pinched, a fleshy crab-shaped protuberance appeared, and it hurt unbearably day and night.

Later she came to Furongshan (Hibiscus Mountain) to bow in the Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance. After she had bowed for seven days, the flesh crab became slightly smaller, but it still hurt. When I was lecturing on the *Earth Store Sutra*, Dharma Master Kuanhui asked me to help her dissolve this bond of enmity. After I gave the crab the Three Refuges, it disappeared from her finger and the pain went away.

The workings of cause and effect, and the meting out of retributions, is never off by the slightest. We should be extremely careful not to take life. You kill him, he kills you, and the mutual killing never stops. The above story was a case of receiving the retribution in this very life; everyone could see it. Having seen it, we should not fail to believe that cause and effect are real. If you don't believe in cause, effect, and retribution, when it's your turn to undergo them, you won't be able to escape even if you want to.

The most important issue is that there are countless little ghosts in the world right now. Why are there so many little ghosts? Because there have been too many abortions. The fetuses are killed even before they have developed a fully human form. The vengeance wreaked by little ghosts is very grave. Therefore, the injunction to liberate life and avoid killing includes not having abortions. It's not easy to get free of these little ghosts. As it's said, "King Yama is easy to meet, but it's hard to cope with the little ghosts." Everyone should

pay attention to this. In all the countries of the world right now, there are more little ghosts than big ghosts, and more big ghosts than old ghosts. It's a very serious problem.

We should all realize that all living beings have the Buddha-nature and can become Buddhas. You should also know that all beings have the Bodhisattva-nature and can become Bodhisattvas. All beings have the Arhat-nature and can become Arhats. All beings have the nature of Those Enlightened to Conditions and can become Those Enlightened to Conditions. All beings have the heavenly nature and can ascend to the heavens. All beings have the human nature and can become people. All beings have the asura-nature and can become asuras. All beings have the ghost-nature and can become ghosts. If you do ghostly deeds, you are a ghost. If you keep doing animal-like deeds, you are an animal. All beings have the nature of the hell-beings. If you keep planting causes for the hells, you will eventually fall into the hells. Whatever kind of causes you plant, that's the kind of fruit you will reap. It's never off.

Questions and Answers

Q: According to doctrines of Theravada Buddhism, the "body between sets of *skandhas*" (the "soul" or consciousness after it leaves the corpse) is immediately reborn. But Mahayana

Sutras say that it may take from seven to forty-nine days before rebirth occurs.

A: The amount of time it takes for the “body between sets of *skandhas*” to be reborn is not fixed. Some may not necessarily be reborn even after several great eons, while others may be reborn immediately. It’s not fixed.

Q: Where do people come from? How did there come to be so many people?

A: Where do people come from? When people die, they are not all able to be reborn as people. Some may become chickens, dogs, or other animals. All living beings are classified as being born from wombs, from eggs, from moisture, or by transformation. According to their karmic retributions, they run east or west. It is just like a person who suddenly goes to Belgium, and then from Belgium travels to China. None of this is fixed. Knowing these matters is not necessarily helpful to cultivation.

Q: I often feel ill at ease both physically and psychologically, both sitting and standing. What should I do?

A: Sincerely recite the Great Compassion Mantra and the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva, and refrain from telling lies.

Q: In Chan meditation one investigates the question “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” How do we start to investigate it? How do we apply effort on this?

A: To investigate “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” you have to investigate for it to count. You don’t ask about it, you investigate it. It’s like using a drill to make a hole. When you drill all the way through, you’ll understand. Before you’ve drilled all the way through, you can ask about it, but you won’t understand. This is the Dharma-door where “the path of language is cut off, and the place of the mind’s activity disappears.” It cannot be spoken of. Anything that other people tell you is not it.

Q: When someone scolds me, there are two possible reasons. One is that I have scolded him in a previous life, so in this life he is scolding me. The second is that he is planting a bad cause. How should I think of this?

A: You can think of it as being your own retribution, but you shouldn’t think the other person is planting a bad cause. If you think he is, your own bad causes will grow. Even if he is planting a bad cause, don’t think of it that way. If you do, you yourself are planting a bad cause, so that is not a good way to deal with it. If you don’t think like that, there’s no problem.

Q: There is limitless merit and virtue in reciting the “Six-syllable True Words,” and a Bodhisattva of the seventh ground dwells within one’s body. What is this all about?

A: Not only is there limitless merit and virtue in reciting the “Six-syllable True Words” [Om mani padme hum], there is limitless merit and virtue in not telling lies, in not contending, in not being greedy, in not seeking, in not being selfish, and in not wanting self-benefit. However, although there is merit and virtue, one should not become attached to it. “All appearances are false. If one sees all appearances as nonappearances, one sees the Thus Come One.” [Vajra Sutra] In cultivation, one should not be preoccupied with how much merit and virtue one has. If you are always counting up your merit and virtue, it’s like hoarding money in the bank. If you hoard up a lot, you’ll have lots of false thoughts.

Cultivating is just cultivating. Even if you have a lot of merit and virtue, you still have to cultivate. And if you have no merit and virtue, you have to cultivate even more. Reciting Sutras and mantras is for the sake of purifying the mind.

If the mind is free of discursive thoughts, then there is immeasurable merit and virtue. Having no temper is immeasurable merit and virtue. Never getting angry, never losing your temper, never arguing or fighting with people is limitless merit and virtue.

Q: How can we get rid of the three poisons of greed, hatred, and stupidity?

A: People who have left the home-life [monks and nuns] work at getting rid of greed, hatred, and stupidity every day. You haven't even left home, yet you hope to get rid of your greed, hatred, and stupidity all at once? If you really want to do that, you can be like Layman Pang and dump all your family valuables into the ocean. Can you do that?

Q: A single person can do that, but someone with a family cannot. How does dumping valuables into the ocean help people?

A: You are doubtful about Layman Pang's realization of the Way. Layman Pang was utterly stupid. That's why he was able to realize the Way. You are too smart.

A talk given on October 27, 1990 in Grenoble, France

Let's Bring All Religions Together to Practice the Bodhisattva Way

**When all religions are united with each other
and with all living beings, and Buddhism is
one with all living beings, there will be world
peace and no more wars.**

Buddhism is a most perfect teaching, and it should also be a most universal teaching. But some people who misunderstood it divided Buddhism into the Mahayana (Great Vehicle) and the Theravada (Small Vehicle), and also into the different schools of Chan, Teaching, Moral, Esoteric, and Pure Land.

Originally Buddhism didn't have all these different branches of a Great Vehicle and a Small Vehicle, a northern tradition and a southern tradition; nor did it have the five schools of Chan, Teaching, Moral, Esoteric, and Pure Land. Buddhism is just one, and it does not exclude anyone. If you believe in the Buddha, you are a Buddhist. If you don't, you are still a Buddhist. Even if you slander Buddhism, you are a Buddhist.

And if you praise Buddhism, you are also a Buddhist. Why? This is because Buddhism pervades empty space to the ends of the Dharma Realm; every living being has a share in Buddhism. Therefore Buddhism should not be divided into nationalities, ethnic groups, sects, or factions. Buddhism encompasses all the functions of the entire universe. Yet certain people acting on their own decided to divide Buddhism into northern and southern schools, adding unnecessary complications that destroyed the perfect universality of Buddhism. Buddhism became fragmented and factionalized. Now in this age, it is time for all Buddhists, whether northern or southern, regardless of nationality, to unite as one. Each person should be a true disciple of the Buddha, not an unfilial or rebellious disciple.

Buddhism is a most perfect and most universal religion, but its adherents are too narrow-minded, so Buddhism has no way to be all-encompassing and unobstructed. Now we want to unite with the Buddhism of all countries and nationalities, to unite with all religions, and to unite with all living beings. When all religions are united with each other and with all living beings, and Buddhism is one with all living beings, there will be world peace and no more wars. There are wars in the world because the wars within the minds of people manifest externally as wars around the world. When there is peace in every person's mind, there is peace in the world.

*When people's hearts are at peace,
All under Heaven is tranquil.
When all under Heaven is tranquil,
Great unity is accomplished.*

When this happens, there won't be any wars in the world. If every person in the world can follow the motto of "no self, no others, no living beings, no life span, no contending, no greed, no seeking, no selfishness, no self-benefit, and no lying," everyone will dwell in harmony and there won't be any conflicts.

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is located in northern California in the United States, and whatever religion you follow, you may come to the City and hold your own religious services. We Buddhists will also participate in the services of other religions. In the past, no other religion ever held their services in a Buddha Hall. This had never happened before in the history of Buddhism. Now the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas wants to break through factional, racial, national, and personal prejudices and encompass and accept all religions without opposing any of them. Opposing any religion means destroying peace and inviting war.

Buddhism pervades empty space to the ends of the Dharma Realm. No living being is outside of empty space or the Dharma Realm, nor is any religion. For that reason, Buddhism should become one with all religions. It should not create

boundaries and divisions within itself and fail to become one with living beings.

When the Buddha was sitting under the Bodhi tree, one night he gazed upon a bright star and became enlightened. He then exclaimed, "All living beings have the Buddha nature and can become Buddhas." Basing ourselves on this principle, we should spread the Buddha's teachings into the hearts of all living beings, so that every living being can understand the Buddhadharma and attain Buddhahood.

We should further realize that all living beings have the Bodhisattva nature and can become Bodhisattvas. If you do the deeds of a Buddha, you are a Buddha. If you do the deeds of a Bodhisattva, you are a Bodhisattva. To be a Buddha, you have to have the four limitless minds of kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. The Buddha regards all living beings as his parents from the past and as future Buddhas. That being the case, how could there be any basis for discriminating among living beings? What prejudices are there that cannot be relinquished? Everyone possesses the Buddha nature in equal measure. Everyone also equally possesses the Bodhisattva nature. Everyone can walk the Bodhisattva path. What is the Bodhisattva path? It consists of the Six Perfections and the ten thousand practices. The Six Perfections are:

1. *Giving*. Giving cures one of stinginess and greed. People

who are stingy and unable to renounce things have to practice giving. Only through giving can you gain. If you don't give, you can't gain anything. Giving and receiving: You have to give in order to receive. There is giving of wealth, giving of Dharma, and giving of fearlessness.

- a. Giving wealth means giving money and giving the wealth of merit and virtue. When you give, you should empty the three aspects of giving, so that there is no giver, no receiver, and nothing that is given or received.
- b. Giving Dharma means bestowing the Buddhadharma upon living beings. You constantly speak the Buddhadharma to rescue living beings who are hungry and thirsty for it.
- c. Giving fearlessness means that when living beings feel fear, you comfort them and help them not to be afraid.

That is the general meaning of giving.

2. *Holding precepts.* The basic precepts are those which prohibit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants. Not killing accords with humaneness,

not stealing is righteousness, not engaging in sexual misconduct is propriety, not lying is trustworthiness, and not taking intoxicants is wisdom. Humaneness, righteousness, propriety, trustworthiness, and wisdom are just the precepts against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants. If you can hold the five precepts, you are in accord with humaneness, righteousness, propriety, trustworthiness, and wisdom. If you are in accord with these five virtues, then you have established the foundation for being a good person.

3. *Patience*. There is patience with production, patience with dharmas, and patience with the nonproduction of dharmas. Being able to bear the unbearable is true patience. To bear what is bearable does not count as real patience. It's the unbearable things that you have to be able to bear. Maitreya Bodhisattva has a verse:

*The Old Fool wears a tattered robe
And fills his belly with plain food.
He patches his robe to keep out the cold,
And lets things follow their natural course.
If someone scolds the Old Fool,
He just says, "Fine."
If someone hits the Old Fool,
He just lies down and goes to sleep.
"Spit on my face,*

*And I'll let it dry by itself.
That way I save my energy,
And you won't get afflicted."
This kind of Paramita
Is the jewel within the wonderful.
If you know this news,
How can you worry about not attaining the Way?*

The Paramita (“perfection”) of Patience requires that you bear what you cannot bear. If you can bear what is unbearable, that is Paramita, “arriving at the other shore.” If you bear something that is bearable, that doesn’t count. It only counts if you are patient with something that you cannot bear.

4. *Vigor*. There is physical vigor and mental vigor. Physical vigor means diligently cultivating precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. Mental vigor means putting to rest greed, hatred, and stupidity. This is the Paramita of Vigor.
5. *Dhyana samadhi*. Dhyana is a Sanskrit word meaning “thought cultivation” and “quieting thoughts.” Quieting your thoughts means having no thoughts, purifying your mind of thoughts. Thought cultivation means not attaching to thoughts of good or evil, but holding to the Middle Way. That is Dhyana samadhi. In cultivation, we should cultivate samadhi power.

6. *Prajna*. *Prajna* is wisdom. It is one of the five kinds of terms which are not translated. If it were translated as “wisdom,” that would be demeaning it. Therefore, *Prajna* is not translated because it is an honored term. *Prajna* is just our inherent wisdom. When we study the Buddhadharma, we want to study wisdom, not stupidity. If we do things unfairly, that is stupidity. If we are public-spirited and impartial, that is wisdom. Benefiting others is wisdom; benefiting oneself is stupidity. The difference lies in a single thought. That one thought can penetrate the heavens and the earth.

This is the Dharma door of the Six Perfections and ten thousand practices cultivated by Bodhisattvas.

A Talk given on October 28, 1990
at Shanming Temple in Lyon, France

Genuine Freedom and Longevity

Wine, lust, wealth, and anger have been the downfall of countless Buddhist disciples.

*Wine, lust, wealth, and anger are the four walls;
Many confused people are trapped inside.
If one can leap outside these walls,
One will enjoy eternal life and never grow old.*

This verse talks about the five worldly desires for wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep, which turn people upside-down and cause them to live as if drunk and die dreaming, too confused to turn back. There are also “wine, lust, wealth, and anger.” Those who like wine constantly think about drinking wine. Those who crave sex have thoughts about sex all the time. Those who covet wealth are always trying to think of a way to get rich. Those who like to get angry are always losing their temper over matters great and small. These four things are like four walls that trap people in, so the verse says,

“Many confused people are trapped inside.” There’s no knowing how many people live inside those walls. “If one can leap outside these walls,” if a person can not drink wine, not indulge in lust, not be greedy for money, and not get angry, “one will enjoy eternal life and never grow old.” If you are not moved by wine, lust, wealth, or anger, you will definitely live a long time.

Although Buddhism teaches us not to be attached to the notion of a life span, if you don’t lose your temper, don’t drink wine or take intoxicants, and aren’t greedy for sex or wealth, then you pretty much have control over your own life span. If you want to live a little longer, you can. If you don’t want to live to be too old, you can go to rebirth whenever you wish. You are free and at ease. This is true self-mastery. Self-mastery means that you are always in control, not mastered by others. What is mastery by others? If you give rise to discursive thoughts all the time, that is being mastered by others. What is self-mastery? If you have no discursive thoughts, that is self-mastery. If you want to be the Bodhisattva Who Contemplates with Self-Mastery [Avalokiteshvara], you must not have any discursive thoughts. When you break through all discursive thoughts and attachments, that is self-mastery; that is the Bodhisattva Who Contemplates with Self-Mastery. That is also “illuminating the five skandhas and seeing that they are all empty, and passing beyond all suffering and difficulty.” [*Heart Sutra*]

Wine, lust, wealth, and anger have been the downfall of countless many Buddhist disciples. Wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep have also ruined the futures of countless many potential sages and worthies. Yet people still do not wake up. They still spend their lives in a drunken state and die dreaming, not knowing how to turn around. How foolish, how pitiable! That's why, when I was young, I considered wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep to be extremely unclean, like excrement or dirt. I regarded wine, lust, wealth, and anger as external things that had nothing to do with my body, mind, or life. I began to search for a way to leave the five desires behind and leap outside the four walls. That's when I decided to leave the home-life.

After leaving home, I wanted to help others, so I used the Great Compassion Mantra, the Forty-two Hands and Eyes, and the Shurangama Mantra to save people's lives. I saved many people, but in doing so I also provoked many demons, ghosts, and other strange creatures. Some of these creatures were from the heavens; some were from the human realm; some were sea monsters who lived in the water. Because I had offended so many heavenly demons, goblins of the hills and rivers, and so on, I almost drowned when I went by boat from Tianjin to Shanghai.

I remember the trip should have taken only three or four days. (This was over forty years ago.) But the boat I took was

on the sea for over half a month. All the food and water on-board had been used up, but the boat only sailed in circles on the black expanse of sea. None of the engines worked, and there was no way to reach the shore. There were several hundred passengers on the boat, and they kept vomiting. When the boat pitched forward, one end would rise several dozen feet in the air. When it rocked the other way, that end would sink several dozen feet into the water. The boat rocked back and forth in the black waters and nearly capsized. At that time, reciting the Great Compassion Mantra didn't work, and reciting the Shurangama Mantra didn't work either. I had vomited up everything in my stomach, and was lying on the deck unable to move. I knew the boat couldn't move because of the sea monsters that were fighting me, trying to capsize the boat and drown me. I had vomited up everything, even the bile in my gall, and I had no strength at all. I thought of voluntarily jumping into the sea, so that so many people wouldn't be harmed on account of me. But I still had a thread of hope: I prayed to Guanyin Bodhisattva. I said, "Guanyin Bodhisattva, from the time I was born I have wanted to work for Buddhism. If I can still be of use to Buddhism, please extend your holy hand to calm the waves and guide the boat to Shanghai. If you cannot stretch out your holy hand to save me, then I shall jump overboard now, so that all these people won't have to die because of me. I'm willing to take my retribution."

When I finished my prayer, the violent wind and the waves calmed down. After fourteen days, the boat finally arrived in Shanghai. If it had stayed on the sea for just a few more days, people would have been so famished that they might have started eating one another, and there would have been unforeseeable consequences. That's the kind of trouble I got for getting involved in people's affairs and trying to help them. From that time on, after I went to Hong Kong, I didn't dare to interfere too much in the affairs of others. Even now, I don't get too involved. If people are sick and I am able to help them, I do so quietly; if I cannot help, then there is nothing I can do. Thinking back on my youth now, I see that I didn't have the sense to protect myself, and I didn't know how immense the universe was, so I offended countless mountain and sea monsters. I've told you about this today hoping that you won't be like me and get too involved in people's affairs.

A talk given on October 28, 1990,
at Avalokiteshvara Temple in Paris, France

What I Learned from the Trip to Europe

by Bhikshuni Heng Jen

A Sutra says, "A physician can cure all sicknesses, but not a person whose life is about to end. The Buddha can save all people, but not those who lack faith." On this trip to Europe, the Dharma delegation not only brought the Proper Dharma to Europe, it also destroyed prejudices within Buddhism and united the northern and southern traditions so that the all-encompassing teaching of the Buddha can plant its roots in Europe.

Further, this delegation hoped to bring all religions and national leaders together, and to exhort all parents and teachers to join hands and work together to maintain world peace and to renew the hearts of people all over the world. This method of uniting all living beings has never been tried before. Since it is unprecedented, it probably will not gain immediate popularity or support. Nevertheless, there is a definite need for this kind of work. We are used to bravely

taking the first step, and if others don't follow along, we still want to try our best. Although there may be no immediate results from such trail-blazing work, we only ask ourselves if we have worked hard enough. We don't worry about success or failure, gain or loss.

Buddhism does exist in Europe, but it is not widespread. What is more, each Buddhist group tends to consider itself the one and only right one, and may even presume to represent the whole of Buddhism. In every country that Buddhism enters, it takes on a special style or flavor. As a result, each place becomes attached to its own particular style of Buddhism. This has led to the present situation of different sects denouncing and rejecting one another. This is one of the crucial reasons why Buddhism has not flourished.

From this trip to Europe, I have learned that no matter what kind of people we are faced with, whether they are nonbelievers, attached to their own views, or hope to glean some truth from Buddhism, we should always speak the truth. Yet most people cannot immediately accept genuine true principles, because they are too true. Sometimes, the truth even provokes opposition. Does that mean we shouldn't speak the truth? No. Not only should we speak, but we should speak without fear.

What does speaking the truth mean? It means telling people

to believe in cause and effect, and not to be deluded by the five desires; telling people to hold the precepts, to constantly examine themselves and bravely change their faults; telling people not to have attachments. These are all truthful words. People don't like to listen to them, and may even retreat, but even so these words are wonderful medicine that saves people's lives and inherent natures.

Wherever the Venerable Master goes, he tells people not to take life, not to eat meat, but to practice the Six Guidelines of not killing, not stealing, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing self-benefit, and not lying. He repeatedly stresses that the various current diseases and disasters are brought about by people's greed, fighting, selfishness, and other improper thoughts.

The Venerable Master also calls people to work to rescue education. The educational crisis is not the fault of students, but of national leaders who have ignored the mental and physical development of the next generation. The mistake of neglecting education is a more serious threat to humankind than cancer, AIDS, or the atomic bomb. The failure of education is an invisible killer that can ruin a nation and destroy the human race. When the roots of the next generation are cut off, the world is headed for certain destruction. It may sound like I'm saying these alarming things just to get your attention, but if you take a close look at

the disasters happening in the world today and the various problems in the society and the family, you will discover that the solution to these urgent problems begins with education.

If everyone can promote the eight virtues of filiality, brotherhood, loyalty, trustworthiness, propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame in every school, and instill these values in the mind of every youngster, how can the world not become good? And if people are good, then there is hope of Buddhahood for them.

In visiting Europe, our goal was to awaken people who are intoxicated by the five desires, so that they become aware of what is happening around them and take full responsibility for themselves. Therefore, we cannot speak untruthfully in order to make people think well of us. We absolutely have to speak true, honest words that can genuinely benefit people. The Venerable Master, based on his great vows to rescue the people of the world, has always spoken frankly of what he knows, shaking people up and making them feel that his words are a shot in the arm.

Finally, I'd like to say that if a person always strives to be true, not only is he a wise and courageous enlightened one, he is a humane one of great kindness and compassion who views all living beings as equal with one another.

Glossary

The glossary is an aid for readers unfamiliar with the Buddhist vocabulary. Definitions have been kept simple and are not necessarily complete.

Amitabha Buddha The Buddha of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. See Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Analects One of the Four Books of classical Chinese literature, the *Analects* is a collection of Confucius' conversations with his students and other people.

Arhat One who has realized sagehood in the Lesser Vehicle.

asura Beings who are fond of fighting. Although asuras are classified in a Dharma Realm of their own, they are actually found in many other Dharma Realms.

Bodhisattva An enlightened being who does not enter Nirvana but chooses instead to remain in the world and save living beings.

Buddha The Awakened One, one who has achieved perfect enlightenment.

Buddhadharma Teachings of the Buddha.

cultivation The practical application of the methods taught by the Buddha that lead to enlightenment.

Dharma The teachings of the Buddha. A method of cultivation.

Dharma Realm The enlightened world, that is, the totality or infinity of the realm of the Buddhas; a particular plane of existence, as in the Ten Dharma Realms. See Ten Dharma Realms.

Five Eyes and Six Spiritual Penetrations The five spiritual eyes are the flesh eye, the celestial eye, the Buddha eye, the wisdom eye, and the Dharma eye. The six spiritual penetrations are the penetration of the celestial eye, the penetration of the celestial ear, the penetration of others' thoughts, the penetration of past lives, the penetration of the complete spirit, and the penetration of the ending of outflows. Opening these five eyes and developing these six spiritual penetrations is a potential latent in all beings.

good roots The roots of virtue that are planted during cultivation. Good roots grow out of faith. A quote from the *Avatamsaka Sutra* says, "Faith is the source of the Way and the mother of virtue, because it nourishes all good roots."

Greater Vehicle The Mahayana in Sanskrit, this is the vehicle of Bodhisattvas. The Greater Vehicle teaching advocates bringing forth a resolve to save all living beings.

Hearers Disciples of the Buddha who become enlightened through contemplation of the Four Noble Truths (suffering, accumulation, cessation, and the Way). (Sanskrit: Shravaka)

karma Deeds, activity; especially the deeds which we create ourselves and the retributions which those deeds bring upon us.

King Yama Lord of the underworld.

Guanshiyin (Guanyin) Bodhisattva The Bodhisattva of great compassion, who responds to living beings in distress who call out his/her name. The name Guanshiyin means "One who Contemplates the Sounds of the World." (Skt: Avalokiteshvara)

Land of Ultimate Bliss The Buddhaland of Amitabha Buddha in the West created through the power of his vows which enable living beings to be reborn simply by sincere mindfulness and recitation of his name. Also known as the Western Pure Land.

leave the home-life (leave home) To renounce the householder's life and become a monk or nun in order to devote oneself completely to the practice of the Buddhadharma.

Lesser Vehicle Also referred to as the Two Vehicles, this includes the vehicle of Those Enlightened to Conditions and the Hearers (Arhats). The Lesser Vehicle teaching focuses on self-enlightenment rather than saving others. See Theravada Buddhism.

Mahakashyapa (Venerable) One of the ten great Arhat disciples of the Buddha who was foremost in ascetic practices. Shakyamuni Buddha transmitted the Mind Dharma to him and made him the First Patriarch of Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhism The northern transmission of Buddhism, found primarily in China, Tibet, Japan, and Korea.

Maitreya Bodhisattva The next Buddha after Shakyamuni Buddha, he is often depicted as a fat monk who is said to be one of his incarnations.

mantra Mantras are the secret language of all Buddhas. A single phrase of a mantra may have many different powers, such as curing illness, eradicating offenses, generating blessings, and subduing evil influences.

Nirvana Perfect quiescence realized by enlightened sages.

Prajna Transcendental wisdom.

precepts Rules of ethical conduct set forth by the Buddha. There are various categories of precepts, the most basic being the five precepts: no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no taking of intoxicants (alcohol, drugs, tobacco, etc.).

sage An enlightened being; a Buddha, a Bodhisattva, or an Arhat.

samadhi A wholesome state of concentration gained through meditation and other practices; there are various kinds of samadhi.

Sangha The community of Buddhist monks and nuns.

Shakyamuni Buddha The historical Buddha who appeared in the world over 2,500 years ago. Born in India as a prince named Siddhartha Gautama, he renounced wealth, pleasures, family, and royal position and became a wandering

mendicant. After six years of extreme asceticism in the Himalayas, he sat under the Bodhi Tree for 49 days and realized perfect enlightenment. For 49 years he travelled widely in India and taught living beings the way to Buddhahood. At the age of 80 he entered Nirvana.

Shramanera A novice monk.

Sutra Discourses by the Buddha or by various members of the assembly with the authority of the Buddha.

Shariputra (Venerable) One of the ten great Arhat disciples of the Buddha who was known for his great wisdom.

Theravada Buddhism The southern transmission of Buddhism, found primarily in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and other countries of Southeast Asia.

Ten Dharma Realms Ten realms of existence, namely: the realms of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Those Enlightened to Conditions, Hearers, gods, asuras, people, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings.

Those Enlightened to Conditions Those who become enlightened through contemplation of the Twelve Links of Conditioned Co-production. (Sanskrit: Pratyekabuddha)

Thus Come One One of the titles of a Buddha. (Sanskrit: Tathagata)

Three Jewels The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

Twelve Links of Conditioned Co-production A cycle consisting of ignorance, activity, consciousness, name and

Glossary

form, the six sense faculties, contact, feeling, love, grasping, becoming, birth, old age and death. Those Enlightened to Conditions become enlightened through the contemplation of this twelve-link cycle.

Vajra A Sanskrit word that means “durable,” “luminous,” and “able to cut.” It is indestructible and is usually represented by diamond.

The Way The spiritual path of cultivation; the ultimate truth, which is realized through following that path.

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddha-dharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master Hua developed the inclination to cultivate early on in his childhood. Influenced by the filial piety of Filial Son Wong (Great Master Chang Ren) of Shuangcheng County, the Master vowed to follow his example. Every morning and evening after bowing to the Buddhas, he would make three bows to his parents. Later he took refuge with the Triple Jewel and had deep

faith in Buddhism. When he was nineteen his mother passed away, and he lived in a tiny hut by her graveside for three years in observance of filial piety. At that time he left the home-life with Venerable Master Chang Zhi and cultivated quietly and earnestly. He travelled widely to study under Elder Masters of great virtue. Later he received the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun and became the Ninth Patriarch of the Wei Yang Sect, the forty-fifth generation since the First Patriarch Mahakasyapa. In 1949 the Master went to Hong Kong to propagate the Dharma. He founded monasteries, delivered lectures on Sutras, and engaged in other activities to benefit living beings, thus causing Buddhism to flourish in Hong Kong. In 1962 he came to America alone. Responding to the ripening conditions in the West, he worked to gradually actualize his vow to raise the banner of the Proper Dharma in the West.

Establishing Centers of Cultivation and Bringing People Together

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to promote and develop education in the Buddhist tradition, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to establish a foundation for Buddhism in America. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself in the Three Great Principles and the Six Great Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, 110 miles north of San Francisco. The grounds cover 488 acres, and there are approximately 80 acres in active use. In the Jewelled Hall of Ten Thousand Buddhas at the City, there is a large image of Guanyin Bodhisattva with a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. The four walls inside the Jewelled Hall are covered with over ten thousand small Buddha statues. The four assemblies of disciples gather daily in this Hall for the morning and evening recitation ceremonies, and after evening recitation they listen to the Venerable Master's lectures on the Mahayana Sutras. Whenever there are intensive sessions for reciting the name of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, devotees from all directions come together to cultivate. During the annual Jewelled Repentance before the Ten Thousand Buddhas, the Hall is filled with the vigorous energy of cultivation. There are many other buildings and schools on the grounds of the City, including the elementary schools and secondary schools, the university, the Sangha and Laity Training Programs, Tathagata Monastery, Great Compassion House, Joyous Giving House, Wonderful Words Hall, the Ordination Hall, the Library, Tower of Blessings (a seniors' center), and a vegetarian restaurant. There are more than seventy major buildings. The pure and peaceful atmosphere and the clean air at the City provide an ideal environment for study and spiritual cultivation.

Although the Venerable Master Hua belonged to the ninth generation in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect of the Chan School,

all the plans, Dharma events, and practices at the City give equal emphasis to the methods of cultivation of the Five Schools—the Chan School, the Pure Land School, the Esoteric School, the Vinaya School, and the School of Doctrine. Thus each person may choose the most appropriate method of practice to investigate and cultivate at a deeper level. That is also in accord with what the Buddha said, "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are upheld strictly and carefully. All residents of the City undertake to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with constant vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and unselfish lives, and attain peace in body and mind. All residents are expected to dedicate themselves mentally and physically, follow the five precepts of Buddhism, and practice the principles of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. In this way they can nurture lofty moral character, activate their pure, inherent wisdom, and work for the prosperity of Buddhism.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University.

The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, the most urgent priority is to develop good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people's minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. For this purpose the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and he

founded Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

The Master indicated that the elementary school should teach students to be filial to parents and respectful to teachers and elders, the secondary school should teach students to be good citizens, and the university should teach the principles of humaneness, righteousness, the Way, and virtue. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School merge the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. Due to the emphasis on moral virtue and spiritual development, in addition to the required academic curriculum, courses are offered in ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them gradually to know themselves and to explore the truths of the universe. At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the elementary and secondary schools offer bilingual education (Chinese and English). Boys and girls are educated separately in order to avoid distractions and preserve their pure natures. Due to the many different cultures and nationalities that are represented among the teaching staff and student body, multiple grades are grouped together to allow students more flexibility in academic progress. Students learn to open their minds to respect and appreciate different cultural traditions. In offering an education based on virtue, Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School hope to guide students to become good and capable citizens of the world, thus benefiting all of humankind. Aside from the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, branches of the schools have also been

formed at other affiliated monasteries with the aim of widely propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all people and all living beings return to their inherent nature. Thus Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are then encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and thus integrate the Buddhadharma into their lives. They will then be able to nurture their wisdom and become replete with virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

The content of the courses taught by Dharma Realm Buddhist University consists primarily of the Proper Dharma. Faculty and students alike see this as the goal of their efforts in study and cultivation. Everyone investigates together in order to attain the ultimate state of wisdom and compassion. In such an environment, everyone's lifestyle is characterized by rigorous self-discipline. Whether students or teachers, monastics or laity, male or female, young or old, everyone is regarded with equal kindness. There are no distinctions of class and no personal differences. Every individual and the customs of every cultural tradition are respected. Beyond the physical manifestations of students,

teachers, textbooks, and classrooms, the genuine and profound hallmark of the Dharma Realm Buddhist University is its spirit of taking the Dharma Realm as its substance and the Proper Dharma as its function. There is no place that is not a classroom, and nothing that is not a learning resource. There is no time when people are not mutually honing and refining each other's characters and talents. All people, events, and objects can be learned from and constantly give us good opportunities to accumulate blessings, grow in wholesome Dharma, and perpetuate wisdom.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs, Proper Dharma Buddhist Academy

In the Dharma-Ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha's regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers of genuine wisdom and proper understanding capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism are also very rare. In order to raise the caliber of the Sangha, cause the Proper Dharma to long endure, provide professional training for Buddhists from around the world that emphasizes practice as well as theory, and perpetuate the wisdom of the Buddha, the Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 and the Proper Dharma Buddhist Academy in 1988.

The Sangha Training Program provides left-home people with a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and giving them a conception of Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to

assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. Emphasis is placed on students' thorough knowledge of Buddhism, understanding of the scriptures, development of virtuous character, earnest cultivation, and strict observance of precepts, so that they will be able to propagate the orthodox Dharma and continue the Buddha's legacy. The Laity Training Program offers courses appropriate to laypeople, allowing them to develop proper knowledge and proper views, advance together in cultivation, and gain an understanding of the regulations of the monastery and the essentials of cultivation. After completing the Program, they will be able to serve humanity by contributing their abilities in Buddhist organizations. Proper Dharma Buddhist Academy, founded in Taiwan, focuses on the study and cultivation of the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the Dharma-Ending Age, a time when deviant theories are rife, the Academy is devoted to training students to have clear and penetrating views and to be able to propagate the Proper Dharma.

International Translation Institute and Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it could become widespread in the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute at Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating the Venerable Master's commentaries on Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the

Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a bank building in Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and officially established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date the Association has published more than two hundred volumes of Buddhist texts translated from Chinese into English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese. Five bilingual (Chinese and English) volumes of Sutras and Dharma talks are also available.

One of the Venerable Master's three great vows was to translate the Buddhist scriptures. In China's past, this difficult and vast mission was directed and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In the present, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the eight guidelines of the International Translation Institute—not being greedy for fame or profit, not being arrogant, not praising oneself and slandering others, not establishing oneself as the standard of correctness and looking for flaws in others' work, taking the Buddha-mind as one's own mind, using the Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles, and requesting Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify one's translations, and endeavoring to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastras, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct. These are the

Venerable Master's wishes, and they should be the goals that participants in the work of translation strive to achieve.

Certain wise individuals in Taiwan, seeing the degeneration of human morality in the Dharma-Ending Age and wishing to avert the flood of disaster, organized and founded the Proper Dharma Buddhist Books Distribution Association in Taiwan in 1984. The Association's missions are to propagate the six great principles promoted by the Venerable Master Hua and to improve and transform social trends. Based on a membership system, the Association accepts donations to print books and reproduce tapes produced by Dharma Realm Buddhist Association in order to make the Proper Dharma available throughout the world. Since 1990, in addition to printing Buddhist texts, the Association began to hold a variety of other Dharma activities.

The Institute of World Religions

Founded in 1994, the Institute is located near the University of California at Berkeley. The purpose of the Institute is to study the truths of religion in harmony with other religious groups, without rejecting or opposing any religion. The six principles of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas serve as guidelines for the Institute. Propagating the spirit of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas with expansive open-mindedness, the Institute invites the members of various religions to give presentations, deepening our understanding of their ideals and practices. The Institute of World Religions offers an hour of meditation twice daily and presents evening and weekend programs that foster conversation between religions, the sciences, and the humanities. All truth-seeking

individuals who wish to discover their innate wisdom, benefit all beings, and bring harmony to the world are invited to come to study and cultivate together.

Affiliated Monasteries

In order to propagate the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained and educated people, but also spent great effort in establishing various monasteries. He wanted to provide monasteries where people could cultivate in purity according to the Buddha's regulations as well as turn the Dharma wheel and carry out the Buddha's work. After coming to America, over the years he established the many monasteries of the Proper Dharma in the United States, Canada, and southeast Asia, including the following: Gold Mountain Monastery, Gold Wheel Monastery, Gold Summit Monastery, Gold Buddha Monastery, Avatamsaka Monastery, Long Beach Monastery, the City of the Dharma Realm, Dharma Realm Monastery and Amitabha Monastery in Taiwan, Purple Cloud Monastery in Malaysia, and others. All of these monasteries firmly uphold the credo:

Freezing, we do not scheme.

Starving, we do not beg.

Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.

According with conditions, we do not change.

Not changing, we accord with conditions.

We adhere firmly to our three great principles.

We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.

We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.

We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sangha's role.

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

*Encountering specific matters, we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles, we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.*

The monasteries follow the Six Guidelines: no fighting, no greed, no seeking, no pursuit of personal advantage, and no lying. They also honor the Venerable Master's rules of eating only one meal a day and only before noon and always wearing the kashaya sash. The monasteries have daily lectures on the Sutras, turning the great Dharma wheel to universally rescue living beings.

The Dharma is in decline and the world is under dangerous and evil influences. In accord with the mission of Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas has been established as an international center for the study of Buddhism and for spiritual cultivation. It is open to those of all ages, faiths, ethnic origins, and nationalities. Individuals devoted to seeking the truth, helping humankind, and working for the prosperity of society and the nation are welcome to gather in the City to honestly study, cultivate, and put forth effort to rescue the world.

A Brief Account of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua (1918-1995)

One of the most eminent Chinese Buddhist masters of the twentieth century, the Venerable Master (Xuanhua, 1918-1995) was a monastic reformer and the first Chinese master to teach Buddhism to large numbers of Westerners. During his long career he emphasized the primacy of the monastic tradition, the essential role of moral education, the need for Buddhists to ground themselves in traditional spiritual practice and authentic scripture, and the importance of respect and understanding among religions. To attain these goals, he focused on clarifying the essential principles of the Buddha's original teachings, on establishing a properly ordained monastic community, on organizing and supporting the translation of the Buddhist Canon into English and other languages, and on the establishment of schools, religious training programs, and programs of academic research and teaching.

Born in 1918 into a peasant family in a small village south of Harbin, in northeast China, the Venerable Master was the youngest of ten children. His father's surname was Bai, and his mother's maiden name was Hu. His mother was a vegetarian,

and throughout her life she held to the practice of reciting the name of the Buddha Amitabha. When the Venerable Master formally became a Buddhist, in his mid-teens, he was given the Dharma name Anci (“Peace and Compassion”). and after becoming a monk, he was also known as Dulun (“Liberator from the Wheel of Rebirth”). Upon granting him the Dharma-seal of the Weiyang lineage, the Elder Chan Master Xuyun (1840-1959) bestowed upon him the Dharma-transmission name Hsüan Hua (Xuanhua — “To Proclaim and Transform”).

When the Venerable Master was a child, he followed his mother's example, eating only vegetarian food and reciting the Buddha's name. When he was eleven years old, upon seeing a dead baby lying on the ground, he awakened to the fundamental significance of birth and death and the impermanence of all phenomena. He then resolved to become a monk and practice on the Buddhist Path, but he acquiesced to his mother's request that he not do so until after her death. When he was twelve, he obtained his parents' permission to travel extensively in search of a true spiritual teacher.

At the age of fifteen, the Venerable Master went to school for the first time, and when he was sixteen, he started lecturing on the Buddhist Sutras to help this fellow villagers who were illiterate but who wanted to learn about the Buddha's teachings. He was not only diligent and focused but possessed a photographic memory, and so he was able to memorize the Four Books and the Five Classics of the Confucian tradition. He had also studied traditional Chinese medicine, astrology, divination, physiognomy, and the scriptures of the great religions. When he was seventeen,

he established a free school, in which, as the lone teacher, he taught some thirty impoverished children and adults.

At the age of eighteen, after only two and a half years of schooling, he left school to care for his terminally ill mother. He was nineteen when she died, and for three years he honored her memory by sitting in meditation beside her grave in a hut made of sorghum stalks. During this time, while reading the *Avataṣka Sūtra*, he experienced a deep awakening. Subsequently, while seated in deep meditation, he had a vision of the Sixth Chan Buddhist Patriarch Huineng (638–713 CE). In his vision, Master Huineng came to visit him and to give him the mission of bringing Buddhism to the Western world.

At the end of his period of mourning, the Venerable Master took as his teacher Chan Buddhist Master Changzhi, and he entered Three Conditions Monastery as a novice monk. Chan Master Changzhi subsequently transmitted to him the Dharma of the Jinding Pilu Chan lineage. During this time, the Master devoted himself not only to meditation but also to the study of the Buddhist scriptural tradition and to the mastery of all the major schools of Chinese Buddhism.

In 1946 the Master began the long journey to the south of China. In 1947, he received full ordination as a monk at the Buddhist holy mountain Putuoshan. In 1948, after over two thousand miles of travel, the Master arrived at Nanhua Monastery and bowed to Chan Master Xuyun, China's most widely revered enlightened master. From him the Master received the mind-seal transmission

as verification of his awakening, and later a more formal transmission of the Dharma of the Weiyang lineage of the Chan School.

In 1949 the Master left China for Hong Kong. There he taught meditation, lectured on the Buddhist Sūtras, and sponsored their printing. He also commissioned the making of images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and he aided monastic refugees from mainland China. He also built Western Bliss Garden Monastery (Xie Yuan), established the Buddhist Lecture Hall, and rebuilt and renovated Flourishing Compassion Monastery (Ciing Monastery).

In 1962, he traveled to the United States, at the invitation of several of his Hong Kong disciples who had settled in San Francisco, and he began lecturing at the San Francisco Buddhist Lecture Hall, which had been previously established as a branch of the Buddhist Lecture Hall in Hong Kong. As the community at the Buddhist Lecture Hall in San Francisco grew, both in size and in diversity, the institution's name was changed, first to the Sino-American Buddhist Association and then to the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. In 1976 the Venerable Master established the organization's first branch monastery – Gold Wheel Temple in Los Angeles – and he established a new headquarters as well, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, in Ukiah, California.

In the summer of 1968, the Master began the intensive training of a group of Americans, most of them university students. In 1969, he astonished the monastic community of Taiwan by sending there, for complete ordination, two American women and three American men whom he had ordained as novices. They were the

first Americans of that period to become fully ordained Buddhist monks and nuns. During subsequent years, the Venerable Master trained and oversaw the ordination of hundreds of people, both Asians and Westerners, from among the multitudes who came to California from every part of the world to study with him. These monastic disciples now teach in the twenty-eight temples, monasteries and convents that the Venerable Master founded in the United States, Canada, and several Asian countries.

The Venerable Master was determined to transmit to the West the original and correct teachings of Buddhism, and he categorically rejected what he considered to be corrupt practices that had become widespread in China. He guided his disciples in distinguishing between genuine, scripture-based practices that were useful and in accord with common sense, as opposed to ritual superstitions that were unwholesome cultural accretions.

Among the many reforms in monastic practice that he instituted was his insistence that his monastic disciples accord with the ancient practice of wearing the monastic robe or precept-sash (*kaṣṭhāya*) as a sign of membership in the monastic Sangha. He himself followed, and he required that his monastic disciples follow the prohibition against eating after noon. He considered a vegetarian diet to be of paramount importance. He encouraged his disciples among the Sangha to join him in following the Buddha's beneficial ascetic practices of eating only one meal a day and of never lying down. Of his monastic disciples he required strict purity, and he encouraged his lay disciples to adhere to the five precepts of the Buddhist laity.

Although he understood English well and spoke it when necessary, the Master almost always lectured in Chinese. His aim was to encourage his Western disciples to learn Chinese, so that they could help to fulfill his wish that the Buddhist Canon be translated into other languages. So far, the Buddhist Text Translation Society, which he founded, has published over a well over a hundred volumes of translations, including several of the major Mahayana Sūtras with the Master's commentaries.

As an educator, the Venerable Master was tireless. At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, he established formal training programs for monastics and for laity, elementary and secondary schools for boys and for girls, and Dharma Realm Buddhist University. From 1968 to the early 1990's he himself gave lectures on Sūtras at least once a day, and he traveled extensively on speaking tours. Responding to requests from Buddhists around the world, the Venerable Master led delegations to Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Southeast Asia, and Europe to propagate the Dharma. He also traveled to Burma, Australia and South America. His presence drew a multitude of the faithful everywhere he went. He was also often invited to lecture at universities and academic conferences.

The Venerable Master was a pioneer in building bridges between different Buddhist communities. Wishing to heal the ancient schism between Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism, he invited distinguished Theravada monks to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas to share the duties of full ordination and transmission of the monastic precepts, which the two traditions hold in common.

He also insisted on inter-religious respect and actively promoted interfaith dialogue. He stressed commonalities in religious traditions, above all their emphasis on proper and compassionate conduct. Together with his friend Paul Cardinal Yubin, who had been archbishop of Nanjing and who was the Chancellor of the Catholic Furen University in Taiwan, he established the Institute for World Religions in Berkeley.

In 1990, at the invitation of Buddhists in several European countries, the Venerable Master led a large delegation on a European Dharma tour, knowing full well that, because of his ill health at the time, the rigors of the trip would shorten his life. However, as always he considered the Dharma more important than his very life. After his return, his health gradually deteriorated, yet, while quite ill, he made another major tour, this time to Taiwan, in 1993.

In Los Angeles, on June 7, 1995 at the age of 77, the Venerable Master entered nirvana. When he was alive, he craved nothing, seeking neither fame nor wealth nor power. His every thought and every action were for the sake of bringing true happiness to all sentient beings. In his final instructions he said: "After I depart, you can recite the *Avataṣṭaka Sūtra* and the name of the Buddha Amitābha for however many days you would like, perhaps seven days or forty-nine days. After cremating my body, scatter all my remains in the air. I do not want you to do anything else at all. Do not build me any pagodas or memorials. I came into the world without anything; when I depart, I still do not want anything, and I do not want to leave any traces in the world....From emptiness I came; to emptiness I am returning."

The Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's Eighteen Great Vows

1) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one Bodhisattva in the three periods of time throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, to the very ends of empty space, has yet not become a Buddha.

2) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one Solitary Sage in the three periods of time throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, to the very ends of empty space, has yet not become a Buddha.

3) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one Hearer of the Teaching in the three periods of time throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, to the very ends of empty space, has not yet become a Buddha.

4) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one god in the Three Realms has not yet become a Buddha.

5) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one human being in the worlds of the ten directions has not yet become a Buddha.

6) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one *asura* among people and gods has not yet become a Buddha.

7) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one animal has not yet become a Buddha.

8) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one hungry ghost has not yet become a Buddha.

9) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one being in the hells has not yet become a Buddha.

10) I vow that I will not realize right enlightenment as long as even one being in the Three Realms who has taken refuge with me has not become a Buddha — whether that being is a god, ascetic master, human, *asura*, or animal that swims or flies, or whether a dragon, beast, ghost, or other inhabitant of the spirit-realm.

11) I vow to dedicate all the blessings and happiness that that I am due to enjoy to all the beings of the Dharma Realm.

12) I vow to fully take upon myself all the anguish and hardship that all the beings in the Dharma Realm are due to suffer.

13) I vow to appear in innumerable kinds of bodies in order to reach the minds of all the beings throughout the universe who do not believe in the Buddha's Dharma, so that I may cause them to correct their faults and become good, to repent and to start anew, to take refuge with the Three Jewels and finally to become Buddhas.

14) I vow that any being who sees my face or simply hears my name will immediately resolve to awaken and to follow the Path all the way to Buddhahood.

15) I vow to respectfully observe the Buddha's instructions and to maintain the practice of eating only one meal a day.

16) I vow to bring all beings everywhere to enlightenment by teaching each in accord with the various capabilities of each.

17) I vow, in this very life, to open the five spiritual eyes and to gain the six spiritual powers and the freedom to fly.

18) I vow to make certain that that all my vows are fulfilled.

To these personal vows he added the universal vows of the Bodhisattva:

Living beings are countless, but I vow to save them all.

Afflictions are endless, yet I vow to end them all.

Dharma-methods can't be numbered; still, I vow to learn them all.

The Buddha's Path is unsurpassed, and I vow to realize it.