

LISTEN TO YOURSELF

THINK EVERYTHING OVER

Dharma Talks by

VENERABLE MASTER HSUAN HUA

GUAN YIN

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The Eight Guidelines of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
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 endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Introduction

*The sweet dew from the Bodhisattva's
I willow branch
Can cause one drop to pervade the
I ten directions.
All filth and dirt are completely wiped away...*

With these words, in June of 1970, the Guan Yin recitation session was opened. It was the first such session ever held in the western world, and those attending, inspired by the Venerable Master Hua's daily instructional talks, worked to their utmost reciting the name of the Bodhisattva.

In 1962 the Venerable Master Hua brought the banner of the Orthodox Dharma to the West. In 1968 a group of young Americans asked him to speak the *Shurangama Sutra*. The Master consented and the Sutra Study and Practice Session lasted for ninety-six days. From that time onwards, the Master has continued to lecture daily on the Dharma, expounding such Sutras as: *The Lotus Sutra*, *The Sixth Patriarch's Sutra*, *The Earth Store Sutra*, *The Vajra Sutra*, *The Heart Sutra*, and many others. Currently, at the newly established City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the Master continues to explain the King of Sutras, The Great Avatamsaka Sutra.

In our age of moral and spiritual decay, many bemoan the advent of the "Dharma-ending Age". But the Venerable Master has made a vow that he *will not allow the Dharma-ending Age to descend*. Because he has taken the maintaining of the Orthodox Dharma as his personal responsibility, from the very beginning he has taught his students the fundamental importance of practicing what they learn. During the 1968 Study and Practice Session he spoke to his freedom-loving American disciples, telling them, "It is absolutely essential for people who want to cultivate the Way to

receive the precepts...From the lectures we derive understanding, and we practice by investigating Chan. Through the combination of practice and understanding we can stride forward...An example will help to illustrate the value of combining understanding with practice. A blind man and a cripple lived together in a house. One day it caught on fire. The blind man couldn't see and had no way to get out. The cripple could see, but he didn't have any legs. What a predicament! Then a wise advisor told them, 'You two can get out of this burning house. How? Cripple, let the blind man use your eyes. Blind man, let the cripple use your legs.' They followed his advice and made the best of their situation. The cripple climbed on the blind man's back and told the blind man where to walk. Thanks to the timely advice, they managed to save themselves."

From the Sutras and the teachings of the Buddha we gain understanding. From holding the precepts and through meditation we put that understanding into practice. As his students tackle the often elusive principles of the Doctrine the Master encourages them. "Do not be afraid of not understanding," he will say. "Just be afraid that you will not practice what you know. If you do not practice, you are useless..."

As long as there are those who practice the teachings, the Orthodox Dharma remains. In the final analysis, there is no Orthodox or Dharma-ending Age. Those who practice the Orthodox Dharma live in the Orthodox Dharma Age. Those who practice deviant dharmas live in the Dharma-ending age. Those who follow the Buddha's precepts, study the teachings, and practice them, are certain to gain wisdom and eventually reach enlightenment, even now, in our "corrupt" age. On the other hand, those who do not follow the Buddha's instructions could not be saved, even if they were face to face with Shakyamuni Buddha himself!

The present volume contains the Master's lively and practical instructions given to a group of hard working cultivators of both

recitation and Chan. As you find this volume in your hands, you can be assured of your affinities with the Dharma. In 1968 the Master said, “We have karmic connections with Shakyamuni Buddha and the Dharma which he proclaimed and which remains in the world. So now we have the opportunity to understand the doctrines. We are now in an advantageous position, even though we have been born after Shakyamuni Buddha spoke the Dharma.”

The Master has brought the Orthodox Dharma to the West. We now can hear, study and practice it. The house of the Triple World is on fire. Crippled and blinded as we may be by our degenerate age, we have been shown a way out. The world needs the light of Dharma and there is really no time to stand on the sidelines “bemoaning the descent of the Dharma-ending Age”. It is time we got down to the work at hand.

Bhikshuni Heng-yin

Buddhist Text Translation Society

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The Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

a brief portrait

Dhyana Master Hsuan Hua (Dharma name An Tz'u, also known as Tu Lun) was born on the sixteenth day of the third month, 1908, in Shuang Ch'eng County, Northeast China. His father, Pai Fu-hai, and mother, Hu, had eight children, of which the Master was the youngest. His mother often recited the name of Amita Buddha and in a dream one night shortly before the Master was born, she saw Amita Buddha emitting light from between his eyebrows that illumined the entire world system of one billion worlds. When she awoke, her room was filled with a rare fragrance.

His home was located in the countryside where there were few neighbors and not until he was eleven years old did he discover the phenomenon of death. While walking with some friends through a pasture, they came upon the body of a dead baby girl. The Master did not understand why this baby lay so still upon the ground and inquired of his friends, who replied, "She's dead." Puzzled, he returned to his home and asked his mother what exactly was this thing called death. She replied, "All people, whether rich or poor, must die, either from old age, sickness, or through an accident." The Master further asked, "How does one free oneself from death?" At that time there was a visitor at his home, one who cultivated the Way, and he answered the Master's question, "It is only through cultivation of the Way, awakening to one's own mind and seeing one's fundamental nature, that one can be liberated from birth and death in the continuous cycle of the six paths."

On hearing this the Master wished to immediately leave the home-life and begin to cultivate, but his mother told him that he

must wait, for she needed him to care for her in her old age.

When he was nineteen years old, his mother died. He left the home-life, bowing to the Venerable Master Ch'ang Chih as his teacher, and received the ten precepts of a sramanera, after which he took up the practice of sitting by his mother's grave, observing a mourning-period of three years. He lived in an A-frame hut made of sorghum stalks, cultivating dhyana samadhi and recitation of the name of Amita Buddha, eating one meal a day, and always sitting, never lying down. Occasionally he would enter samadhi for weeks at a time, never rising from his seat.

One night the residents of the nearby village saw that the Master's hut was on fire. A brilliant light shot up ten yards into the air, and the area around the hut was as bright as broad daylight. Many people rushed to the graveyard, crying, "The filial son's hut has caught fire!" and soon there were hundreds of people there to lend assistance with buckets of water. When they arrived, however, they found the hut unburned; the Master was sitting absorbed in meditation.

On one occasion, the Sixth Patriarch, Great Master Hui Neng of the T'ang Dynasty, came to the Master's hut and told him that in the future he would go to the West where he would meet many people with whom he had affinities and thereby establish the Dharma, causing it to flourish. After the Second World War, the Master traveled three thousand miles to Nan Hua Monastery in Canton Province to pay his respects to the Venerable Hsu Yun, who was then one hundred and nine years old. During his journey he resided at P'u T'ou Mountain, the Bodhimanda of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, where he received the complete Bhikshu Precepts. When he arrived at Nan Hua, the two masters greeted one another; the Venerable Master Hsu Yun recognized the Master's attainment and transmitted the wonderful mind-seal to him, making him the Ninth Patriarch of the Wei Yang Lineage,

and asked him to serve as the Director of the Nan Hua Institute for the Study of the Vinaya.

In 1950 he resigned his post at Nan Hua Monastery and journeyed to Hong Kong, where he lived in a mountainside cave, until the large influx of Sangha members fleeing the mainland required his help in establishing new monasteries and temples throughout Hong Kong. He personally established two temples and a lecture hall and helped to bring about the construction of many others. He dwelt in Hong Kong for twelve years, during which many people were influenced by his arduous cultivation and awesome manner to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and support the propagation of the good Dharma.

In 1962 he carried the Buddha's Dharma banner farther westward, to the shores of America, where he took up residence in San Francisco and patiently waited for past causes to ripen and bear fruit. In the beginning of the year 1968, the Master declared that the flower of Buddhism would bloom that year in America with five petals; in the summer of that year the Master conducted the Shurangama Sutra Dharma Assembly which lasted for 96 days--five of the people who attended that session left the home-life and became bhikshus and bhikshunis under the Master's tutelage. Since that time the Master has conducted many Dharma assemblies and delivered lectures on the Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, the Sixth Patriarch's Sutra, the Amitabha Sutra, the Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, the Great Compassion Heart Dharani Sutra, and the Dharma Blossom Sutra. The Master then lectured the Avatamsaka Preface, Prologue, and the entire Sutra over a period of nine years. With such tireless vigor, the Master has firmly planted the roots of Dharma in Western soil so that it can become self-perpetuating. He has spent hours every day explaining the teachings and their application in cultivation, steeping his disciples in the nectar of Dharma that they might

carry on the Buddha's teaching.

The miraculous events that have taken place in the Master's life are far too numerous to relate. He has freed many from the burdens of disease and other afflictions, and his followers number in the tens of thousands. His steadfast cultivation of bitter practices, the moral prohibitions, and the six paramitas, paired with his unwavering samadhi and profound knowledge of the teachings serve as a model for gods and men throughout the Dharma Realm.

At the age of nineteen, on the anniversary of the enlightenment of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the Master made eighteen vows before the Buddha, saying, "Bowling in obeisance to the Buddhas of the ten directions, the three divisions of the Dharma, and the venerable sages of past and present, I call upon them to bear witness as I, disciple Tu Lun, Shih An Tz'u, resolve to not seek blessings among gods and men, the vehicles of sound-hearers, those enlightened to conditions, and so forth, up to and including all of the Bodhisattvas of the provisional teaching, but only for the sake of the most supreme vehicle resolve my mind on Bodhi, in the wish that I and all living beings of the Dharma Realm simultaneously obtain the utmost, equal, and right enlightenment.

- 1) I vow that as long as there is a single Bodhisattva in the three periods of time throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, to the very end of empty space, who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 2) I vow that as long as there is a single Pratyeka Buddha in the three periods of time throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, to the very end of empty space, who has not attained Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.

- 3) I vow that as long as there is a single Shravaka in the three periods of time throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, to the very end of empty space, who has not attained Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 4) I vow that as long as there is a single god who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 5) I vow that as long as there is a single human who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 6) I vow that as long as there is a single asura who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 7) I vow that as long as there is a single animal who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 8) I vow that as long as there is a single hungry ghost who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 9) I vow that as long as there is a single hell-dweller who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 10) I vow that as long as there is a single god, immortal, man, asura, air-bound or water-bound creature, animate or inanimate object, or a single dragon, beast, ghost, or spirit, etc., of the spiritual realm that has taken refuge with me and has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 11) I vow to fully dedicate all blessings and bliss which I ought to receive and enjoy myself to all living beings of the Dharma Realm.

- 12) I vow to fully take upon myself all sufferings and hardships of all the living beings in the Dharma Realm.
- 13) I vow to manifest innumerable bodies as a means to gain access into the minds of living beings throughout the universe who do not believe in the Buddhadharma, causing them to correct their faults and tend toward wholesomeness, repent of their errors and start anew, taking refuge in the Triple Jewel and ultimately accomplishing Buddhahood.
- 14) I vow that all living beings who see my face or ever hear my voice will fix their thoughts on Bodhi and quickly accomplish the Buddha-Way.
- 15) I vow to respectfully observe the Buddha's instructions and cultivate the practice of eating only one meal a day.
- 16) I vow to enlighten all sentient beings, universally responding to the multitude of differing potentials.
- 17) I vow to obtain the five eyes, six spiritual penetrations, and the freedom of being able to fly in this very life.
- 18) I vow that all of my vows will certainly be fulfilled.”

Guan Yin

This seven-day Intensive session devoted to mindfulness of Guan Yin Bodhisattva was held in June of 1970 at the Buddhist Lecture Hall in San Francisco. Since it was the first session of its kind sponsored by the Sino-American Buddhist Association, the instruction given by Venerable Master Hsuan Hua was particularly detailed and informative, as young Americans discovered the wonder of this Dharma-door of Great Compassion.

During the week, participants practiced sitting and walking meditation while chanting aloud and silently “Na Mwo Guan Shih Yin Pu Sa”--Namo to the Bodhisattva who Contemplates the Sounds of the World.

“NAMO TO THE GREATLY COMPASSIONATE GUAN SHIH YIN”

Today is Sunday and this evening we will purify the boundaries. Tomorrow we will begin the Guan Yin Recitation Session.

Among all the Bodhisattvas, Guan Shih Yin has the most compassionate heart and so we say “Namo to the Greatly Compassionate Bodhisattva Guan Shih Yin.” Namo is a Sanskrit word. Translated it means “to return the life and submit respectfully”. To return your life means to offer up your heart, mind, body, and nature to Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. To submit respectfully is to bow reverently to the ground to Guan Yin.

Great Compassion is great kindness and great sympathy. It is great kindness towards those for whom you don't have an affinity, and great sympathy for those with whom you are of the same substance. You might also say there is an affinity even with those who have no affinity because there is not a single living being who does not have an affinity with Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. Even those who have no affinity are recognized by Guan Shih Yin as having an affinity. Most people say, “I can be compassionate towards the people I am close to.” This is not the compassion of Guan Shih Yin.

The great compassion towards those of the same substance means that Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva is united with all living beings; there is no discrimination between this and that, no you and no me.

The word “compassion” includes the two concepts “kindness” and “sympathy”. What is kindness? Kindness bestows happiness on others. This is not to say, “You should invite me to lunch so I can get full and bliss out.” That's not it at all: True kindness means that, even if you have to give your own lunch

away and go hungry, you do it just to make someone else happy. Great kindness differs from the limited kindness of ordinary people. Guan Shih Yin has no limits, no boundaries.

Sympathy is having pity on all people under heaven. The Compassionate Lord, Guan Yin, pities all people and relieves their suffering. That which can get rid of all the suffering of living beings is great sympathy. So, in general, the two words “kindness” and “sympathy” combine to make up the word “compassion”.

In the name Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva, “Guan” means “to contemplate”. It refers to a kind of wisdom which enables one to contemplate. Most people can contemplate, but they don’t have wisdom. Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva has contemplative Prajna wisdom.

The second word of the Bodhisattva’s name, “Shih” means “world”. Guan Yin Bodhisattva contemplates all the sounds of the world. What sounds? All the sounds made by living beings --sounds of suffering, sounds of joy, sounds of right, sounds of wrong, good sounds, bad sounds, happy sounds, and sad sounds. Guan Shih Yin follows the sounds, seeking out the living beings who make them, in order to rescue them from their suffering. If you are undergoing suffering, Guan Yin Bodhisattva will contemplate the causes and conditions and say, “Why is that person suffering? It’s because in the past he did not do good deeds. The retribution he must suffer has not yet ended, so I’ll have to wait a bit.” Then, after a while, when the suffering is just about to come to an end, if there’s not a lot left over, Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva will bring it to an end and pull that living being out of the sea of suffering.

Why are beings happy? It is because in the distant past they cultivated good roots, cultivated many blessings. So Guan Shih Yin thinks, “I should go and cross him over and then he’ll be even happier. He will bring forth the resolve for Bodhi and eventually realize proper enlightenment.”

Guan Shih Yin is a Bodhisattva; “Bodhi” means “enlightenment”, and “sattva” means a “living being”. A Bodhisattva is an enlightened living being; a Bodhisattva is also one who enlightens living beings. If you are able to enlighten yourself then you will be able to enlighten others.

Among living beings, Bodhisattvas are enlightened. Basically, they are living beings, just like you and me, but they’ve chosen to cultivate the four infinite hearts: kindness, compassion, joy, and giving, and as a result they have become Bodhisattvas. If you and I and all living beings cultivate kindness, sympathy, joy, and giving, and if we practice the six perfections and the ten thousand conducts of a Bodhisattva, we, too, can become Bodhisattvas, and we will be the same as Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Why haven’t we become Bodhisattvas? Simply because we do not cultivate. Today we cultivate, but tomorrow we don’t. The day after we want to cultivate again, but the following day, after lunch, we begin to retreat. We go forward a bit, then back a bit, forward a bit, then back a bit, back and forth, and we don’t become Bodhisattvas.

Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva is Amitabha Buddha’s foremost disciple. If you recite Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva’s name, the merit and virtue derived from the recitation is the same as if you had recited Amitabha Buddha’s name. If you recite Amitabha Buddha’s name you will be born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss; the same is true if you recite the name of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. Reciting Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva’s name for seven days is the same as reciting Amitabha Buddha’s name for seven days.

We now begin a Guan Yin Bodhisattva recitation session and will recite the Bodhisattva’s name for seven days. In the *Amitabha Sutra*, it says, “If a good man or good woman hears spoken ‘Amitabha’ and holds the name, whether for one day, two

days, three days, four days, five days, six days, as long as seven days, with one heart unconfused, when that person approaches the end of life, before him will appear Amitabha and all the assembly of Holy Ones. When the end comes, his heart is without inversion; in Amitabha's land of Ultimate Bliss he will attain rebirth." Reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha for seven days is the same as reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva for seven days and both lead to rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Recently, one of the people attending the summer session asked me a question. I replied, "Don't ask me. I'm not paying any attention to such matters. The Americans here can speak English and they know what's going on. I have given my authority to them, just like Amitabha Buddha gives his authority to Guan Yin Bodhisattva." The summer session combines study and cultivation. If you cultivate but do not study, you are practicing blindly and you will never manage to cut off the "affliction obstacle". If you study but do not cultivate, you will never cut off the "obstacle of what is known". If you can't cut off the "affliction obstacle", you still have a self, and if you can't cut off the "obstacle of what is known", you still have dharmas. If you have dharmas, then you have the dharma-attachment; if you have a self, you have the self-attachment and you have not realized that basically self and dharmas are empty. Therefore, you must combine study and practice. The understanding derived from study aids us in our practice and the practice aids us in our study. They harmonize. You shouldn't cultivate your whole life away and then find that when someone asks you how to explain a sentence of Dharma, you don't know what to say! On the other hand, you shouldn't simply study and listen to a lot of lectures on the Sutras and then find that, when someone asks you how to cultivate, you're speechless!

The Guan Yin Recitation Session will last for seven days.

The *Amitabha Sutra* says, “...whether for one day, two days...” but we will change it slightly. The Chinese word for “whether” looks like this: 若. We are going to move the middle line a bit to the right a bit it turns into the word “suffering” which looks like this: 苦. So the text now reads, “...suffering for one day, suffering for two days...:

If you don’t suffer for seven days, you’ll never be free from suffering. If you suffer through these seven days, you’ll be able to end it. If you’re afraid of suffering, you should say so right now. If you aren’t afraid, then don’t be lazy for even a second. Those who don’t want to suffer for seven days can back out and be happy for seven days. But if you are happy for seven days, in the future, you won’t be happy. On the other hand, if you suffer for seven days now, later you’ll be happy. Whether you want to be happy for seven days now and then be sad, or suffer for seven days now and then be happy, is all up to you. I won’t offer my opinion because we talk about true freedom here.

We’re going to suffer for seven days reciting the name of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. You may wonder, “What is the advantage of all this suffering?”

I answer, suffering *itself* is an advantage. If before you couldn’t stand to suffer, but you learn to endure suffering, that, in itself, is an advantage. Some people say that when the suffering ends, the advantage is obtained, but I don’t agree. I say that suffering is *itself* an advantage. If you’re able to be patient and bear weariness and suffering, you’ll find it is a great help in your cultivation of the Way. When the weariness is over, the sweetness comes. During these seven days, perhaps you’ll be enlightened. I shouldn’t tell you this because if I do, on the one hand you’ll be greedy. If you are greedy, you won’t be sincere in your recitation and you won’t become enlightened. So I’m not going to talk about how many good points may be obtained. You should find

them yourself. I don't want to say too much because I don't want you to get greedy.

In general, cultivate according to the Dharma and you will obtain a response. When you're done reciting, Guan Yin Bodhisattva will always protect you and say, "This American isn't bad at all. He recited my name for seven days and so I will protect him because I protect the Proper Dharma."

I'm telling you just a little bit. If I spoke in detail, I'd never finish. I wouldn't want you to get arrogant, either, and think, "I've recited for seven days and Guan Yin Bodhisattva will certainly protect me. I'm not afraid of anything. I'm really fine." If you indulge in that kind of pride, a demon will come to hassle you and Guan Yin Bodhisattva won't do anything but say, "He's really worthless. Look how arrogant he is."

People who cultivate must not be arrogant or self-satisfied. So it is said, "You can go ahead and eat too much. It's not important. But if you talk too much you're in for trouble." If you eat too much, at the very most you'll be uncomfortable and have to make arrangements to move the food. But if you talk too big, say you brag that you can lift five hundred pounds, you'll go to lift it, strain something, and spit blood. What I'm getting at here is, if you have not yet realized the karma of the Way, do not talk arrogantly, whatever you do. Don't say, "I can do everything," because as soon as you say it, a demon will come to test you. The demon, however, is really an aid to your progress in the Way. As soon as you say that you have put everything down, the very thing that you can't put down will arrive to test you; it will come to see what you will do. At that time, if you've really put it down, you will know. If you haven't put it down, you'll be pretty clear about that too.

Once I said a very arrogant thing. I said, "I'm not afraid of demons. Cultivators fear demons, but I don't. I don't fear any

demons at all--earth demons, heavenly demons, human demons, or ghostly demons.” As soon as I said it, a sickness demon got me so sick that I didn’t know anything at all. After that, I understood that you have to be careful in everything that you do and never boast.

Now, I have something to say that’s very arrogant, but I don’t pay attention to how arrogant it is; I just go ahead and say it: “Everything’s okay.” Good and bad, birth and death--I see them all as the same. They are no problem at all. Whether people believe in me or not makes no difference. Even sickness and death is no problem. I just don’t see them as problems. I’ve said this many times, and have run into no difficulty.

Tonight we will begin the session. This is the first time a Guan Yin Session has been held in America and the participants must all be number one. No one can be number two. Everything I do has to be tops, with no runners-up. And I don’t want anyone else to trail behind either.

You may think, “You just like to be No. 1!”

Of course I do! If I didn’t like to come out on top, how could I teach all of you to be Number Ones, too?

Now, let’s begin the session!

* * * * *

The Summer Sutra Study and Recitation Session is a method of cultivation for the summer months. This winter we will begin a period of fourteen Chan weeks—ninety-eight days, two days short of a hundred days. It will be much harder than the Summer Session, which is merely an entrance exam for the big meditation session. How can you pass? You should not even want your own life; just insist on cultivating.

“Isn’t this insanity?” you may ask, “cultivating to the

point of going nuts, cultivating until you don't even want to live anymore? Wanting to do nothing but cultivate?"

Maybe it is; maybe it isn't. Everyone is crazy these days. If you're not crazy, they think you are. Maybe it is true and maybe it isn't. Although practically everyone is crazy, they just don't realize they're crazy.

Some people accuse me of being crazy, and I say, "Maybe I am and maybe I'm not," because there are no fixed dharmas. Everything is made from the mind. If there is craziness in your mind, you're crazy; if there is no craziness in your mind, you're not. All dharmas arise from the mind. When the mind arises all dharmas arise; and when the mind does not arise all dharmas perish. Now, during the session, the mind will not arise and dharmas will not arise. The state of non-production and non-extinction will manifest.

We just completed a ceremony which is called "sprinkling clean". Those who have studied Buddhadharma know what "sprinkling clean" means, but those who have not studied Buddhadharma don't know what we are doing--muttering "Na mwo Na mwo, Mwo la Mwo la," taking a bowl of water and sprinkling it all over. Someone says, "I know. You were getting ready to sweep the floor and so you sprinkled water on the ground so the dust would not fly around."

No. It's not to keep the dust down, but rather to keep the demons from flying around, because there are demons everywhere. Whenever one convenes a Dharma assembly in a Bodhimandala, one should sprinkle it clean. Otherwise demons may come to disturb the Bodhimandala and cause a lot of trouble. "Sprinkling clean" keeps them away.

The water is called "sweet dew", Guan Yin Bodhisattva's sweet dew. It chases out all demons and ghosts so that the

Bodhimanda says,

*The sweet dew from the Bodhisattva's
willow branch
Can cause one drop to pervade
the ten directions.
All filth and dirt are
completely wiped away.
Causing the platform to be
totally clean and pure.*

Although we are sprinkling clean, it is not that we are actually using water. This is the verse that we recite when “sprinkling clean”. Now that I have explained it, you understand what we are doing.

* * * * *

You have already suffered for one day. If you think it's suffering, it's suffering. If you think it isn't suffering, then it isn't. Reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name is not really suffering, for it plants many good roots and the seed of Bodhi.

You should not only not think of it as suffering, but you should be very happy. Why? Because in a hundred thousand ten-thousand aeons, it is difficult to encounter this Dharma door. How many times have you gone around on the wheel of rebirth, spinning in the six paths, and never encountered this Dharma door? Confused, we have passed through aeons as many as the number of dust motes in the Ganges River. Now, having met the Buddhadharma, we should be happy.

The power of the function of reciting Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name is inconceivable. If someone has a demonic

obstruction and recites Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, the demons will run away. If someone seeks anything at all, and continually recites Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, he will succeed. In the *Universal Door Chapter* of the *Lotus Sutra* it is said that those who have a lot of desire and constantly recite Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name will be able to separate from their desire.

Desire is greed--greed for wealth, sex, fame, food, or sleep. Whether or not greed is good is a matter you must decide. If you think it is good and I tell you it is not, you will want to argue with me and will thereby waste a lot of energy. In the end, you'll still think greed is good. There is no way that I can convince you it is not good. If you think it is not good, and if you want to put it down, you have already found a way. What is the way? Recite "Namo Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva", and you'll be able to put down your thoughts of greed and desire, your defiled thoughts, and your ignorant thoughts. Recite Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name and you will be able to break through ignorance and realize genuine wisdom. If you would prefer wisdom to your present state, you should recite "Namo Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva" and bow to Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. Constantly reciting, "Namo Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva," your thoughts of greed and desire will gradually melt away and you won't even know how it happened.

Right now you have many greedy thoughts, but you are not aware of them. In the same way, you won't be aware of them as they lessen. Although you won't be aware of them, the lack of greed is actual proof of the efficacy of recitation. Rid of greed and desire, your thoughts of hate will also disappear. It is said, "If someone has much hatred and continually recites 'Namo Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva', thoughts of hate will disappear."

Just recite. You don't have to pay a fee to do it, and you don't have to do any work. Just repeat, "Namo Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva", very, very respectfully with all your attention

focused on it. You will feel as if Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva is right on top of your head, on your right and on your left, in front of you and behind you. Guan Yin will give you a prediction of Buddhahood and manifest before you saying, “Good woman, good man, your thoughts of greed and hatred are gone. You’ve brought forth the Bodhi-Mind, and in the future you’ll certainly obtain the Bodhi-Way.” If you truly concentrate and are mindful, Guan Yin will come to you and say this.

Everybody has a temper. If you’re not mad at this person, then you are mad at that situation. Anger can upset you to the point that you can’t even eat or sleep. This is just punishing yourself. You recite Guan Yin and yet think you suffer, whereas people who suffer from anger don’t feel like they are suffering. Getting angry is much more suffering than reciting.

If you recite Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva’s name, all you have to lose is your stupidity. Stupidity is taking what is right as wrong and what is wrong as right, taking the deviant as proper and the proper as deviant. This happens because you don’t understand, because you are too stupid. Stupidity obstructs wisdom, and anger obstructs compassion. In one thought of stupidity, prajna is cut off. In one thought of wisdom, prajna manifests. If we want to have wisdom we should not be stupid. What is stupidity? It is just whatever you don’t understand.

“What don’t I understand?” you may ask.

How should I know what you don’t understand? Ask yourself. If you don’t know I will give you a little news. You don’t understand how to cultivate. You don’t understand how to let go of your hate and greed. You don’t understand how to let go of your stupidity. Right? If you really understood, you would have let it go long ago. You wouldn’t have had to wait to recite “Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva” in order to let it go. I think that you probably agree with what I have said.

Further, you don't understand what ghosts are. Many people say that there are no ghosts. Some religions spray poisons in people's minds, doctrines which seem to be reputable but which in fact are not. They say there are no ghosts. They are able to poison people's minds with these ideas, because many people are taken in by the persuasiveness of their arguments. And so most people don't understand about ghosts.

We don't even need to speak of ghosts--they don't even know about animals. How did they get here anyway? How did animals get to be animals? They don't know that either.

But let's not even consider animals, after all, they are only animals. But they don't even know how they got to be people. They don't know where people came from or where they are going. They don't know about ghosts, they don't know about animals, they know nothing about people and even less about asuras and gods.

"Oh, yes," they argue, "I know about heaven. Heaven is up there and God is in it."

Have you ever been there? If so, what did you see? If not, what proof do you have that there are heavenly gardens and God up there?

Do you know about Sound Hearers or the Conditionally Enlightened Ones? Do you know about the Bodhisattvas? How much the less do you know the Buddha. Is that anything but stupidity?

"Dharma Master," you ask, "do you know about them?" Don't ask me. I'm me and you are you. Why should you care about what I know? Isn't that really just going too far?

"Well," you say, "you brought it up."

Yes, but you don't have to listen.

If you're stupid, does that mean you will be stupid till the end of time? Must you hold on to your stupidity like it

was a treasure? I believe that no matter how stupid someone is, if he realized what he was doing he no longer would hold on to his stupidity like a treasure, but would want to get rid of it. So, those who want to cut off relations with stupidity, anger, and greed now have the opportunity to do so.

Now, your good roots are deep and thick. They were in the past, they are now, and they will be in the future, when they will certainly mature. Having met the wonderful Dharma, recite Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name. In this way, your wisdom will open and your stupidity will disappear.

Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva will help increase our wisdom, our compassion, and our heart of Bodhi.

Not only that, but through our recitation of the name of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva, the people in the four directions can benefit from his kindness and wisdom. When people recite Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva, know that for a space of forty yojanas, 3,200 miles, there will be peace and no calamities. I don't want to keep this treasure to myself and so now I wish to transmit it to all who have gathered here to recite.

* * * * *

Good Knowing Advisors: Why do I call you Good Knowing Advisors? If you weren't Good Knowing Advisors, you wouldn't be able to recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. Since you have come to recite, you must be Good Knowing Advisors.

Where did you Good Knowing Advisors come from? In past lives, you created an affinity with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Think it over: previously in America there weren't any left-home people, and there was nowhere to go to attend a Guan Yin Session. Now, here you are.

We say we "strike up" a session, and that means that we do

battle with our false thinking. Our false thinking is continuous from morning to night; there's just no way you could count all your false thoughts which are as many as specks of dust in empty space. See the dust on the window? We have just that many false thoughts.

“Well,” you say, “I didn't know that.”

Of course not. When everything is black and the sunlight isn't streaming in, you cannot see the motes of dust. Your recitation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name has given you the sunlight of wisdom with which to reveal your false thoughts.

“My mind is running wild. I'm sitting here reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name and at the same time I'm having false thoughts about going out for a beer. I recite a bit more and then I have a false thought to go have a steak. I recite a little more and then I think I would like to go out and get stoned.”

Now that you know you have false thoughts, where do these thoughts come from? The sun of wisdom shines on your dusty false thoughts so that all of you now know you have them and since you are determined to bring them to a stop, I call you all, “Good Knowing Advisors”.

Do you all consider yourselves Good Knowing Advisors?

Someone is thinking, “I am not a Good Knowing Advisor.”

It doesn't really matter whether you consider yourself as one, because you already are one. Not only can you consider yourself a Good Knowing Advisor, but you can also become a Buddha. But don't consider yourself a Buddha already. Don't be like those stupid people who say, “Hey, everyone is a Buddha. We are all Buddhas.”

What kind of Buddha are you? You are a meat Buddha, a bone Buddha. You are a Buddha whose belly is full of hate. You are a Buddha whose belly is full of greed. You are a Buddha

whose belly is full of stupidity. If you are greedy, you are a greedy Buddha. If you do not want other people to be Buddhas, then you are a hateful Buddha. If you think everyone is not as good as you and that you are number one, then you are a stupid Buddha. Take a look at yourself. Are you one of those kinds of Buddhas? Take a look at the Buddha: he is not angry, greedy, or stupid. You can scold him and he is still happy; he does not lose his temper. You can hit the Buddha and he still does not get angry.

You say, “I think I’ll take a slug at the Buddha.”

You have to see him first! If you cannot see him, how can you hit him? Besides, you cannot hit a Buddha. Just thinking about hitting a Buddha is an offense. So don’t follow the demon kings. Don’t be like those faceless people who say, “Everybody is a Buddha.”

When I spoke at Redwood City I said that the word Buddha means “BU DA”, (不大) “not big”. Don’t think you are as big as Mount Sumeru. If you think that way you certainly are not a Buddha. The Buddha does not have any big status, and he does not have any special style. Although he has thirty-two marks and eighty minor characteristics, that is from the point of view of living beings. It is living beings who think that the Buddha is either present or not present. In actuality, the Buddha is not big or small, he is not inside or outside, he is not produced or destroyed, he does not come or go, and he is not defiled or pure. So, if you say that you are a Buddha, and yet when I scold you you cannot take it, when I hit you you get angry just the same, then you’d better not say that you are a Buddha. When you have become a Buddha you won’t have to say that you are a Buddha. To say that you are a Buddha before you have realized Buddhahood is like an old farmer who goes around saying, “I am the emperor.”

Really? Who is going to look out for you? If you don’t have any subjects what is the use of being an emperor?

I call you all Good Knowing Advisors because in the first thought you had to attend the Guan Yin Session you were already Good Knowing Advisors. You have now been here for two days and have been extremely reverent and respectful in reciting Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name.

You're probably thinking, "How does the Master know my thoughts? Can he read my mind? Someone was thinking about drinking and the Dharma Master knew. Someone also wanted to go get stoned and the Dharma Master knew. The Dharma Master is probably not an ordinary person, not ordinary at all!"

You're wrong. If you think that, that is a false thought. I'll tell you some more about your thoughts. I don't have to wait for you to have your false thoughts, I know them before you even think them! Why? Because in the past I was just like you, and I had false thoughts, too. Now I know your false thoughts without having to read your mind. I don't need the penetration of others' thoughts, I just listen to you recite, "Namo Guan Shih Yin Pu Sa", and it sounds very sincere. This means that in the past you created an affinity with the Sangha.

Now, there are genuine left-home people in America who only eat one meal a day. Do they wait until you are not looking and then steal food? I don't think so. Why? Because in America everything is very democratic. No one forced them to eat one meal a day. They decided to do it on their own. It is very rare for Westerners to be able to cultivate this way. You shouldn't think that I'm exaggerating. I'm not at all. Also, at night they sleep sitting up. This is very uncomfortable. I have tried this myself and it is not easy.

You have an affinity with the Sangha and you have an affinity with the Dharma. Reciting Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name is a dharma, a method for cultivation. Seeking rebirth in the Pure Land and reciting Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name to get

rid of your sickness and pain is also a dharma. You also have an affinity with the Buddha. Understanding the Dharma, you will certainly be able to become a Buddha. So I'm very happy. You have an affinity with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. You will certainly be able to cultivate morality, samadhi, and wisdom. Reciting Guan Shih Yin's name is called "cultivating the precepts of no-precepts". In other words, "the maintaining of no-maintaining". Although you have false thinking, you are still sitting here and being very respectful. You are respecting the Bodhisattva and so are in accord with the precepts. The precepts are: no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying and no taking of intoxicants. Since you are sitting here, you're not going out to kill anyone, and so you are holding the precept against killing. You might think, "I'd like to go to the store and rip off a bottle of beer, a pack of cigarettes, a piece of fruit, or some candy," but although you might think about it, you're not going to do it and so you are holding the precept against stealing. Reciting, you don't have sexual desire, and all day long you don't even talk, so how could you lie? There is no wine here. Although we have a little milk, it's not going to get you drunk, and the apples haven't been made into wine, so you are not breaking precepts. Not breaking the precepts is the same as holding the five precepts. Although you haven't formally received the five precepts, you are cultivating them all the same. If you do not break the five precepts, you will be able to develop samadhi.

In the past two days some of you may have seen flowers or have smelled a rare fragrance. Although we are all in the same hall, everyone's state is different. Some people see light and some don't. Some people see flowers and others do not. Some people may see a big lotus flower in the hall. In the future they will have an opportunity to sit in one of them. Some may see Bodhisattvas; some may see Buddhas. But whatever you see, don't be afraid. It

comes from your holding of the precepts. It's a kind of auspicious state which purifies your body and mind. Guan Yin Bodhisattva may pour an entire bottle of sweet dew water over your head, and you will be so clean that you won't know where your false thinking ran off to, but it will disappear. Is that wonderful or not? Some people experience such states and others don't. If you do, don't be afraid. If you don't understand you can come and see me. It's not for sure that I'll know, but I may know a little more about it than you--not a whole lot more, just a little bit--and I'll be able to answer your questions. Then you'll really be Good Knowing Advisors.

Why can you be called Good Knowing Advisors?

It is because of holding precepts that you have given rise to samadhi; from samadhi, wisdom has arisen. This is genuine wisdom, not the kind of false, unreal states stupid people obtain from dope. What you have is real. You don't have to take dope. All you have to do is recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, hold the precepts, give rise to samadhi, and open your wisdom. The wisdom is genuinely yours; it is inherently yours. To depend upon the strength of a drug is to turn yourself upside down so that you even think to kill yourself in order to get reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, and is extremely perverted. So you young people should become truly wise. The young people in this country have an affinity with me. When I talk, many of them believe me. Not only do they believe me, but they come along with me to undergo bitterness.

You may say, "Not me. I'm leaving tomorrow. I'm not going to suffer with this Dharma Master."

If you don't want to undergo suffering, I'm certainly not going to force you to do so. But you should know that if you undergo suffering you will be able to put an end to suffering. If you don't enjoy your blessings you will not destroy your blessings.

If you understand what this means, you will follow me. Now we should recite Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name and do the Great Transference of Merit.

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To recite the name of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva once can eradicate limitless kalpas of karma of birth and death. But you must recite with a sincere heart. Why? To recite the name of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva without a heart of faith is just the same as not reciting. The Buddhadharma is like the waters of a Great Sea, but in order to enter it, you must have a heart of faith. Without faith you will be unable to enter the waters of the Buddhadharma.

Once you have faith, you then make vows.

What vows?

LIVING BEINGS ARE BOUNDLESS; I VOW TO SAVE THEM.

Ask yourself, "Have I saved them or not? If I've already saved some, I should save some more. If I haven't saved any, I vow to save some."

AFFLICTIONS ARE INEXHAUSTIBLE; I VOW TO CUT THEM OFF.

Ask yourself, "Have I cut them off? Do my afflictions get less day by day? If that's the case, then I vow to cut them off more and more day by day." Do not treat your afflictions as you would eating some very good food, eating too much of it. If you eat too many afflictions they will make you very uncomfortable.

DHARMA DOORS ARE LIMITLESS; I VOW TO STUDY THEM.

The Buddhadharma-doors are limitless and boundless. I vow to study them all. There are eighty-four thousand Dharma-doors. Some people say there are forty-eight thousand but this is incorrect. There are eighty-four thousand Dharma-doors, not

forty-eight thousand.

THE BUDDHA WAY IS UNSURPASSED; I VOW TO ACCOMPLISH IT.

Now, we recite Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name and Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva has even greater spiritual powers than Master Chih Kung and is even more inconceivable.

How is Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva inconceivable?

Guan Yin follows the sounds beings make when they are suffering, and wipes their suffering away. We recite Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva's name in order to get rid of all our problems.

Among Chinese people, husbands and wives must strictly adhere to social mores. If they don't, they are breaking the law and no one will speak to them. Once, there was a businessman who went out on business trips and left his wife alone. Often he was gone for three or even five months. His wife finally could not bear the loneliness. In China it is not permissible, but she got herself a lover because she was so lonely. The two of them decided that when her husband returned, her lover would murder her husband and then they could get married.

It so happened that the businessman sincerely believed in Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. He made offerings to Guan Shin Yin Bodhisattva and kept an oil lamp burning in front of the Bodhisattva's image in his home. When he returned he travelled by ship and on the voyage he had a dream. In the dream Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva came to him and said, "Good man, you're very sincere. I'm going to tell you a couple of sentences and you should remember them and when the time comes to use them they will be effective.

*When you meet the bridge, don't anchor the boat.
Encountering the oil, smear it on your head.
A peck of grain yields three cups of raw rice.
The houseflies gather on the end of the brush."*

And then he woke up.

The next day they ran into a heavy rainstorm and the captain anchored the boat beneath a bridge to avoid the downpour. Sitting there, the merchant suddenly remembered the poem: “When you meet the bridge don’t anchor the boat.” He finally convinced the captain to continue, and the moment the boat pulled out from under the bridge, it collapsed. Had they been under it, the people and cargo would have all been crushed. “Oh!” he cried, “Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva, you are really something! Really magic! If you hadn’t told me not to anchor the boat under the bridge, the boat would have been sunk and we all would have been killed and the wealth lost.” He bowed to Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva most respectfully.

When he arrived home, he told his wife, “I just about lost my life today. I had a dream in which Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva said, ‘When you meet the bridge, don’t anchor the boat,’ so when the captain anchored the boat under a bridge I made him move it and then the bridge collapsed. So, because of Guan Yin, I am able to come back and see you,” he said congenially to his wife.

His wife thought, “If he had been smashed beneath the bridge that would have suited me just fine. I’d hoped he wouldn’t come back at all. If he had been killed then I wouldn’t have had to do it now...”

Then they had dinner and she managed to get him slightly drunk. However, before the meal he had gone before Guan Yin’s image to bow and had knocked over the oil lamp. He remembered the second line of the verse, “When you meet the oil, smear it on your head,” and so he did. In those days the men wore their hair in long neat plaits. The women, however, sometimes wore cream dressings on their hair. After dinner and a lot of wine, he dozed off. That night his wife’s lover snuck in carrying a knife. He patted the man’s head and feeling the oil smeared on it, figured

it must be the woman. Convinced that the other person in the bed was the husband, he deftly performed the decapitation.

The next day he found out that he had killed his lover and not her husband. He wrote a letter to his girlfriend's parents saying that her husband had returned that night and killed their daughter. The parents had the husband arrested. Although he denied it, the evidence was stacked heavily against him. "You must have killed her," they said. "Why else did the murder take place on the very day you returned?" He couldn't talk his way out of it, and they gave him the death penalty. He continued to deny it, but they all said, "If you didn't kill her, who did?"

In ancient times they wrote out the death sentences with a brush, saying when the person was going to be beheaded. Just as this was being written out, however, a swarm of flies gathered on the tip of the brush, making it impossible to write. They brushed the flies away but they kept coming back. Seeing this, the businessman laughed and laughed, and thought, "Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva, you're really magical." The jailor said, "What are you laughing about? We are going to cut your head off, and you're laughing. You've killed your wife and even as you die for it you are self-satisfied!"

"No, that's not why I'm laughing," said the man. "I'm laughing because I had a very efficacious dream in which I heard four sentences, and the first two sentences have already turned out very auspiciously."

The jailor said, "What two sentences?"

He replied, "I believe in Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. Two days ago, I had a dream in which Guan Yin told me:

*When you meet the bridge, don't anchor the boat.
Encountering the oil, smear it on your head.
A peck of grain yields three cups of raw rice.
The houseflies gather on the end of the brush."*

The next day when we stopped under the bridge to wait out the storm, I told the captain to move on. As soon as we pulled out, the bridge collapsed. We barely escaped with our lives! That first sentence was magic.

“When I got home, I bowed to Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva and the oil lamp got broken. Remembering the second sentence, I rubbed oil on my head. So when the murderer felt my head, he figured I was a woman. Instead of murdering me, he killed my wife, who was lying beside me, figuring she was me. Now, I can’t keep from laughing because Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva is just too magical. See! The flies are gathered on the brush-tip, just like the last sentence says. However, I still haven’t figured out the third line.

“What was it again?”

“A peck of grain yields three cups of raw rice,” said the man.

“Oh!” said the jailor, “I know who did it,” and he ordered the sheriff to go find out if there was anyone named K’ang Ch’i (“seven parts chaff”) living in the county. They did in fact find one such man and arrested him. He turned out to be the dead woman’s lover.

The police questioned him and said, “We know that you killed this woman.”

“Since you arrested me,” he said, “I might as well admit it. I didn’t want to kill the woman. I wanted to kill the man. But I made a mistake. My conscience has suddenly got the best of me, so I’ll plead guilty. But tell me, how did you know it was me?”

The man related his dream and the jailor said, “The sentence ‘a peck of grain yields three cups of rice’ gave me the murderer’s name. A peck is ten cups: subtract three cups raw rice and that leaves ‘seven parts of chaff’--Ch’i K’ang.”

So we know that Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s realm is truly

inconceivable and the response evoked is also inconceivable--too vast to narrate in detail. This is just an inkling. We should now perform the Great Transference of Merit and ask Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva to help us eradicate our karmic obstructions.

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“In this region the true substance of the teaching is purely found within sound. Return the hearing to hear the self-nature and the nature realizes the supreme Way.” This is the Dharma-door which Guan Yin Bodhisattva cultivated, the Dharma-door of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature.

Do not seek outside. Most living beings listen outwardly to the sounds around them and are unable to return the hearing within. Now we cultivate to return the hearing, and not seek outside. So it is said, “Return the hearing to hear the self-nature and the nature realizes the supreme path.” Guan Yin Bodhisattva certified to perfect penetration of the ear organ by entering the stream and forgetting the place of entry. “Entering the stream and forgetting the place of entry” refers to entering the Dharma nature stream of the sage. This involves moving against the stream of common people, which consists of the flow of sense impressions.

Entering the Dharma nature stream of the sage is called “entering the stream”. Going against the stream of the common person, which consists of the six sense objects, is what is meant by “forgetting the place”. This is entering the stream and forgetting the place. “Forgetting the place” also means coming from nowhere and going nowhere. In your cultivation you should imitate Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Imitating Guan Yin Bodhisattva is to enter the stream and forget the place.

Now as we recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva, our mouths recite, clearly and distinctly “Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva”. In our hearts

we think very clearly and distinctly of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and our ears hear very clearly. If your mouth recites, your heart recollects, and your ears listen with careful attention, you will be unable to have false thinking. When you don't have false thinking you will not feel tired, you will not feel weary.

During the past two days, I've heard the sound of your recitation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. You are reciting but you are not as sincere as you were the first two days. How so? I've listened to each of you recite, and you sound like you are about ready to doze off, weak and tired. This means that you are being turned by states. Turned by what states? Turned by the state of fatigue. You feel, "I have recited one day, two days, three days, four days, recited so many days and I think it is unbearable suffering. I've suffered for three days, suffered for four days. It's a lot of suffering." Your sound says you are tired.

When you recite, you shouldn't do it too loudly or too softly. If it's too loud, you waste a lot of energy; if it is too soft, it's very easy to nod off and go to sleep. Another problem arises when it's as if you are reciting but you aren't. You don't even hear yourself clearly. Why not? There are two reasons. First, you're doing a lot of false thinking and so you don't know whether in fact you are reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. What false thinking? You know that yourself. I don't need to tell you in detail. Second, you want to sleep. When you sleep, when you nod off, you plunge into one of the eight great following afflictions.

There are three days left, and in these three days everyone should obtain the aid of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. To do so, you must recite sincerely. You can't be sloppy about it, and you can't be lax or lazy. In cultivation, the harder you work, the more response you will obtain. If you are sincere, there will be a response and the more truehearted you are, the more of a response you will obtain. You must have a true heart and a true will. True, not false. You

must have nothing false, nothing phony. Use a true heart to recite, and recite to the level where the wind blows with the sound of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, the rain falls with the sound of Guan Yin Bodhisattva too. The wind blowing, the grasses waving, and even the door when it rattles--what are they doing? They are saying, “Guan Yin Bodhisattva”. The pigeons walking around, “Teng, teng, teng!” What are they doing? They’re reciting, “Guan Yin Bodhisattva”. If you can, at all times, in all places, and in all states of mind, hear the sound of the recitation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, then you will have attained the Guan Yin Recitation Samadhi. You won’t know whether or not you’ve eaten. You won’t know whether or not you’re wearing clothes. You won’t think of anything at all, and you won’t know anything at all. Your true heart will then manifest, and your nature will realize the supreme Way.

Now we are reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva together in this hall. Those who are reciting in accord with Dharma will be able to attain a response. Those who are not reciting in accord with Dharma, in accord with the rules of cultivation, may recite for any length of time, but it will be useless.

What is meant by reciting in accord with Dharma? It’s what I just said. Your mouth recites clearly, clearly and distinctly. Your mind thinks of it clearly and distinctly. Your ears listen clearly and distinctly. No other false thoughts are entertained. Your sound is neither loud nor soft. Then you are reciting in accord with Dharma. If you recite in accord with Dharma, your heart will be clear and pure, and not a single thought will be produced. When one thought is not produced, you’ll be able to see your original self-nature. If you produce a thought, a cloud appears in empty space covering the sun. And so it is said,

*When the six roots suddenly move
There is a covering of clouds.*

*When one thought is not produced,
The complete substance manifests.*

When the six roots move, there is suddenly a covering of clouds. The six roots are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. When the eyes see forms, they follow the forms and run off after them. When the ears hear sounds and are unable to return the hearing to the self-nature, they run outside after them. When your eyes see something, you should return the light and reverse the illumination. When your ears hear something, you should return the hearing to hear the self-nature. When your nose smells, you should know where the objects of smell come from. When your tongue tastes, you should know where the tastes come from and how they arise. You should return the light, reverse the illumination, return the hearing to the self-nature, and seek it within yourself. Ask yourself, “Why does my body crave touch and smoothness? Why? What’s the reason for this?” If you don’t understand, ask. Ask your self-nature.

Your mind conceptualizes dharmas and runs off after ideas. Use the wisdom sword of your enlightenment to cut through them. If, at the gates of the six organs, you can apply effort, then the gates of the six sense organs will emit light, and the earth will shake. This light will illuminate the peak of existence, and below will illuminate the unspaced hells. What is meant by the peak of existence? It refers to the Heaven of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception. And so you illumine the heavens, and illumine the avici hells. If you can cultivate to this level, you won’t have wasted your time. So when working, don’t start getting lazy after only a little time has passed. The harder you work, the harder you should want to work and the more vigorous you should be. You should work every day. This is not just something you can accomplish in a single day and night.

The Guan Yin session is just a battle. We are battling with karmic obstacles which have come with us from limitless kalpas in the past. We don't know how many karmic obstacles we have. They goad us saying, "Don't cultivate! Don't recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. Come on, rest a little bit, sleep a little more. Sleep is a real tangible comfort:" If you go through so much bitterness to recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, your karmic obstacles will have a meeting with you. You will have to object to them because they will tell you not to cultivate. You will have to say, "You don't want me to cultivate? Fine, I'll cultivate even harder! I will work a little harder just to show you. You don't want me to cultivate, but I'm telling you I'm going to cultivate."

There was once a gluttonous old cultivator who had quite a bit of skill. One day he had a false thought. He said, "Vegetable dumplings are really good to eat. I must eat a meal of vegetable dumplings and then my stomach will be satisfied," so he made some. What did he do? He had a good method. He chopped up the vegetables and he used rice husks to make the wrappers for the dumplings. He wrapped them up and cooked them. When they were ready, he said to himself, "Okay, come on and eat these vegetable dumplings. Come here, come on over here," the old cultivator said to himself, "Come and eat." And he ate them. And ugh! The more he ate of the chaff-skin dumplings the worse they were. But he said, "Ugh! They're terrible, but I have to eat them. Even if I don't want to, I have to eat them. I must eat them. I wanted them and now I've got them. I'm not going to be polite about this. There they are, vegetable dumplings! Go on! Eat them!" He ate them and then he never wanted to eat vegetable dumplings again. He realized that basically, originally, the vegetable dumplings were just like that. And he never wanted to eat them again. This is called, "curing

your own sicknesses”. But not only did he not like these vegetable dumplings, I don’t think anybody would have wanted to eat such vegetable dumplings. This is also called the skill of being able to discipline yourself. Cultivation has to be that way. Whatever false thought you may have, you should not follow it. If you want to follow your false thinking you should find a way to cure it. Be like the old cultivator, who, for some unknown reason, got greedy for vegetable dumplings and used husks to make the wrappers. He cured himself of his own false thinking.

You say, “He was really stupid.”

Of course he wasn’t as smart as you are. If he had been as smart as you, he wouldn’t have eaten those vegetable dumplings. But although the old cultivator was very stupid, he still knew how to cultivate. Consequently, he realized his Way karma and became greatly enlightened. On the other hand, you’re so intelligent, but you still haven’t gotten enlightened. You’re still a common ordinary person and you haven’t obtained the sagely fruit. Stupidity may be true intelligence and intelligent people can sometimes be really stupid.

You say, “What is stupidity and what is intelligence? What is wisdom?”

Stupidity is just stupidity and wisdom is just wisdom. Wisdom is just stupidity. Stupidity is also just wisdom.

You say, “This is entirely too illogical. It’s not in accord with either philosophy or psychology. This is a dharma I most certainly do not believe.”

Of course you don’t believe it. If you believed this dharma, you would be able to be perfectly fused without obstruction. If you don’t believe in this dharma, you must study it. All dharmas must be studied. If you believed in this dharma, you wouldn’t have to study any dharma at all because they would all be yours.

But you don't recognize this dharma, and so now all I can do is recite the names for you and let you listen to them. I don't care whether you disagree or agree, with them. In the future when you become enlightened you'll know that it is truly that way--no problem. Now, you have a whole lot of problems and I can't solve them. When the time comes when you have no problems, you will need me even less to solve them. Is this right or not? Okay, now we'll do the Great Transference of Merit and work hard at our cultivation.

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Reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name is a Dharma-door which is perfectly fused without obstruction. If you can recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, you will enlarge your Bodhi-heart. In the future you can be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Some people say, "Guan Yin Bodhisattva is just you, yourself." Other people say, "Guan Yin Bodhisattva is simply Guan Yin Bodhisattva. There is a Bodhisattva with that name." If you recognize that you, yourself are Guan Yin Bodhisattva, then your attachment to self has not been emptied. If you recognize that outwardly there is a Guan Yin Bodhisattva, then your attachment to dharmas has not been emptied. Since you have an attachment to self and an attachment to dharmas, then "people" have not been emptied and dharmas have not been emptied. When people and dharmas have not been emptied, your recitation plants good roots and develops your Bodhi-heart, but it is still not genuine recitation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. With true recitation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, inside you view no self and outside you view no Bodhisattva; there's no self, and there's no Bodhisattva. You say, "If there's no Bodhisattva then how can I recite the Bodhisattva's name?" There doesn't necessarily have to be a Bodhisattva in

order for you to recite a Bodhisattva's name. If you can arrive at the state where you recite and yet do not recite, then you can recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name without even realizing that you are reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. And when you are not reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, it recites itself. You may want to stop, but you can't. It's like flowing water; you can't stop it even if you want to. So, you recite, and yet do not recite; you do not recite, and yet you recite. This is genuine recitation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. By not reciting and yet reciting, you get rid of the attachment to self. By reciting and yet not reciting, you get rid of the attachment to dharmas. Thus, people are empty, and dharmas are also empty. People empty, dharmas empty. When you get to this state, then you are truly, genuinely reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva. You are not saying, "I, myself, recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva." Where is this "self?" Didn't I say to you a few days ago, "If you search over your entire body you won't find a single thing that is 'I'." Why do you insist on having an "I", a self? If you have an "I", you have a lot of trouble, a lot of problems. Without a self, an "I", there's no trouble. Pigeons think about eating all day long because they can't put down the self, the "I". If they had put down the self, the "I", then why would they run around looking for food? Have you put it down? Not necessarily. If you wait a while, it will return. Why will it return? Because the self hasn't really been renounced. If you put down the self, the "I", then it's all the same thing whether you eat or not.

In reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva, you recite to "people empty and dharmas empty" and, at that point, you fuse into a unity with the whole universe. And so you can say it is great, since there's nothing greater than it. Or, you can say it is tiny, since there is nothing smaller than it. This is the genuine state of reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva. What can't we put down? We can't put down the false. What can we not pick up? We can not pick up

what is true. What is false? Your body, which is a combination of the four elements, is false. People say, “My body is what is real at present. How can you say it’s false?” On the other hand, what is true? Your inherent Buddha nature is true, but people say, “The Buddha nature is just something you talk about. How can you say it’s true? If it’s true, then I should be able to see it. Why can’t I see my Buddha nature? You say that my body is false, but every day I can see it, at any time. How can you say it is false?”

I’ll tell you something very straightforwardly now. Your body is a false combination of the four elements. What are the four elements? Earth, water, fire, and air. Our bodies have flesh, muscles, and bones. These are the solid parts, and are composed of the element earth. The temperature of our bodies is the element fire. Our breath is the element air. The sweat on our bodies and all the liquids that flow out of it belong to the element water. When it’s time for you to die, the four elements all go back to where they came from. The water goes back to the water, the fire returns to the fire, the air returns to the air, and the solid earth parts return to the earth. They all return to where they came from, but your Buddha nature has no “where” that it goes back to. So it says, “The Buddha nature is true.”

Our body is just like a house:

*Our human body is like a house.
The mouth is the door,
and the eyes are like windows.
The four limbs are like the pillars;
The hair is like the thatch on top.
In the morning and evening
keep it in good repair.
Don’t wait until it falls apart,
And then run around and busily try to fix it.*

Our bodies are like houses. You can only say that the house is “my house”. You can’t say that the house is “me”. For example, if you visit a house and someone asks you, “Whose house is it? Do you rent it or do you own it?” Even if you own the house, you can’t say, “The house is me.” If you said that the house is you, would you be smart or stupid? You can only say that the house is “mine”. Our bodies are the same way. You can only say that the body is “mine”, it’s your body. You can’t say that the body is “me”. So this is a point that you should understand clearly. If you understand this clearly, then you won’t simply do the bidding of your house. We shouldn’t freeze our bodies to death, or starve them to death. If we can keep our bodies, our houses, from falling apart, then that is sufficient.

What is it we should be doing? We should be cultivating the Way. This is the number one most important thing. Secondly, we should be establishing merit, establishing virtue, and establishing literature. These are the three important responsibilities in human life. Establishing merit. How does one do this? For example, if there is something you can do which will benefit everyone, your accomplishment of this task will accrue merit for you. When this extends even to giving up your own money to do good things without any hope of gaining any recompense, then you have a virtuous nature. Establishing literature means that your words are so valuable that they cause everyone in the world who hears your words or reads your writings to wake up. Once they wake up they won’t be able to do muddled things. For people in the world, establishing writings is very important.

You can’t live as if drunk and die in a dream, thinking. “If I have wine today, tonight I’ll get drunk,” paying no attention to whether or not it will be right or wrong tomorrow. “Today I have wine, and I’ll drink till I got drunk and don’t know anything at all, let tomorrow take care of itself.” This is a mistaken way of

thinking. People in the world must be of benefit to other people. One must benefit oneself and benefit others to practice the Bodhisattva path. This is our responsibility as people. Therefore, in his life every person should go down a road that is meaningful and not walk a road which has no meaning. This is also to say that we should walk down the brightly lit road, and not go down the dark and twisted path. The brightly lit, proper path means following the regulations, doing things in accord with the rules. The black road, the dark road means not following the rules. Not following the rules means doing anything at all with a total lack of concern for the consequences, such as committing arson and theft or using drugs. All those improper things are the black, twisted path. Students of the Buddhadharma must recognize these two roads clearly; one is proper and one is deviant. Be careful not to have stupid thoughts about doing deviant actions. To go down the proper path you have to follow the rules, so many people think, "I'd like to go down that wrong path." It's blissful for a while--there are no hindrances, nothing to tie you down, and you don't have to follow the rules, but in the future it will be extremely painful. For people who go down the right road, although for a while it's a bit difficult and not quite so blissful, in the future there will be eternal happiness. Just as I have said, if you want to undergo suffering, then during this week you can have seven days of suffering. This is going down the proper road. In the future you will obtain the brightness of your self-nature and be without suffering. If, on the other hand, you don't go down the proper road in these seven days, perhaps you will take some drugs, drink some wine, or casually waste your precious time. This is all considered to be going down the improper path. Although for a while you may feel very free and independent, you won't be able to end your suffering and stupidity. You won't be able to leave your ignorance behind.

If you recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, and continue reciting until you recite even when not reciting and are as if not reciting when you recite, then your recitation accomplishes the samadhi of reciting Guan Yin's name. This samadhi is the attainment of genuine concentration. It is the absence of stupidity and the birth of wisdom. Now as we recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva we are travelling down the great, bright, upright path. We are running down the great, bright, upright path. All day we circumambulate the Buddha, and for every step we take, a large brilliant lotus flower blossoms forth. As you sit there, you are sitting on the lotus blossom which you have created from your recitation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, When you walk around, you are walking on the lotus blossom too. However, do not get arrogant and think, "I am a Bodhisattva," because the time has not come yet. Slowly, slowly.

Yesterday I said that there were three days left, and that within these three days everyone should recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva until light comes forth to illumine them. If you have good experiences, don't be overly happy about them. If you don't have those experiences, don't worry about it. The only thing to worry about is that you won't believe in this Dharma-door. If you have a heart of faith, Guan Yin Bodhisattva will always be right above you, right in front of you, right behind you, as well as on your left and on your right, helping you. And the day will certainly come when you will personally see Guan Yin Bodhisattva's original face. All you have to do is cultivate, make vigorous progress, and not be lazy, and you will obtain a response.

Time is very precious. There are two days left and we must certainly have some accomplishment in these two days. Then we will not have wasted our time. This is my hope for all of you, and I believe that each one of you also has this hope; that is why you have come to attend this Guan Yin session. You may not know

what benefits or how much advantage you have gained from this session. After this your thinking will be altered, your behavior will be different from what it was before. You will use genuine wisdom in whatever you do, and you won't be able to do muddled things ever again. This is the very least advantage you will obtain. You will not have any more upside-down, dream-like fantasies and thoughts. You will leave behind upside-down dream-thinking, and in the future you will be able to obtain Ultimate Nirvana.

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We have already come to the final day of the Guan Yin Session, and on this last day, have we who are attending this Guan Yin Session put to rest the mad heart? If you can put the mad heart to rest, then the Bodhi heart grows big. If you have not put to rest the mad heart, you must continue to apply effort. Now, all of you are in the Buddhist Lecture Hall learn how to recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. And after this you should always, always recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. By reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, on the one hand you obtain the protection of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. On the other hand, you cure yourself of your false thinking. The mad heart, the greed heart, the hate heart, the stupid heart can all be counteracted.

You shouldn't consider this very simple and of no use, because if you use effort for a long time you will naturally be able to attain good points. For example, you recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. You recite continually until you feel that a light is coming forth from within your heart. The heart's light illumines the entire Dharma Realm, and after that your stupidity vanishes. Sometimes you recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name until the inside of your mouth becomes even sweeter than if you were eating sugar. It can also happen that Guan Yin Bodhisattva pours

sweet dew-water upon the top of your head. When your head has been anointed in this way with dew-water, your karmic obstacles which have accumulated for limitless kalpas are eradicated. At other times you may recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name and come to know in advance something that's going to happen tomorrow. You'll know, for example, "Tomorrow somebody is going to come and visit me. This person may be someone I knew before or perhaps it is someone I don't know." You will know something that is going to happen the next day. However, when you know something like that, you shouldn't consider it stupendous. It's just a small-scale experience. Then what's a large-scale experience? A large-scale experience is knowledge of ten thousand ages past; and ten thousand ages hence. You have knowledge of the eighty-four thousand great aeons that lie before you and knowledge of the eighty-four thousand great aeons past. You could say there is nothing you don't know. There is nothing you are not aware of. Yet even that is not counted as a large-scale experience when compared to the state you experience after attaining that which is the very greatest.

And so now that you have learned the Dharma-door of reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, you should always recite it. After this, wherever a Guan Yin Session Dharma Assembly is being held, you should go and take part, lending support to the Dharma Assembly, because to support the Dharma Assembly is just to revere Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Wherever there is a Buddha Recitation or a Guan Yin Recitation Session, you should go there to follow and rejoice in merit and virtue, and recite along with everyone. You may say, "I already know how to recite, so why do I still have to go and recite?" You should go to be part of the influential assembly. You should influence those who don't know how to recite by going there and reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's and Amitabha Buddha's names. Because you already know how

to recite, you can cultivate, and you also can help other people to cultivate. That is called being part of the influential assembly. In that way, bit by bit, Buddhism will flourish and everyone will come to understand the genuine Buddhadharma. This does not just mean “intellectual zen” like those who understand whatever you say to them, but if you tell them to apply it, they can’t do anything at all. They understand with their heads and mouths, but if you tell them to apply it, they can’t. That is called head-mouth samadhi, and it’s useless. We should reliably, actually, truly understand the Dharma and really learn to apply effort, and then there will be a way.

Now, what aspect of this world causes the most suffering? What aspect brings the most bliss? Can any of you answer this question for me? No one answers? You’ve recited Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s name for six days so you should have some wisdom. You should understand what causes the most suffering and what brings the most bliss. Now I’m giving you a test, and whoever can answer the test question will pass. Whoever can’t answer has to continue with the session. If you can’t answer, you will have to keep up this Guan Yin Session forever. When this Guan Yin Session is over, another one will come along, and when that Guan Yin Session is over another one will follow it. We’ll just continue having them without any interruption and nobody will be allowed to leave. If you want to leave, you are going to have to answer my question first. What about it? Don’t be afraid, I’m not going to force you. If you want to go you can go, if you don’t want to go you don’t have to go, since the Buddhadharma is not bound, fettered, or blocked up. I say I’m not going to let you go, but if you want to go, you can go ahead and go. Besides, no one is answering the question, so I will tell you: What causes the most suffering is not to understand the Buddhadharma, and what brings the most bliss is just to understand the Buddhadharma. You

say, “No, Dharma Master, previously I heard you say the happiest thing was not that but something else.” Well, now I’m saying it this way. Before was before and now is now. You can’t take the past and drag it into the future for the same explanation. Why not? Because there are no fixed dharmas. If you think about it, what I said before was probably not exactly perfect. So I’ll tell you once more.

What I was talking about before was Confucius and how when Confucius was stopped by Kuei Lien, he had nothing to eat. Therefore he told Tzu Lu to go to Fan Dan to borrow rice. Now Tzu Lu was very coarse. All he knew was kung fu, at which he was very good. So Tzu Lu was told to go borrow rice from Fan Dan who asked him, “Where do you come from?”

He said, “I’m Old Confucius’ disciple and my teacher now has no food to eat. He’s in between Ch’en and Ts’ai countries, right in the middle, and he has no food to eat, no rice. There’s also an assembly of over three thousand with nothing to eat. This is a very dangerous situation, so I’ve come to borrow a bit of rice from you.”

Fan Dan said, “Okay, you can borrow rice, but I have a question I want to test you on. You’re Confucius’ disciple and Old Confucius is very learned so naturally since you have been studying with him, you must be learned too. So I will ask you a question, and if you can answer it I will lend you the rice, and if you can’t then I’m afraid I won’t lend it to you.”

Tzu Lu said, “Okay, what is it?”

Fan Dan asked, “In the world, what is the most and what is the least? What is pleasant and what is a bother?” That’s the way he put it.

Tzu Lu thought about it and he just brashly stepped right up and said, “There is absolutely nothing difficult about a question like that. It’s very easy to answer.

Fan Dan said, “Well, then, answer it.”

Tzu Lu said, “Yes, I’ll answer it. It’s that stars are the most and the moon is the least. Marriage is pleasant and death is a bother.”

Fan Dan said, “You’re wrong. You answered wrong.”

Tzu Lu said, “But no, I’m absolutely right. Can you say that there are few stars and more moons? Can you say that people like death and find marriage a bother? My doctrines are the most correct!”

“You ask your teacher whether they are correct or not.”

So Tzu Lu--was he ever displeased!--said, “You’re too unreasonable. I’m talking very much in accord with principle, but you say I’m wrong.”

Tzu Lu then went back to Confucius who asked, “How did you do borrowing the rice?”

To which the disciple replied, “That Fan Dan is totally unreasonable. I went there to borrow rice and first he had to give me a question to test me out, and I answered it very well. I wrote my essay just very much in accord with principle, and he said I was wrong. He said I answered the question wrong. Ha! He just didn’t want to give me the rice.” That’s what Tzu Lu said to Confucius.

The Old Master replied, “Well, what was the question and how did you answer it?”

Tzu Lu reiterated the question and his answer to which Confucius replied, “Oh! You were really wrong. You did do it all wrong.”

Now when Fan Dan said he was wrong, that was one thing, but for his teacher to tell him he was wrong... So Tzu Lu asked, “Well, if that’s wrong, how should I have answered it?”

Confucius said, “You go right back and ask him for the rice again and if he asks the question again tell him this: In

this world there are a lot of petty people and few superior ones. If I borrow the rice I'm pleased. If I have to beg it's a bother."

Tzu Lu thought, "How can an answer like that be correct?" He still didn't believe it would work. He didn't believe his own teacher, but he said, "Well I'll go try it out and see what happens."

Tzu Lu went back to Fan Dan to borrow rice again and Fan Dan said, "If you answer my question right, then I'll give it to you."

Tzu Lu said, "My teacher told me how to answer your question. He said to say this: 'In this world there are lots of petty people and few superior ones. If I borrow the rice I'm pleased, if I have to beg it's a bother.'"

Fan Dan said, "Fine. I will lend the rice to your teacher. No wonder he's a teacher, he's very learned. I'll lend it to you now, and no doubt in the future when you pay me back it's not going to be a bother."

"No, it's not." Tzu Lu said.

Now, in this world, I'll ask you again, "Who are the most stupid people and who are the most intelligent?" No one is going to answer my question. I don't have any rice to lend you anyway. I'll tell you, the stupidest people are those who do not study the Buddhadharma, who do not believe in the Buddhadharma. The most intelligent people are their opposites. They are the ones who like to study the Buddhadharma, who like to believe in the Buddhadharma. These are the most intelligent people.

That is the reason why a few days ago I called you all Good Knowing Advisors, and afterwards, when I certify you, you will be genuine Good Knowing Advisors. This is not merely casually giving you a good name, calling you Good Knowing Advisors. It's because you want to study the Buddhadharma, because you

have faith, that I can call you all Good Knowing Advisors. In the *Sixth Patriarch Sutra*, the Sixth Patriarch called everyone who sat beneath his Dharma seat to hear the Dharma, a Good Knowing Advisor. He considered everyone a Good Knowing Advisor. And it's just because of that, that everyone considered the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch, a Good Knowing Advisor. You say, "Now I understand. You're calling us all Good Knowing Advisors so we'll call you one, right?" If you think it's that way, that's the way it is. If you don't think it's that way, then it's not that way. That's because I don't actually think that way. It's just what you, on your part, are thinking. Rather, it's like the Buddha. The Buddha said, "All living beings have the Buddha Nature; all are able to become Buddhas." Consequently he became a Buddha himself. So if you call me a Good Knowing Advisor, then I can call you a Good Knowing Advisor too. If you are all Good Knowing Advisors, then how can I fail to be one, because we're all the same, aren't we, anyway? This Dharma is level and equal with nothing above or below it, and so you Good Knowing Advisors are born from me, this Good Knowing Advisor. Therefore, I'm an Old Good Knowing Advisor, and you are young Good Knowing Advisors, we're all the same. This Dharma is level and equal with nothing above or below. Didn't I tell you not only you can be Good Knowing Advisors, but in the future you can all become Buddhas. Thus I'm just like you, and you are not different from me; so we are all equal.

However, don't go out and say, "Our Good Knowing Advisor is an enlightened Good Knowing Advisor, and I am just the way he is." That's because so doing is showing yourself off as enlightened. But I apologize, I'm very ashamed, that I myself am not really enlightened. Because I'm not enlightened, I'm the same as all of you who are not enlightened. And if you say that I'm enlightened and you're the same as I am, then you're

lying. Why? Because it's not fixed: you don't know for sure that I'm enlightened. And anyway, if you truly were enlightened, you wouldn't say you were enlightened. So I know really, truly, actually, for certain it's a lie. If you said it to a genuine Good Knowing Advisor, he'd laugh his teeth out. Think about it. People who are enlightened who tell other people that they're enlightened, saying, "Do you know me, I am enlightened?" What meaning is there to that? If you're enlightened, you're enlightened yourself. What are you doing telling other people about it? Do you do it so that when you tell people you're enlightened then those people will immediately become enlightened too? Do you think that if you go up to someone and say, "Do you know what, I'm enlightened!" that they will immediately become enlightened? If that's the case, then it's okay. But if you're enlightened and tell someone else you're enlightened and they don't become enlightened, how are they going to know whether or not you're enlightened? For how can people who are not enlightened know whether or not you are truly enlightened or falsely enlightened?

An example of this is a person who sells medicinal plasters, who tells people, "My plasters cost me so much money, and they can cure such and such illnesses. Take them with you and, if people are dead they will come back to life." If that's really the case then okay, you can sell them for ten thousand dollars each. If your plasters applied to dead people do not bring them back to life, you take the money. But does the person who buys the plaster know whether or not the plaster has the power to do what you say or not? He has no way of knowing. That is the same as your saying you're enlightened, telling someone that. That's like selling plasters: whether it's true or false, nobody knows. However, the person who sells the plasters of course knows that they are phony. But no one else knows. This is like your saying you're enlightened. You tell people you're enlightened, and they

don't know whether you're enlightened or not. But do you know yourself? If you get enlightened, then you don't need to tell people that you're enlightened. If you aren't enlightened, and you tell people that you're enlightened, then you are just a phony. Do you understand? Therefore, talking around and around, talk is useless. What is useful is doing, not just talking. To speak a foot is not as good as to practice an inch, and so we should all do the Great Transference of Merit.

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EXPLANATION OF THE GREAT TRANSFERENCE OF MERIT

This text is called a text for contemplating, the same “contemplate” as in Contemplator of the World's Sounds, that is Guan Yin. It means that you contemplate the meaning contained within the text. It says, WE, DISCIPLES OF THE ASSEMBLY. We call ourselves disciples because we are disciples of the Buddha. Who are the disciples? There is not just one disciple, but very many. An entire assembly together, so it says, “We, disciples of the assembly.” NOW MANIFEST AS COMMON PEOPLE IN BIRTH AND DEATH. We, disciples of the assembly, now, at present, have not accomplished our Way karma. We are born and then die; die and are reborn; we are common people who have not certified to the attainment of the Sagely Fruit. Why are common people common people? It is because WITH KARMIC OBSTACLES EXTREMELY HEAVY. Our karmic obstacles are at the same time both deep and heavy, and because they are deep and heavy WE REVOLVE IN THE SIX PATHS. In the path of the gods, in the path of humans, in the path of asuras, in the path of the hells, in the path of hungry ghosts, and in the path of animals. In

the six paths we turn around and around, revolving without cease. AND THE SUFFERING IS UNSPEAKABLE. In the six paths, if one is a hungry ghost, there is nothing to eat. For animals, there is food, but the stuff they eat is very filthy. And dogs eat manure, pigs eat stinking things, and birds, though they can fly, eat raw food. They don't eat cooked food and that's not really too good. So it says it is unspeakable suffering. As a person, sometimes one eats well and dresses well and everything is fine, but one is still subject to all kinds of very unfortunate circumstances, so it says the suffering is unspeakable. Suffering can't be talked about to the end.

NOW WE'VE MET A GOOD ADVISOR. It is not easy to meet a Good Knowing Advisor. For many lives, in many kalpas, we've planted a lot of good roots and so we have been able to meet a Good Learned Advisor who understands the Buddhadharma. AND GET TO HEAR THE NAME OF AMITABHA BUDDHA. The Good Knowing Advisor teaches us, transforms us, leads us to recite Guan Yin-Bodhisattva, to recite Amitabha Buddha, to hear Amitabha Buddha's name; Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. AND THE MERIT AND VIRTUE OF THEIR BASIC VOWS. Amitabha Buddha's basic vows are forty-eight in number. Guan Yin Bodhisattva also made great vows. This is merit and virtue. AND WITH ONE HEART WE RECITE. Because we call on the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva we can lessen our greed, decrease our hatred, and diminish our stupidity. So with one heart we recite the name of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. AND SEEK TO GO OFF TO BE REBORN. We earnestly seek to make the vow to go off to rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss in the West. WE PRAY THAT THE BUDDHA, OUT OF COMPASSION, WILL NOT CAST US ASIDE. We hope that Amitabha Buddha will be greatly compassionate and not cast us aside. We pray that Guan Yin Bodhisattva will be greatly compassionate and not

cast us aside, but will take pity on us and receive us. BUT WILL MERCIFULLY RECEIVE US. We hope that they will pity us, will have mercy on us, will receive and gather in all of us who are assembled as disciples here.

WE, DISCIPLES OF THE ASSEMBLY. Again it says, all of us here in the assembly DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE BUDDHA'S BODY. We didn't recognize the Buddha's body WITH ITS BRIGHT LIGHT AND FINE MARKS. The Buddha has thirty-two fine marks and eighty minor characteristics, and this light, and we didn't recognize it. WE PRAY THAT THE BUDDHA WILL MANIFEST. We hope that the Buddha Amitabha and the Bodhisattva Guan Shih Yin will cause their wonderful marks and their bright light to appear AND ENABLE US TO VIEW. Let us be able to see the fine marks and light of the Buddha and those of the Bodhisattva. AND TO SEE GUAN YIN AND SHIH CHIH. Not only do we want to see Amitabha Buddha, but we want to see Guan Yin Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattva Ta Shih Chih. AND THE ASSEMBLY OF BODHISATTVAS. And also the entire assembly of the pure, great, ocean-wide assembly of Bodhisattvas. AND IN THAT LAND. In that Land of Ultimate Bliss THE PURE ADORNMENTS THERE. In the Land of Ultimate Bliss, the pure adornments, wonderfully fine appearance THE BRIGHT LIGHT, THE WONDERFUL MARKS AND SO FORTH. The bright light, the wonderful marks and so forth refers to the seven tiers of railings, the seven layers of netting, the seven rows of trees, and all the other things CAUSE US TO CLEARLY UNDERSTAND. Cause all of us disciples to very clearly and distinctly understand. Clearly understand means to understand and then understand again, very, very clearly. AND GET TO SEE AMITABHA BUDDHA. And get to view those fine marks, the Dharma body.

The second contemplation text goes: I VOW AT THE END

OF LIFE TO BE WITHOUT OBSTRUCTION. AMITABHA WILL WELCOME ME FROM AFAR. We who cultivate the Way--why do we cultivate the Way? It's just because we want the end of our lives to be without obstruction. I vow at the end of life...The end of life is just the time when, one's life draws to a close--the time of death. When people are born it's like a live turtle having its shell ripped off. Like taking a live turtle and ripping off its shell. And the time of death is just like a cow having its skin ripped off, that painful. A live cow which you don't kill first, but just rip its skin off. How painful do you think that is? It's agonizing; and the time of death is that way.

When the seventh consciousness has already departed, the eighth consciousness, the alaya consciousness, is the last to leave. And as the last to go it can't just take off easily. There are a lot of obstacles, and as to these obstacles, how many are there? In general you can say there are eighty-four thousand kinds--that many. If it's not a human obstacle, it's a material obstacle. Wealth presents the obstacle of wealth, and people present the obstacle of people. When you have human obstacles at the time of death you think, "I have relatives and I'm so fond of them, I can't let them go." Or, "I have a child who hasn't left home and set up his own business yet, his own work, so I can't put him down." Or else you have friends that you can't part with. Your not being able to part with them is just pain, is just obstruction. The obstruction of people. There are many kinds of obstructions like this. Men can't put down women, women can't put down men. Most ordinary stupid people find this is the hardest fault not to have. They think it's real. People have human obstacles, and also material obstacles. Maybe at the time of death you really can't put down your car. Or you can't put down your plane, or you can't put down your big beautiful house, your big building, or maybe you can't put down your business. You say, "I've opened up so many companies. If

I die, what's going to happen to them?" This is an obstruction. In general there are too many of them. So now, we make a vow to be without obstructions, to get rid of these obstructions, and when the time comes we will see all these things as an illusion, a magical transformation. They present no problem, they're just like a dream.

Cultivating the Way is very difficult for people. When you're very clear and aware you say, "I see everything as empty. I've put everything down. No problem. Nothing matters to me." You're very nonchalant. But when you dream, you can't put it down. You have a dream and then it isn't so that nothing matters. A woman comes and you like the woman; wine comes and you like the wine; things come and you want to steal them; drugs come and you want to take them. And you think in your dream, "Oh, not bad." And you can't keep in control. You say, "Yes, I can, and in dreams it's no problem either. When I see a woman I'm not lustful, when I see wealth I'm not greedy, when I see wine I don't drink it. No matter what I see, I'm not moved. In my center I do not move." Don't think you're so fine and outstanding, because this is still just a tiny, minute state. Don't be self-satisfied and say, "Look at me. Ha. I have taken over Mount Sumeru's position. I stand where Mount Sumeru used to stand. See, in cultivating the Way, I am number one. In cultivating the Way I'm first." That's being arrogant. Even if you have control in your dreams, when you're sick you won't have control. When you're sick, your legs hurt. You can't stand it. You say, "My legs, how can they hurt like this? Oh!" Or, "My back hurts an awful lot. I can't stand it. My stomach hurts even worse. And my head. Oh, oh! Everybody has headaches. Everybody knows what headaches are. But this headache is very bad and you can't stand it. And when you can't stand it, then you scream for your teacher. You say, "Teacher, help me. I can't stand it." And in your heart you just call for your

Teacher. Those are people who have taken refuge with the Triple Jewel. Those who haven't taken refuge with the Triple Jewel and who are at home and don't have a Teacher, call for their mothers. They cry, "Mommy, Mommy," and they can't stand it. At that time they are turned by the state, and they can't break through this obstacle.

If you can have control in dreams, and sickness is also not too much for you to cope with, then you think your endurance is very great, and you say, "Go ahead and hurt. Hurt all you want. It doesn't matter. Go ahead and hurt. I'm not going to pay any attention. That's just the way it is. What problem could there be?" Then you have samadhi power, and sickness is not a problem. Well, don't think you're out-of-sight and get self-satisfied, because when the time comes for you to die, I'm afraid you won't be in control then. This is because all the debts of resentment and evil which you have incurred over many aeons come to collect. They will say, "You borrowed so much money. Give it back now." Someone else will say, "You gave me this karmic obstacle. Here it is right back again. You should receive this retribution." And at that time your body of six organs, your eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, is without a lord. Your thoughts won't be in control. Your eighth consciousness will not be in control. And it's very dangerous at that time. So now we vow at the end of life to cut off obstruction, to get rid of all those impediments.

AMITABHA COMES FROM AFAR TO WELCOME US. When we are without obstructions, Amitabha Buddha comes from one hundred thousand million Buddhalands with his hand outstretched to receive us. Why does he want to receive us? Because he made a vow. He said, "If all living beings who recite my name are not reborn in my land, I vow not to attain the Right Enlightenment." All living beings, if they recite Namó Amitabha Buddha, my name, my Buddha

name, and are not reborn in my country, I also will not realize the Right Enlightenment. Enlightenment is not just getting enlightened. You don't explain it that way. It means becoming a Buddha. Right Enlightenment is the status of Buddhahood. I vow not to attain Buddhahood. I vow not to realize the Utmost Right and Perfect Enlightenment. It's not just getting enlightened. That is a small matter. You're not properly enlightened if you don't say "Right Enlightenment," but just translate it, "Get enlightened". That is not sufficient because there are also evil enlightenments. For instance, demons have a kind of enlightenment, but it's an enlightenment to all evil. They have an enlightenment to think improper things. Now we want to have Proper Enlightenment, Right Enlightenment, Proper, Equal and Right Enlightenment, so if you just say, "enlightenment", you don't specify whether it is Proper Enlightenment or improper Enlightenment.

As before, when I told you this story which you probably all remember--at New Year's I wrote this on a piece of paper--I was writing characters, and I wrote some very cursive scripts that said, "wisdom like the sea". And the script looked like a dragon--it was really wonderful. I wrote it with my eyes shut. I wrote, "wisdom like the sea", those four words. And because someone knew I'd written it with my eyes closed, the more he looked at it the better he liked it. And he kept saying, "wisdom like the sea". He recited it about twenty or thirty times and I just detested it. I said, "How can you do that?" I really didn't like it. I said, "I see that your karma power is like the sea."

Then that person blew his top. "How can you say my karma power is like the sea?" He wanted to fight on the spot.

I said, "Don't get mad. Wait a minute, calm down. I said your karma power was like the sea, but as to your karma power,

I haven't told you clearly. When I tell you, I guarantee you'll be happy, you'll like it. You won't be like you are now, so angry."

He said, "You said my karma power is like the sea. How can I be happy? What in the heck!" and he really got mad.

I said, "Come here, and I'll tell you," and in a very low whisper I said, right in his ear, "Your karma power---there's good karma and there's bad karma. I was talking about your good karma being like the sea. Don't you like that?"

Then he said, "Ohhh, how can you say that? Oh well, that's all right."

See? Just one word. Just the difference of one word. I said, "Karma power like the sea," and when he heard it, he was not happy. When I said it was his good karma power that was like the sea, then he was delighted. And I said, "I didn't say your evil karma power was like the sea, so don't get mad. If you get mad, then it will turn into evil karma power like the sea." So he didn't dare get angry with me.

GUAN YIN'S SWEET DEW IS SPRINKLED ON MY HEAD. Guan Yin is Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Guan Yin has a pure bottle and also a willow branch. Guan Yin puts the willow branch in the pure water bottle and then sprinkles the water on top of our heads. Last night didn't I say that if you have a sweet taste in your mouth that's Guan Yin Bodhisattva sprinkling sweet dew on your head? And SHIH CHIH'S GOLD PAVILION IS BENEATH OUR FEET. Bodhisattva Great Strength has a gold lotus platform which will be lent to you so that you can ride upon it to the Land of Ultimate Bliss. AND IN THE SPACE OF A KSHANA WE LEAVE THE FIVE TURBIDITIES. A Kshana is a very short space of time, even less than a second. You leave the five turbidities, the world of the five turbidities--the turbidity of time, the turbidity of views, the turbidity of afflictions, the turbidity of living beings and the turbidity of life. These are the

five turbidities. They are spoken of in the *Amitabha Sutra*. AND IN THE FLICK OF A WRIST WE ARRIVE AT THE LOTUS POOL. Then it's just like sticking out your arm. Just sticking it out and bringing it back in again, or flicking your wrist. In such a short space of time you arrive at the Lotus Pool, you arrive at the Lotus Pool by transformation birth. If you recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva and Amitabha Buddha, you recite in the Saha world; and in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, in the West, there is a lotus blossom in the seven-jewel lotus pool that blooms. The more we recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva and Amitabha Buddha, the bigger the lotus flower grows. The less you recite, the smaller it gets. If you just recite a little, then when you're a Buddha, you'll be a little Buddha, and when you become a Bodhisattva, you will be a little Bodhisattva. If you recite a lot, the lotus flower will be very big. When you recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva and the Buddha's name, you are pouring water on the lotus flower. You recite here and in the lotus pool in the West the lotus grows. If you don't recite, the lotus flower dries up. There is an interrelationship between the Land of Ultimate Bliss and the Saha world.

WHEN THE LOTUS FLOWER BLOOMS YOU WILL SEE THE COMPASSIONATE HONORED ONE. Having arrived in the Land of Ultimate Bliss by birth in a lotus flower, you will see Amitabha Buddha when the lotus opens. The Compassionate Honored One is Amitabha Buddha. AND PERSONALLY HEAR THE DHARMA SOUND AND COMPREHEND IT CLEARLY. You will personally hear Amitabha Buddha speak the Dharma, and his sound is very clear and distinct. HAVING HEARD IT, WE WILL AWAKEN TO THE PATIENCE OF UNPRODUCED DHARMAS. After hearing it you will obtain the patience of the non-production of dharmas, and when you are enlightened to that, there will be no production and extinction. AND NOT GOING AGAINST THE COMFORTABLE SUPPORT, WE WILL ENTER

THE SAHA. At that time, you will still be in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, sitting in the Lotus Flower, but your transformation body can go to the Saha world. This is called not going away from the peaceful support. That means not leaving the Land of Ultimate Bliss, but being able to go to the Saha world.

WITH GOOD KNOWLEDGE AND EXPEDIENT DEVICES WE CROSS LIVING BEINGS OVER. You'll be able to use sound understanding and expedient devices, all kinds of methods, to be a Good Learned Advisor. You can use good knowledge and expedient devices as doctrines to save and liberate living beings. AND CLEVERLY TURN THE WEARISOME DUSTS INTO BUDDHA AFFAIRS. At that time, everything, you do, all your practices, on the one hand will be the wearisome dusts, that is, form, sounds, tastes, touchables, and ideas: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. But although your activities will be the same as those of other people, the things that you do will be things for the Buddha, Buddha affairs. You won't be selfish, and seek self-profit; you'll always be able to benefit living beings, not yourself. You use the wearisome dust to do the Buddha's work. You won't leave the wearisome dust to do Buddha affairs. It is right within the wearisome dust that you will teach and transform living beings and cause them to obtain enlightenment. This is called cleverly turning the wearisome dust into the Buddha's work. Wearisome dust: For people who are able to practice or cultivate the Dharma, wearisome dust is wearisome dust, and the Buddha's work is the Buddha's work. But for people who are perfectly fused without obstruction, everything's okay, and although it's wearisome dust, it's also the Buddha's work, and what you do is just Buddha work. You do the same things that other people do, but the merit and virtue is different. And this is because you are one who is experienced; you are manifesting a great, provisional device. A Bodhisattva who has come back, or

a Buddha who has come back again, is different from ordinary people. You do the same things, like maybe feeding pigeons. Take that, for example.

The pigeons are wearisome dust, but if you infuse their food with wonderful secret dharma, bit by bit, gradually they will bring forth the Bodhimind, and little by little they will grow good roots. If you don't understand, you can go ahead and give them food too, but you'll just feed them and get them fat and they won't be of any use. Do you understand? This is called cleverly taking the wearisome dust and turning it into the Buddha's work. Even feeding pigeons is Buddhadharmā. Don't think that feeding pigeons is not Buddhadharmā. See, that one was very stupid. At first he didn't even know which end of the jar to eat out of, and now he knows he should eat out of this end of the jar. This means that he has opened his wisdom. See, he's opened wisdom. Come, come and eat. See, he's opened wisdom. Right? Before, he didn't even know enough to eat from this end, now he knows. This is called cleverly taking the wearisome dust and turning it into the Buddha's work.

MY VOWS BEING SUCH AS THIS, THE BUDDHA WILL KNOW. My vow power is just like that, as I have said before, and the Buddha is certain to know AND EVENTUALLY IN THE FUTURE THEY WILL CERTAINLY BECOME ACCOMPLISHED. In the future for sure, ultimately, in the end, eventually, it is absolutely certain that my vows will be accomplished. Now, before I told you that those two pigeons in the T'ang Dynasty used to be left-home people, remember? They were bhikshus and bhikshunis, upasakas and upasikas--they were left home people and laymen. However, you shouldn't think that they are pigeons now: pigeons are pigeons. They came because of their vows. They made vows to become pigeons which would be influential in the assembly. You see, even pigeons can get near

left home people and the Triple Jewel, and they are not afraid that they will be rejected as Buddhist disciples. So, every day they come here to be an influential assembly, to let everyone take a look and see that pigeons, too, can study the Buddhadharma, and they know it's this way. The pigeons are inconceivable pigeons. Of thirty-four pigeons, thirty-two ran away, and only two came back to be an influential assembly.

You can't fail to believe. See how intelligent they are! But, although they basically are very intelligent, they are pretending to be very stupid, and gradually, little by little they will come to understand. Otherwise, how could pigeons climb right into your hand and let you pet them and not be afraid at all? You can pick them up in your hand and they are not even afraid. This is not to say, "Well, you give them food." We tried to give some other pigeons food and they wouldn't even eat it. We treated them the same, but they wouldn't come and eat our food. The other thirty-two were let loose, so why didn't they come back to get some food? So because of this everyone should wake up a little bit. This should influence you. Because of these two pigeons you should bring forth the Bodhi heart, and not be so muddled. Don't take it very lightly and think, "Pigeons are just pigeons." This is an inconceivable state, I'll tell all of you. And after this there are going to be a lot more inconceivable states. Bit by bit you'll come to know that the Buddhadharma is truly inconceivable. At first, when they came back that day, no one gave them any food. After they kept coming back for five or six days, we started to feed them. So when they came back, it certainly wasn't because we had given them some food. It was because they recognized the Buddha's Bodhimanda and they came to bow a little, bow to the Buddha, but they didn't let you see them,

of course.

Someone says, “I don’t believe it.” If you believe, I believe. If you don’t believe it, then I don’t believe it. What I say is Chan banter. If you believe it, you can bring forth the Bodhi mind; if you don’t believe it, you can bring forth the obstacle mind. There’s another thing that needs to be said clearly: I basically don’t think that there’s a “me”, so if you believe, I believe--if you don’t believe, then I don’t believe. At the very most, I cannot even admit that I said it, because since you don’t believe me, it’s as though I never said it. So I’ll say I don’t believe it either, and you can just figure that I never spoke such a Buddhadharma. You might try to forget about it entirely, but you won’t be able to, because the seed has already been planted in your eighth consciousness. Okay, now we’ll recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva. That is true! And you should believe it and I should believe it.

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At the Buddhist Lecture Hall the things we do are different from those of ordinary people. In what way are they different? They are especially intense. They are not the slightest bit sloppy. If you’d like to be a bit lazy, you can’t. If you’d like to take it easy a little, that’s even less permissible. As to speaking, this year there was probably less talking than in years previous, because there were two who did not speak at all and so they influenced everyone else not to talk so much.

At present the sound of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva has manifested in America; the sound of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva has appeared and the basic substance of the Bodhisattva, his Dharma body, has also just arrived. Therefore we are here reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva and you can see Guan Yin Bodhisattva in empty space holding a bottle of sweet dew, on the one hand smiling

and on the other sprinkling the sweet dew. Those of you who have attended this Guan Yin session have had your karmic obstacles greatly diminished. However, although your karmic obstacles have been greatly diminished, the karmic obstacles you started out with were not few, and so now even though a great many have melted away, there are still a lot of them following you. If you can attend more Guan Yin sessions your karmic obstacles can be entirely melted away.

This has been the first Guan Yin session in America. Never before was there a session in which the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva was recited for seven days in such a rigorous manner, beginning early in the morning and going straight through to nine at night. This is the first time and so I give you all a good name--I call you all good knowing advisors. You may all be called good knowing advisors since you understand how to recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. If you can't recite, then you are non-knowing advisors. Why? If you don't even know how to recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, isn't that a case of being stupid, "not knowing," and having no genuine wisdom or intelligence? So this time, those of you who have attended should take care to keep on being good knowing advisors and, wherever you go, don't do upside-down things anymore. That's my hope for you.

What is more, when you see your relatives and friends you should advise them to recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. This is the best advice you can give anyone, the best present. This kind of merit and virtue can be practiced without using money, and anyone can recite. Later, when you leave, those of you who have attended this Guan Yin Bodhisattva Dharma Assembly can introduce Guan Yin Bodhisattva to everyone. This is an inconceivable circumstance. If you can recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, you are a good knowing advisor. If you can't recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, you are a "non-knowing"

advisor. If you want to be a “non-knowing” advisor, do as you please. If you want to be a good knowing advisor, then introduce Guan Yin Bodhisattva everywhere, and teach people to recite his name. That’s the very best gift there is. If you give Guan Yin Bodhisattva to people, that’s the best gift because it can cause them to plant good roots and to melt away all of their karmic obstacles. This is very important and, whatever you do, take care not to forget it. You should know that you are all the first participants in a Guan Yin Bodhisattva Dharma Assembly. Don’t take your good roots lightly, but go everywhere and teach people how to have Guan Yin Sessions.

Wonderful Sound, Guan Shih Yin

From limitless kalpas until the present we've been born and we have died. After dying, we've passed through interminable hundreds of thousands of millions of aeons without ever encountering a Dharma assembly honoring Guan Yin Bodhisattva. We have failed to decrease our bad habits and faults in the slightest, and every day our ignorance and afflictions increase. To now be able to encounter a Dharma assembly dedicated to Guan Yin Bodhisattva means that at this particular time, good roots which you have amassed throughout limitless kalpas past until the present have ripened, and come to maturity. That is the reason you are now able to participate in this extremely subtle, wonderful, and inconceivable Dharma assembly. It's also possible that if you yourself haven't planted good roots, that your parents have virtuous conduct, and they have encouraged you to attend this most wonderful Dharma assembly. But, in general, anyone anywhere in the entire ten directions who has not planted good roots and amassed virtuous conduct will not be able to attend this Dharma assembly. This should be sufficient reason for you to refrain from false thinking during these seven days. You shouldn't let the time pass by in vain. If you simply immerse yourself in false thinking, then although you're attending this session, it's just as if you weren't here at all, and you won't obtain any particular advantage.

Now I know that although this Dharma assembly started only two days ago, already some people have seen Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, light, lotuses, and other extremely inconceivable states. There are some among of you who are just about to open your Five Eyes. The rest of you who haven't obtained any advantage should be ashamed. You shouldn't think because

nothing's happened with you, that it's the same with everyone else; that's not the case. We're now in this great foundry--Gold Mountain Monastery's Buddhahall--where we are smelting gold, silver, copper, and iron, to see which can withstand the test of fire. It's said, "real gold doesn't fear the fire of the smelting furnace." When true gold goes into the furnace of the foundry, the more it smelts, the more brilliant it becomes and the clearer the color grows. Silver, has a little less clarity, copper has even less, and iron obviously has a lot less. At Gold Mountain Monastery, we pan for gold. Among the grains of sand, we sift out the gold. Whoever is really cultivating will not want to leave Gold Mountain. If you leave Gold Mountain in search of a place to cultivate, you're going to have a hard time finding it. Here at Gold Mountain, all the people are resolved in the Way. No matter how difficult it is, they want to stay here and cultivate.

There are eighty-four thousand Dharma doors for cultivating the Way, and you should understand each kind of Dharma door. You don't want to just concentrate on one. You want to at least be familiar with the others, so that eventually you can come to understand all Dharmas. If you concentrate solely on one Dharma door, then you're not going to understand the ocean-like state of a Buddha; you will be as if looking at the sky through a telescope, and deciding that the sky is only as big as the amount you can see through the telescope. However, if you put down the telescope, and take a look, you will see how vast the sky is. So when you're studying the Buddhadharma, you don't want to limit yourself to a single aspect, but penetrate all dharmas; understand all dharmas.

A Guan Yin recitation session, is one aspect of the Buddhadharma. If you've never cultivated this Dharma, then you should try it out. You don't want to pass judgment on it before you've even tried it, and not even attempt to cultivate it. If you can go from the first day through the seventh day, and finish the

whole thing, then it definitely will have a good effect on both your body and your mind. I hope you won't fail to realize this.

Bodhisattvas cultivate the Six Perfections and myriad practices. The first of the Six Perfections is giving. When you give, you don't want others to give to you. It doesn't mean, "give, give, give to me, but I won't give to you!" That's not the idea. If you are able, then give.

The second Perfection is patience. This Guan Yin recitation session is a period to test your patience. If you can be patient, then you will finish the entire session. If you can't be patient, then from morning until night you'll have false thinking. You'll be thinking about what your friends are doing, or be imagining yourself walking into a restaurant and ordering a steak, or pork chops, or making some Chop Su'ey. You might even start thinking, "Well, what use is it for me to be here anyway? It's a lot of nonsense! I'm 'splitting'." These sorts of false thoughts indicate a lack of patience. People without patience are not going to be able to cultivate the Way. Because if you're a real cultivator, then you will take delight in investigating Chan, or you will be happy to recite the Buddha's name, and you'll feel joy when reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name--considering them all equally fine Dharma doors, and not making distinctions among them. If you have patience, you can succeed at whatever Dharma door you happen to be cultivating. But if you don't have patience, then you won't be able to cultivate any Dharma door. That's because if you lack patience, then you'll keep thinking, "This is wrong, and that's not good." Nothing will satisfy you. If you are like that, how are you going to be able to cultivate? In cultivating the Way, you must not have a view of self. You want to be without a self. You don't want to have that attachment. If you have an attachment to a self, you're never going to be able to cultivate. "I want to investigate Chan," you insist. Well, if you're going to investigate

Chan, you must have a lot of patience. Then, after being patient, you have to hold the precepts. Do not do any evil, and offer up all good conduct. Then you have to be vigorous, not lax or lazy. Don't slack off. Finally, you have to develop Chan Samadhi. When we're reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, we're beseeching Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help us. What are we asking him to help us with? Our Chan samadhi. When we're not reciting the Bodhisattva's name, we cultivate Chan. Once you have Chan samadhi you can give rise to wisdom. That is the relationship which the Six Perfections bear to one another.

You still persist, saying that you are totally infatuated with the idea of cultivating Chan. Fine. Then I'm going to talk to you about a method of Chan cultivation.

People who really cultivate Chan go into the Chan Hall, and once everybody has gone in, **NOBODY GETS OUT--NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS!!** "What if I get sick?" you ask. You still have to investigate Chan. "Well, what if I die?" you wonder. You still are not removed from the Chan Hall. When somebody dies in the Chan Hall, they are just thrown under a bench. If you notice an empty spot and a bench that was formerly occupied, you can guess what has happened. Even if the corpse begins to decompose, and smell bad, it still stays there. **NOBODY GOES OUTSIDE!** "That's like being in jail, isn't it?" It's like jail. You think you're not in jail now? Everyone is in jail; it's just that you don't realize you're in jail. Your self-nature tries to get out, but it can't. On the other hand, it can't get back in either. If it's out, it can't get back in, and if it's in, it can't get out. Is that freedom? Everybody's body is a jail, but you haven't realized it. That's the way a Chan Hall is run. The door is closed, and that's it. You're in and you can't get out. If you try to leave, you're going to get beaten on the head and

the back with the incense board. We call it, “Striking up a session!” Well, that’s just what it’s all about; you actually can get beaten. Beaten to death? That’s one method for striking up a session. Guan Yin recitation sessions work the same way. You can’t get out of the Chan Hall without getting beaten. Who asked you to come here anyway? “You announced it,” you counter. But you came! We never said in the announcement that once you came you could leave. You can go; it’s okay, you can go. But if you leave, you have to provide for everybody else’s food for the week, otherwise you can’t leave. Stop and think about it. We’re cultivating together. If you go, others will notice your absence, and start false thinking, “Oh, that guy is splitting; I’m going to leave too.” In this way it will “snow-ball”, and pretty soon everyone will be going. That’s called “breaking up the Bodhimanda”. Since breaking up the Bodhimanda is a serious offense, I feel you should pay for everybody’s food for the entire session to help counteract that bad influence. If you don’t have that much money, then don’t leave. “That’s just a made-up rule.” Well, if you don’t go, then we don’t have to resort to the rule.

The affinities you people have with one another have brought you to Gold Mountain Monastery. If you didn’t have affinities, you wouldn’t even be able to get inside the door of Gold Mountain. Since you have affinities, obviously you are friends in this Dharma assembly honoring Guan Yin Bodhisattva. You should all join hands and step forward together. Where will you be going? You’re going to go where each of you wants to go. It’s your choice as long as you cherish the desire to help other people.

I have spoken rather severely today, because I’m afraid that you might take a wrong path. I’m afraid for you, because the minute

you step out of Gold Mountain, things get very dangerous.

One of my disciples came to this session, and left after just a few days. He left in the middle before it was over, but when he went outside, he couldn't take that so he's come back. My impulse is to beat him--beat him out of here! It's been a long time since I have beaten anyone. Maybe the time will come, and I'll try it out. I'll beat him, and see if he still dares to remain here.

The things I've said here today, are for the good of you all.

You've all recited the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva for a day, but do you know what "Guan Shih Yin" means? Maybe you don't even know, especially if you are a Westerner who is not familiar with the sounds of *Chung Wen*. Those who understand *Chung Wen* know what's being said, but for those who don't understand the language it's just as if they were reciting a mantra.

The word "Guan" means "contemplate". The word "Shih" means "world". The word "Yin" means "sounds". So the name means "Contemplate the World's Sounds". This Bodhisattva, having nothing to do, wants to find something to do. The "Guan" also means "look", but in this case it's the opposite of the kind of "looking" you do. It is to look within, to look into the hearts of living beings. It doesn't mean looking at external things. It means looking to see which living beings don't have any false thinking in their minds; which living beings' minds are empty; which are enlightened.

The verse in honor of this session says:

*From the ten directions,
We gather in an assembly
Of good men and faithful women,
To study together the unconditioned.*

Reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva is an

unconditioned dharma. It's neither conditioned nor unconditioned. It is an unconditioned dharma that can teach you not to have false thinking. When you recite, "Namo Guan Shih Yin Pu Sa", you are mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva and Guan Yin Bodhisattva is mindful of you. You are mutually mindful of one another. This is just like thinking of a relative, when at the same time the relative is thinking of you. We have been in the Dharma retinue of Guan Yin Bodhisattva for limitless, limitless aeons. We are related by means of the Dharma to Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Our forefather is Amitabha Buddha, the teaching host in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. That Buddha is the teacher of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva helps Amitabha Buddha propagate the Dharma in the Pure Land. Therefore, Guan Yin Bodhisattva is like an older brother to us all. That makes us very close relatives. The older brother watches over the younger brother. "Do we dare say we are the younger brothers of Guan Yin Bodhisattva?" you wonder, "isn't that setting ourselves up pretty high?" No, indeed it isn't. Not only does Guan Yin Bodhisattva consider you his younger brothers, he considers all living beings to be his younger brothers. If it weren't that way, then why would he manifest and save people from suffering? Why would he always be there to help all living beings when they have some difficulty? He just looks upon all living beings as he would his own hands and feet, his own flesh and blood. That's why he doesn't fear any difficulty or suffering in order to save all the living beings in the Saha world. So, you should never forget about your brother. If you are mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva while you are here, then Guan Yin Bodhisattva will be mindful of you. Our appeal to Guan Yin Bodhisattva is one of brother to brother. Guan Yin Bodhisattva refers to those of us now, who are future Bodhisattvas and future Buddhas, as his younger brothers. If you look at it this way, then you should be even more sincere, respectful and true-hearted

in your recitation--as thoughtful as you would be of your own brother. Younger brothers often ask their older brothers to play with them, but here, the “play” doesn’t mean going to movies, going skiing, or playing golf. What we do is sit in a Lotus Flower and become transformationally born out of that Lotus Flower. Can you imagine how wonderful it would be to sit inside a Lotus Flower? Now that you’ve met up with the Dharma door of reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, don’t waste your time. Be particularly sincere.

When you’re mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, you should not walk around with your head down; hold your head up high. Show some courageous and vigorous spirit! Don’t act defeated and morose! When Guan Yin Bodhisattva sees how vigorous you are and how much spirit you have, he’ll take you by the hand and say, “Come along with me.” Then step-by-step eventually you’ll get to the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. While I was saying all this, one of my disciples had a false thought. “You always say that Guan Yin Bodhisattva is looking, looking, looking. Why is it that you tell me I can’t look, look, and look?” Well, I’m going to tell you that there’s a difference between the way you look and look and the way Guan Yin Bodhisattva looks and looks. Guan Yin Bodhisattva is looking inside and you’re looking outside. Guan Yin Bodhisattva is contemplating his self-nature and its connection with that of all other beings. This connection is like radar. He checks the radar in his own self-nature as it reflects what is going on in other beings’ self-natures, and then he knows how to respond to them. For instance, he knows whatever particular false thoughts living beings are having, because he’s looking inside. Of course there are a lot of living beings, many of whom are great distances away from him. So, although he has a thousand hands and a thousand eyes, he still has to look at limitless, boundless numbers of living beings. Since even a thousand of each doesn’t

go far enough to serve him, he continues to turn back the light and illumine within. He looks into his own self-nature. He looks at the living beings within his own self-nature. He sees what kinds of suffering they're undergoing and saves each particular living being. When *you* look, however, you look outside. You forget about your inherent wisdom. That is why I say that the way Guan Yin Bodhisattva looks is quite different from the way you look.

That answers that disciple's question. There's another person who is thinking, "Dharma Master, you've explained all these things, but I don't believe any of them. For instance, you say that we are brothers of Guan Yin Bodhisattva and that Guan Yin Bodhisattva is a sage. But we're just ordinary people. So, how can common people and sages be related as brothers? It's not logical. So I can't believe it." Fine. You don't believe it. What you say has a lot of reason to it. But the problem is, your logic is limited to an ordinary person's way of thinking, and you are not using your ocean-like wisdom. You should remember that passage we heard a few days ago in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* which said,

Bodhisattvas throughout time without beginning have been brothers, have been husbands, and wives, have been sisters, have been parents and children.

Since that's the way the *Avatamsaka Sutra* explains it, how can Bodhisattvas not be that way? So, when you say you don't believe this, it's because you don't understand the principles of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. That passage continues:

Not only do Bodhisattvas look upon us as brothers, after they become enlightened and become Buddhas, they regard all men as their former fathers.

You may say that you believe this even less, wondering how Buddhas can have so many fathers. Not only that, they have that

many mothers as well. The Buddhas look upon all women as their former mothers. So, you see, if Buddhas look upon all men and women as their former fathers and mothers, then for me to say that Guan Yin Bodhisattva looks upon us as brothers and sisters doesn't seem to be illogical, does it? So, your lack of faith is a lack of understanding. To put it another way, you haven't yet seen enough and you don't yet know enough, and so you make stupid judgments like this. No matter what I say, you don't believe it.

Why does a Buddha want to save living beings? Because, since he regards every woman as his former mother, and every man as his former father, when he sees them suffering and writhing in pain in the six paths of rebirth, he can't help but come and try to save them. He hopes to enable his fathers and mothers to separate themselves from suffering and obtain bliss.

Every day we are mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva and bow to Guan Yin Bodhisattva. But when Guan Yin Bodhisattva manifests and comes to see you, you don't even recognize him. Living beings are really in a pathetic state of affairs. When you're mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, then you want to practice being like Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Guan Yin Bodhisattva possesses great kindness and great compassion, and has great vows and great strength. We should work to be like this. If anybody does anything to us that is not nice, we should not move our minds. We must be patient no matter who scolds us. We must bear it no matter who strikes us. You should think, "In past lives if I hadn't harmed this person, then he wouldn't be coming to harm me now. If in the past I hadn't scolded this person, he wouldn't be coming to scold me now. If in the past I hadn't struck other people, they wouldn't be coming to strike me now. So why is this person scolding me, striking me, and harming me? It's just because in the past when I was stupid, I did the same to him." All we're doing now is paying back our debts. Our very admitting that we have these debts is

seeing Guan Yin Bodhisattva. It is having a definite, genuine connection with the Dharma-retinue of Guan Yin Bodhisattva.

Everyday we are mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, but then we look around and start noticing other people's faults. As long as you look at others' faults, the roots of your own suffering are not cut off. We should all understand this, and return the light to illumine within--getting to the very roots of it all. When you study the Buddhadharma, you have to be able to apply it to yourself. If you can't use it, then no matter how long you study it, the Buddhadharma will still be the Buddhadharma, and you will still be you. But if you can use it, then you unite with the Buddhadharma, and you cannot be separated from the Buddhadharma.

Patience is extremely important. Patience is applied when you encounter a situation you don't like, and feel you can't bear. For instance, if you don't like to be scolded, you apply patience and decide, "If someone scolds me, I'm going to be happy about it." The same applies to being beaten or harmed in other ways. The person who is disturbing you becomes your genuine Good and Wise Advisor. When you study the Buddhadharma, that's how you have to turn things around. When you cultivate the Way, you have to turn things around. You have to want the things you don't want. You have to be able to yield to others the things you want yourself. If you decide to cultivate the Way but continue to be like most people who can't see through things or put them down, so that you can't make your attachment to self become empty, you can't make your attachment to dharmas become empty, and you also have a view of people, a view of a self, of living beings, and of a lifespan, then you're in for a lot of trouble. If you can always yield--take a step back--then you'll get through all situations. When you study the Buddhadharma, you have to know how to use it. You have to know how to make it function. This is very important.

If you study the Buddhadharma but you can't use it, then you are, "swallowing a date whole", as it were--you don't have any idea how sweet the date is. But if you know how to use the Buddhadharma, it's like chewing up a date and eating it slowly to savor the sweetness. When you study the Buddhadharma, you don't have to look in lofty places, because the Way is found in the ordinary state of mind.

The straight mind is the Bodhimanda. If you cultivate with a straight mind, then when you recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, you won't have any greed. You won't think, "If I'm mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, then I'll get rich." That's not really possible. But if you don't have that kind of greed, it might be possible. It works like this: if you are greedy, then you probably won't get the object of your desire. If you're not greedy, then you quite likely will. Nor will you think, "I'm going to recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva and when I'm done, I'm going to let everyone know what I've done. Having spent a whole week reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, I'll be better than all of them. They will be beneath me." If you have a straight mind, you won't have this attitude either. Nor will you be greedy for fame or pleasure. You keep your mind really even and ordinary when you recite. You won't want to be seeking for anything. You won't think things like, "I don't have a son, so I'll recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva and seek a son." Nor will you recite in hopes of getting a daughter. Nor will young men recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva seeking a beautiful girlfriend. Nor will young women do it to find a boyfriend.

When you recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, you want to get rid of these defiling thoughts. Don't have thoughts of greed, thoughts of hatred, or stupid thoughts. Don't pay attention to whether the clothes you wear are good or not. They'll do as long as they keep you from getting cold. Don't say, "If I recite

the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, then I'll get some good things to eat." You can't do that. Just eat your fill. That should be sufficient. Don't be greedy for flavors. If you've got that on your mind, then you're not really truly reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. If you are really mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, how can you still be thinking of good things to eat, nice things to wear, or a good place to live? Forget everything. When you forget everything, then you can become one with Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Guan Yin Bodhisattva is in the heart of each living being. It's just because there's a Guan Yin Bodhisattva in your heart that you're now able to be mindful of him. What you're really being mindful of is the Guan Yin Bodhisattva in your own mind. You should do this to the point that you don't even have a mind anymore. Once you don't have a mind at all, then you don't even need to recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, because you just ARE Guan Yin Bodhisattva. That's because Guan Yin Bodhisattva is without a mind. That is, Guan Yin Bodhisattva doesn't have any false thinking. Guan Yin Bodhisattva doesn't have any greed, any hatred, or any stupidity. Guan Yin Bodhisattva doesn't make plans about what good things he's going to eat today, or what good offerings he's going to be able to muster up. He doesn't think about things like that. Guan Yin Bodhisattva doesn't think about whether he's gotten enough sleep or not. Guan Yin Bodhisattva doesn't think about anything at all! Guan Yin Bodhisattva is without any attachments, and doesn't seek for anything. What Guan Yin Bodhisattva does is take living beings across. He wants to be able to help living beings leave suffering and obtain bliss, to put an end to birth, cast off death, and quickly accomplish the Buddha Path. That is the Guan Yin Bodhisattva Way. Guan Yin Bodhisattva doesn't seek anything from any living being. The one hope that Guan Yin Bodhisattva has is that all living beings will really understand and not be greedy.

If You Just Keep Reciting

I see that people are not very clear about the Dharma-door of reciting the Buddha's name, and so they do the reciting very sloppily and don't perfect their skill. In cultivation, investigating Chan is just mindfulness of the Buddha, and mindfulness of the Buddha is investigating Chan. People who are able to investigate Chan are the ones who are able to be mindful of the Buddha, and being able to be mindful of the Buddha gives you the ability to investigate Chan. People who are mindful of the Buddha are the Buddha, whereas that cannot yet be said of those who investigate Chan. The reason is that when you are reciting the Buddha's name, "Namo Amita Buddha, Namo Amita Buddha," then the only thing in your mind is a Buddha, and eventually you will become a Buddha. The reason Amita Buddha comes to guide living beings is that living beings have already turned into Buddhas, and so he leads their true nature to the Land of Ultimate Bliss, and then:

The flower opens and one sees the Buddha.

But those who investigate Chan are still looking for the Buddha, wondering, "Who's reciting the Buddha's name?" They are searching, and don't dare admit they are the Buddha they are mindful of. Instead, they look into, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" "Who is able to be mindful of the Buddha?" "Reciting the Buddha's name is who?" They keep looking and looking, running outside. But when you are mindful of the Buddha, the Buddha comes back into your nature and you don't have to search outside. Buddha recitations are held so that for an entire week you don't have any other false thoughts--you're just mindful of the Buddha, and then you can become one with the Buddha. If you

can do that, then you are sure to be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. So the Dharma-door of reciting the Buddha's name is especially fine.

“Well, what about investigating Chan?” you may ask. It's good too. But when you investigate Chan you have to suffer. First, there is the pain to put up with, and then you have to make sure at all times you're not having false thoughts. If you compare the two, Chan is harder than reciting Buddha which you can do any time and anywhere: “Namo Amita Buddha, Namo Amita Buddha.” If you are mindful of the Buddha, the Buddha will be mindful of you, and when the two mindfulness merge, you become a Buddha. This is a very wonderful Dharma-door! You haven't looked into it carefully, so you don't know its good points, and very few people attended when we held the session. It ended today, and now I'll tell you: You really missed a good chance. You missed it this year, but I hope that next year--this--year--you'll retrieve the chance and decide, “If there's another Buddha recitation session, no matter what, I'll take time off, however busy I am, and come recite ‘Namo Amita Buddha’.”

I'll tell you something else that is the absolute truth: What I like most is reciting Amita Buddha's name. When I'm asleep I recite, “Namo Amita Buddha”, and I recite it in my dreams. When I'm walking or if I'm standing, I'm reciting, “Namo Amita Buddha”. Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down are all done reciting, “Namo Amita Buddha”. Amita Buddha is standing all around me, because Amita Buddha wants to become one with me so there is no difference between us. Would you say that was wonderful or not? Is there anything that could be more wonderful?

Reciting the Buddha's name is the most wonderful of Dharma-doors. You haven't recited to the point that you have skill, so you don't know what I'm talking about. But when you

get to that point, then to the exhaustion of empty space and the Dharma realm everything turns into “Namo Amita Buddha”.

You may say, “What use is there in that?”

Well, what use is there in your not reciting? There’s nothing better than to be able to be with the Buddha every day. I’m not trying to give you regrets by saying this, but this year it’s really too sad that you missed the opportunity. Why do I say that? Several millions of years have gone by without our ever encountering a Dharma assembly for reciting the Buddha’s name, but this life we have managed to meet that wonderful Dharma and the conditions are about to ripen. All of you think it over: in this country how many places are there where Buddha recitation sessions are held? Not just in America, but in the entire Western Hemisphere, there are very few such places--for I’m constantly looking into history, and there aren’t any. But now that we have had the chance, we’ve missed it. So, next year if there’s another Buddha recitation session held, no matter what, don’t miss your chance! Cultivation has to be actually practiced, you really have to do it!

In investigating Chan, not only do you yourself fail to become a Buddha, you even lose yourself! See how you wonder, “Who recites the Buddha’s name?” Basically you’re the one reciting, but you fail to recognize who you are and wonder “Who?” What’s the point in losing yourself? That’s not so important, but you even lose the Buddha! For you have to look for the Buddha outside. You investigate, “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” Without it occurring to you to ask, “Who is it who is the Buddha?” “Who is being Buddha?” “Who becomes the Buddha?” Even if someone does investigate, “Who becomes a Buddha?” they are likely to figure, “Oh, it’s him; it isn’t me,” and get it wrong too. It’s very easy to take the wrong road, which is why Chan Master Yung-ming-Shou said:

*With Chan and with Pure Land,
One is like a tiger wearing horns.
This life a teacher of people,
In the future a Buddha--Patriarch.*

*With Chan but without Pure Land,
Nine out of ten take the wrong road.*

That happens because you start to have doubts like, “Oh, it’s not me who becomes a Buddha. I can’t become a Buddha.” Yet, even though it’s easy to go astray, there are lots of people who cultivate Chan, for if no one cultivates it, that Dharma won’t exist. I, too, investigate Chan, and I’ve been looking for a long time for who’s reciting the Buddha’s name, all over the place. Have I had any luck? Well, I’m not looking anymore. Why not? It’s because now I’m learning to be lazy, and smart. I’m not as dense as I was before.

You may say, “Oh, we can do that too!”

You can try if you want--it will work if you are able not to have any false thinking. But if you still have false thinking, you have to keep on looking. You have to employ the Dharma to stop false thinking. But once you’ve stopped the false thoughts, you no longer need to use the Dharma.

By saying this I’m causing people to have lots of false thoughts, such as, “It’s not my fault that I missed the chance to do the Buddha recitation session this year. It’s because the Abbot didn’t tell us clearly. If I had known before, I would have made sure not to miss the chance.”

I did tell you clearly, several million years ago; but you didn’t pay attention and forgot. So now I’ve told you again. There were people I caused to miss the chance, since they wanted to go home and visit their parents instead of doing the session and I

said okay.

Now you may wonder, “How can the Abbot do that, and make them miss such a chance?” I have my reasons. I thought, “It’s also a good thing for them to be filial. They can practice filial piety first, and cultivate afterwards.” So it was my fault. I know that if I had said, “No! No one is allowed to go on vacation! Everyone has to stay and do the session,” than lots of people would have participated. But I didn’t say that, though a time may come when I do. Actually, though, you can do what you want, and “everything’s okay!”

Her Universal Door Rescues All

As we begin this Guan Yin Bodhisattva Recitation Session, everyone should bring forth a resolve for the Way; don't let the time pass by in vain. The best would be not to talk to each other, not to take phone calls, not to read letters or look at the newspaper, because any of these activities can scatter your concentration. You won't be able to get your essence and energy gathered together. If that happens, then even though you are participating in the Guan Yin Session, you won't get any genuine benefit, and that will be a real shame. So, this time, as we participate in the Guan Yin Session, everyone should have true and actual regard for the Way.

During these seven days, at the very least you should see Guan Yin Bodhisattva, or see light, or see flowers, or smell a rare fragrance; you should be able to obtain such special responses as these. The most important point is to talk as little as possible. As soon as you talk your mind becomes scattered. Once that happens, you cannot accomplish the samadhi of being mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva.

In the past, every year we had sessions reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, or Amitabha Buddha's name, or Earth Store Bodhisattva's name, or perhaps a session where we recited a specific mantra. However, nobody has really achieved any tremendous benefit from it. Their attainments have been few and small in terms of benefit. Why haven't we achieved great benefit? Because we haven't been really vigorous. On the one hand we recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and on the other hand we have false thinking. So, there has not been a response. Or, we recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva when it's time to recite, but as soon as there's a spare second, we want to talk with somebody. Now

that's a cause for obstruction in the Way, and because of it, there won't be any big response.

On the one hand we may be reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, and on the other hand we are wondering when it's going to be time to eat. Or, you think, "I'm really thirsty, I'm going to have a cup of tea," and you strike up all kinds of false thinking. So, people recite, and you recite along with them; people walk, and you walk along with them; you follow along with the crowd, you're just going through the motions, because you don't have any genuine vigor, or a true mind. So this time, unless there's something absolutely essential, you should not talk. In the Buddha-hall especially, or in the place where the toilets are. Don't congregate at the door to the toilet, or the kitchen; don't hold meetings at the tea table, in each other's ears, or walk with each other, or stare at one another. If you do any of these things, there won't be any response. There won't be any response on your part. You won't be able to recite to the point where there is single-mindedness with no scattered thinking.

When you reach the point when your mind is single and unconfused, then inside there is no self and outside there are no people. People and self are both gone. Above you don't know there's heaven, below you don't know there's earth, and in between you're not aware of people. You can see everything as empty. That's when you get a big response. So, during this Guan Yin Session let's be particularly vigorous. Let's not be sloppy about it as we have been in the past, and just have a lot of false thinking about eating, drinking tea, and sleeping. For so many years now we've been at it; we should really be ashamed, recognize our past mistakes and painfully change for the better. You certainly must know your own mistakes, and at all times turn the light around and look in on yourself. You can't gossip with your mouth; absolutely not!

The person who cultivates the Way who can't even control himself is hard put to be able to cultivate. At all times don't be greedy for fame, don't be greedy for profit, don't be greedy for wealth, for food, or for sleep.

At all times turn back the light and look within, and figure out who you are. If you aren't able to figure out your own mistakes, then you are really wasting your time, and that's really sad. In the past we've made a lot of mistakes. After this, I hope that day-by-day we'll change for the better and do things right.

At Gold Mountain Monastery, one of our biggest mistakes is when people come from the outside, nobody pays any attention to them. No one tells them where to stand, or to sit. When visitors first come they look upon people who are already here as being like wood or mud. This is because when it's time to talk, they don't talk. Of course, when it's not time to talk, I don't know how much they talk; they've got a lot to say then.

As for newcomers, if it's a man or a Bhikshu, then the men should take care of him; tell him where to stand and where to sit. You don't have to get into a long rap with him. Just point to where he's supposed to be, and he'll understand. There's no need to get all involved in a conversation about a lot of useless things. Just tell him where to stand and let it go at that. If it's a woman or a Bhikshuni, then a Bhikshuni should tell her where to stand and sit. The first time someone comes, they basically don't know how we do things here; if you people act like sticks or stones, and don't tell anyone what to do, it's a big mistake, because it causes visitors to feel like they've gone into, "Never-Never land". Now, if a layman comes, then a layman should help him. The laypeople who have been here longer should tell them where to stand and sit; talk to them about whatever they might need to know. If a laywoman comes, the women should take care of her; tell her where to stand and sit. When people first come, they don't know how to do these

things. If you all act like you're dead, and don't pay attention to anything, then what use are you to the Bodhimanda? You're supposed to be protecting it, and you don't even pay attention to newcomers. The things you ought to say, you don't say, and the things you shouldn't say, you say a lot of!

Also, whenever there's a Chan session or a recitation session, it's like nobody has any interest; nobody has a mind on the Way; nobody wants to participate. If you keep this up, then before the Proper Dharma is even established, the Dharma Ending Age has arrived. So, after this you should realize that having come to the Bodhimanda, you need to help it grow, and then you're called a Dharma Protector. Cultivating the Way is teaching and transforming living beings. It's not being a self-ending Arhat, being selfish after your own interests.

Now, you should look very deeply into the things I've said today. You people who are Dharma Protectors and Buddhist disciples, what have you done to help out? Ask yourselves.

Everyone should bring forth a resolve for the Way, and not let the time pass in vain. The very best would be not to speak at all, not to take phone calls, not to read letters, and not to read the newspaper, lest you get distracted and allow your energy to scatter.

During these seven days, at the very least, you should all see Guan Yin Bodhisattva, or see light, or see Lotus Flowers, or perceive a rare fragrance, or have some other kind of special response. Most important is to talk less! As soon as you speak, your mind scatters; once your mind scatters, you can't bring to perfection the Samadhi of reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. If you can't avoid talking altogether, at least speak less; don't talk so much. Whoever talks should punish themselves, either by kneeling before the Buddhas or standing in front of the Buddhas, and not sitting. We should make rules for ourselves. Don't start

talking as soon as you have finished eating, or look for opportunities to chat with one another; don't look for opportunities to bother other people. This is extremely important.

Next time, when we light the incense, everybody ought to race to be first; fight not to be last, to be behind. Don't be the last one in line; be in front. Be courageous and vigorous; you want to go in front of other people. I see a lot of people who are always holding back.

So, during this Guan Yin Session, we should be very vigorous, and not be turned by other people. After we eat and we've done what we have to do, we should immediately light the incense and begin. Don't wait around and give people an opportunity to chat.

When reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, we should think of Guan Yin Bodhisattva as always surrounding us on our left, right, above and below, that we're never apart from Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Contemplating her in this way, we'll obtain a response. However, whoever isn't sincere won't get a response. In the period of this session, we should all set our minds on what we are doing. Walking becomes Guan Yin Bodhisattva, sitting becomes Guan Yin Bodhisattva, standing becomes Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and lying down becomes Guan Yin Bodhisattva. In walking, standing, sitting and lying down, we never renounce the thought of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. If you turn your mind to one, then it's efficacious. If your mind is scattered, then there's no response. If you really are single-minded in your recitation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, then everything will be in accord with your wishes. Whatever you want will come to pass, depending on how sincere you are, but you can't just follow along with others and recite when they recite, and not recite when they don't recite. Be mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva absolutely every second. Hold Guan Yin Bodhisattva right there in your heart, and

never forget her. If you can be like that, Guan Yin Bodhisattva will certainly come and anoint your crown with Sweet Dew. The willow branch will brush your body, and aid you. Then you can very quickly bring forth great wisdom.

It's explained clearly in the Universal Door chapter 1 of the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, "*If there are living beings with a lot of desire, they will be separated from their desire.*" If you are a person who is greedy, and has desire either for sex, wealth, fame, food or sleep, but you are constantly mindful of and respectful toward Guan Yin Bodhisattva, your desire will disappear.

"If there are living beings with a lot of anger who can constantly revere Guan Yin Bodhisattva, they'll be able to separate from their anger." This is referring to people who have bad tempers. It's said,

*The fire of ignorance and a tiger-like spirit,
Are roots of offenses from former lives.*

People who have big tempers have heavy karmic obstacles. They have big tempers because their karmic obstacles urge them on. However, there is a way to handle this. You shouldn't worry. It's a very simple method. Be constantly mindful of and respectful toward Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and you'll be able to get rid of your anger. It will just go away. The Sutra also says,

"If a person is really stupid and is constantly mindful and respectful toward Guan Yin Bodhisattva, they can separate from their stupidity."

So, you can see the power of reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name is inconceivable. The virtue is unthinkable! What you can accomplish is also unbelievable! The very best is to always be

mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva in every second--every second, and every moment. When you're reading, you're reciting Guan Yin's name. When you're putting on clothes, you're reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name; when you're sleeping, you're still reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name.

Your recitation just fuses together with whatever it is you're doing, to the point that even if you thought not to recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, you wouldn't be able to stop. At that point, you have achieved the Samadhi of reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, and from that you can come to open great and perfect understanding.

Patience And Vigor

We've come together to have a Guan Yin Recitation session. Usually when people have a Guan Yin session, for instance in Hong Kong or Taiwan, they recite the Buddha's name for a while and then they rest for half an hour before they go on with their recitation. But at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, we start in the morning and we go through to the evening without any rest periods. But you should realize that our not resting is not necessarily correct, and that people who rest are not necessarily wrong. What's the principle involved here? It's that early on, we didn't cultivate and so now we have to increase our vigor in order to catch up with those who are ahead of us. So, it's not that we do it right. Perhaps those people who sit in Chan for a while or recite the Buddha's or Bodhisattva's name for a while and then rest have already been developing their skill for a long time, and are already well on their way to perfecting their skill to the point that whether they recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name or not, they are without false thinking. In that sense, their "resting" is more vigorous than our not resting. That's why we can't say that if someone is resting it's not right. If we get arrogant and think, "We are vigorous, and they are lax and lazy," we wipe out all our own merit and virtue with that one thought. That's because a thought like that is arrogant and self-satisfied. So we must understand that if someone is resting while we are cultivating, that person may have been cultivating for limitless kalpas and is resting now just waiting for us to catch up with him. If you can think like that, you will get a response from the effort you apply. There's a way to develop your skill and there are ways to obstruct yourself in developing your skill. Self-satisfaction and arrogance obstruct your seeds of Bodhi. People who work at cultivation must understand this

point. No matter what's happening, you can't get arrogant or be self-satisfied; nor can you be selfish or out for self-benefit. You absolutely must see that "all dharmas are level and equal with no high or low". As we just begin to develop our skill we have to maintain a proper attitude. If your attitude is not proper, then no matter what skill you use, you'll get a demon. If your mind is proper, then regardless of the kind of skill you apply, you can become a Buddha. The difference between Buddhas and demons is just a single thought.

Now we are being mindful of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. Why are we doing this? It is because Guan Yin Bodhisattva has great affinities with living beings in the Saha World. He follows the sounds to rescue those who are suffering. Someone may say, "Then we should wait until we are suffering to recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name. Since we are not suffering, why should we recite?" You think we're not suffering? We are in the Saha World immersed in the five turbidities: the kalpa turbidity, the view turbidity, the affliction turbidity, the living beings turbidity and the life turbidity. You don't think that's suffering? Every day your false thinking never stops. Your false thinking consists of never being satisfied, or being endlessly greedy; you're always thinking of what you can get and of how to benefit yourself. You may realize your expectations, but then you can't sleep at night. If you don't get what you seek you can't digest your food. Isn't this suffering?

Since we are being mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, we should first know what the words in the Bodhisattva's name mean. GUAN means "contemplate". This refers to the Wonderful Contemplative Wisdom. Guan Yin Bodhisattva has this kind of wisdom. Since he has Wonderful Contemplative Wisdom, no sound in the world is able to cheat him. Good sounds, bad sounds, wholesome sounds, destructive sounds, selfish sounds, sounds

of self benefit, sounds of greed, sounds of fighting, sounds of seeking, are all retained in your eighth consciousness. So, when you seek for Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva to protect you, to help you, Guan Yin Bodhisattva has to contemplate clearly to see if you really have a true mind when you recite his name. Is greed mixed in with your recitation? Is contention mixed in with your recitation? Is a mind of seeking fame and benefit mixed in with it? Is selfishness and self-benefit mixed in with your recitation? Are limitless and boundless deviant views and knowledge mixed in with your recitation? If you have these faults, then even if you recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, it's not for sure you will get a response.

Your mind must be totally pure when you recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Your mind should be vast and great when you are mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Use the unconditioned mind to recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. "In reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, I make transference to all living beings in the world; I do it so that all living beings can leave suffering and obtain bliss, end birth and cast off death. As long as there are beings who have not left suffering and obtained bliss, who have not cast off birth and ended death, I will continue to sincerely recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, beseeching the Bodhisattva to eradicate disasters and dispel the difficulties of living beings in the evil world of the five turbidities, and cause their offenses not to rise again." One does not just do it for oneself; whether you yourself are getting along alright or not is not a big problem. Rather, it is our vow that all beings in the entire world obtain benefit, and they are blessed by Guan Yin Bodhisattva. If everyone maintained this thought as we recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, the response with the Way would certainly be inconceivable. You who recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva should understand the method of recitation used by a Bodhisattva

who vows, “All living beings and I will accomplish Buddhahood together.”

When you recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, you should also be mindful of the Guan Yin Bodhisattva in your own self-nature. In cultivation, whatever is going on outside is also going on inside. If Guan Yin Bodhisattva is external to you, he is also internal. So, when we are mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, we must recite until inside and outside are of a single suchness. Self and others are non-dual. Our self-nature is replete with the virtue of the nature of Buddhas as limitless as sands in the Ganges. When your mouth recites the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, your mind must be pure and sincere and must not give rise to any extraneous thoughts. One doesn't give rise to false thinking, but becomes single-minded in one's concentration. There's no need to be seeking anything or to be greedy for anything. There's also no reason to question why we are reciting Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. Reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name is exactly what our self-nature should be doing. When we recite to the point that we are reciting and yet not reciting, not reciting and yet reciting, then the Guan Yin Bodhisattva of our self-nature will appear. We recite until everything comes together. We forget about people and also have no self, and so what affliction or ignorance is there? At that time we are at ease and unobstructed and the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom spontaneously appears. The Wisdom of the Equality of the Nature spontaneously appears. The Wonderful Contemplative Wisdom spontaneously appears. The Wisdom of Accomplishing What Should Be Done also spontaneously appears. The first appearance of these Wisdoms is only the initial stage, because of course the Four Wisdoms have a myriad variations and degrees. It's not that their initial appearance means that you have accomplished the Four Wisdoms of a Buddha. Every level of accomplishment, every step of the way, has variations and

degrees. That is why if you are off by a hair in the beginning of your cultivation, you'll be off by a thousand miles in the end. Keep your mind on what you're doing and apply yourself with vigor. Don't fall into the deviant knowledge and deviant views of side doors and outside ways. Always maintain proper knowledge and proper views. Keep proper thought before you when you recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. You must be mindful of your own Guan Yin Bodhisattva: don't pay attention to other people's Guan Yin Bodhisattvas. What do I mean by "your own" Guan Yin Bodhisattva? I mean that you recite until you become the same as Guan Yin Bodhisattva, in that you are kind, compassionate, joyful and giving. You develop Guan Yin Bodhisattva's ability to help those in the seven difficulties and those with the two types of seeking. You develop the fourteen fearlessness, the nineteen ways of speaking Dharma, and the thirty-two response bodies--that is what is meant by being mindful of your own Guan Yin Bodhisattva. When you are mindful of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, you must also learn to be like Guan Yin Bodhisattva; you learn to have the great wisdom and great knowledge, the great vows and great strength, the great kindness and great compassion, the great joy and great giving of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. You have to do this truly, not superficially. For instance, now there are some who say that they are practicing the Bodhisattva Way, but actually, they are just putting on a front. No matter what they do, in every move they make, they are just doing it for others to see. They don't dare take a look at themselves. They don't look at themselves and evaluate to see if the Dharma they are cultivating, and the skill they are applying is appropriate or not. They don't ask themselves if they should be doing what they are doing. They don't question themselves to see if they are simply involved in superficial aspects. Those who are just putting on a show, and who, in all they do are just showing off for others, have let go

of the root and are grasping at the branches; they have forgotten the source. They have forgotten what they should be doing. In cultivating, you should be looking at yourself. "Looking," means returning the light and looking within. You're supposed to turn the light in, not shine it outside. You are not supposed to emit your light so that people will recognize you. You may get other people's attention, but by letting it out like that, you lose your light. That's because your light is still not sufficient. You haven't perfected your cultivation. When you haven't cultivated enough, then your light is really young. Young light is not the same as time-tested light. Young light cannot stand up against the wind and waves. Wait until your light is perfected, wait until it's exactly right--not too much, and not too little--then you can let it out. But now, while in the midst of cultivating, don't be thinking about emitting your light. In studying, you first go through elementary school, then high school, and then college, and then eventually obtain a PhD. It happens step-by-step. Cultivation is the same way. Someone protests, "In the Chan school, they talk about sudden enlightenment." But sudden enlightenment is in regard to the principle--the noumenon. The specifics--the phenomena --must be cultivated gradually. What is more, the person who experiences sudden enlightenment doesn't do it upon first beginning to cultivate; his cultivation began limitless kalpas ago when he first planted the seed. After that, he watered and weeded it until it finally came to maturity. It's certainly not the case that having never cultivated before, he became accomplished upon first beginning to cultivate. It doesn't happen like that.

*Although one suddenly enlightens to the principle,
The specifics must be gradually cultivated.*

In this Guan Yin Session we should get hold of our vigor

and be energetic. One cannot be lazy and look for opportunities to take it easy. If you are like that, then you are letting the time go by in vain. That's really a shame. Everyone works together in a session--exerting all their effort in applying their skill. This is a Dharma assembly which is extremely difficult to encounter.

Actually we should always recite the Buddha's name or the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva just as if we were in a continual session. But since it's to be feared that we don't apply our effort under normal circumstances, we set aside a special time so we can come together and participate in the Guan Yin Session. This is called, "Setting aside a time to seek for certification." (剋期取證)

In these seven days we will put aside the myriad conditions, and not give rise to a single thought. With a single straightforward mind uphold and be mindful of the name Guan Yin Bodhisattva. When you recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva you should be apart from deviant knowledge, and maintain proper knowledge and proper views. Don't be competitive when you recite, or get involved in making comparisons. Those are the attitudes of people in the mundane world. People who cultivate the Way don't compare themselves with other people. They don't fight with anyone or compete. Everyone works together and when people do well it is the same as if you yourself had done well. However, this doesn't mean you can use that as an excuse for not working on your own skill. You can't think, "Well if others working well is the same as myself working well, then they can do the work and I don't have to. I can rest." That is an example of deviant knowledge and deviant views. People who cultivate the Way cannot try to get off cheap. They can't enjoy relaxation and despise toil. At all times you should be vigorous in every moment, in every thought. With one part vigor you have one part response; with ten parts vigor you have ten parts response. Guan Shih Yin

Bodhisattva is there in empty space just waiting to see which of us is truly reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. He will aid and bless those who are sincere. He will help them open their wisdom, and increase their good roots. All their evil deeds will be eradicated and their obstacles will be wiped away. (諸惡消滅，三障蠲除) He can help us get rid of our karmic obstacles, retribution obstacles, and our obstacles of affliction. All our evil karma can be wiped clean. So when we recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva we must do it with a sincere mind, a true mind. Whoever has a genuine true and sincere mind will obtain benefit. But if your mind is not true and you just go through the motions of walking, sitting, and reciting, without ever being able to do it for real, then there won't be a response. A "true mind" is one devoid of false thinking, without seeking for anything, without any greed, without any contention, any selfishness or any seeking for self-benefit. If your mind is true, then real things will happen, and your karmic obstacles can be melted away. If your mind is not true, then your karmic obstacles will continually pursue you. It is best during a Guan Yin Session to speak less and recite more.

*Say one less sentence
And recite one more sound of the Buddha's name.
Beat your thoughts to death,
And your Dharma-body comes to life.*

But if your mind is not true, your karmic obstacles will hang around you and bother you. They will cause you to be so stupid you won't have any wisdom. They will make it so you cannot apply effort to develop your skill. But even if you do have a true mind, your karmic obstacles still follow you. They still want to give you trouble. They still want to find a way to keep you from doing your work; do you realize that? But if you have a true mind, and

proper knowledge and views, although the karmic obstacles try to make trouble for you, you recognize them as karmic obstacles. Then you are able to avoid being turned by the state, and instead you can turn the state around. If you have true knowledge, proper views and great wisdom, then you can illumine all dharmas. That's why it's said,

*When the Buddha comes, slice through the Buddha.
When the demon comes, slice through the demon.*

You are able to not be moved by external states, and not be confused by internal states. Everything inside and outside is very clear and manifest. That's the advantage of using proper knowledge and views, your genuine Bodhi resolve, in your cultivation. People who cultivate the Way, should know that we are doing it for the sake of ending birth and death, and taking living beings across. We're not doing it because we seek a response. It's not that we cultivate so that if we want clothing, clothing will come, or if we want something special to eat, it will appear for us. It's not that we do it so that whatever we think of we can have. That may be the way it is in the heavens, but if you seek responses here, you're planting the causes to become a heavenly demon. The heavenly demons are afraid their retinue will dwindle so they come to the world and go all over recruiting for their army. They get human beings to cross over into their demonic retinue. So, if you're not true when you cultivate the Way, there won't be any demons, but the truer you are, the more demons there will be.

For instance, if you're a left home person, but you don't really want to be a genuine disciple of the Buddha, if you just do it half-heartedly, then no one is going to get jealous of you. They'll all think you're just a good old soul. If you want to become an outstanding person, and be a genuine disciple of the Buddha, then

people who just go along with the crowd are going to be upset with you; they will be jealous of you. That's the way it is in the world, regardless of whether it's among ordinary people or members of the Sangha. If you are better than someone else, he is jealous of you. If you don't match up to someone else, that person looks down on you. Everyone has this problem. If a person leaves home and cultivates for a while and figures he's got something going, he gets arrogant. This is another case of deviant knowledge and deviant views. People who really cultivate the Way don't have false thoughts about clothing, or about food and drink, or about name and fame, or about profit and benefit. All false thinking stops. Why? Because cultivation is not for the sake of these worldly advantages. It is for the sake of ending birth and death. How can one expect to end birth and death, and at the same time be striking up such worthless false thoughts? If you have worthless false thoughts, in the future you will reap a worthless fruit. We must bear what others cannot bear, yield where others cannot yield. We must eat what others cannot eat and undergo what others cannot undergo. All food and drink should be regarded as a single flavor. When you eat don't be greedy for flavors which appeal to you and eat more of them, while avoiding food which is not as tasty. That's a trick of the discriminating mind. You should know that the good tasting food, and the food which is not good to eat are both simply medicine. We eat them to cure our sicknesses. Some of us are always sick with one sort of illness or another. If it isn't the sickness of greed, it's the sickness of anger; these illnesses are incurable. Why? Because you keep getting turned by those states. You're greedy for flavors; when that happens you're turned by defiling flavors. If you're greedy for forms, you're turned by the defiling objects of form. If you are greedy for sounds, you're turned by the defiling objects of sound. If you're greedy for scents, you're turned by the defiling objects of scents. If you are greedy

for touch, then you are turned by the defiling objects of touch. If you are greedy for dharmas, then you are turned by the defiling objects of dharmas. It's in the very minutest places that you have to genuinely apply your skill. You can't be lax or negligent in the least. If you have false thoughts about food, that's being lax. The same is true if you have false thoughts about fame, reputation, fine clothing, etc. You are not in control of your six thieves. Your six sense organs play tricks on you and you can't keep it together. If you're like that, you can cultivate to the ends of future time, and still you won't have any accomplishment. So cultivating the Way is not that easy. This is especially true in the West where we are just breaking the ground. It's very difficult to get Buddhism started in a country that is predominately Catholic and Protestant. Those religions can do as they please, but in Buddhism we cannot cheat ourselves. We cannot seek the blessings of gods and humans. We cannot just take it easy. We can't just make it on a false name and a phony reputation. To do it that way will always bring barren flowers and no fruit.

At all times seek the true. No matter what Dharma door it is, we must actually put it into practice. We must make sacrifices and be reliable in doing the work. It won't work to cheat yourself and cheat other people as well, not to speak of trying to cheat the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which basically can't be done.

Here in America things are peaceful and uneventful compared to the way it is in the refugee camps. If you have to go through the experience of being a refugee, then you will know how bitter and difficult it is. Don't be the kind of person who ordinarily doesn't even bother to light incense, but when something happens you run and hug the Buddha's feet. Don't wait until it rains to patch the roof, or until you're thirsty to dig a well. We are reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva as a prayer on behalf of all the refugees in the whole world. We hope that all refugees will be able

to separate from suffering and obtain bliss; may they all escape danger. That is why the Guan Yin Session has a direct connection with the lives of everyone in the world. If we are sincere, we'll be able to save more people. If we are not sincere, fewer people will be rescued.

At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, our aim is to rescue all the suffering beings in the world. We recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva with the hope that the Bodhisattva's thousand eyes will shine on them and see them, that his thousand ears will hear them from afar, and that his thousand hands will protect and support all living beings. In this session period, everyone should strive to be first and fear to fall back. No one should be lazy. If you don't have Way virtue, if you lack merit and virtue, if you don't have the thought to benefit yourself and benefit others, then this will have a direct reflection on the level you achieve. Now we are cultivating the Great Vehicle Dharma which means we renounce ourselves for the sake of others. We act as models for living beings; we seek peace on behalf of all living beings. We pray that living beings will be able to leave suffering and obtain bliss. We are not reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva for the sake of ourselves. We are doing it for the sake of all beings in the world, and because we are doing it this way, it is certain that our recitation of the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva will bring a tremendous response. Guan Yin Bodhisattva is truly a savior; he truly follows the sounds and rescues beings. So don't be lazy in the midst of this session. You should realize that every person who recites adds that much more strength to the recitation. With more strength to the recitation, more of the world will become peaceful. So it is extremely important. We don't seek for ourselves but pray for all beings in the world. In that way there is no selfishness or self-benefit involved. In addition, there is no selfish seeking, greed, or contention. You should nourish the thought of

renouncing yourself for the sake of others, and put it into practice. With Great Vehicle thinking like that you will certainly obtain the protection of the Bodhisattvas.

I remember a long time ago there was a man who wasn't white, black, yellow, or red--a misfit of some sort. He was about 5' 4" and very thin. He came to Gold Mountain Monastery, but he didn't come in the door. He sat in meditation outside the door. It was raining, but he sat right through the rain for three or four days. He didn't talk to anyone. He didn't talk to himself either. One day one of the laywomen felt sorry for him and invited him into Gold Mountain Monastery, but he didn't come in. He kept on sitting outside. If anyone went and tried to talk to him, he wouldn't speak to them. Then I went out and he talked to me. I asked him what his surname was and he said, "Stone." His name, he said, was "Man." So he was called Stone Man. I asked where he came from, and he said, "The mountains." When I asked what he'd come for, he said, "To seek Dharma." I said, "I haven't any Dharma here to seek, so you've come and now you're disappointed." He said he was not disappointed.

So we told him to come into Gold Mountain Monastery, but he didn't eat or drink or relieve himself. Every day he sat in meditation. It seemed as if he might be a hippy and be smoking dope, so the monks checked him out. The clothes he wore were filthy. He wore jeans, jacket and pants, and the only thing he was carrying was a piece of charcoal. When asked what it was for, he said it kept him warm. He stayed in the temple for several days like that. He would meditate all day in the Buddha hall along with everyone else and when it was time to sleep he would go up to a room. People were afraid he would steal things at night, so they had someone guard him at night. The guard would sleep inside the room with him, leaning against the door from the inside; if the stone man tried to leave the room he would certainly wake

up the guard. They could guard him in this way, because since he didn't relieve himself, he wouldn't need to leave the room for that reason. However, even though they kept him under guard like this, one day the stone man simply disappeared.

Why do I tell you about him? A stone man can come to Gold Mountain Monastery seeking the Dharma, but we people who are the most adroit of all creatures still don't cultivate to the best of our ability. Isn't that a pity? During that period at Gold Mountain Monastery, a lot of people came. There was another one that came and no one could figure out if the person was male or female. He was dressed in flashy clothes, but when asked his name, he said it was "Ghost." When he ate, "Ghost" consumed large quantities. He would finish up everything that was served. He lived for several days at Gold Mountain Monastery, and then that ghost left for parts unknown. He no doubt was a hungry ghost. That happened several years ago.

All through those years at Gold Mountain Monastery, Guan Yin Bodhisattva protected us, and now that we are at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, you should realize that those who are sick will get well if they recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. If someone who has had an operation and who has been told by the doctors that there is no hope of getting better recites the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva with sincerity, that person can get well. If people get poisoned, like the layman who ate the poison mushrooms, and they recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, they can get well, just as he did. The poison won't be able to kill them. The power of Guan Yin Bodhisattva is inconceivable! We shouldn't fail to recognize Guan Yin Bodhisattva when face to face with him. Guan Yin Bodhisattva is right within our Bodhimanda, and yet when we have a Guan Yin Session, we are still so lazy. We don't use our vigor but just do enough to get by. We steal off for some rest and relaxation and have a sunbath. Some go outside

to catch a tan and don't follow along and recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. It's really a pity, really stupid, and it shows a total lack of regard for Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva.

I'll tell you something else; Guan Yin Bodhisattva takes you by the ear and gives it a pull as he tells you to cultivate well, and you still wonder who's doing it. You still fail to catch on to who it is. Instead you react by saying, "What are you doing looking after my affairs? Mind your own business! Who are you anyway? What's it to you whether I cultivate or not?" Such people even scold Guan Yin Bodhisattva himself! It's really a shame. That's just missing your chance when it is right at hand, and turning your back on a good opportunity. However, what's past is past. Let's look to the future with renewed vigor. From now on, you certainly shouldn't miss the opportunity to participate in a Guan Yin Session, or any other Dharma assembly. No one can just go off on their own and not take part. That's impermissible! If you do that, you are wrecking your own future. Such a rare opportunity and it only lasts for seven days, and yet you let it go by in vain. If you have something more important to do, then it's alright to do it if it's protecting the Bodhimanda, but if you don't have something more important to do, you shouldn't run away and not do the session.

Reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva is just a way of cleaning up the garbage. For every phrase of Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name you recite, you should have one less false thought. Two phrases means two less false thoughts. Reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name three times means three less false thoughts. A hundred phrases, a thousand phrases, ten thousand phrases, and you have correspondingly less false thinking. You protest, "Dharma Master, you're wrong. At the same time I am reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, I'm having false thoughts. I have more false thoughts than I do recitations of

Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name, by far." Well, you are a person with inconceivable talent. If you recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name on the one hand, and have false thoughts on the other, then you are basically not reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name at all! Your mind is not on your words. You look but do not see, listen but do not hear. Then although you are following along with the assembly in reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, you are not really attentive to Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Since you are not attentive to the Bodhisattva, your false thoughts come forth in profusion. When that happens, although you are saying "Guan Yin Bodhisattva" with your mouth, your mind is in a state of total confusion. You get caught up in the false thought. Pretty soon it gets so bad that you totally forget you are reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and become completely absorbed in the false thoughts you are having. That's called neglecting your responsibility and doing things in a halfhearted way. You're not really reciting Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name; you're just going along with the crowd. So there's no response to your recitation, and no power behind it.

When you recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, your eyes should constantly contemplate the Bodhisattva as being right there in front of you. His thousand eyes shine down upon you and his thousand ears hear you. His thousand hands protect and support you. When your mouth recites, your ears should hear the sound very clearly, "Namo Guan Shih Yin Pu Sa." Send that sound to your heart. Your heart then invites the Bodhisattva in. When the mouth recites clearly and the mind remembers clearly, then at the gates of the six sense organs--eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind--you are mindful of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. This is called gathering in the six sense organs and deeply entering through one door. As Great Strength Bodhisattva put it, "Gathering in the six organs through continuous pure mindfulness to obtain samadhi,

is the foremost method.” That’s what he said in describing his method of perfect penetration of the six organs. We use the same method in reciting the name of Guan Shih Yin Bodhisattva as we use in reciting the Buddha’s name. “Gathering in the six sense organs” means keeping them from becoming scattered. We get them under control. We make them obey our instructions. We turn the six thieves into six Dharma protectors. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind are called the six thieves, and also the six gates; they become six Dharma protectors if you can gather them in. That means you simply do not allow the six thieves to play any more tricks. You train them until they are extremely compliant and reliable.

If you find you cannot recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, but that you are constantly having false thoughts, ask yourself why. It’s just because you have not been able to gather in the six sense organs. You can’t get a rein on them. If you are able to gather them in and to be continuously mindful, with pure thoughts one after the other--thoughts of mindfulness of Guan Yin Bodhisattva--so that the sound never stops, then eventually you will enter samadhi. You will obtain proper concentration, and proper reception. You will have the samadhi of mindfulness of the Buddha or of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. This is the foremost method. If you can obtain the samadhi of mindfulness of Guan Yin, then you can be considered someone who is participating in the Guan Yin Session. If you can’t obtain that samadhi, then you aren’t really participating in the Guan Yin Session. You may argue, “But in the past I’ve participated in so many Guan Yin sessions.” Well, were they efficacious for you? Did you enter samadhi or not? When you are in that samadhi, from the moment you arise in the morning until the time you retire in the evening, your mouth continuously recites the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. You are unaware of the passage of time. You are unaware of what time

it is right now; you are unaware of the coming of time. Past, present, and future time simply do not exist for you when you enter samadhi. When reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, you don't remember whether or not you have eaten. Why not? Because you are single-mindedly reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. You don't recall putting on your clothes. Why not? Because you are reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and have forgotten everything else. You forget about sleeping as well for the same reason. When those details fall by the wayside, then your proper concentration and proper samadhi have manifested. When proper concentration appears, you don't have any affliction in your mind. You have no ignorance. Your recitation of the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva is pure and immaculate, and it makes you happy and joyful. Reciting is more comfortable than anything else you might do; it is better than any other activity. You say you are sick, but if you recite like this, you will forget your sickness. You say you don't get enough to eat, but if you recite like this you will forget your hunger. You'll forget everything else. That includes the manifestation of "states", such as having someone or something talk to you while you are in meditation; that's a demonic state, not samadhi. People who cultivate the Way must vow to cross over the living beings of their own self-nature. They vow to study the Dharma doors of their own self-nature, and to accomplish the Buddha Way of their own self-nature. If you don't recognize your own self-nature, and instead go adding a head on top of a head, and invent some "spirit" or "Bodhisattva" or something else, you're making a mistake.

In cultivating, one must return the light and illumine within. Do not seek outside; everything is to be found within your own self-nature. Ask yourself if you have any skill in your cultivation. If you don't have greed, you have some skill. That's an essential point. Ask yourself if you have any anger. If someone slapped your

face for no reason, would you lose your temper? If you say you would, then you don't have any skill in your cultivation. If you wouldn't get angry, then although we cannot say your attachment to self is completely cut off, it is significantly diminished. If you have to admit that in your mind you still get upset, afflicted, or want to get angry, then you don't have any cultivation. That's also a case of not being empty. If you're empty, who gets angry? Who gets afflicted? Who's making all the fuss? If you still have these things, you don't have any cultivation. Even if you don't have these things, you can't say, "My cultivation is stupendous!" All it means is that you have the slightest bit of skill, that you've taken the first steps in cultivation, nothing more. You can't get arrogant and haughty and say things like, "Look at me, I'm the foremost cultivator in the entire world!" That's the talk of someone with an overweening view of the self. It's the talk of a great demon king. You must not think like that. As soon as you give rise to thoughts like that, you are engaging in deviant knowledge and deviant views. Again, ask yourself, do you have any stupid thoughts? "Is it the case that I can penetrate one thing and understand all things from it? Is it the case that I am clear about everything, and don't have any obstacles?" Even if it really is that way for you, that is still just the beginning of cultivation. You can't stop there, and be satisfied. If you say, "I've got it all! I've perfected everything!" then you are just a person who has the arrogance of one who's insane. You're someone who's crazy about himself!

In True Emptiness there is no self and others.

In the Great Way there is no form or appearance.

When you reach True Emptiness, how can there be people and a self? If you're always thinking about getting a chance to drink some juice or some tea, or some other beverage, then you don't

have any concentration. You have not obtained any samadhi. When you enter samadhi you drink the tea of nature which is sweet dew. If you still need to be seeking outside for this and that, then you are still caught up in what is phony. In cultivation you can't put on a false face. You can't just hang out a sign professing to be a cultivator when in fact you're, "hanging out a sheep's head and selling dog's meat." You can't engage in activities which are not in accord with the Dharma. If you have really obtained samadhi and are really cultivating, then in the winter you won't be cold, and in the summer you won't be hot. Why not? You won't have that kind of discrimination in your mind. You will no longer know hunger or thirst. How could you possibly go about stealing things to eat and drink, and stealthily engaging in all kinds of activities which are violations of the precepts? You simply wouldn't do such things. The determination as to whether you have skill or not, or whether you can pass the test or not, can only be made by an expert. If you aren't experienced and yet pretend to be experienced, you're telling a big lie. That will lead you to the hells in the future. So, when we cultivate we want to do it truly and actually. You actually do it, and don't just invent a phony name for yourself and be satisfied with that. "Although the mention of plums can cure one's thirst, a painting of a cake will never satisfy one's hunger."

It's been a long time since I transmitted any essential teaching to you, so I'll do so now. For those of you who feel tired, who feel like the session is too much suffering, you should contemplate in this way:

"I'm about to die. This is my last breath. So, in this last moment before I die, I am going to give my all in reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva." For instance, you're in an airplane and it is about to crash; if you don't recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name for all you're worth, your life hasn't got a millionth of a

chance--the danger is that grave! Or you can imagine you're in a train and it jumps its rails; it's being rolled over the ground, and if you don't recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva's name and ask to be saved, it's for sure that everyone in the train will die. They've got no insurance. Or you can imagine you're in a car and the car goes out of control and catapults through space and heads for a deep ravine. If that happens, your body will be smashed to smithereens. And there won't be any remains. Not to speak of resting, you won't be fit to ever do anything again! At those crucial moments you want to recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and you should regard every moment of the session as being just that crucial. Just think that your death is imminent; in that moment before death, you would certainly recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, seeking to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. You should recite as if your life depended on it. But this is just an analogy; of course you don't want to scream, "Namo Guan Shih Yin Pu Sa!" and then fall onto the bench cracking your skull in two in the process. That's just being stupid. The analogy is used to help you realize how intense you should be about it. You should be that concerned, and should consider it that important. If everyone recites the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva like that, not even one of you will fail to become accomplished. Why are you unsuccessful? It's because when your legs hurt you can't take it. When your back aches you can't stand it. You have to go rest and lie down for a while. When you act like that, Guan Yin Bodhisattva takes a look and knows that you're washed up! Finished. If you recite with that attitude, then even if you recite until your throat is sore, Guan Yin Bodhisattva will pay you no heed, because you don't really place any importance on mindfulness of Guan Yin; you don't give it all you've got. If you imagine that King Yama and the ghost of impermanence are standing right there before you ready to invite you for tea, and then decide that instead you will stay here and

do what you have to do--if you can regard what you're doing as that important--then a single recitation of the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva transcends millions of half-hearted recitations. It's just because you're not in a tight spot right now that you're not reciting sincerely. If you could recite, right here, with the same kind of sincerity which one of the refugees recited while on a flimsy boat that was being battered by the wind and waves, knowing that if she didn't recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva there was no hope at all, then you'd have some success. So, why is it you want to rest now that you're safe and sound? It's because you're out of danger. Actually, though,

*This day has already passed,
and our lives are that much shorter.
We are like fish in an ever-shrinking pool;
what bliss is there in this?
Great assembly! You should go forth with
diligence and vigor as if you were
trying to save your own head!
Be mindful only of impermanence,
and be careful not to be lax!*

After you die, you'll have no opportunity to recite the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, even if you want to.

Dharma Realm Buddhist Association Branches

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas

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Avatamsaka Hermitage

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Tel: (301) 299-3693

Avatamsaka Monastery

1009 4th Avenue, S.W. Calgary, AB T2P OK8 Canada
Tel: (403) 234-0644 Email: ava@nucleus.com

Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery (formerly Deng Bi An)

161, Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: (03) 2164-8055 Fax: (03) 2163-7118

Prajna Guan Yin Sagely Monastery (formerly Tze Yun Tung)

Batu 5½, Jalan Sungai Besi,
Salak Selatan, 57100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: (03) 7982-6560 Fax: (03) 7980-1272

Fa Yuan Sagely Monastery

1, Jalan Utama, Taman Serdang Raya, 43300 Seri Kembangan, Selangor,
Malaysia
Tel: 03-89485688

Lotus Vihara

136, Jalan Sekolah, 45600 Batang Berjuntai,
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Tel: (03) 3271-9439

Guan Yin Sagely Monastery

166A Jalan Temiang, 70200 Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia
Tel: 06-7611988

Malaysia Dharma Realm Buddhist Association Penang Branch

32-32C, Jalan Tan Sri Teh Ewe Lim, 11600 Jelutong, Penang, Malaysia
Tel/Fax: 04-2817728 / 04-2817798

Source of Dharma Realm

Malaysia Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Lot S130, 2nd Floor, Sungai Wang Plaza, Jalan Bukit Bintang, 55100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Buddhist Lecture Hall

31 Wong Nei Chong Road, Top Floor, Happy Valley, Hong Kong, China
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Dharma Realm Sagely Monastery

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Amitabha Monastery

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Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.