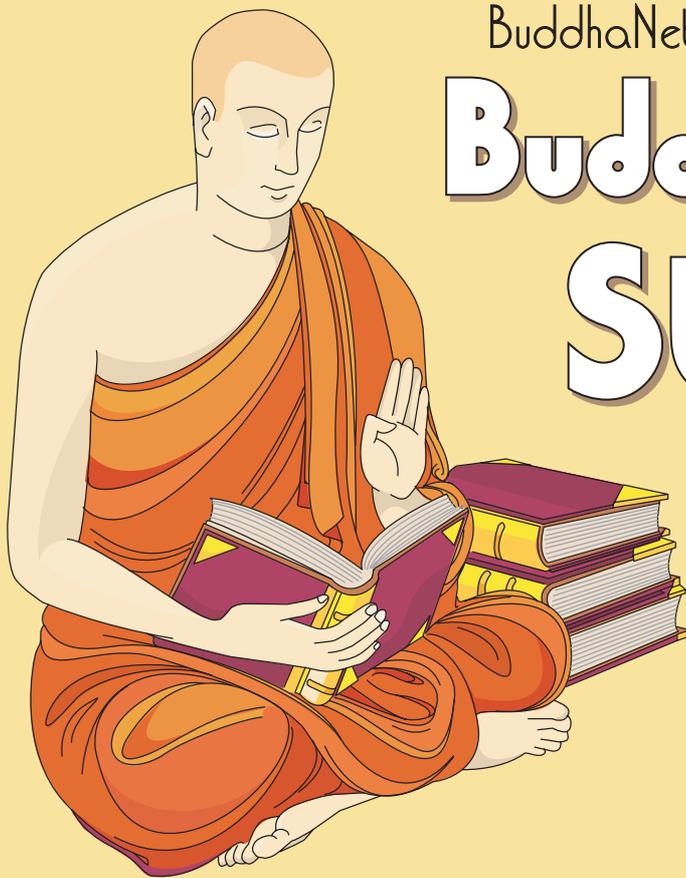


Popular Deities

in Chinese Buddhism (Illustrated)



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In early 1979 the author encountered an unusual spiritual experience which changed his life and put him onto the Buddhist path. For weeks he had fervently prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to Sai Baba for a miraculous cure as his younger brother was stricken with cancer and slowly withering away. Heaven responded to his cries and Kuan Yin P'usa came into his life most unexpectedly. Kuan Yin not only promised that his brother would live but would also be blessed with a son the following year... and it was so! The author was also asked to establish a place of worship so that many others could also enjoy Her blessings in the future. Thus, the Kuan Yin Contemplative Order was founded in the same year and Kuan Yin has indeed given Her blessings to a great number of people who went there to worship Her.

Over the years the Kuan Yin Contemplative Order (KYCO) had been blessed with the visits of numerous world-renowned Buddhist Dharma Masters who gave teachings there. It was then that the author realised that many who called themselves Buddhists had only a very vague idea of what Buddhism is. This led him to produce this book with the sincere objective of inducing such people to spend more time in Dharma study. With a comprehensive description of each of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the popular Chinese Pantheon, the inclusion of the many colourful illustrations and the basic teachings of the Buddha which all Buddhists should know, it is hoped that this unique book will make Dharma-reading pleasurable. For the sake of avoiding undue publicity he has chosen to use his Buddhist name as the author of this book.

中國佛教 著名的佛菩薩

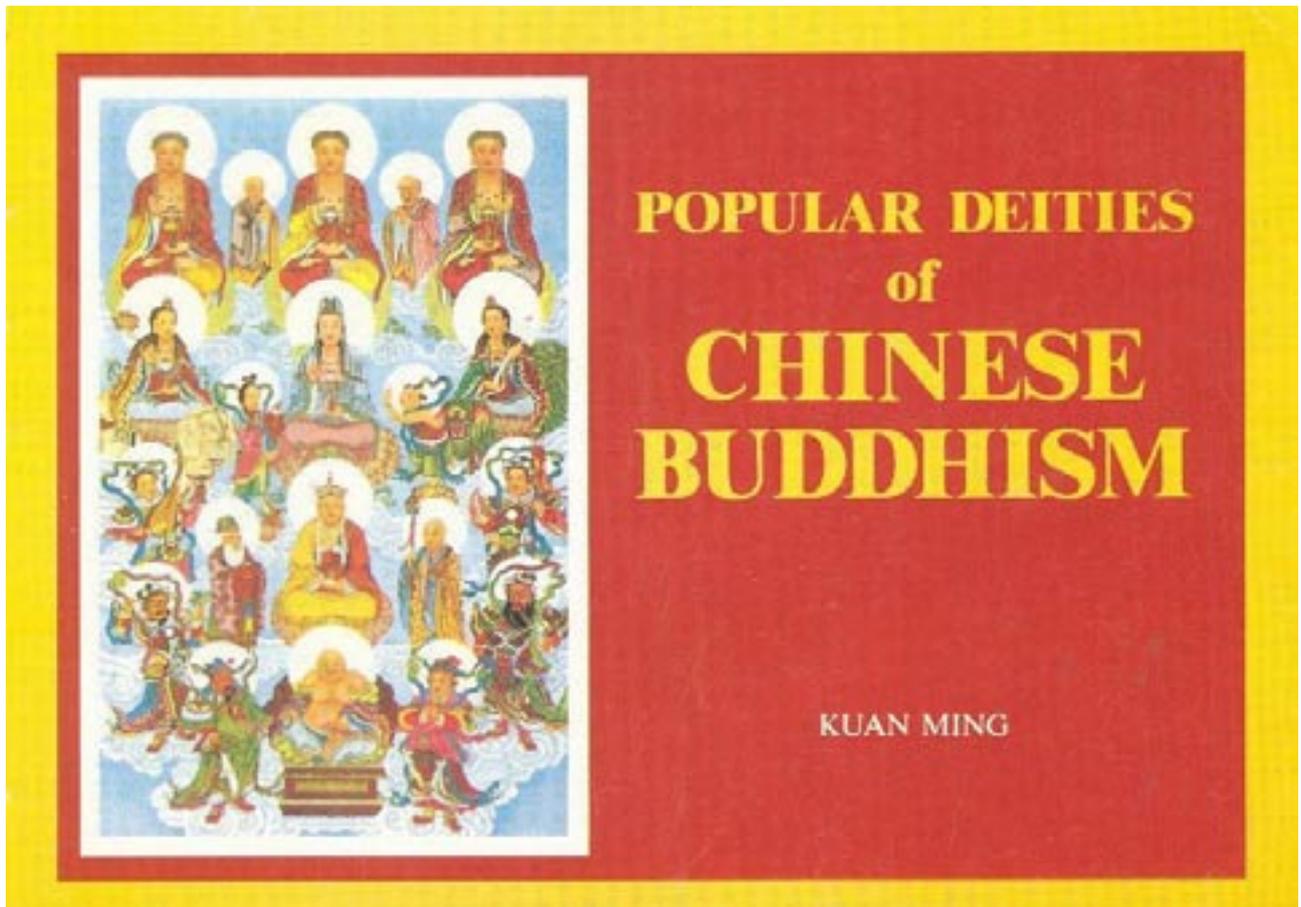
*Popular Deities
of
Chinese Buddhism*

by

觀明

Kuan Ming

*Kuan Yin Contemplative Order
Malaysia*



To my father and mother
— *the kindest persons that I have ever known.*



Preface

This elementary book on Chinese Buddhism and its more popularly worshipped Deities, has been written for the benefit of *Buddhists* amongst the Chinese community. I refer to them as *Buddhists* in italics because they do not have a clear idea of their faith. Their spiritual practices have been reduced to mere superstitious beliefs and blind faith due to lack of doctrinal knowledge and opportunities to meet with Dharma teachers.

It is amazing to find Buddhists who do not know what their religion stands for. Some do not even know who the Buddha is or whether He is the same Buddha who was born in India, or what is meant by “Refuge-taking”. Just by offering incense to the Heavenly Gods and to the Ancestral Tablets does not qualify them to be Buddhists as it is not a Buddhist practice at all. In order for them to find comfort and meaning in their religious pursuits they must, first of all, have a clear idea of what Buddhism is and what constitutes its practice. It is also important that they are able to distinguish the differences between Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Gods, otherwise the term ‘deity’ would have to be used to describe them. This explains why the title of this book has been changed from “The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of Chinese Buddhism” to the “Popular Deities of Chinese Buddhism”.

The picture of the popular Chinese Pantheon of Deities gave me the inspiration to write a book which offers the opportunity to

give an explanation on the meanings and differences between the various classes of divine beings that exist in Buddhism. I have chosen the same picture for the cover design with the hope that its familiarity with the average Buddhist will induce them to read it so as to gain a basic knowledge of their religion. Apart from giving a general outline of Buddhism and its entry into China, I have also attempted to provide brief accounts on the important doctrines that the Buddha has taught, prayers that one may recite to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, how to become a Buddhist, and a number of interesting articles that are related to Chinese Buddhism.

This is indeed a book of love — love for the Greatly Compassionate Kuan Shih Yin who came so suddenly into my life in 1979 and bringing so much meaning to it. It is also written for the benefit and sustenance of our insignificant Kuan Yin Contemplative Order which has been blessed with the visits of so many wonderful Dharma teachers and friends. Finally, my very grateful thanks to my brother Nelson Wong, who is my spiritual benefactor, and my wife for her great patience with me during my nightly struggles to bring forth this book.

KUAN MING

1985

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An Introduction to Buddhism

Buddhism is a universal religion, one which has brought peace of mind, happiness and harmony to millions of people in its long history of more than 2,500 years. It is suitable for anyone who has a mind to perceive the Truth and who wishes to live his life meaningfully for the benefit of others as it teaches one to have a realistic view of both life and the world. It has no place however, for those who are selfish and narrow-minded.

Buddhism does not encourage blind faith nor indulge in frightening and agonising people with imaginary fears and feelings of guilt in order to convert them. It is a practical religion which encourages its followers to reason and query, even the teachings of the Buddha. To live the life of a Buddhist, one must be ready to follow the way of life that the Buddha has taught and this requires great discipline, determination and self-effort. Right practice of the religion leads to peace, tranquillity, happiness, wisdom and perfect freedom. For these and many other reasons, Buddhism has satisfied the spiritual needs of more than one third of mankind.

Buddhism is a way of life. It is also a religion of reason and disciplinary meditational practices leading to the purification of the mind and Deliverance, the full liberation from the cycle of birth,

old age, diseases and death. In its long history, Buddhism has not shed a single drop of blood in persuading people to walk its gentle path. It is a religion that requires all its followers to practise loving kindness and compassion towards all sentient beings.

Sakyamuni Buddha was deeply concerned with suffering in life and for some forty-five years after his Enlightenment, taught ways and means to overcome and transcend it. The Buddha's theme is therefore one of liberation from all suffering and sorrow.

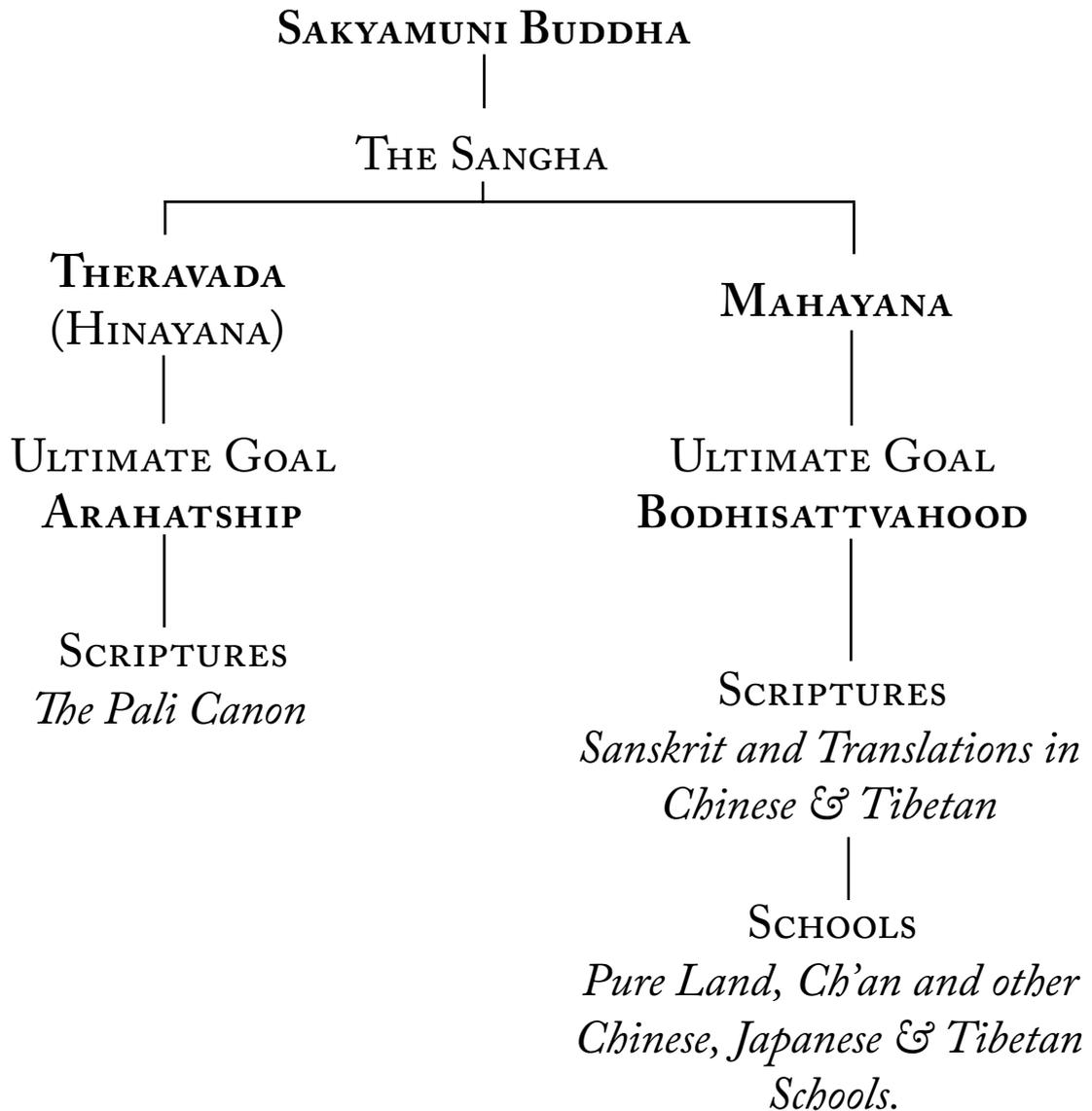
The Buddha established the Noble Order of the Sangha, the community of monks, more than 2500 years ago. After His death (Parinirvana), His Teachings (Dharma) became the sole guide and source of inspiration to the Sangha. However, the vast teachings together with their profundity brought about different understanding and interpretations so that two main schools of thought came into being.

At the second Buddhist Council in Vaisali, held some 100 years after the death of the Buddha, the two great traditions of the Hinayana and Mahayana were formally established. The Hinayanists (Theravadins) follow the Pali Canon while the Mahayanists took to heart the scriptures that were written in Sanskrit.

This chart gives a brief summary of the two great schools of Buddhism: Hinayana and Mahayana.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM

The Schools of Buddhism



From India Buddhism gradually spread out all over the Asian continent with the Theravada being widely accepted in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia while China, Mongolia, Japan, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan accepted the Mahayana School of thought.

The two great traditions share the same basic teachings of the Buddha but their interpretations of the ideals and practices are not quite the same. The Theravada, often referred to as the Hinayana, focuses on the attainment of the Arhat level of realisation while the Mahayana, being much more progressive, liberal and open-minded, strives not for self liberation but to serve mankind actively through the attainment of Bodhisattvahood. The Mahayana recognises the weakness of human beings and offers help in salvation through the services of the Bodhisattvas. This great concern and attitude earns it the title “Mahayana” or “Great Vehicle” as it seeks to benefit all beings by awakening their enlightenment thought which leads them to practise the Bodhisattva path. It is open to all who wish to practise it, whether monk or laity, and therefore has won the hearts of countless people, especially the Chinese. As the Mahayana spreads across the land, it absorbed the different cultures and indigenous beliefs, thus allowing the Great Vehicle to transform the wisdom of Buddhahood to different people in a variety of ways. Thus we find that there are more schools of Mahayana Buddhism which are but different paths of practice leading to the same goal.

Hinayana Buddhism is not a metaphysical doctrine but a philosophical one. It does not speculate on the origin of the world nor the existence of God and neither does it accept the divinity of the Buddha. The Buddha, himself is regarded as a man, a great teacher, but not a God or Deity. The stress is on self-reliance and it follows therefore that one should not expect miraculous help from any deity in heaven at all. One should rather rely on one's own efforts and conduct to achieve one's goals.

In Hinayana, the main aim of the strenuous religious disciplines is to develop oneself into a spiritual being of the highest level, that of an **ARHAT**, a 'worthy one' or a 'perfected being', who is able to bring to an end, the repeated rounds of rebirths in the suffering worlds known as Samsara. Within Samsara are six different kinds of existences: that of the Devas (gods), Asuras (demi-gods), Humans, Animals, Pretas (ghosts) and Hell-beings. Each being in these worlds or realms are subject to the pains of birth, disease, old age and death which will be discussed in details later on.

Mahayana Buddhism is Devotional Buddhism which requires its adherents to put full faith in the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who possess the infinite power to save all beings. It is the path of compassion and it rejects the idea of pursuit of Nirvana as a lone quest which is considered self-centred and selfish. It also teaches the concept of the Bodhisattva who is fully concerned in the salvation of all living beings. Bodhisattvahood, therefore, is the goal of the Mahayana which requires a resolve to win full enlightenment for the benefit of all that lives, and thereafter, until Buddhahood, passes countless lifetimes in the practice of the Six Perfections (Paramitas) of Giving, Morality, Patience, Perseverance, Meditation and Wisdom. Through the practice of Giving, Morality and Patience, vast merits are gained; through the practice of Meditation and Wisdom, transcendental Knowledge is attained; and in order to be successful in these practices the Perfection of Perseverance must be accomplished.

What then is a Bodhisattva?

BODHISATTVA is a Sanskrit term with **BODHI** meaning Wisdom or Enlightenment, and **SATTVA**, which means Essence or Being. A Bodhisattva is thus a Wisdom-being or an Aspiring Buddha who is determined to attain Buddhahood.

When enlightened, he renounces Nirvana and goes on living Samsaric existences for the sake of others, perfects himself during an incalculable period of time and finally realises Nirvana and becomes a Fully Enlightened Buddha, a Samyaksambuddha. His main attributes are love, compassion, selflessness and wisdom and his capacity for service to others is unlimited. The Vows that he aspires to fulfill are:

“However innumerable sentient beings are, I vow to save them.

However inexhaustible the defilements are, I vow to extinguish them.

However immeasurable the Dharmas are, I vow to master them.

However difficult Enlightenment is, I vow to attain it!”

These great Vows thus commit the Bodhisattva to lead all beings to liberation and to remain in this world till the end, even for the sake of a single being. They are known as the Bodhisattva Vows which all Mahayanists should practise.

A Bodhisattva is usually presented as the personification of a particular trait of the Buddha, and as there are numerous such

traits, so also are there different Bodhisattvas. A transcendent Bodhisattva who enjoys the most devotion and popularity as helper to liberation is **AVALOKITESVARA** (Kuan Shih Yin), who is the compassionate aspect of the Buddha. He and other popular Celestial Bodhisattvas described in this book will help to remove incorrect ideas and speculative doubts from the minds of those who have little or no knowledge of the Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana teachings.

While the Hinayana Arhat accumulates meritorious karma for his own salvation through following and practising the teachings of the Buddha, he also serves others though his capacity to do so is limited. The Mahayana Bodhisattva, on the other hand, relentlessly carries out his mission of universal salvation, transferring his vast merits to the less fortunate ones so that they too may enjoy the fruits of such merits. Thus the Bodhisattva Ideal brings about much hope for the down-trodden and provides a noble goal to those who are seriously on the Buddha's path. The Arhat ideal may not sound as noble as that of the Bodhisattva but it does not necessarily mean that the Mahayana is in any way superior to the Hinayana practice. Both are ideal paths that lead to enlightenment and those who are aspiring to become Arhats are not necessarily selfish since Arhatship cannot be attained if there is even the slightest tinge of selfishness left in his being. A true Buddhist will not indulge in glorifying his path of practice, he should realise that without the Hinayana there can be no Mahayana path. What is more important is that they both share the same fundamental teachings such as:-

1. Sakyamuni Buddha as the Original Buddha.
2. There is no supreme deity who created the world and governed it.
3. The Four Noble Truths.
4. The Noble Eightfold Path.
5. The Truth of Dependent Origination (Patticasamupada).
6. The concepts on Impermanence (Anicca), Suffering (Dukkha) and Non-self (Anatta).
7. The Three Trainings (Trisiksa) of Morality (sila), Meditation (samadhi) and Wisdom (prajna).

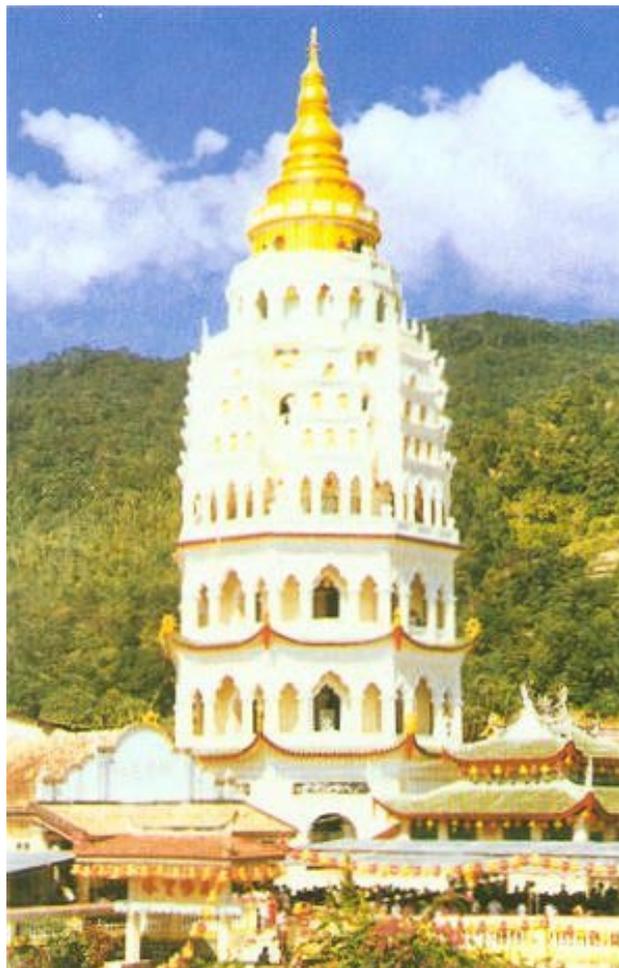
Both Schools of Buddhism entered China a few hundred years after the Buddha's death but the Mahayana took firm roots in the hearts of the Chinese as can be seen by the number of Mahayana Sects that eventually developed.

Chinese Buddhism

Historical record has it that two Buddhist missionaries from India, on the 30th day of the 12th month, in the year 68 AD, arrived at the court of Emperor Ming (ruled 58–75 AD) of the Han Dynasty. They enjoyed imperial favours and stayed on to translate various Buddhist Texts, one of which, The Sutra in Forty-two Sections, enjoyed wide popularity which continues to be so even today. Buddhism soon took roots in the Chinese soil covering the entire country with monasteries which welcome all who felt a call to enter a monastic life. These monasteries subsisted on a common fund sustained by gifts from the charitable. They became a refuge for the unhappy, the unwanted and those who have noble intentions.

What gave the early Buddhists their popularity can be attributed mainly to the doctrines of the common brotherhood of men and the Law of Cause and Effect. This taught that every good act such as worship, charity, reading and printing scriptures, wishing for the good of others and other good deeds would infallibly cause good results. The rewards of their faith in the compassion and saving powers of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and other Mahayana teachings easily attracted a great following. Moreover, one could be a good Buddhist without actually entering the Order, as was impossible according to the Hinayana. Another very important factor which helped to spread and popularised Mahayana Buddhism was its non-rejection of the peoples' ethnic faiths so that their gods and spirits were absorbed into its vast pantheon. There was no real harm in worshipping such deities so long as it was recognised that enlightenment could be won only by following the way of the Buddha and not gained through godly worship. The Chinese could thus continue to turn to their gods for worldly boons such as success in love affairs, business, gaining wealth, recovering of illness and even requesting for extension of life. This may seem a superstitious practice but do not people of other faiths also pray to their gods for such help? Chinese Buddhism has therefore, its own unique flavour and beauty since it has, to a certain extent, been influenced by Taoist thoughts. Thus the Chinese Pantheon came into being. The sole intention of producing this book is to provide useful information to the uninformed Buddhists who worship such figures in the temples. It also serves to explain to non-Buddhists that Buddhists often respect and honour gods and deities but do not take refuge in them.

As a result of the seeds sown by the Indian missionaries, Buddhism soon flowered into a number of distinctive schools which were the products of the Chinese mind. Each of these schools developed its own method of practice basing on a particular text and appealing to different sets of people. The most outstanding schools amongst them being the T'ien-tai, Hua Yen, Ch'an and Pure Land. The Pure Land School with its easy method of practice that leads to salvation, together with such a lovable deity as the Greatly Compassionate Kuan Shih Yin P'usa easily won the largest number of adherents to make it the principal school of Buddhism among the Chinese. Kuan Yin is so popular that She is even worshipped in Taoist temples as the Goddess of Mercy.



KEK LOK SI TEMPLE

CHAPTER I

A Typical Chinese Monastery

The Chinese Buddhist monastery or temple is fashioned after the palaces and bears very little resemblance to that of temples in India or any other Buddhist countries. Generally there are three groups of buildings separated by courtyards. The monastery, like other Chinese structures, normally faces south.

Entering the front hall, one is confronted by four huge images, usually made of wood, two on each side. These are the Four Heavenly Kings or Devas, the Guardians of the four Directions, and the hall is named after them as the 'SI TIEN WANG TIEN'. In this hall too, one is greeted at the entrance, by the lovable and kindly Buddha-to-be, Maitreya Buddha, known to the Chinese as the 'Laughing Buddha' or 'Ta-pao Mi-Lei-Fwo', who has a fat paunch, looking joyously towards the entrance. Directly behind Mi-Lei-Fwo, often separated by a wall, is the great Deva Wei-to, the Protector of Buddhist temples and Faith. He is depicted clad in full armour and holding either a gnarled staff or a sceptre-shaped weapon of assault resting on the ground. Wei-To, who is a general under the Four Heavenly Kings, is also accorded the title of 'Protector of Buddhist Books'. He is always facing the Great Hall known as the 'TA-HUNG-PAU-TIEN' which is separated from the front hall by a wall or a courtyard.

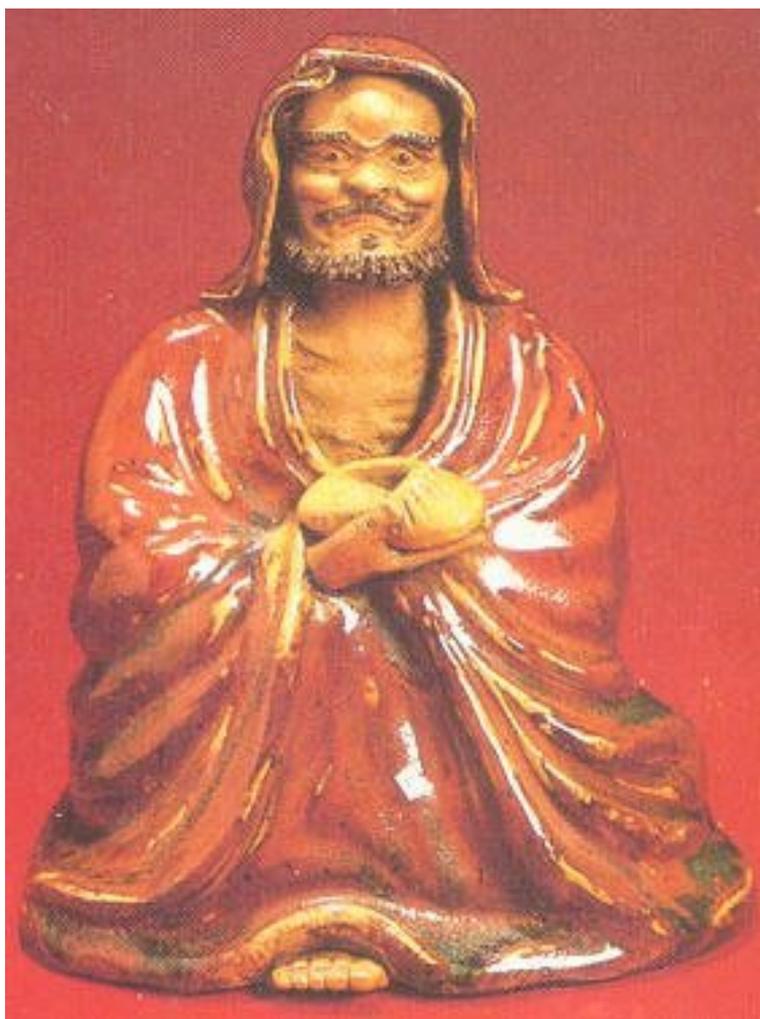
In the Great Hall the main altar is found along with the images of Sakyamuni Buddha and his two foremost disciples Maha-

kasyapa and Ananda, or other Buddhas of the past eras. The arrangement and choice of personages in this altar varies from temple to temple. Most of the time Sakyamuni Buddha is depicted in the attitude of contemplation with his disciples flanking him. Temples dedicated to Amitabha Buddha have his image at the centre, Sakyamuni Buddha and Bahaisajyaguru, better known to the Chinese as 'Yao-Shih-Fwo', each accompanied by two disciples. To the right and left of the main altar one usually finds the two Great Bodhisattvas, Manjusri (Wen-Shu-Shih-Li) and Samantabhadra (Pu-Hsien). The placements of personages are not really fixed so that one may often find Sakyamuni Buddha being flanked by Amitabha (O-Mi Two-Fwo) and Yao-Shin-Fwo (Medicine Buddha), the two great Buddhas of past eras. At other times a single Buddha is seen seated between his two Bodhisattvas, Sakyamuni (Shih Jia-Mo-Ni-Fwo) between Manjusri and Samantabhadra or Amitabha Buddha with Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin) and Mahasthamaprata (Ta-Shih-Chih). Temples dedicated to Kuan Shih Yin P'usa will have her flanked by Wen-shu-Shih-Li and P'u-Hsien.

On the east and west sides of the walls of this Great Hall are often arranged the figures of the Eighteen Arhats (Lohans) who are represented as possessing various kinds of supernatural power. Along the north wall are often found the images of Janteng Fwo or Dipankara, the ancient Buddha who predicted Sakyamuni's Buddhahood, and the popular Bodhisattvas such as Kuan Yin, Wen-shu, Pu-Hsien and Ti-tsang (Ksi-tigarbha), or other Bodhisattvas. Very often, images of Kuan Ti, the Protector of Buddhism, can also be found in this hall. It is here at

the Ta-Hung-Pau-Tien that devout Buddhists offer their prayers and offerings of flowers, fruits and other gifts which are placed on the table in front of the main altar. Very often, behind the central images of this hall and facing northwards, is placed the images of Kuan Yin P'usa.

The third, or Back Hall, at the back is usually divided into several smaller halls (Tien) or rooms. The central hall is generally the altar of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, the right housing the funerary tablet of the temple founder, while the left may be the Teaching or Meditation Hall. On the side or behind these main buildings are the living quarters, the dining area and the kitchen.



BODHIDHARMA

CHAPTER II

Chinese Buddhist Images

Much abuse or unkind remarks have been heaped upon Chinese Buddhists accusing them as being idolators because of their use of images in their temples. Accusations of such nature only reveal the ignorance of those who made them as the principle of the use of images in places of worship should be viewed as symbolic and not idol worship. It should be stressed that all the images that are found in the temples or home shrines only serve as reminders of their respective qualities. For example, when a Buddhist kneels down before the image of the Buddha, he does not worship the holy image but brings to mind the great compassion of the Enlightened One who has taught him the way to liberation.

Idolatory is not what Buddhists practise and only the unkind person will choose to deride the use of holy images in the temples. He should have the wisdom to realise that no religion in the world can do away with symbolism, whether they be human or otherwise, for without symbolism, identification would be quite impossible. The world, in fact, cannot exist without symbolism and it can safely be said that only civilisations as old and advanced in culture as China are able to bring forth symbolic images such as those produced by the Chinese people. The images used in the Chinese temples are therefore useful aids to generating faith and devotion in the minds of the believers and are objects worthy of reverence.

Upon entering the front hall of the temple, one is met with the idea of 'protection' from the celestial beings and as one stands before the Buddha's image, one is reminded of Sakyamuni's compassion, benevolence and wisdom. Looking at the Bodhisattvas' images he sees their particular attributes so that Kuan Yin's image instantly reminds him of her infinite mercy, compassion and other gentle qualities. Many a troubled mind have found solace and comfort upon looking at the sweet image of Kuan Yin. Even the animals which are portrayed with the deities have their own symbolic meanings. Thus Fu Hsien's great white elephant indicates purity, caution, strength, gentleness and a weighty dignity while the lion of Wen-shu represents honour, boldness, bravery and a fresh, eager and advancing spirit as well as the wild and almost untameable spirit of the unruly mind which one must eventually subdue in order to gain wisdom and enlightenment. In the Arhat's images one sees those who have perfected themselves by ridding their worldly passions and earned the freedom from samsaric sufferings. Such is the symbolism of the Chinese Buddhist images which one should know of instead of jumping into wrong conclusions, which are the causes of ill-will. Therefore when a Buddhist bows before a holy image and makes his offerings, one should know that this is but an act of respect and veneration to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.





THE CHINESE BUDDHIST PANTHEON

CHAPTER III

The Chinese Buddhist Pantheon

The Buddhist Pantheon has a vast number of Deities in the seemingly endless variation of forms so that it is quite impossible to portray them in any one illustration. Most of these Deities fall into the category of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arahants and other Heavenly Beings. The illustration of the Chinese Pantheon only depicts the most popular Deities whom the Chinese adore and there is another popular illustration which includes the Eighteen Lohans that can be found in many temples and homes of the Buddhists.

Description of the Chinese Pantheon

The Trinity of the Buddhas on the top row of the illustration consists of the historical **SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA** who is seated in the centre and is attended by his two foremost disciples. The older monk standing on his left is **MAHAKASYAPA**, who later became the First Patriarch of Buddhism after the Buddha's death. The young monk on his right is **ANANDA**, his personal attendant, who was well known for his great memory power and ability to repeat accurately all the teachings that had been spoken by the Buddha. He later became the Second Patriarch of Buddhism.

The two most adored Buddhas of the distant past, whose existence were revealed to us by Sakyamuni Buddha himself, are shown seated by his sides. **AMITABHA BUDDHA**, The Buddha of Boundless Light and Limitless Life, the Creator of the Western Paradise (Sukhavati) where all Pure Land Buddhists hope to take rebirth into, sits on the right hand side of Sakyamuni Buddha. **BHAISAJYA-GURU**, the Healing Buddha, the Creator of the Eastern Paradise, also known as the Medicine Buddha because of his healing powers, is seated on the left.

Just below the Buddhas are the Three Great Bodhisattvas. A Bodhisattva or P'usa, in Chinese, is an Enlightened Being who forsakes Nirvana and accepts rebirth into the suffering worlds of Samsara for the sake of relieving the pains of sentient beings and leading them to the path of enlightenment. The six sam-saric realms or worlds are those belonging to the gods, asuras, humans, animals, ghosts and hell-beings.

KUAN SHIN YIN P'USA or Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva can be seen seated just below Sakyamuni Buddha and is flanked by her two famous disciples 'GOLDEN YOUTH' and 'JADE GIRL'. Being the personification of Compassion, Kuan Yin is easily the most popular of all the Deities of the entire pantheon.

WEN-SHU P'USA or Manjusri Bodhisattva, the embodiment of Wisdom, is the figure seated upon the lion which represents the 'wild mind' which meditation transforms. **PU HSIEN P'USA** or Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, the personification of Perfect Activity and Happiness, is depicted as seated upon the white

elephant. She also represents active love, virtue, diligent training and patience.

TI-TSANG WANG P'USA or Ksitigarbha, the embodiment of Benevolence, the only Bodhisattva depicted in a monk's attire, is seated just below Kuan Yin P'usa. His two disciples, a father and son combination, are **MUNG KUNG** and monk **TAO MING**.

MI-LO FWO or Maitreya Buddha, or the Buddha-to-come and often referred to as the Laughing Buddha, sits below Ti-tsang P'usa. He is flanked by **KUAN TI**, the Protector of the Buddhist religion, on his right, and **WEI-TO**, the Protector of Buddhist Dharma, on his left.

The rest of the magnificent figures, all clad in complete armour, are the famous **SI-TA-TIEN-WANG**, or the Four Great Kings of Devas. These Four Guardian Kings of the four directions represent the protection of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs and are actively involved with the affairs of the world. **MO-LI CHING**, the Guardian of the East, holds a magical mandolin or p'i-pa, while **MO-LI HAI**, the Guardian of the West, has with him the magic dragon. On the other side, **MO-LI SHOU**, the Guardian of the North, is seen holding an umbrella, at the elevation of which darkness envelopes the world or a violent and thunderous storm commences. **MO-LI HUNG**, the Guardian of the South, who possesses a black countenance and ferocious expression, has in his hand a precious sword.

The **EIGHTEEN ARHATS** (Lo-Hans), not depicted in this illustration but often appearing in other versions of the Chinese Buddhist Pantheon, are usually represented as possessing various kinds of supernatural power, symbolised either by objects held in their hands or by wild animals crouching submissively beside them. These are perfected beings who have listened and practised the teachings of the Buddha. In Chinese Buddhism there are a number of famous groups of Arhants of which this group of eighteen is the most popular.



IN THE GREAT HALL THE EIGHTEEN LOHANS ARE FOUND NINE ON EACH SIDE OF THE WALLS. THE ABOVE PICTURE ONLY SHOWS PART OF THE NINE LOHANS ON ONE SIDE. INCENSE ARE OFTEN OFFERED TO THEM AS A MARK OF RESPECT FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENTS.



CHAPTER IV

Chinese Buddhists Festive Days

These are the holy days that Chinese Buddhists celebrate by visiting temples to make offerings of prayers, incense, fruits, flowers and donations. On such days they observe the moral precepts very strictly as well as a full day's vegetarian diet, a practice originally from China.

The dates given are based on the Chinese Lunar system so that 1.1 means the 'First day of the First lunar moon' and so on.

DATES

FESTIVALS

- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| 8.12 | — | Buddha Sakyamuni's Enlightenment Day. |
| 30.12 | — | Avatamsaka Bodhisattva's Birthday. |
| 1.1 | — | Maitreya Buddha's Birthday. |
| 9.1 | — | Sakra Devaraja's Birthday |
| 8.2 | — | Sakyamuni's Renunciation Day |
| 15.2 | — | Sakyamuni Buddha's Mahapari-Nirvana Day |
| 19.2 | — | Birthday of Kuan Shih Yin P'usa. |
| 21.2 | — | Birthday of Pu Hsien P'usa |
| 16.3 | — | Birthday of Cundi P'usa |

- 23.3 — Birthday of Marichi Devata
- 4.4 — Birthday of Wen-shu P'usa
- 8.4 — Birthday of Buddha Sakyamuni
- 15.4 — Wesak Day
- 28.4 — Birthday of Yao-Wang P'usa (Bhaisajjaraja Bodhisattva)
- 3.6 — Birthday of Wei-to
- 10.6 — Birthday of Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava)
- 19.6 — Enlightenment Day of Kuan Shih Yin P'usa
- 13.7 — Birthday of Ta-Shih-Chi P'usa
- 15.7 — Yu-lan-pen (Ullambana) Ceremony, for feeding hungry ghosts.
- 30.7 — Birthday of Ti-tsang P'usa
- 22.8 — Birthday of the ancient Buddha Jan-teng (Dipankara Buddha)
- 19.9 — Kuan Shih Yin P'usa's Renunciation Day, the day that marks her entering into the nunnery.
- 30.9 — Birthday of Yao-shi Fwo (Bhaisajyaguru Buddha)
- 5.10 — Anniversary of the death of Ta-mo (Bodhidharma)
- 17.11 — Birthday of O-mi-to Fwo (Amitabha Buddha)

CHAPTER V

The Buddha

Buddhism is a way of life, a religion which is based on the practice of discipline according to the teachings of the Buddha Siddharta Gautama who is also known as the Buddha Sakyamuni. The word “Buddha” derives from the root Sanskrit word “Budh” which means “to know”. It is used as a title to denote an “Enlightened Being” — one who has attained, by, his own personal efforts and merit, the pinnacle of intellect and divine knowledge.

Buddhism is a religion of peace and loving kindness, in the name of which no blood was ever shed in its long history, there had never been any association with killing and destruction in its manner of persuading people to walk its gentle path. It is a religion of reason and meditation and its final goal is Deliverance, meaning the Liberation of the Self from the cycle of birth, old age, disease and death.

Who is The Buddha?

Historically, this refers to Siddharta Gautama who was born in 560 BC to Queen Mahamaya and King Suddhodanna of the Sakya Kingdom in the vicinity of Nepal. The queen had, prior to the birth of the child, a dream of a beautiful white elephant entering her womb through her side. Gautama was born in Lumbini Park on a full-moon day in the month of Vesakha. A

week after his birth, his mother died and he was brought up by his aunt, Mahaprajapati. At a name giving ceremony he was given the name Siddharta which means One Whose Aim Is Accomplished.

Ancient Pali commentaries relate a significant incident which occurred during the Ploughing Ceremony, when as a young child and left alone in a tent under a rose-apple tree, his nurses later found the prince to be seated in a lotus posture and having entered one-pointedness of mind known as Samadhi.

The young prince grew up in the midst of luxury and splendour and at the age of 16, was married to his cousin, the beautiful Yasodhara. For almost thirteen years after his marriage, he led a blissful life unaware of the ever changing nature and misfortunes of life outside the palace.

When he was 29 years old Gautama encountered four significant sights which marked the turning point of his life. First he saw a weak and frail old man leaning on a staff, next a diseased person, then a corpse and finally, a shaven-headed hermit in yellow robe moving around with a peaceful and serene countenance. The first three sights convincingly showed him the inexorable nature of life, and the universal ailments of humanity; the fourth showed the means to overcome the ills of life and to attain to calm and peace. Realising the worthlessness of sensual pleasures and the value of renunciation he decided to leave home in search of Truth and Eternal Peace.



THE BUDDHA

It was after this decision was made that he heard of the birth of his son, and regarding the new born child as an impediment rather than a blessing, named him Rahula meaning “fetter”. It was a clear indication that his heart was already turning away from household life. On that night, he left his uncongenial palace and traded his princely robes for the lowly clothings of an ascetic. His search for truth and peace had begun and it was more from sympathy with the sufferings of others than from any personal sorrow which he had no occasion to experience.

His departure from home was not a case of desertion of his beloved family, but an unprecedented case of historic renunciation. He left his worldly life not in old age but in the prime of manhood, not in poverty but in the midst of plenty.

Following the path of extreme asceticism, as was the custom of those days, he was not able to seek what he sought for until he gave up the practice of austerity some six years later.

The Great Enlightenment

One day, in the forest at Buddha Gaya, after a last meal of milk rice, Gautama sat down, crossed-legged, on a grass mat spread under a “Bodhi” tree, and declared, “If I do not succeed in this way of seeking the truth by searching within, I will not rise from this place”. His mind soon became tranquil and purified and he then attained the Samadhi that he had experienced in his youth.

During meditative trances in that night's three watches he gained the knowledge of all his past lives, acquired the "super-human divine eye" by which he envisaged the passing away and rebirth of all living beings of all times. It was like that of the whole universe appearing before him as a mirror. He saw that good karma brings about a happy rebirth and evil karma leads to a miserable next life. Then, at the third watch (2.00 am — 6.00 am), he reached the highest state in which the "outflows" of his life i.e., his ignorance and cravings, were finally quelled. It was then that he perceived the Four Noble Truths of the way of Enlightenment, noting, "This is Suffering, this is the Cause of Suffering, this is the Cessation of Suffering, and this is the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering". Thus ignorance was dispelled and wisdom arose. Being enlightened, he realised, "Rebirth is ended; fulfilled the Holy Life; done what was to be done; there is no more this state again". Thereafter he was known as Buddha Gautama, one of the long line of Buddhas that already had appeared in the past and will appear in the future.

Thus at the age of 35, Gautama, under the full moon in the month of Vesakha (April — May), about the year 525 BC at a place called Buddha Gaya, attained the Supreme Enlightenment and Buddhism was born to the world. The Buddha then spent seven weeks contemplating on the Truth that he had realised, particularly the more difficult ones on causal relations or the Truth of Dependent Origination.



THE BUDDHA

Initially the Buddha was hesitant to reach out to teach the Truth because he felt that the world being caught up in the passion and darkness of Samsara will find it difficult to accept the truth of his teachings. However, due to his great compassion and his realisation that man exists at different levels of spiritual development he decided to reach out and set in motion, the Wheel of Truth, which is depicted by the ‘mudra’ or hand-signs of the fingers as shown in the illustration.

The Buddha spent his remaining forty five years travelling all over India, teaching the Dharma and living in the manner of a begging monk. He formed the first monastic Order in the world which is known as the Sangha and his most notable disciples included Sariputra, Mahakasyapa, Mogallana, Subuti and his personal attendant and cousin, Ananda. His followers were people from all walks of life which included kings, princes, ministers, ascetics, brahmins and commoners. He taught them according to their ability to learn, with parables and through questions and answers applying all suitable means to aid them to spiritual growth. He did not demand blind faith, but adopted the unusual “come and experience for yourself” attitude which won the hearts of thousands. His was the path of self-reliance which required unswerving personal effort.

The Buddha also converted his father, his family, and a large number of the Sakyan people. At the urging of his close disciple Ananda, he formed the first Order of Nuns and his foster mother, Queen Mahaprajapati, and a large number of her friends became the first members of the Order.

The Great Decease

During the early part of his ministry, the Buddha lived as a travelling monk and did not have any fixed abode. It was towards the last twenty years or so that he chose to reside at Savatthi, in the Jetavana Grove which was donated to him and his monks by the very rich householder Anathapindika.

At the age of eighty he travelled northwards from Rajagriha to Vesali where he became seriously ill. Upon recovering the Buddha proceeded to a small town called Pava where he stayed in the grove of Cunda, the smith, who upon hearing of his arrival, offered him and his followers a meal. This was to be the last meal that he ate for one of the dishes diligently prepared by Cunda and which the Buddha later specifically instructed was for himself to eat only, caused him to suffer sharp dysentery pains. The Buddha later assured Cunda through Ananda that his pains were not any fault of his and that it was a meritorious act to offer the Buddha his last meal.

The Buddha bore it calmly and, despite his illness, set forth for Kushinagara where he laid down between two Sala trees with his head pointing to the north. The Buddha was described in the Scriptures to have “laid himself down on his right side, with one leg resting on the other, mindful and self-possessed”. The Sala trees then burst into bloom out of season and fragrance filled the air in homage of the Buddha.

At this moment his former attendant, the venerable Upavana, came forward to fan the Buddha but was asked to step aside. Ananda then asked the Buddha why he had turned down the monk's service and the Buddha replied that Devas had assembled in great numbers to see the Tathagata and they were rather displeased that their view was concealed by Upavana.

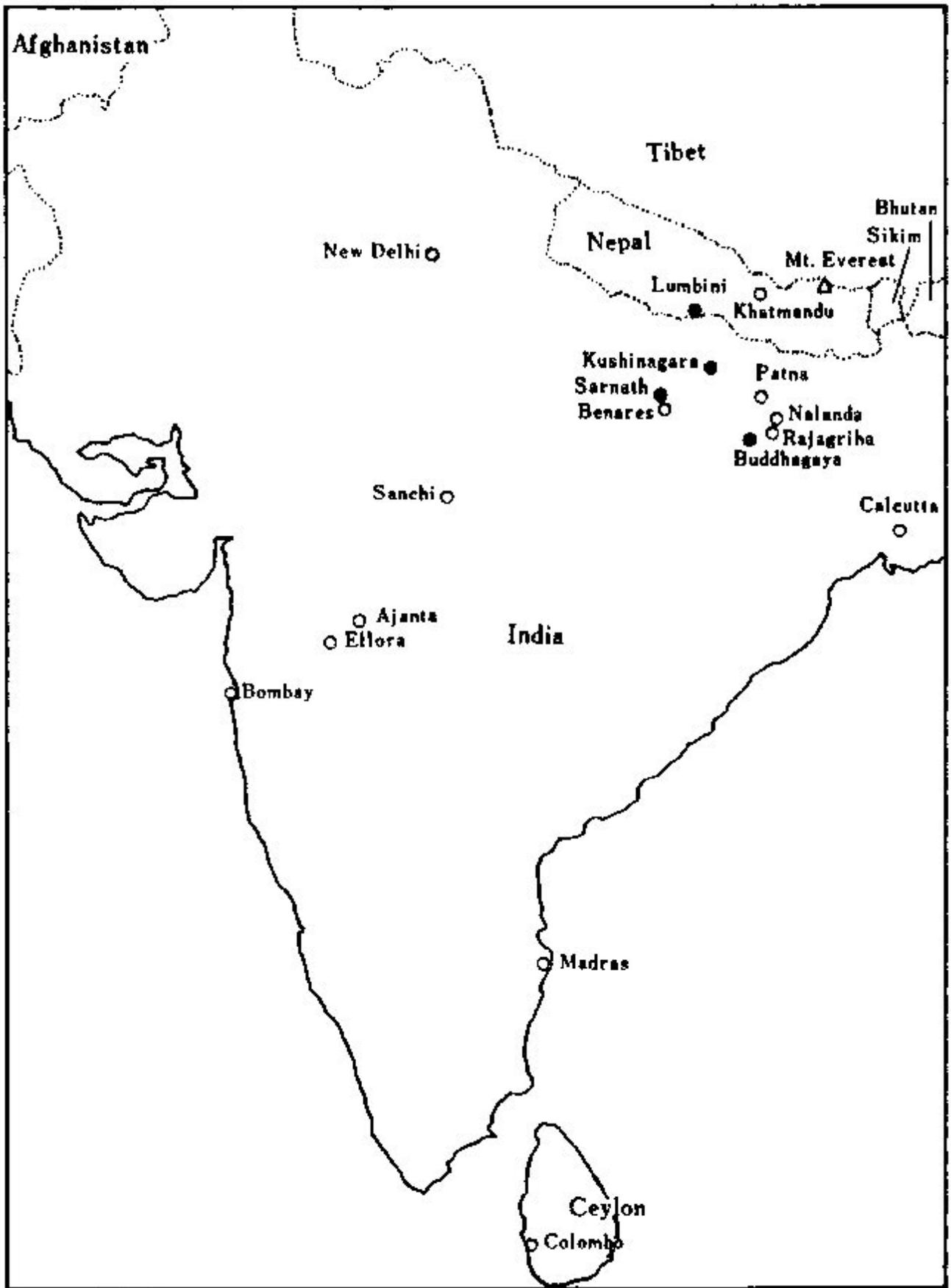
Sakyamuni Buddha then told Ananda that after his death faithful followers should revere four places which have been made sacred by his association:

1. The place of his birth (Lumbini).
2. The place where he attained Enlightenment (Buddha Gaya).
3. The place where he preached his first sermon (Sarnath).
4. The place where he attained Parinirvana (Kusinagara).

The Buddha further added that those who should die while making such a pilgrimage would be reborn in a heavenly state.

The dying Buddha then asked the monks around him three times whether there were any remaining questions or doubts about his teachings, but all kept silent. Turning to Ananda he said, "What I have taught and laid down, Ananda, as Dharma and Vinaya, this will be your Master when I am gone." Then turning to the assembly of monks he made this final pronouncement:

"...transient are all conditioned things. Try to accomplish your aim with diligence".



Then he entered successive stages of deeper and deeper meditation from which he passed into parinirvana. Thus ended the life of Buddha who is known to the world as Sakyamuni Buddha, the Sage of the Sakya Clan, the Historic Buddha who founded Buddhism that gave mankind the way to supreme Deliverance. It was the full-moon day of the month of Vesakha.

His body was then cremated and the relics divided into eight portions and sent to the various kingdoms where they were enshrined in Stupas.

Prayers to the Buddha Sakyamuni

Daily every Buddhist should pay homage to the Buddha by reciting any of these prayers:

“NA MO BEN SHR SHIR JYA MO NI FWO”

which means ‘Hail Our Original Teacher Sakyamuni Buddha’.

“NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMASAM-BUDDHASA”

which means ‘Homage to the Great Compassionate Completely Enlightened One’.

As the Buddha is endowed with numerous qualities, various epithets have been bestowed upon Him. He is therefore also addressed as:

JINA — Conqueror

TATHAGATA — One gone to 'suchness'

SUGATA — Well-gone One

BHAGAWAN — Blessed One

ARHAT — Capable One

ATULYA — Matchless One

SAMYAKSAMBUDDHA — Perfect Buddha

Buddhists are also required to Take Refuge in the Three Jewels each day as a commitment to practising the Buddha's teaching for the benefit of all sentient beings. The Three Jewels consist of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha and the Buddha's way of life requires one to live wholesomely by adhering to the Noble Eightfold Path. Those who do so will successfully avoid these ten non-virtuous actions:

Killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, malicious speech, idle speech, covetousness, malevolence and erroneous views.

The most holy day for all Buddhists is the celebration of WESAK or Buddha Day which generally falls in the month of May. This is a thrice blessed day which celebrates the three major events: the Birth, Enlightenment and the Passing-away of Gautama the Buddha. On this day Chinese Buddhists make their way to the temples to pay homage to the Buddha and to reaffirm their faith in the Buddha Dharma. It is truly a religious day and many people will spend it in meditation or prayer-recitation for the well-

being of others. Precepts are adhered to very strictly and only vegetarian food will be eaten. On this day too loving-kindness is practised in various manners as many people will set free birds and animals as a symbolic act of liberation, of giving freedom to those who are in captivity, while others choose to give alms to the poor, make donations to temples and institutions or visit the unfortunate ones who are at the Old Folks Homes, Orphanages or similar Centres, bringing with them gifts of every kind. Wesak brings to mind, the Great Compassion of the Buddha which should move us to be more determined to lead noble lives, to develop our minds, to practise loving-kindness and compassion so as to bring peace and harmony to all mankind.



CHAPTER VI

Amitabha Buddha “Namo O-Mi-To Fwo”

Thus the Sakyamuni Buddha described the Buddha Amitabha to Ananda:

“The Light that issues from Amitabha Buddha is the most brilliant, and none is comparable to him. In adoration we call him:

‘The Buddha of Infinite Light,
The Buddha of Immeasurable Light,
The Buddha of Boundless Light,
The Buddha of Inexpressible Light,
and the Buddha whose Light surpasses the Sun
and the Moon’.

Whoever is blessed with the Light will enjoy a calm and peaceful life which is free of despair and will obtain enlightenment at the end of his life on earth.

The Light of Amitabha is full of splendour and pervades the entire universe. Not only do I adore His Light, I also adore Him, if anyone, on receiving the great blessings of His Light, adores Him incessantly day and night with faith and sincerity in his heart, he will surely take rebirth into His paradise called the Pure Land.... Even though I adore the magnificence of Amitabha day and night, it is impossible for me to describe Him well.”

Who is Amitabha?

According to Mahayana Buddhist sutras he was a king in the remote period of time. Renouncing his kingdom, he became a

monk and was named Dharmakara, which means ‘Treasury of Dharma’. Inspired by the teaching of the then Buddha of that time, Lokeshvaraja Buddha, who taught him the way to supreme enlightenment many aeons ago, he made forty eight great vows for the saving of the sentient beings. The Eighteenth Vow, which is the basis of the Pure Land, ran like this: ‘If upon the attainment of Buddhahood all sentient beings in the ten quarters who aspire in sincerity and faith to be reborn in my land, recite my name up to ten times and fail to be born there, then may I not attain the Perfect Enlightenment...’.

Since then, the Bodhisattva Dharmakara, after five aeons of self-cultivation, finally attained the Supreme Enlightenment and became the Buddha Amitabha. This means that his grand and infinitely compassionate vow is now a reality, the paradise known as Pure Land or Sukhavati has been established, suffering beings must and will be delivered if only they will have the full faith to call upon his name.

Calling the Buddha’s name with full faith is known to the Chinese as ‘NIEN-FWO’ meaning ‘Prayer-recitation’. The Japanese term for this practice is known as ‘Nembutsu’. In this practice three important qualities must be present in the mind: Sincerity, Faith and Aspiration to be reborn in the Pure Land. The simple prayer or formula that one needs to repeat is:

“NAMO O-MI-TO FWO”

One may repeat it in Sanskrit ‘Namo Amitabha Buddha’ which literally means ‘Homage to the Amitabha Buddha’ or ‘I seek refuge in the Amitabha Buddha’.

Method of Prayer-Recitation

While practising 'nien-fwo' it is important to adopt a correct sitting posture, a concentrated mind which is faith-filled and a firm desire to be reborn in the Pure Land of Amitabha. One must also be aware that salvation is not affected solely by Amitabha's powers but mainly by one's own constant effort in the practice. It is preferable to have an image of the Buddha in front so that the eyes can look at it during the recitation. And while the mouth recites the Buddha's name, the ears listen attentively to the six-syllables "NA-MO-O-MI-TO-Fwo" so that the mind is in full concentration and not allowed to move about freely.

Beginners will find that they are faced with a scattered mind which make them restless, feel heavy or even frustrated. This outcome is quite normal so that they should not give up the practice easily but instead recognise the fact that their minds have been lacking in concentration and discipline. They should also appreciate having found a practice which will help them to get rid of their unruly minds and accept the great challenge to succeed instead of being discouraged. With patience, they should try harder and continue the recitation with renewed vigour. After some time the result of their efforts will be felt as the quiet-mind arises and then 'nien-fwo' will henceforth be quite easy to practise.

The more advanced ones may practise reciting the Buddha's name while meditating on the mental image of Him or The Pure Land scene which shows Amitabha Buddha being flanked by His foremost disciples Kuan Shih Yin P'usa and Ta-Shih-Chi



AMITABHA BUDDHA

P'usa and surrounded by the assembly of Divinities. Constant practise will eventually lead one to arrive at a stage of perfect concentration so that the Buddha is in his mouth as he recites His name, in his ears as he listens to the recitation, and in his mind as he visualises Him.

Pure Land Buddhism

Pure Land Buddhism known as the Lotus School of Buddhism or CH'ING TU, is, in short, the Buddhism of Faith and Devotion meant for those lacking in wisdom to comprehend the profound teachings of the Buddha Sakyamuni, and therefore having to resort to the use of Faith in the saving power of Amitabha Buddha. It is therefore called the 'easy path' since the way to attain rebirth in the Pure Land is by way of a simple faith and a simple invocation. The Pure Land is also called the Western Paradise since it is located in the far distant Western Quarters of the Universe. It should be treated as a stepping stone to Nirvana and therefore beings who take rebirth there are not to be considered as enlightened beings.

Pure Land Buddhism is Mahayana Buddhism as it teaches the universality of salvation. Its particular duty is to give help to common beings so that Enlightenment is not less accessible to them even though they are not intelligent enough to understand the Dharma. The Buddha's compassion is infinite and he exists to save all beings in the universe whether they are wise or stupid because the Buddha-nature is equally present in all of them. Ch'ing Tu thus became the most acceptable form of Buddhism

in China as the larger part of its populace do not belong to the scholarly class. It should not be looked upon as a lowly method of practice for whether one chooses to practise the easy way of faith or the difficult way of wisdom, the ultimate goal is the same — just as one can climb up a mountain top from the north, south, east or west side.

THE PURE LAND OF AMITABHA BUDDHA (SUKHAVATI)



The above illustration is from an old Tibetan Text which depicts the grandeur of Sukhavati or the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha. It is a paradise which is rich and prosperous, comfortable, fertile, delightful and crowded with Bodhisattvas, Devas and men. In this Buddha-field there are no hell, no animals, no ghosts or evil spirits, no Asuras and none of the inauspicious places of rebirth. It is empty of suffering of any kind. In this Pure Land sweet fragrance fills the air and it is rich in a great variety of flowers and fruits, various plumed birds with exotic sweet voices sing verses of the Dharma and bejeweled trees of many colours can be found everywhere. Amitabha Buddha can be seen at the centre of the picture surrounded by the happy beings of the realm.

Description of the Pure Land

The full description of the Pure Land can be read from the Sutras related to Amitabha Buddha e.g., Sukhavativyuha Sutra or the Amitayus Sutra. Amitayus is the other name for Amitabha Buddha meaning Boundless or Infinite Life because his life-span (ayuh) is infinite (amita).

Briefly it is a paradise in the West which is exquisitely adorned with gold and silver and all kinds of precious gems. There are indescribably beautiful lakes with golden sand that are surrounded by pleasant banks lined with jewelled trees and covered with heavenly lotus flowers which are grown in crystal pure water. It is filled with wondrous sounds and sights and fragrant flowers rain down three times a day. The flowing waters of the rivers hum the sounds of the holy dharma; even the melodies from the songs of plumed birds are filled with harmonious notes which induce those who hear them to remember the precious Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Here too the words of Amitabha Buddha teaching love, mercy, compassion, joy, sympathy, equanimity and so forth can be heard. Everything in this paradise is radiant, peaceful and beautiful. No defilement can be found as no evil birth is possible, and even the very name hell is unheard of. It is populated by Bodhisattvas, Deities and other heavenly beings and the pious ones who being reborn there, are destined to attain Nirvana.

In the Pure Land, Amitabha Buddha is assisted by two principal attendants namely, Kuan Shih Yin P'usa and Ta Shih Chi P'usa, who will descend to earth to lead the faithful and devoted to the

paradise at their hour of death. Buddhist temples dedicated to Amitabha Buddha always have the images of these Three Great Sages so that those who venerate Amitabha Buddha already honour Kuan Shih Yin P'usa and Ta Shih Chi P'usa. In the same way, Kuan Yin devotees are already the devotees of the Buddha and therefore qualify to take rebirth in the Pure Land.

After taking rebirth in this paradise one must not forget his other fellow beings who are still deeply submerged in the mire of painful existence. This thought will help to generate the desire to take rebirth again on this earth so as to deliver them from their great sufferings. This then, is the arising of the Bodhisattva nature which is born out of compassion and loving-kindness, and a new bodhisattva is born. Pure Land is therefore the land where beings can develop their bodhisattva spirit and have the opportunity to appear before the Buddha to declare their earnest wish to strive for Buddhahood so that they are able to save sentient beings. Here too the Bodhisattva Vows can be taken and Amitabha Buddha can then give his blessings and prophesies their future success in the career of a budding bodhisattva.

The worship of Amitabha Buddha originated in India but took firm roots in China. Its teachings appealed especially to those who are not attracted by scriptural studies, ritualistic or meditative practices but possessing great faith, energy and devotion, prefer to rely on Amitabha Buddha to save them. Pure Land Buddhism soon spread from China to its neighbouring countries like Vietnam, Korea and Japan. Japan can be considered to be the main area of Pure Land practice today as more than two-thirds of its population are said to be Pure Land practitioners.

In the fourth century AD, a monk from Central Asia arrived at Loyang, then the capital of China, and engaged in widespread evangelism on this easy and convenient path of salvation which stirred the interests of many. His work was later continued by his famous disciple Tao-An (AD 314–385) with just as much vigour who then passed on the responsibility to his own disciple, a former Taoist, Hui Yuan (AD 334–416), who later found the Pure Land School better known then as the Lotus School.

It must be stressed again that rebirth in the Pure Land does not constitute the attainment of Nirvana, as it is but one of the countless heavenly realms in the Buddhist Cosmology.

However there is a great difference between the Pure Land of Amitabha and the various heavenly states in that beings born there are free from the temptations of sensuous delights and that they will be blessed with the most excellent conditions to practise the Dharma, as have been described earlier, that will lead to Nirvana.

With the practice of meditation on the evil consequences of Samsara, one will put more effort in his practice of Nien-Fwo and appreciate the great opportunity of being a human being and having found the means of renouncing Samsara.

Pure Land Buddhism also has various meditational practices for those who are well on the path. Here are the five popular practices which anyone may practise to achieve rebirth into the Pure Land:



KUAN SHIH YIN P'USA



TA SHIH CHI P'USA

1. The meditation on Love which leads one to ponder and yearn for the weal and welfare of all beings, including the happiness and safety of one's own enemies.
2. The meditation on Pity which causes one to think of all the sufferings of sentient beings so as to arouse a deep compassion for them in one's own mind.
3. The meditation on Joy in which one dwells on the prosperity of others and rejoices in their happiness.
4. The meditation on Impurity in which one realises the evil consequences of defiled thoughts and the effects of unwholesome acts.
5. The meditation on Serenity which leads one to rise above the grips of the mental poisons of greed, anger and delusion, so that all unwholesome acts are discarded and one is able to subdue desires thereby attaining calmness and tranquillity of mind.

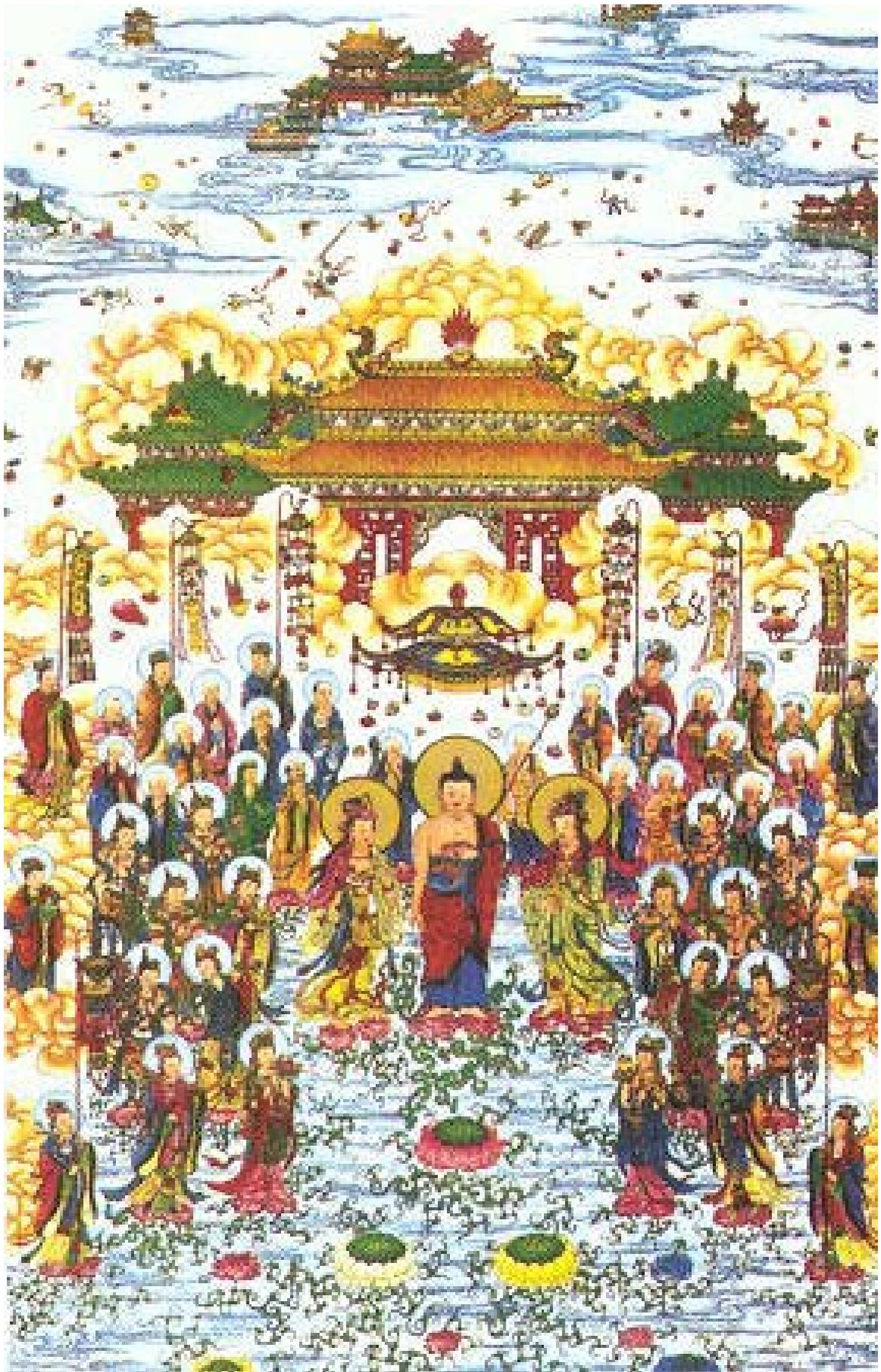
There are many other methods of meditating on Amitabha Buddha which are more profound but may not be suitable for beginners of the path. However, one should not be over anxious to practise them all or wish to determine which is the most effective practice. All are in fact suitable and beneficial as long as faith and devotion are present in the minds of the practitioners. For the present, it is best that recitation on Amitabha's name be vigorously practised until the deep and inexpressible inner experience has been felt.

Amitabha Buddha's Festive Day

The birthday of Amitabha Buddha is celebrated by his devotees on the 17th day of the 11th lunar month. On this day many Pure Land Buddhists spend the entire day in 'nien-fwo', sutra-reading, and contemplating on the vows of Amitabha Buddha. In the absence of temples dedicated to him most people will make their ways to Kuan Yin Temples to offer prayers and donations, some will set free animals and birds while others visit orphanages or old folks homes. On this day too many will observe the precepts and refrain from eating meat.

The picture of Pure Land (Sukhavati) gives one an impression of the grandeur of the paradise where one is able to enjoy the sights of Amitabha and his two principal assistants, Ta-Shih-Chi P'usa and Kuan Shih Yin P'usa, known to all as the "Three Sages" (San-Sheng). Surrounding them are other heavenly beings each of whom stands upon a lotus flower. In front of Amitabha Buddha are seen numerous lotus flowers which are awaiting beings to be reborn from them as there are no womb born creatures in the Pure Land. The full description on this paradise can be read from existing scriptures such as the Amitabha Sutra which is easily available to those who sincerely seek for them. As one practises his daily 'nien-fwo' this picture could be placed before him as an aid to visualisation or to keep the mind concentrated instead of being distracted by nearby surrounding objects.

Many people find it difficult to find notes on Ta-Shih-Chi P'usa (Mahasthamaprabhata Bodhisattva) although she is one of the two



PURE LAND

great disciples of Amitabha Buddha. Unlike Kuan Shih Yin who is widely worshipped and has countless temples and shrines in her name, Ta-Shih-Chi is hardly venerated by the common people and for this reason, the next chapter is dedicated to her even though she does not appear in the pantheon.

Ta-Shih-Chi P'usa

Ta-Shih-Chi P'usa is one of the two main Bodhisattvas of Pure Land Buddhism. Her Sanskrit name is MAHASTHAMAPRATA which means 'one who has attained great strength' and is therefore often called the Bodhisattva of Universal Strength. She is an attribute of Amitabha Buddha, representing his Wisdom just as Kuan Shih Yin is his compassionate aspect. She earned her rank of Bodhisattvahood in the distant past through the practice of reciting the name of the Buddha of that period of time. When Amitabha became a Buddha, she and Kuan Shih Yin became his disciples and thus were responsible in welcoming the faithful of the Buddha to his Pure Land at the time of their death.

The Shurangama Sutra states that in time to come "when Amitabha Buddha retires as the teaching host of the Pure Land, Kuan Shih Yin will take over the responsibility. When it is time for Kuan Shih Yin to retire as Lord of the Pure Land, Ta Shih Chi P'usa will be her successor...."

Ta Shih Chi P'usa is said to be so powerful that whenever she raises her hand or moves any part of her body, the earth will

quake and tremble. Although she is a very popular Bodhisattva to the Chinese, she has not found as many devotees as Kuan Shih Yin and it is extremely difficult to find a temple dedicated solely in her honour. She is normally worshipped in the Triad with Amitabha Buddha and Kuan Shih Yin Bodhisattva and pictures of them together are commonly found in homes of the Pure Land Buddhists. Those who wish to form a karmic link with her should daily spend a few minutes contemplating on her and request for “wisdom and strength in cultivation” or mindfully holding her name through the recitation of:

“NAMO TA-SHIH-CHI P’USA”

Recitation should be done with firm faith, devotion and single-mindedness so that all kinds of distracting thoughts are quelled. It is also very important that virtuous conduct be maintained so that one must not indulge in killing or harming others, stealing, living immorally, lying, speaking harshly, or taking intoxicants of any kind that delude the mind. To reach this great Bodhisattva one has to be pure both in mind and spirit. Practising mindfulness on Ta Shih Chi P’usa is the same as adoring Amitabha Buddha and qualifies one to take rebirth in the Pure Land after this earthly life.

The success in attaining Bodhisattvahood is dependent upon the fulfilment of the vast and noble vows set by the aspiring bodhisattva. The Ten Great Vows of Ta Shih Chi P’usa, also known as the Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, which all Pure Land Buddhists should know are:

1. To worship and respect all Buddhas.
2. To praise the Thus-Come-One (The Buddha)
3. To cultivate the giving of offering.
4. To repent and reform all karmic faults.
5. To compliantly rejoice in merit and virtue.
6. To request the turning of the Dharma Wheel.
7. To request that the Buddhas dwell in the world.
8. To always follow the Buddhas in study.
9. To forever accord with living beings.
10. To universally transfer all merit and virtue.

Besides having fulfilled these great vows, Ta Shih Chi has also successfully practised the Four Great Vows of:

Saving the limitless living beings.

Cutting off all evil passions.

Studying the immeasurable Dharma Doors.

Realising the supreme Buddha Way.

Unlike Kuan Shih Yin P'usa whose role is to grant help and to succor beings in misery, Ta Shih Chih P'usa renders her help to a different category of people, those who are bent on putting to practise the Buddha's way of life and striving to attain perfection. Thus the number of beings who choose to become her devotees are few in number as cultivators of the path are scarce indeed. It is said that this great P'usa has a Gold Pavilion or lotus platform which she will lend to those who hold her name so that they can ride upon it to the Pure Land. If you are one who is seriously striving for enlightenment, then you should not hesitate to recite the name of this great Bodhisattva constantly.

CHAPTER VII

Yao Shih Fwo

Bhaisajyaguru Buddha

Yao Shih Fwo, one of the three foremost Buddhas of the Chinese Pantheon, is a Buddha of the past era. Better known to the people as the Buddha of Medicine or the Master of Healing, he is dear to the hearts of many, for they have indeed received his blessings in the forms of miraculous cures from all kinds of illness. The Buddha's efficacy in preventing calamities and granting prosperity besides curing illness has attracted a steady number of believers and devotees since the time of the Eastern Chin Dynasty (AD 317–420) to the present day. The Sutra of the Buddha of Medicine (Bhaisajyaraja Sutra) was also translated into Chinese at that period of time which provided a full account on the peerless Buddha, his Paradise and his Twelve Great Vows. However the later translation made by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Tsang, the famous monk of the Tang Dynasty, known as The Sutra of the Master of Healing (Bhaisajyaguru-Vaidurya-Prabhasa Tathagata), is the more popular Sutra which is widely read by most people today.

The title 'Master of Healing', is a literal translation of his Sanskrit name 'Bhaisajyaguru', the Buddha who favours worshippers with relief from the troubles of the world. Apart from curing illness, warding such calamities as famine, drought and plague, granting longevity and assisting the dead, Yao Shih Fwo is known to have dispensed all kinds of mundane benefits to those who pray to him.

Despite his great popularity, temples dedicated to him are very scarce so that those who wish to worship him may do so at temples where his images can be found. He is often found in a triad with Sakyamuni Buddha and Amitabha Buddha, and his symbols are either the medicine bowl or the pagoda. When depicted alone, he holds his symbol with his left hand and he is normally attended to by his prominent disciples, the Great Bodhisattvas 'Radiance of the Sun' and the 'Radiance of the Moon'.

In the Sutra of the Master of Healing Sakyamuni Buddha described Yao Shih Fwo to Manjusri Bodhisattva thus:

“Eastward from here, beyond Buddha-land about ten times as numerous as the sands of the Ganga, there is a world called ‘The Pure Crystal Realm’, the Paradise of Yao Shih. Its Buddha has a few titles, such as The Master of Healing, Azure Radiance Tathagata, The Arhat of Perfect Knowledge, the Perfect Mind and Deed, The Well Departed Sugata, The Knower of the World, The Peerless Nobleman, The Man Who Brings The Passion of Men Under Control, the Teacher of Devas and Men...”

While still a bodhisattva, he made Twelve Great Vows to free living beings from the bondage of karma. He vowed to guard their progress towards enlightenment, to help them keep their precepts, to free them from the snares of wrong religious practices and false doctrines, to provide food and drink for the hungry, to restore the bodies of the deformed, to rescue those facing execution and to lead them to a happy and tranquil life. The full text of the Twelve Vows cannot be given fully here but the



YAO SHIH FWO — BHAIJYAGURU BUDDHA

Seventh Vow, which specifically pledges to relieve man of physical illness and to dispel his spiritual confusion, earned him the title of 'Physician of Soul', runs like this:

"I vow that, after my reincarnation and having attained Perfect Enlightenment, those who are tormented by diseases, who have nobody to whom they can seek for help, without a refuge, without a doctor, without medicine, without relatives, without a home; these poor and miserables beings shall all of them be free from diseases and pains, and shall enjoy perfect health of body and mind, once my name reaches their ears. They shall have families, friends and properties a-plenty, and shall all be brought to the supreme Enlightenment of Buddha."

Through the perfection of these Great Vows, the bodhisattva has attained Buddhahood and thus became known as Yao Shih Fwo, the Buddha who is able to bestow all kinds of benefits to those who have faith in him.

In the same Sutra the Buddha Sakyamuni also revealed to Manjusri that:

"A woman may suffer from great pain while giving birth. If she can whole-heartedly worship the Buddha of Medicine and to invoke the name Tathagata, worship Him, and make offerings to Him, all pain will vanish, the newly born will have a sound and healthy body; whoever sees him will rejoice at his being so clever, so strong and healthy; and no demon comes to rob him of his vitality."

It is because of past good roots in your previous lives that you are now reading about this great Buddha. It means that you have the rare opportunity to cultivate and to generate good karma for the future. To do so you need only to cherish the name of this World-honoured Master of Healing whole-heartedly and without a doubt. Daily you should contemplate on his vows or his form, recite his name and make offerings to him with what you can. Through this devotion you will easily learn to practise compassion and loving-kindness to those who are unfortunate, ill, lost, hungry or are in pain and distress. It will also lead you pray and wish happiness on all sentient beings. The prayer which comes out from your heart that is laden with feelings of concern for others' well-being is of course the best that you can offer to the Buddha, but here is the universal prayer which is on the lips of many:

“NAMO HSIAO-TSAI YEN SHOU YAO SHIH FWO”

Those who wish may also recite this Sanskrit praise:

“NAMO BHAGAVATE BHAIJYAGURU BUDDHA YA”

In the Sutra of the Master of Healing the Buddha also revealed to Manjusri the great dharani (mystical formula) which one should recite for the purpose of delivering beings from their diseases and miseries:

**“NAMO BHAGAVATE BHASAJYAGURU-VAIDURYA-PRABHA-RAJAYA.
TATHAGATAYA ARHATE SAMYAKSAM-BUDDHAYA TADYATHA
OM BHASAJYE BHAIJYAGURU-SAMUDGATE SVAHA”**

Regarding the efficacy of this great prayer the Buddha said:

“Manjusri, if you see a pious man or woman who suffers from a disease, you shall do the following whole-heartedly for these people: let them keep clean by taking frequent baths and rinse their mouths, give them food, medicine and clean water, and recite the Dharani for a hundred and eight times, then all diseases will disappear entirely. If one should have a particular wish, he should concentrate and recite the magical formula. Then he will fulfill all he wishes, he will be without disease, and will live longer. After his death, he will be born in paradise without having to return to this world, and will in the end attain perfect Enlightenment....”

While reciting the above dharani or the Buddha’s name, one should contemplate on the Buddha’s image and then one may arrive at the state of the Buddha-recitation samadhi when one is reciting and yet not reciting, not reciting and yet reciting. For those who do not have an image of the Buddha, either of the two pictures on Yao Shih Fwo should serve the purpose. The same is true of all the illustrations of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas provided in this book; they are all suitable objects of meditation or contemplation.

Here is a simple method of practice which may be of some help to those who have no idea of how to pray and therefore are not likely to have a Buddha image. Worship can be practised anywhere but a quiet and clean room is the most suitable. Place before you the image or picture of the Buddha that you would like to worship. Gaze at the picture for a minute or two to calm your mind and generating the desire to worship. Lightly close



BHAISAJYAGURU — TIBETAN DEPICTION

your eyes and imagine that the Buddha has manifested before you. Make three bows as a gesture of reverence. Make known the purpose or motivation of your worship i.e., praying for long life for one's parents or the well-being of certain friends. Softly or mentally recite his name — in the case of this Buddha:

“NAMO HSIAO-TSAI YEN SHOU YAO SHIH FWO...”

or one may choose to recite the great dharani from 9 up to 108* times with utmost sincerity and reverence. It may take a great deal of effort at the beginning of the practice to hold the prayer with full concentration, but after some time, with perseverance, the result of one-pointedness will be felt. In the midst of prayers one should first imagine that the Buddha is happy with one's effort, then he gives his blessings by radiating pure light onto oneself. The Buddha's light fills up the entire body with its radiance purifying one's defilements or illness. One should generate a very happy feeling for this blessing and be moved to practise such virtues as loving-kindness and compassion towards all other sentient beings so that, without hesitation, one immediately transfers all such blessings received to them. This is done by imagining that the radiance of one's own body is absorbed by all beings in the universe which will help purify their bad karma and cause them to be happy in the future. In case one is praying for the Buddha's blessings for a friend, one should then imagine that he is sitting in front of oneself so that all the light that is radiated from the Buddha will flow into his body thus benefiting him solely. After the prayers one should sit for a short while to feel the calm and blissful feelings that one has built up and then sincerely pray that all beings too will be blessed with such happiness.

CHAPTER VIII

Kuan Shih Yin P'usa

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

“Namo Ta-Chi-Ta-Pei Kuan Shih Yin P'usa”. This is the prayer which is recited by all Kuan Yin devotees daily to pay homage and to appeal to the Great Lord, **AVALOKITESVARA** Bodhisattva, who is the compassionate aspect of all the Buddhas of the three aeons. Literally translated it means “Namo To The Greatly Compassionate Kuan Shih Yin Bodhisattva”. To recite this prayer is to seek the blessings of Kuan Yin and at the same time to develop one's own compassionate nature. Those who recite the great prayer with a sincere heart will surely find it quite easy to practise great kindness and great sympathy towards others, for Kuan Yin's compassion will then flow through them and cause them to walk the Path of Mercy. It is also the Path towards Buddhahood for the merit and virtue of reciting the name of the great P'usa is immeasurable.

This great Compassionate Lord is known by various other names such as:

“The Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sound of the World:”

“The Lord of Compassionate Glances.”

“The Lord Who Sees the World with Pity.”

“The Lord of What is seen, of the Visible World.”

and a host of other names. He is indeed the Lord who regards with compassion, all beings suffering from the evils of existence within the Six Realms.

KUAN SHIH YIN is the direct translation of the Sanskrit name of Avalokitesvara which has the following meaning:

KUAN — ‘contemplate’ or ‘looks on’
SHIH — the world or the region of sufferers’
YIN — ‘all the sounds of the world,’ i.e., the crying sounds of beings, verbal or mental, all acknowledging misery and seeking salvation which touch the heart of the Lord who pities.

Kuan Shih Yin is therefore the Bodhisattva of great compassion, mercy and love who has won the hearts of countless people. By virtue of his infinite power, he is capable of regarding the cries of the people whether these represent either desire or suffering, delivering them through the wisdom of skilful means, and appearing in the form suitable to those to be saved. This noble Lord is thus the ‘saviour’ who may assume the form of a Buddha, Bodhisattva, god or any other forms, either male or female, in order to fulfill his task of mercy.

In most of the Buddhist lands, the male form is predominant but in China, Kuan Shih Yin manifests in various female forms such as:

“White-robed Kuan Yin”

“Child-giving Kuan Yin”

“Calm-sea Kuan Yin”



KUAN SHIN YIN P'USA — AVALOKITESVARA BODHISATTVA

The reasons for these female emanations are because of the then Confucianist influence on the attitude, customs and social systems which discouraged the female population from seeking comfort and solace from male deities especially in their requests for off-spring.

Kuan Yin, in fact, manifested into 33 forms with which to reach the people and the most popular ones being:

Kuan Yin of Complete Light

Dragon-head Kuan Yin

Kuan Yin Who Views Waterfalls

Child-giving Kuan Yin

Kuan Yin of the Fish Basket

Kuan Yin of the Rock Cave

Kuan Yin of Universal Compassion

Kuan Yin Holding a Lotus

It should also be mentioned that even before Buddhism was introduced into China, the women folk there were already worshipping several female Taoist Deities, in the forms of 'Niang-Niang' seeking their blessings for safety, happiness, children, mercy, compassion and salvation. Thus when Kuan Shih Yin responded to the urgent and distressful calls of the Chinese people in the female forms, they were also given the 'Niang-Niang' titles so that Kuan Shih Yin P'usa which is the proper Buddhist term, became known as Kuan Yin Niang Niang or The Goddess of Mercy. In this way, Avalokitesvara became the most popular

deity in all of China, worshipped by both the Buddhists and the Taoists as well as those who are without a proper faith but needed a compassionate deity to turn to.

Kuan Yin's manifestations or transformation bodies can be said to be numberless and the most widely worshipped form today is that of the White-robed Kuan Yin. For this reason, most of the Kuan Yin images that are seen in temples and at home altars are related to this form. Since this is the most beloved of all the forms, one should take a closer look at it to discover its endearing features which have captured the hearts of countless millions.

Kuan Yin images are either in a seated or standing posture each having its significant meanings. Most people tend to prefer the seated form as it gives both a serene and dignified feeling, the very picture of enlightenment. The standing figure represents compassion in action. What does it indicate? It really indicates that Kuan Yin's compassion and saving power are available to anyone who seeks them, that Kuan Yin is ever ready to reach and help all beings by offering them assistance, love and protection. This posture also symbolises the eternal activity of bringing enlightenment to all who wish it. Kuan Yin is also depicted as holding a vase which contains 'Amrita', the dew of compassion, which can purify the defilements of our body, speech and mind, as well as having all kinds of curative powers. The face of Kuan Yin images is always gentle, calm and enduringly sweet, an expression which reflects infinite wisdom, serenity, love and compassion. It has the peculiar quality of calming those who

are angry or are in despair, comforting those who are sorrowful, and bringing forth feelings of love, devotion and contentment to her faithful. How does one become her faithful? Not by blind faith or through worship which is tinged with selfish intentions but through the practice of such virtues as kindness, gentleness, love, mercy, compassion, charity, morality, patience, perseverance, contemplation or acts that will bring benefits to others, one becomes a true disciple of Kuan Shih Yin. Another feature that should be noted is the eyes which are always depicted as 'half-opened and half-closed' which indicates a perfect harmony of outer and inner life as half of the vision is concerning the outer world, while the other half is directed internally for proper self-reflection. Thus it can be said that Kuan Yin is ever mindful of the external world and all our internal thoughts and inclinations.

As mentioned earlier, Kuan Yin forms are many, in fact they are said to be countless, and each of these forms has its own significant and symbolic meaning. Those who are new to Mahayana Buddhism should not be startled by the various forms of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, especially by the number of arms that they are often depicted with. One of Kuan Yin's most famous and compassionate forms is that of the 'thousand-arm-thousand eyes' which is known in Chinese as 'Chien-shou-chien-yen Kuan Shih Yin P'usa. In this form, Kuan Yin has eleven heads and a thousand hands, with extra eyes on the palms of each hand. Legend has it that he was contemplating the task of working for the safety and happiness of all sentient beings when his head split into a thousand pieces upon realising

the enormity of such an undertaking. Amitabha, the Buddha of Limitless Light, his Spiritual Father, quickly came to the rescue and restored Kuan Yin to life and also gave him this form. The thousand eyes symbolise the all-seeing nature of Kuan Yin's compassion while the thousand arms represent the ever-present and all-compassing nature of his help. All Kuan Yin images, male or female, with one or multiple heads, two or multiple arms, gentle or fierce facial expressions, have their own symbolic and religious meanings and therefore should not be looked upon as peculiar and uninviting. However, all Kuan Yin images always feature a loving, kind and compassionate expression and even a statue with eleven heads and a thousand arms does not lose the harmony of the whole body but radiates peace.

In the Lotus Sutra, an entire chapter is devoted to Kuan Yin in which the Buddha describes the Bodhisattva as one who has her face turned in every direction in order to see all things and to save all beings and that there is no form or shape that Kuan Yin will not assume to preach the Dharma to sentient beings:

“In some worlds... the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Avalokitesvara preaches the law to creatures in the shape of a Buddha; in others she does so in the shape of a Bodhisattva. To some beings she shows the law in the shape of a Pratyekabuddha; to others she does so in the shape of a disciple... to those who are to be converted by assuming Brahman, she preaches in the shape of a Brahman; to those who are to be converted by Vajrapani, she preaches in the shape of Vajrapani.”



CHIEN-SHOU-CHIEN-YEN — KUAN SHIH YIN P'USA

Many other Kuan Yin transformations are described fully in the various Mahayana Sutras and the underlying concept for all are basically the same — an expression of the limitless compassion of this great bodhisattva. One of the most important forms which all Kuan Yin devotees should recognise and revere is that of the Four-arm Avalokitesvara, worshipped by all Tibetans as **CHENRIZIG**, the Holder of the White Lotus. It is in the male form which has two hands in the praying-gesture known as the ‘namaskara-mudra’ while the other two hands hold his symbols, the Crystal Rosary and the Lotus Flower. He is the emanation and therefore the spiritual son of Amitabha Buddha, who blessed him and whereupon the Bodhisattva brought forth the famous prayer, known as the Mani Mantra:

“OM MANI PADME HUM”

This Mantra of Universal Protection is recited ceaselessly by millions of Kuan Yin adherents in countries where Mahayana Buddhism is practised. It is a very powerful mantra whose efficacy have helped countless number of people in every way.

Another great compassionate form is that of the ‘All-sided One’, the Eleven-faced Kuan Yin. This is an esoteric form which is widely popular in Tibet and its neighbouring countries where Vajrayana, the third vehicle of Buddhism, is practised. Several famous temples in Japan have this image but it is a rarity in Chinese temples. Here is the legend:

“Avalokitesvara, the All-Pitying One descended into hell, converted the wicked and liberated them to Sukhavati, the Western

Paradise of his spiritual father, Amitabha. No sooner had he emptied the hell of its inhabitants, within the next instant other beings were reborn there to fill up their places. Out of despair and grief in discovering the extent of wickedness in the world and the utter helplessness of saving all mankind, the Bodhisattva's head split into ten pieces.

Amitabha Buddha quickly came to the rescue of his beloved disciple and caused each of the pieces to become a head, placed them in three tiers of three, with the tenth head on top and his own image above them all.”

Thus the Great Compassionate One was endowed with twenty-two eyes instead of two, to see all suffering, and eleven brains instead of one, to concentrate on the best means of saving mankind.

As mentioned earlier, Kuan Yin is always accepted by the average Chinese to be a female Bodhisattva due to her various manifestations and legend in China. To refer to her as a male deity will surely cause many a brow to wrinkle up and pairs of confused eyes staring at you for the profanity uttered. This is because the great majority of her devotees and faithfuls are lacking in doctrinal knowledge and it is for this particular reason that this book has been prepared. To them Kuan Yin is a great Being who can be counted upon for help under any circumstances for she has indeed helped countless others, so that just to have faith in this Goddess of Mercy is good enough and that the complicated doctrines of the Buddhas should be left to the monks and nuns who will be there to guide them whenever the need arises. This may

be a commendable show of faith but it benefits only a limited number of people who have the good karma to develop it. It will not help to instruct the younger generation to develop an interest in Buddhism or to practise it. What is more important is that every Buddhist should have a fair knowledge of who the Buddha is, and what are his important teachings so that Buddhism can be practised meaningfully and objectively. This will also help to do away with superstition and wrong practice and at the same time provide intelligent answers to the questions that are posed by those of other faiths.

But let us get back to the subject on this great Bodhisattva whose sphere of influence is much greater than the Buddha for she has more temples built in her name than all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Buddhist Pantheon. Her merit is incalculable, like drops of rain falling continuously for a year. She is called the Greatly Compassionate One because of her vow of 'saving all living beings and therefore committing herself to being the last person in the universe to attain Buddhahood!'

In the Lotus Sutra the Buddha said that anyone who calls upon Kuan Yin will be delivered instantly from all their sufferings. By virtue of her supernatural power, she is able to save all living beings from all kinds of danger, give them what they want, and preach the Dharma freely by appearing in whatever form that suits the nature of the faithful.

To call for Kuan Yin's help one needs only to humbly recite her name continuously with:



CHENRIZIG — FOUR-ARMED AVALOKITESVARA

“NAMO TA-PEI KUAN SHIH YIN P’USA”

(Namo to the Greatly Compassionate Kuan Shih Yin P’usa)

or, one may recite her mantra of Universal Protection:

“OM MANI PADME HUM”

The power of the function of reciting any of the above prayers is inconceivable. If someone has grave problems or even demonic obstructions and recites Kuan Yin P’usa’s name or the Mani Mantra, the problems will disappear or the demon will run away. There are many people who are suffering from having a lot of desires which are their causes of unhappiness, desires such as greed for wealth, social status, fame, sex, food and other mundane things, these people should try to recite constantly the name of Kuan Yin and their useless desires will melt away.

Desire arises out of thoughts. Many people are not aware of their thoughts even though they are very harmful to them and to others. Their minds are not really clear so that even thoughts of greed, anger, lust, and ignorance are left unchecked and in time evil deeds will be committed. Those who wish to rid their mind of greed and desire should constantly recite, “Namo Ta-Pei Kuan Shih Yin P’usa”, with the deepest respect and all their attention focused on it. In time the efficacy of this recitation will be felt and all kinds of defiled thoughts will soon disappear. To fully understand what is meant by this description of the power of holding Kuan Yin’s name, one should give it a try — ‘experience is always the best teacher’.

Kuan Yin's response can be instant or slightly delayed, it all depends on one's karmic influence at that moment of prayer and the intensity of faith in the calling. Miracles of Kuan Yin answering the fervent prayers of those who called upon her name are countless. They can easily fill up the entire volume of the Britannica Encyclopedia for almost every devout devotee will have a tale or two to tell. Here is a true account of a recent happening, a miracle which has transformed the life of a lady who was not even a devotee, and this is what she has written:

“The Fatt Wah Aum Temple in Cheras was celebrating ‘See-fu Tan’, and a group of us went there during our lunch break, to taste the vegetarian food served there. It was reputed to be the tastiest in town. On arrival, each of us, following the custom of the temple, bought a bundle of joss-sticks for offering to the deities. Not being a Buddhist I had no idea where the joss-sticks or incense were to be offered, so I followed the actions of other worshippers; I lit the incense and went round the hall placing a stick in each incense urn that is placed in front of the deities. Having done that, I found that I still had quite a few sticks left. I looked around and found that others were making their way to an adjoining hall. There were more altars and incense urns into which I continued to place a joss stick in each of them. After placing my last stick of incense I realised that there was still one more altar left and it had before it offerings of food, flowers, candles and fruits. This then must be the altar of the ‘See-fu’ whom the temple was honouring that day. I felt terribly sorry that I had no more incense to make my offering to this deity, so I knelt down to apologise. I then recognised that it was the statue of **KUAN YIN**.

Suddenly I felt a cool breeze on my face and, at the same time, a 'thought' crossed my mind that I would be having a baby after which I should serve Kuan Yin. This 'thought' seemed rather ridiculous as I already have two sons, aged five and two, and I certainly have no intention whatsoever to have another child. As for serving Kuan Yin, the thought was so foreign that I did not know what it meant. Anyway, this strange experience was soon forgotten.

The following year I conceived. At the eighth month of my pregnancy my gynaecologist informed me that my baby was in a breech position. He then tried to shift the position of the baby but was unsuccessful. That night I began to bleed and it got worse the next day. It was then that I recalled the incident at the temple.

I had a strong desire to go back to the temple to ask Kuan Yin for help but my husband could not bring me there due to business commitments. However he did promise to take me there the next day.

That night, I went into labour. At the hospital the water bag burst and soon the baby's legs were out. The few attending doctors tried to deliver the baby and, after a few attempts, decided to seek the help of the off-duty consultant. I was frightened out of my wits and having no one to turn to, I burst into a prayer to Kuan Yin, pleading for help! Just that 'instant' thought of praying to her and these spontaneous words that came out of my heart... and then, the most wondrous thing happened!

I suddenly saw a 'figure-in-white' slowly floating down the long corridor towards me. Although there was a wall separating the delivery room and the corridor, Kuan Yin flowed through it. As soon as she reached my room, I heard a doctor saying that I had delivered the baby. Relief and deep feelings of joy raced through my mind, Kuan Yin had given her blessings and I was extremely grateful and happy. However, the grateful feelings were quickly forgotten as soon as I was back to normalcy and returned to the working life of a nurse. I guess this is quite natural to those who are not too spiritually-minded. With the hustle and bustle of everyday living and other worldly distractions, Kuan Yin was once more far from my mind.

A year ago, 1983, friends brought me to a private shrine in Petaling Jaya to attend the Kuan Yin Festival. I was rather surprised at the set-up there for it was not a regular temple, but I found the atmosphere rather pleasant. My second visit there was during the following Kuan Yin Festival after which I felt drawn towards the place, Kuan Yin worship had become a meaningful part of my life. An unexplainable restless feeling would arise and each time it would be quelled through praying to Kuan Yin at that place which is known as The Kuan Yin Contemplative Order or KYCO for short. As a working mother of three children it was not easy to find time to attend the twice weekly prayer gathering which I have grown to love and each time I missed worship, I felt terribly guilty about it. In order to pacify the guilt-feeling each time that I could not attend worship, I would explain mentally to Kuan Yin that my children must come first and that if She really wanted me to be consistent in my spiritual practice,

She must help me to overcome several obstacles. Somehow situations began to right themselves and I was able to worship Kuan Yin with the least of obstacles.

Here is an incident which I would like to share it with others. On the first day of January 1985 (Tuesday) I participated in the New Year Prayer for World Peace during which The Great Compassionate Dharani was recited 54 times amongst other Kuan Yin prayers. During the chanting I happened to gaze at the Kuan Yin image at the altar and I noticed a strange sight! The face of Kuan Yin suddenly changed into a blank, like a mirror, and then an image slowly formed in it! A hairy face appeared in it, darkish looking which I thought was that of a monkey. This startled me and I closed my eyes for fear of seeing anything unearthly. When I had somewhat regained my confidence I looked at the Kuan Yin face again. This time I saw the image of a kindly old man with a very white beard. It appeared for only a short while after which everything was back to normal. It was a strange but wonderful incident which I can still remember vividly in my mind. At the end of the prayers, I had yet another remarkable vision. As I was about to get up to leave, I distinctly heard a voice instructing me to kneel down 'for Kuan Yin was still present'. My head was made to turn towards the leader of the prayer group who was at that time talking to a few persons while seated before the altar. I obeyed the inner voice's instruction and upon doing so, I saw white light emitting from him. What was more amazing was that there was a kind of energy-field which produced some kind of force which I could feel even though I was some four or five feet from him. Time seemed to be suspended and I had no idea of how long it lasted".

The above account has been included in this chapter not for the purpose of propagating KYCO but, to encourage those who are seeking Kuan Yin's help to do so with firm faith.

The Miao Shan Legend

The legend of Kuan Yin's emanation as Princess Miao Shan has caught the hearts of all the Chinese people. To them it is common knowledge that Kuan Yin is the enlightened form of their beloved princess and therefore Kuan Yin, their Goddess of Mercy, cannot be a male God or Deity. This, in fact, is the fixed view of the Taoists and those who are not so well-informed of Buddhism. Who can really blame them for holding such a view when the episode of such a sweet princess turning into a Goddess happened only slightly more than two thousand years ago in a country whose history is well remembered right down to five thousand years?

Towards the end of the Chou Dynasty (around 3rd Century BC), in the kingdom of Hsing Lin, there lived a king called Miao Chung. He had three daughters and they were Miao Ching, Miao Yin and Miao Shan. Before the birth of the third girl, Queen Po Ta had a strange dream in which she saw a heavenly pearl transforming into a fiery sun which then tumbled down and settled at her feet. When told of it, the king, in his wisdom, considered the seeing of such a celestial sign to be an excellent omen and he looked forward to having a male heir to his

throne. However, to his great disappointment, a girl was born to him. This was on the 19th day of the 2nd moon and she was named Miao Shan.

Miao Shan grew up to be a religious and virtuous girl unaffected by the attractions of worldly matters. What she yearned for was to have a quiet retreat in the mountains where she could practise the perfections of her virtues. She longed to be able to bring relief to all the miserable beings on earth.

When his daughters were of marriageable age, the King found suitable husbands for them. While her sisters accepted their marriages, Miao Shan steadfastly refused to marry and infuriated the father by choosing to retire to a nunnery called the White Sparrow.

The father made several attempts to make temple-life unbearable to his fragile daughter so as to persuade her to return to her palace. However, all his attempts failed for a little suffering was not going to deter one whose mind was set on cultivating the Buddha's path. In his anger, the King ordered that the nunnery be set on fire for such an unfilial daughter deserved to be put to death. However, the fire was instantly put out by an inundating shower which saved the lives of the princess and the few hundred nuns. The enraged King then decreed that Miao Shan be executed but the executioner's sword, upon contacting the princess's neck, broke into smithereens! This so angered the King that he next ordered that his unfilial daughter be strangled to death with a silken cord. As she was being strangled, the tutelary god

appeared in the form of a great tiger, dispersed the crowd, and carried the inanimate body into the forest.

Miao Shan's spirit descended into hell, but her sweetness and the purity of her prayers soon converted it from a place of great suffering to a paradise. This alarmed the Registrar of the Living and the Dead who then hastily petitioned Yen Lo, the King of the Underworld, to order her removal declaring, 'Since it has been decreed that, in justice, there must be a heaven and a hell, if Princess Miao Shan's soul is not sent back to the upper world, there will be no hell left, but only a heaven'.

Her soul was then quickly transported back to her body which was lying under a pine tree. Upon returning to life, Buddha Amitabha appeared, and directed the princess to continue her practice of the perfections in a cave called Hsuan Ai, in the island of Pu-to.

For nine years she devoted herself to performing acts of merits and meditational practices and attained Buddhahood. It was in Pu-to Island that she acquired her two acolytes Hoan Shen-tsai and Lung-nu, better known to all as Golden Youth and Jade Maiden.

In the meantime, King Miao Chung, who had displeased the Jade Emperor, Supreme Ruler of Heaven, by his heinous crimes of burning a nunnery which nearly caused the loss of so many lives and the killing of so virtuous a maiden as Miao Shan, that he received the punishment of an incurable disease, the only

cure being an ointment made from the hands and eyes of a 'Pu T'ien Jen', or 'One Who Is Never Angry'.

Aware of her father's plight due to her acquired spiritual powers and out of compassion, Miao Shan freely despatched the healing parts of her body, which effected the recovery. In gratitude the King then sent a delegation with his minister to thank the kind donor only to find, to his great shock, that those precious gifts came from none other than the daughter that he had killed. He was so overcome with remorse that he renounced his throne and accepted the Buddhist faith. Thus ended the legend of the 'unfilial' daughter who became the saviour to her father, and to all mankind.

Miao Shan Kuan Forms

Miao Shan Kuan Yin is often represented as seated, her hands in the gesture of meditation, holding a flaming pearl, or with the hands in the praying gesture. Many famous paintings depict her as seated on a rock near running water, or on an island in the sea. Other pictures present her having a scroll of prayers which represents the Heart Sutra or a willow sprig with which to sprinkle divine nectar (Amritha) which has the quality of removing suffering, cleansing evil karma and lengthening life. Other pictures also show her carrying a rosary of pearls in her hand or it may be held in the beak of a heavenly bird. She is generally dressed in a white robe and is represented, standing upon a cloud, a lotus flower, or even a lotus petal on the sea. Another popular picture

shows her with her acolytes, Shen-tsai with the praying gesture and Lung-nu holding the flaming pearl.

Due to the legend of Miao Shan, Pu'to island has become the most sacred place of pilgrimage for Kuan Yin devotees. From it we are also able to learn of how the other two great Bodhisattvas Wen-shu and Pu-Hsien, came to be flanking Kuan Yin as depicted in the Pantheon of Deities. Wen-shu P'usa, better known to other Buddhists as Manjusri Bodhisattva, 'the Rider of the Green Lion, the Completely Beautiful, the Very Virtuous P'usa, is none other than Miao Ching while Pu' Hsien, the Rider of the White Elephant, the Very Virtuous and Completely Resplendent P'usa, is the other sister Miao Yin'.

Kuan Yin Festivals

Three days a year devout Kuan Yin devotees celebrate the three festivals which are attributed to the life of Princess Miao Shan, the Chinese emanation of Kuan Yin. This legend of the sweet and virtuous Miao Shan has so captivated the hearts of the Chinese people that she outshines all other deities in the land, be they of Buddhist, Taoist or any other origins. She is adored as the Goddess of Mercy and in all the other female Kuan Yin manifestations as described earlier. The three auspicious days are:

2nd Moon 19th Day — which marks the Day She was Born.

6th Moon 19th Day — which marks the Day She Entered the Nunnery.



MIAO SHAN KUAN YIN

9th Moon 19th Day — which marks the Day She Attained Enlightenment.

On these days, devotees and those who have received favours from Kuan Yin flock to the various temples to make offerings, set birds and animals free, observe a full day vegetarian diet, perform all kinds of charitable acts, visit old folks homes or orphanages bearing gifts and good wishes, and observe the Five, Eight or Ten Precepts very seriously. Generally the Five Precepts are observed and they consist of:

Not killing or harming living beings.

Not taking what is not given.

Not indulging in sexual activities.

Not indulging in false speech.

Not consuming intoxicants of any kind.

The entire day is spent in quietude, contemplating on the Great Vows of Kuan Yin to save all sentient beings and to forsake the bliss of Nirvana, or on the great virtuous qualities of this great Mother of Mercy such as loving-kindness, compassion and wisdom. The more energetic ones may indulge in a full day's practice of prayer-recitation, Sutra-reading followed by meditation on the happiness of others and then transfer all merits accumulated to all sentient beings.

This does not mean that Kuan Yin followers practise virtuous deeds on these and other festive days only. To those who are

well on the Kuan Yin Path, practice is a moment-to-moment affair from the day that they have accepted Kuan Yin into their hearts till the day enlightenment is won. However, beginners of the path are advised to practise as best as they can, aiming for gradual progress and refraining from over-committment, to spiritual development unless they have experienced teachers to guide them. Devotion and faith in Kuan Yin cannot be acquired hurriedly but can be won over a period of time.

This chapter on Kuan Shih Yin P'usa can hardly be completed without the inclusion of the Heart Sutra and the Dharani of Great Compassion, both of which are daily recited by those who are committed to the Kuan Yin Path of Great Wisdom and Compassion.

The Heart Sutra

(THE PRAJNA PARAMITA HRIDAYA SUTRA)

When the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was practising the profound Prajna Paramita, he illuminated the five aggregates, and saw in their own being to be empty.

“Sariputra, form is here emptiness, Emptiness is form; form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form. That which is form is emptiness, that which is emptiness is form. The same is true of feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness.

Sariputra, all things are marked with emptiness: they are not born or destroyed; they are not pure or impure, nor do they wax or wane.

Therefore, Sariputra, in emptiness, there is no form, no feeling, no perception, no mental formation, no consciousness; no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; no form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or objects; no eye-element, and so forth up to mind-consciousness element.

There is no knowledge, no ignorance, no extinction of knowledge, no extinction of ignorance and so forth up to no old age and death, no extinction of old age and death; there is no suffering, no cause, no end, no path; there is no knowledge, and no attainment.

Therefore, Sariputra, because nothing is attained, the Bodhisattva who relies on Prajna Paramita has his mind free from obstacles. With the mind free from obstacles, He overcomes fear and goes beyond perverted views, and attains to Nirvana!

All the Buddhas of the three periods of time, through reliance on the Prajna Paramita, attain to the Perfect and Highest Enlightenment!

Therefore, one should know that Prajna Paramita as the great supernatural Mantra, the great bright, unsurpassed and unequalled Mantra which can truly and without fail wipe out all sufferings.

This Mantra is proclaimed in the Prajna Paramita. It runs thus:

‘GATE, GATE, PARAGATE, PARASAMGATE, BODHI SVAHA!’”

The Dharani of Great Compassion

It is stated in the Dharani Sutra that “Those who recite and hold the Spiritual Mantra of Great Compassion will not suffer any kind of bad death and will obtain good rebirth.” Here is the mantra in Chinese which is known to all Kuan Yin devotees as the ‘TA PEI JOU’. The efficacy of this Great Compassionate Mantra has been proven countless times. Ask anyone who has practised this mantra and they will have lots to tell you about the wonders of this prayer. With some effort anyone can recite it for the sake of benefitting others.

The Ta Pei Jou begins with one reciting three times, this opening verse of adoration:

“NAMO CHIEN SHOU CHIEN YEN

KUAN SHIH YIN P’USA

KUAN TA YEN MARN WU AI

TA PEI SIN TOR LOH NI”

followed by the reciting of Kuan Yin’s name thrice:

“NAMO TA PEI KUAN SHIH YIN P’USA”

after which the Dharani is recited:

NA MO HA LA DAN NA DWO LA YE YE
NA MO OR LI YE
POH LU JYE DI SHAU BWO LA YE
PU TI SA TWO POH YE
MOH HO SA DWO POH YE
MOH HO JYA LU NI JIA YE
AN. SA PAN LA FA YE
SWO DA NWO DA SYE
NA MO SYI JI LI TOR EE MUNG OR LI YE
POH LU JI DI SHR FWO LA LENG TOH PO
NA MO NWO LA JIN CHR
SHI LI MWO HO PAN DWO SA ME
SA POH OR TWO DWO SHU PERN OR SHR YUN
SA POH SA DWO NA MO PO SA DWO
NA MO PO CHYE MWO FA TE DOU
DAN JR TWO AN OR PO LU SYI
LU JYA DI JYA LU DI
YI SYI LI MWO HO PU TI SA TWO
SA PO SA PO MWO LA MWO LA
MOW SYI MWO SYI LI TOR YUN
JYU LU JYU LU JYE MUNG
DU LU DU LU FA SER YE DI
MWO HO FA SER YE DI
TWO LA TWO LA DI LI NI SHR FWO LA YE
JER LA JER LA MWO MWO FA MWO LA
MU DI LI YI SYI YI SYI SHR NWO SHR NWO

AH LA SHEN FWO LA SER LI
FA SHA FA SHEN FWO LA SER YE
HU LU HU LU MWO LA
HU LU HU LU SYI LI
SER LA SER LA SYI LI SYI LI
SU LU SU LU
PU TI YE PU TI YE
PU TWO YE PU TWO YE
MI DI LI YE NWO LA JIN CHR
DI LI SER NI NWO
POR YE MWO NWO SWO PO HO
SYI TWO YE SWO PO HO

MWO HO SYI TWO YE SWO PO HO
SYI TWO YI YI SHR PAN LA YE SWO PO HO
NWO LA JIN CHR SWO PO HO
MWO LA NWO LA SWO PO HO
SYI LA SEN OR MO JIA YE SWO PO HO
SA PO MWO HO OR SYI TWO YE SWO PO HO
JER JI LA OR SYI TWO YE SWO PO HO
BWO TWO MWO JYE SYI TWO YE SWO PO HO
NWO LA JIN CHR PAN JIA LA YE SWO PO HO
MWO PO LI SHENG JYE LA YE SA PO HO
NA MWO HA LA DAN NA DWO LA YE YE
NA MWO OR LI YE
POH LU JYE DI SHAU BWO LA YE SWO PO HO
AN SYI DYAN DU MAN DWO LA BA TWO YE SWO PO HO....”

The above sounds are quite meaningless as they are but translations from the original Sanskrit prayer. It must be mentioned that in mantra recitation the meaning of it is not really that important as the sound of each of the syllables. For the benefit of those who are really keen to find out the literal meaning of this prayer, here is the Sanskrit prayer and its English translation:

The Mantra of Avalokitesvara

1. **NAMO RATNATRAYAYA**

I take refuge in the Triple Gem

2. **NAMO ARYAVALOKITESHVARAYA**

I take refuge in the Lord-seer

3. **BODHISATTVAYA MAHASATTVAYA MAHAKARUNIKAYA**

In the Enlightened Being, in the Great Being, in the Great Compassionate One

4. **OM SARVA ABHAYAH SUNADHASYA**

Om, in the fearless one

5. **NAMO SUKRTVEMAMA ARYAVALOKITESHVARAGARBHA**

May I enter into the heart of the Lord Seer

6. **NAMO NILAKANTHA SIRI MAHABHADRASHRAME**

I take refuge in Him with the blue neck, great abode of kindness

7. **SARVARTHASUBHAM AJEYAM SARVASATTVANAMAVARGA
MAHADHATU**

Meaning the fullness of understanding of all ways, which is pure, making all sentient beings victorious and purifying all the realms of existence.

8. **TADYATHA OM AVALOKELOKITE KALATE**
In whom who is thus. Om, the Seer, transcending the world.
9. **HARI MAHABODHISATTVA SARVA SARVA MALA MALA**
Oh Hari Great Being of Light! All, All, Garland, Garland
10. **MASI MAHAHRDAYAM KURU KURU KARMAM**
Core of the world! Make Success! Success!
11. **KURU KURU VIJAYATI MAHAVIJAYATI**
Triumphant success! Great Triumphant success!
12. **DHARADHARA DHARIN SURAYA**
Stand by, stand by firm, O Indra!
13. **CHALA CHALA MAMA BHRAMARA MUKTIR**
Shake! Shake! Liberate me from my mental disturbance!
14. **EHI EHI CHINDA CHINDA HARSHAM PRACHALI**
Come! Come! Listen! Listen! The joy that arises!
15. **BASHA BASHAM PRESAYA HULU HULU MALA**
Speak! Speak! Give the sigh! (Hulu Hulu Mala are words of invocation)
16. **HULU HULU HILO SARA SARA SIRI SIRI SURU SURU**
(Magical sounds of invocation)
17. **BODHIYA BODHIYA BODHAYA BODHAYA**
Awake! Awake! Be awakened! Be awakened!
18. **MAITREYA NILAKANTHA DHARSHININA**
O friendly! The one with the blue neck, Worthy of being seen!
19. **PAYAMAMA SVAHA SIDDHAYA SVAHA MAHA SIDDHAYA SVAHA**
To the fearless, svaha! To the Powerful svaha! To the Great Powerful, svaha!

20. **SIDDHAYOGESHVARAYA SVAHA NILAKANTHA SVAHA**
To the powerful Lord of Union, svaha! To the one with the blue neck, svaha!
21. **VARAHANANAYA SVAHA. SIMHASHIRAMUKHAYA SVAHA**
To One who looks like a wild boar, svaha! To Him with the lion's face, svaha!
22. **SARVAMAHASIDDHAYA SVAHA. CHAKRASIDDHAYA SVAHA**
To Him who holds all great powers, svaha! To Him who holds the power of the circle, svaha!
23. **PADMAHASTYA SVAHA. NILAKANTHAVIKARAYA SVAHA**
To the Holder of the Lotus, svaha! To the Creator with the blue neck, svaha!
24. **MAHASISHANKARAYA SVAHA**
To the Great Seer and Benefactor, svaha!
25. **NAMO RATNATRAYAYA**
I take refuge in the Triple Gem
26. **NAMO ARYAVALOKITESHVARAYA SVAHA**
I take refuge in the Noble Lord-Seer, svaha
27. **OM SIDDHYANTU MANTRAPADAYA SVAHA OM!**
May the success of this Mantra be achieved!

A Prayer to Kuan Shih Yin P'usa

Here is a prayer which many Kuan Yin devotees will appreciate. It should be read paragraph by paragraph mentally and then contemplated upon:

“NAMO TA-PEI KUAN SHIH YIN P’USA”

Out of the great compassion of the Buddha Amitabha, from his pure Dharma Body, you appear in a faultless and crystal pure body of white light.

Due to this glorious birth, the worlds of beings benefitted. With compassionate eyes you look on all sentient beings, to render them help, give them hope and save them from damnation. You gave to the world the Great Path of Compassion which is, in actuality, the Path to Liberation.

Since then countless great ones who pursued this wonderful Path have been saved from the rounds of birth and rebirth. This great Path is before me right now and I am indeed the fortunate one. I wish to show my gratitude and pray that I too may successfully tread your Path so as to illuminate my mind of delusion.

To you, Kuan Shih Yin, Great Bodhisattva, I prostrate. I shall always hold dear your name and recite your great mantra of salvation: ‘OM MANI PADME HUM’.

I pray that there will be peace and harmony in my country and in all the world. I pray that evil may be overcome by good, for the happiness of those who are in every state of suffering, and for the ending of all disasters in the world.

Please accept my offerings of incense, flowers, fruits, prayers and the merits of the recitations of the Great Compassionate Dharani

(Ta Pei Jou) and the Heart Sutra as a mark of my love and gratitude for your Great Compassion for having shown me the way:

‘HOMAGE TO YOU, O GREAT MERCIFUL ONE. HOMAGE TO SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA, AMITABHA BUDDHA AND ALL THE BUDDHAS OF THE TEN DIRECTIONS.

HOMAGE TO UNIVERSAL WORTHY TA-SHIH-CHI P’USA,

HOMAGE TO THE GREAT AND VIRTUOUS PU HSIEN P’USA,

HOMAGE TO THE HOLY AND WISE WEN-SHU P’USA,

HOMAGE TO THE COMPASSIONATE TI-TSANG WANG P’USA

AND ALL THE BODHISATTVAS OF THE TEN DIRECTIONS.

Through these Great Victorious Ones, the Path to Nirvana is known which puts an end to all Samsaric sufferings. Out of love and gratitude and wisdom, I shall henceforth take refuge in the Three Jewels, realise and confess my faults, practise the Precepts, observe the Bodhisattva Vows and perfect the Six Paramitas.

I pray for your blessings to ensure that I shall always be on your Great Path of Compassion in this and every life-time until Buddhahood has been won.

May all sentient beings be blessed by your saving powers and be happy for all eternity. Kindly help their seed of Enlightenment to bud and blossom so that its beauty may fill the universe. I prostrate to you, Kuan Shih Yin P’usa.



KUAN SHIN YIN P'USA

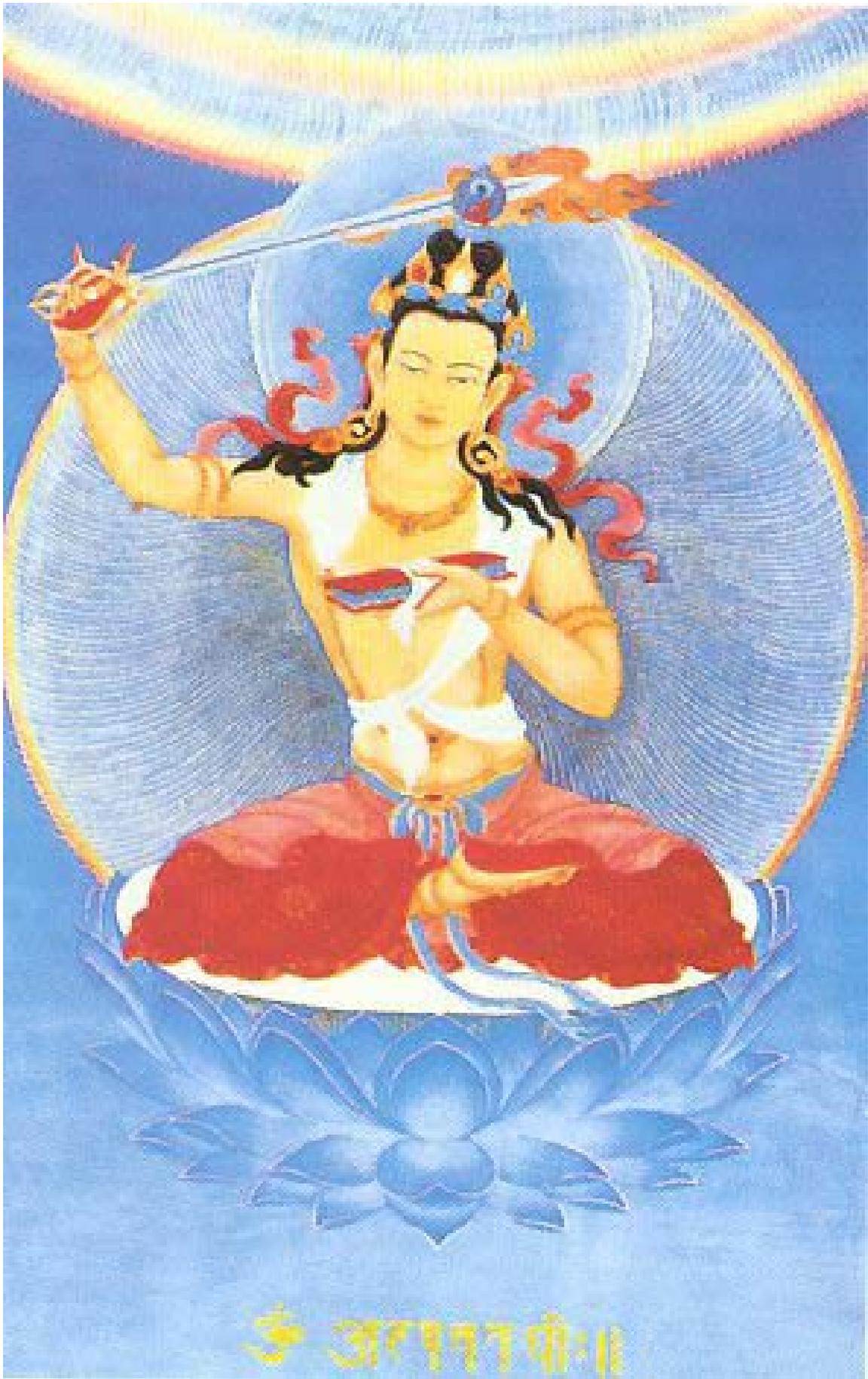
CHAPTER IX

Wen-Shu-Shih-Li P'usa *Manjusri Bodhisattva*

Manjusri, the personification of Transcendental Wisdom, is the first Bodhisattva mentioned in Buddhist scriptures, and one of the two most prominent and important Bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism. His wisdom is perfect and is symbolised by the sword, he holds in his right hand signifying his intellect which pierces the deepest recesses of Buddhist thought and cutting doubts which cannot otherwise be solved. His name frequently appears in various sutras and in the Lotus Sutra, or The Lotus of the Good Law, it was mentioned that he had trained and disciplined many bodhisattvas.

In the Mahayana, Wisdom and Compassion are regarded as equally important, but with greater emphasis on Wisdom. Manjusri, the Lord of Wisdom and Knowledge, is therefore considered as the foremost Bodhisattva in early Mahayana. Later Mahayana laid greater stress on the practise of Compassion so that Avalokitesvara, the Lord of Compassion (Karuna), who is known to the Chinese as Kuan Shih Yin P'usa, soon emerged as the supreme Bodhisattva.

Manjusri, meaning 'Gentle Glory' or 'Sweet Splendour', is often regarded as the 'prince royal' of the Buddha's realm. He is also



WEI-SHU-SHI-LI P'USA — MANJUSRI

addressed as 'Manjugosha' with 'Manju' meaning 'soft' indicating that his continuum has become softened by his wisdom which cuts through distress-causing hindrances to liberation from cyclic liberation (Samsara), and the non-afflictive obstructions to infinite knowledge or Omniscience. 'Gosha' means 'chanting' or 'intonation' referring to his possessing a Buddha's perfect vocalisation abilities.

According to Chinese Buddhism, he was informed by Sakya-muni Buddha that it was his duty and responsibility to seek the instruction and salvation of the Chinese people by making his abode at the Wu-tai Shan in the Shansi province, and there to cause the Wheel of Dharma to turn incessantly.

Manjusri's popularity in the northern Buddhist countries stretches from Nepal, Sikkim, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Korea to Japan. Millions of Chinese Buddhists daily recite "Namo Wen-shu-Shih-Li P'usa" to seek his blessings. He is the most popular Bodhisattva among the Buddhists of Tibet and Nepal where even young children constantly repeat his mantra, 'Om-ara-pa-chana-dhih' which is a prayer for developing wisdom. Holy books compiled by lamas often begin with the mantra 'Namo Guru Manjugoshaya' as a mark of respect to Manjusri for he is indeed 'the lamp of wisdom and supernatural power' who is the destroyer of falsehood and ignorance from the minds of all beings.

The illustration of Manjusri is an useful aid to those who would like to visualise him during their prayers or meditational prac-

tices. They should first of all conjure in their minds a shining blue sky. From it a youthful prince of about sixteen years old with flowing hair, appears and is seen seated on a pale blue lotus with a body made of golden light. He is smiling gently and on his forehead is a wreath of blue lotuses surrounded by a crown of five jewels. Aksobya, a meditational Buddha, is seen seated on top of his head. His right hand brandishes a double-edged sword with a vajra-handle, the point of which is wreathed in flames. His left hand has a book, his second symbol, which he presses close to his heart. This is the Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom known to all as the Prajnaparamita. He wears silk of five colours of a great being and the six ornaments of the Bodhisattva. Surrounding him is a great aura of light which is radiated from his great pure body, a very special kind of light that can purify the minds of those who are seeking wisdom....

Thus is Manjugosha seen, the 'Gentle Voiced Lord' who is related to creative communication. His wisdom is nothing less than Prajna, perfect wisdom, which is symbolised by the volume of the Prajnaparamita.

Legends of Manjusri abound, each with its own beautiful significance so that only those who have great faith and affinity with him will be able to realise their inner revelations. A popular legend has it that Manjusri once left Mount Pancasirsha (Wu-tai Mountain in China) to visit the shrine of the Primordial Buddha which was located on a high mountain and accessible only by way of Lake Kalihrada. However, the lake was infested with all kinds of watermonsters and spirits so that

he had no choice but to ‘open, with his sword, several valleys on the southern side of the lake, thus draining the waters and drying up the land at the bottom’. This dried land is now where Nepal stands which accounts for the great popularity of Manjusri there. The Nepalese also considered him to be their father of civilization as well as the founder of Buddhism in their country.

In Tibet Manjusri veneration matches that of Avalokitesvara so that “Om-arapachana-Dhah” is recited as frequently by the populace as “Om Mani Padme Hum”. Many great lamas are in fact manifestations of Manjusri and the most revered and well known amongst them is none other than His Holiness Sakya Trizin, the Head of the Sakya Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism or Vajrayana.

Manjusri in China

The Chinese regard Manjusri as their Celestial Architect who is believed to have inspired, with his divine intelligence, those who are active in the propagation of the Dharma. He is known as Wen-shu-shi-li P’usa or ‘Wen-shu P’usa’ in short. With his Sword of Wisdom, he dissipates the darkness among men. His other symbol, the Book of Transcendental Wisdom is often depicted as a long and narrow volume, held together by their covers and bound by a piece of cloth string. At times, it is just represented by a scroll which contains the teachings.

He is adored as the Master of Wisdom and Knowledge and is more commonly seen to be seated in meditation on a golden-maned lion which is also called the Lion Throne. Sometimes the golden-maned lion is replaced by a green lion which symbolises the wild mind which can only be transformed by meditation. The practice of meditation is therefore mandatory for all who are keen to have a calm and subdued mind, and Wen-shu P'usa is the Deity who can help them to overcome all their obstacles of Dharma practice.

Wen-shu P'usa's abode at the Wu-tai Mountain in Northern China is the most important place of pilgrimage for his followers and for all other energetic Buddhists as it is believed to be where many Bodhisattvas gather. The Chinese people also address him as the 'Enlightener of the world' as his task is known to be to drive away falsehood and ignorance from the minds of men. Although the ascent to the Wu-tai Shan is steep and difficult, yet countless devotees have reached its top. The lure of making this difficult pilgrimage is mainly due to devotion and also to ascertain the claims made by those who have been there that upon reaching the mountain top temple of Wen-shu, one 'feels a great sense of tranquillity of the mind which cannot be described in words'. There have also been frequent claims by the more fortunate ones that they had witnessed a strange and spectacular sight, that of an unbelievable display of heavenly lights that appeared at certain nights like 'rows of well lit lanterns floating across the vast sky...'. Disbelievers may take this claim lightly and treat it as a kind of hallucination suffered by the devotees' minds as a result of the strenuous climb, the height of the mountain, or even the deep

faith in the Bodhisattva. However they should bear in mind that those who make this arduous trips are generally not mere sight-seers but seekers of wisdom who are keen meditators and therefore possessing calm and not easily excitable minds that are likely to be affected by the aforementioned factors.

Temples dedicated to Wen-shu P'usa are a rarity but a statue honouring this Bodhisattva can be found in most Chinese temples. Generally Wen-shu either appears in a triad with the Buddha Sakyamuni and Pu H'sien P'usa or, with Kuan Shih Yin P'usa and Pu H'sien P'usa, as shown in the Pantheon of Deities. These Three Great Bodhisattvas, when appearing in a Trinity, are in their feminine forms showing Wen-shu riding the Green Lion and Pu H'sien astride the White Elephant. Wen-shu, as usual, represents the Buddha's Wisdom aspect, Pu H'sien, the Perfect Activity of Love, and Kuan Yin, the Perfect Compassion — these three aspects when combined together make up the Buddha's perfection. In the Miao Shan legend, the Green Lion of Wen-shu was described to be the transformation of the God of Fire and the White Elephant being the Spirit of the Water: two evil spirits who captured the parents of the Princess when they set out to visit Hsiang Shan where Miao Shan was then residing, but were later subdued by heavenly forces. Upon Miao Shan's canonization into a Bodhisattva and earning the title as 'The Very Compassionate Saviour of the Afflicted, Miraculous and Helpful Protectress of Mortals', her two elder sisters too earned great spiritual elevations. Miao Ching became Wen-shu P'usa and bears the title of 'The Very Virtuous P'usa, the Completely Beautiful, Rider of the Green Lion'.



WEN-SHU-P'USA

Manjusri Bodhisattva has many other forms which cannot be fully described in a book of this size. Suffice it to say that, like Avalokitesvara, he too assumes numerous forms — fierce or gentle, one or multiple heads, two or several hands and legs, body colour of yellow, white or even black, all of which have their respective symbolic meanings. Each of these forms are but a Wisdom aspect of the Buddha and one of them should appeal to you as your object of worship. Those who are new to Buddhism are advised to accept the forms as depicted in this chapter and to avoid the esoteric or tantric forms for the time being. With firm faith why not place your hands together and offer a prayer to this wonderful Bodhisattva and experience his calming influence? He may yet impart some wisdom to you to help you in your understanding of the Dharma which will lead you to eternal bliss.

Wen-shu P'usa's festive day falls on the 4th day of the 4th moon. It is not usually celebrated by many as those who are on the Wisdom path are not too many in number, but students of Zen Buddhism will most certainly treat this as a very special day of the year.



CHAPTER X

Pu Hsien P'usa

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva

Samantabhadra or Universal Virtue is known to the Chinese as Pu Hsien and Fugen, to the Japanese. She is the personification of love, sacred activity, virtue, diligent training and patience. In the Chinese Pantheon she is seen in the triad with Kuan Shih Yin (Compassion) and Wen-Shu (Wisdom) as the Three Precious Bodhisattvas whose qualities make up the Buddha's Essence. In many Japanese and Chinese temples she is also found in the Trinity with Sakyamuni Buddha and Wen-Shu Pusa (Manjusri).

Imageries of Pu Hsien usually show her seated on a white elephant in various ways and holding a lotus flower or a scroll or book. The elephant, normally in a standing posture, may be crouching and may either have three heads or one head with six tusks.

Pu Hsien P'usa is well known for her limitless offerings to the Buddhas as well as her Ten Great Vows which are directed towards benefitting sentient beings. They are:

1. To worship the Buddhas
2. To praise the Tathagatas.
3. To make offerings to all the Buddhas.

4. To confess past sins and to reform.
5. To rejoice in the virtues and happiness of others.
6. To request Buddha to preach the Law.
7. To request Buddha to stay in the world.
8. To study the Dharma in order to teach it.
9. To benefit all sentient beings.
10. To transfer all merit and virtue to others.

Pu Hsien's sacred abode in China is in the Ngo-Mei mountain of the Szu-Chuan province.

In Japan she is often worshipped by her devotees for prosperity as well as longevity and there are some who also revere her as the divine patron in their meditational practices.

In the Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue (Pu Hsien P'usa) the Buddha lavished great praises on her and revealed that she was born in the Eastern Pure Wonder Land. Meditators who practise this meditation will generate great merits which will free themselves from all kinds of hindrances as well as allowing them to see her excellent forms. The Buddha further gave a vivid description of her as follows:

“The Bodhisattva Universal Virtue is boundless in the size of her body, boundless in the sound of her voice, and boundless in the form of her image. Desiring to come to this world, she makes use of her divine transcendent powers and shrinks her stature to the size of a human being.... She appears transformed as mounted on a great white elephant which has six tasks (representing



SAMANTABHADRA BODHISATTVA

the purity of the six senses). Under the legs of the elephant lotus flowers grow... the whiteness of the elephant is of the most brilliant of all shades of white which is so pure that even crystal and the Himalaya Mountains cannot compare with it!”

The Lotus Sutra has done much to attract great numbers of female devotees for Pu Hsien P’usa as they are promised that they too could attain Buddhahood which is described in detail in the 10th Chapter of the Sutra. In Chapter 28 Pu Hsien P’usa also made this promise to the Buddha:

“In the latter five hundred years of the corrupt and evil age, whoever receives and keeps this sutra I will guard and protect, eliminate the anxiety of feeling away, and give ease of mind.... Wherever such a one walks or stands, reading and reciting this sutra, I will at once mount the six-tusked white elephant king and with a host of great bodhisattvas go to that place and, showing myself, will serve and protect (him) comforting his mind, also thereby serving the Law-Flower Sutra.... Moreover I will give them dharanis, and obtaining these dharanis, no human or non-human beings can injure them, nor any woman beguile them.”

Still further on, one hears the Buddha extolling Pu Hsien with this promise:

“...I, by my supernatural power, will guard and protect those who are able to receive and keep the name of the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue.”



PU HSIEN P'USA

Pu Hsien P'usa is not generally worshipped by the 'average' Buddhists as temples dedicated to her are very scarce. However, those who would like to form a karmic link with this great Bodhisattva may do so in most of the Kuan Yin temples where her images can be found and one of the most popular prayers to recite to her is:

“NAMO TA HUNG PU HSIEN P'USA”

Like all other great Bodhisattvas she is able to grant those who have firm faith in her, all kinds of favours that they are seeking. Those who cultivate her dharma will enjoy a longer life-span and they will most certainly not fall into the three evil paths (animal, ghost and hell realms) in their future lifetimes. Moreover, they will be protected by Pu Hsien P'usa from the dangers of flood, fire, war and poisonous food, and they will be rewarded with position and abundant wealth. Many a childless couple have also been known to be blessed with children who are bright and healthy after praying to her and, most important of all, she is able to impart great wisdom which will be the greatest help to any cultivator who seeks the Way. The festive day of this great Bodhisattva falls on the 21st day of the 2nd moon and it is a great day for us to bring her to our heart.





PU HSIEN P'USA

CHAPTER XI

Ti Tsang P'usa

Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva

Ti Tsang P'usa is an extremely popular Bodhisattva among the Chinese and Japanese Buddhists. 'Ti Tsang', meaning 'Earth-Store' is a direct translation of the Bodhisattva's name **KSITIGARBHA** in Sanskrit. Among the countless Bodhisattvas in the universe, he and three others have firmly captured the hearts of the Mahayanists. These four main P'usas are depicted in the Chinese Buddhist Pantheon and they represent four basic great qualities:

KUAN SHIN YIN	as Great Compassion
WEN SHU	as Great Wisdom
PU HSIEN	as Great Love and Perfect Activity
TI TSANG	as Great Vow to help and to deliver all beings.

His greatest compassionate Vow being: "If I do not go to the hell to help the suffering souls there, who else will go? ...if the hells are not empty I will not become a Buddha. Only when all living beings have been saved, will I attain to Bodhi".

The Sutra of the **PAST VOWS OF THE EARTH STORE BODHISATTVA**, one of the most popular Chinese Buddhist Sutras, tells of the great filial piety which the Bodhisattva practised that led to his illimitable vows to save all living beings. This Sutra was spoken by the Buddha towards the end of his life to the beings

of the Trayastrimsa Heaven as a mark of gratitude and remembrance for his beloved mother.

In this Sutra the Buddha revealed that in the distant past aeons, Ti Tsang P'usa, then a Brahman maiden by the name of 'Sacred Girl', was deeply troubled when her mother died as she had often been slanderous towards the Three Jewels — the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

To save her from the great tortures of hell, the young girl sold whatever she had and used the money to buy offerings which she offered daily to the Buddha of her time, known as The Buddha of Flower of Meditation and Enlightenment. She made fervent prayers that her mother be spared of the pains of hell and requested the Buddha for help.

One day at the temple, while she was thus pleading for help, she heard the voice of the Buddha advising her to go home immediately and there to sit down and practise meditation on His name if she wanted to know where the spirit of her mother was. She did as she was told and while doing so, her soul was transported to the Hell Realm where she met a hell-guardian who informed her that through her fervent prayers and pious offerings, her mother had accumulated much merits and therefore her soul had already been released from hell and ascended to heaven. She was greatly relieved and should have been extremely happy, but the sights of the great sufferings in Hell that she had witnessed so touched her tender heart that she made an immediate vow: "I shall exercise my very best to relieve beings of their sufferings forever in my future lives of kalpas to come."

The young maiden has since then become an accomplished Bodhisattva through her great acts of merits and is now known as Ti Tsang P'usa.

Ti Tsang P'usa has often been mistaken by uninformed Buddhists to be Mogallana who was a disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha, because he too had a similar experience of descending to the Hell Realm to seek and save his mother. The stories may sound similar but they happened at different times and adopted quite different methods to save their mothers.

Many others also tend to relate Ti Tsang as the Hsuan Tsang, the famous Tripitaka master of the Tang Dynasty who made the harzadous journey to the West to seek the Buddhist scriptures. This is mainly due to the Sangha robe and the five-leaf crown which both are seen to wear.

As the “Regent of Hell” Ti Tsang P'usa is again taken by many to be “Yen-Lo-Wang” or Yama, the “OverLord of Hell”. It must be mentioned that Ti Tsang is a Bodhisattva and not a mere King of the Fifth Hell. He does not judge the souls of the dead but seeks to save them from the punishment inflicted on them by the Kings of Hell.

Description of Ti Tsang P'usa

Ti Tsang may be represented sitting or standing. He always has a kind and benevolent look and carrying either, or both, his



TI TSANG P'USA — KSITIGARBHA BODHISATTVA

symbols of the Cintamani or “Wish-fulfilling Jewel” and the “Ringed-Staff”, which is also called the Khakkhara. This ringed staff is often carried by Buddhist monks in their travels so that the sounds caused by the jingling rings can warn small animals and insects of their approach lest they be trod upon and killed. It is also sometimes called the alarm-staff.

In the above much treasured picture of Ti Tsang P’usa, which is found in many Buddhist homes and temples, he is seen seated upon a lotus throne. His hands holds the precious flaming pearl which has vast magical powers beyond description. He wears the robe of a Northern Buddhist monk and on his head is the “five-leave crown, where the representation of a Dhyani-Buddha can be seen on each of the leaves.”

Whenever you have the urge to pray to this Bodhisattva for any help, look at this picture intently for a few seconds as you silently recite, “**NAMO TI TSANG WANG P’USA, NAMO TI TSANG WANG P’USA...**’ before closing your eyes to visualise him. Ti Tsang P’usa is very responsive to sincere prayers of faith and he may yet grant you your wish, if it is not too unselfish or unreasonable. All may pray to him with this simple invocation and, who knows, your past karmic links with him may yet make you into another ardent Ti Tsang devotee again in this lifetime.

The standing posture of Ti Tsang is particularly popular in Japan where he is known as Jizo Bosatsu. It represents the readiness of Jizo to respond immediately to the calls of help made by those who have faith in his saving powers. Standing upon a lotus, he

holds his precious flaming jewel with his left hand while the ringed staff is held with the right, ever ready to force open the gates of Hell with the staff and to dispel the darkness of the infernal realm with his luminous gem.

Ti Tsang is at times depicted accompanied by a dog which also has a significant meaning. On the death of his mother, the Bodhisattva, known as “Sacred Girl”, hastened into the underworld with the view of comforting her and to seek for favourable treatment. However he could not find her whereabouts but later discovered that she had already taken rebirth as a female dog. Upon his return to earth Ti Tsang soon traced and adopted the animal which henceforth became his close companion on his pilgrimages.

Another popular depiction of him is in this standing or ‘activity-form’ which has his left hand holding an alms bowl against his navel, while his right hand forms the mudra (hand-sign) of “giving consolation and peace to all living beings”.

Ti Tsang P’usa has many emanations and he has manifested in countless forms to save beings at different times and places. In the Chinese Buddhist Pantheon his is the only figure in the form of a monk. This is to indicate that Mahayana Buddhism is suitable for both the monks and the laity.

Ti Tsang’s compassion is not practised exclusively for the benefit of the beings of the hell realm, he also gives blessings to those of the world who seek his help and he is a comforter of the poor, oppressed, sick, hungry, and those who are troubled by spirits

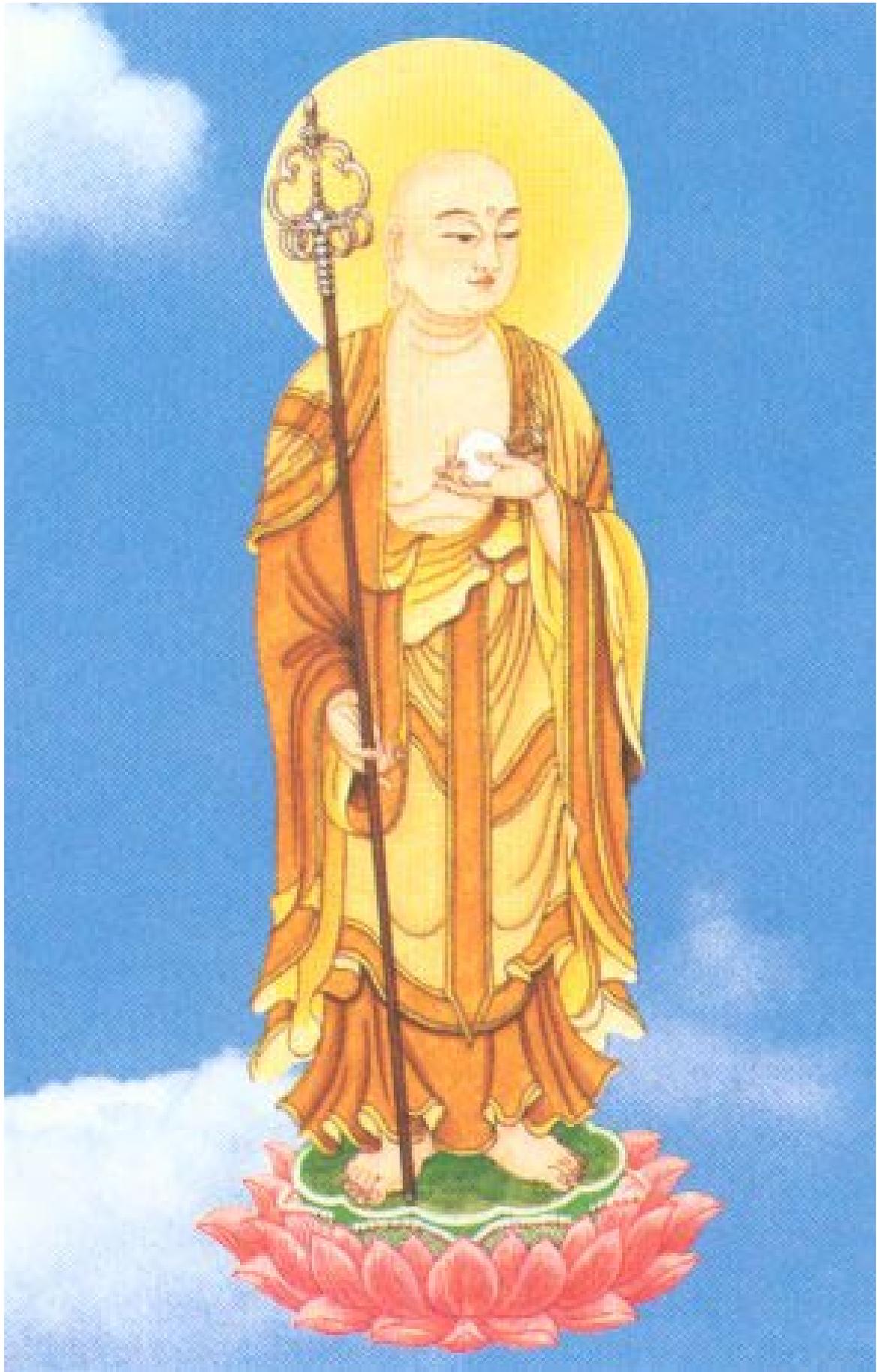
and nightmares. Those who have firm faith in him can easily receive his protection. With faith one need to recite any of these simple prayers:

**“NAMO TI TSANG WANG P’USA” or
“NAMO KSITIGARBHA BODHISATTVA YA”.**

Images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are recognised by the symbols that they are associated with. Each of these symbols have significant meanings which most people are unaware of. The Khakkhara, or Ringed Staff, which Ti Tsang holds is not only meant to warn small and crawling creatures of his approach so as to avoid stepping on them but also to inform people of his presence through the jingling caused by the rings. Often a travelling monk on a pilgrimage has to stop at homes to seek alms and since he does not wish to speak unnecessarily, he usually announces his arrival by shaking his sounding staff.

The Khakkhara is often a wooden staff capped with metal loops or crotchets and rings which are either four, six or twelve in number. The Four-ringed staff is carried by a monk who has perceived the Four Noble Truths of Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. The Six-ringed staff belongs to a Bodhisattva who is constantly practising the Six Paramitas, while the Twelved-ringed staff is held by a Pratyeka Buddha who has realised the Twelve-fold Links of Causation.

As a result of Ti Tsang P’usa having made this promise to Sakyamuni Buddha: “I will fulfil your instructions to continue



TI TSANG P'USA

to relieve beings from their states of suffering and lead them to Salvation. I shall strive to work hard until the next Buddha, Maitreya Buddha, comes to the world.” He is also adored as the “Master of the Six Worlds of Desire,” thus there are depictions of him being surrounded by a Bodhisattva, an Asura, a Man, an Animal (horse or ox), a Preta, and a Demon holding a pitchfork, which symbolises the six different forms he assumes in the six realms to save the beings there.

In the closing chapter of the Ti Tsang Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha gave this advice for the benefit of all human beings:

“Listen to me carefully and I shall tell you in detail. If virtuous ones of the future see the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva’s image, hear the Ksitigarbha Sutra, chant this Sutra, make offerings to Ksitigarbha, pay homage to him, they will receive these benefits:

1. They will be protected by devas and dragons.
2. Their ability to do good will be increased.
3. Opportunities for doing good will increase.
4. They will strive to attain Buddhahood.
5. They will enjoy sufficiency of food and clothing.
6. They will be free from diseases.
7. Floods and fire will not affect them.
8. Robbers will not trouble them.
9. They will be respected and admired by people.
10. Spirits and devas will protect and assist them.
11. Females shall be reborn as males.
12. The females will become daughters of noble & exalted families.

13. They will be reborn with good complexion.
14. They will be reborn in the heavens for many lives.
15. They will be reborn as kings or rulers of countries.
16. They will have wisdom to recollect their past lives.
17. They will be successful in all their aspirations.
18. They will enjoy happy family relationships.
19. Disasters will not affect them.
20. Their bad karma will be removed.
21. Wherever they go, they are safe.
22. They shall always have peaceful dreams.
23. Their deceased relatives shall be free from sufferings.
24. They will be reborn with happiness.
25. They will be praised by divine beings.
26. They will be intelligent and skilful.
27. They will have compassion for others.
28. They will finally attain Buddhahood.

The birthday of Ti Tsang P'usa falls on the 30th day of the 7th moon of the lunar calendar which coincides with the very day when the gates of Hell closes to mark the end of the Festival of the Hungry Ghosts. All over the world Buddhist Temples offer prayers to Ti Tsang P'usa during this yearly Festival for the benefit of the dead.

Ti Tsang's popularity among the Chinese and Japanese Buddhists is second only to Kuan Shih Yin P'usa as he takes upon himself the fearful and distasteful task of bringing relief and consolation to suffering beings of hell.

CHAPTER XII

Mi-Lo-Fwo

Maitreya Buddha

Maitreya, “The Friendly and Benevolent One” or “One Who Possesses Loving-kindness” is widely adored by the Chinese Buddhists for his willingness to grant help to those who direct their minds towards him. He is also known as Ajita, ‘the Unconquered’ and ranks equal with the other great Bodhisattvas such as Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, Samanthabhadra, Mahasthamaprabhata and Ksitigarbha. As the next Buddha-to-be he alone enjoys the distinction of being the only Bodhisattva recognised and popularly accepted by both Mahayanist and Theravadin countries.

Maitreya has taken numerous incarnations in the various Buddhist countries and China has had quite a fair share of them. Historically, the most important amongst them, is said to be that as the son of a King of Varanasi in Central Asia. Record has it that he was born with the full thirty-two marks of a superior being who subsequently became a disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha and was one of the main interlocutors in the Mahayana Sutras where he conversed with some of the great disciples of the Buddha.

Although he is, strictly speaking, still a Bodhisattva of the ninth stage, the tenth being that of a fully Enlightened Buddha, he is

often worshipped as a Buddha in anticipation of his becoming the next Blessed One in the future. Both as Bodhisattva and Buddha he now resides in the Tusita Heaven, the Heavenly Realm of the Devas, where all the Buddhas-to-be will always reside; pending their appearance as Buddha on earth to save mankind and thereby traversing the tenth and final stage or 'Bhumi', to attain Supreme Buddhahood for the sake of benefiting all sentient beings.

Being compassionate, Maitreya always grants help willingly to those who pray to him with faith and the simple prayer to recite is:

“NAMO MI-LO FWO”

The manner of praying to Maitreya is similar to those methods as described in the Chapters on Kuan Shih Yin and Amitabha Buddha. Firm faith, purity of intention and effort will be the main factors of success of their prayers. Among the many reasons for worshipping Maitreya or Mi-Lo Fwo are these two most outstanding aspects:

1. To take rebirth in Tusita Heaven, a kind of Pure Land, so as to receive the teaching of the Dharma.
2. To gain sufficient merits so as to obtain a rebirth during His appearance on earth, to hear His teachings and be saved by Him.

Generally the Chinese worship him for wealth and happiness and there are those who even believed strongly that he is able to bequeath them with children as one of his most popular forms is that with five children surrounding him. However the images of him that are found in the temples normally depict a fat genial laughing figure with a mountainous belly, in a sitting posture, and having a large bag beside him.

Because of this appearance, many people choose to call him 'The Laughing Buddha'. Such a depiction by his Chinese devotee is a far cry from what other Buddhists of other lands imagined him to be, but this does not mean that the Chinese do not revere him as much as others do. This portraiture of him came about as a result of one of his memorable emanations in China during the end of the Tang period and the beginning of the Wu-Tai Dynasty (907–1060). There was a learned monk whom everyone addressed as Pu Tai, meaning 'Cloth Bag', as he was always seen carrying a large hemp bag wherever he went. He was a native of the Chekiang Province who went about propagating the Buddha-dharma. No one really knew his true name although he had called himself 'Chi Tze', and because of his bag, the people preferred to refer to him as 'the monk with the sack'. Here he appeared as one who is extremely kind, jovial and helpful and although he had no home or temple which he could call his own, he is always in a cheerful mood. He wandered about here and there to beg for food, giving advice and teaching to those who care to hear him, or he could be seen collecting all kinds of things which he would put into his bag. To the worldly ones this act may be reckoned as an act of greed but it really meant

彌勒佛德
功德無量
佛笑口
慈悲入



MI-LO-FWO — MAITREYA BUDDHA

that he was ever seeking to help deliver beings into his Pure Land.

As the people got to know him better they soon discovered that he was also extremely good at reading their fortune and predicting the weather. Even by his daily actions they were able to guess the outcome of the weather conditions for whenever he was seen hurrying around in wet sandals, rain was sure to follow, and whenever he was seen wearing shoes and relaxing here and there, bright and sunny days would prevail. He also had many other peculiarities some of which bore similarities with those of another famous monk **CHI KUNG** of the Sung Dynasty. Pu Tai was often seen to be sleeping very comfortably on the snow during the cold winters and at the same time resisted taking a bath during the hot summers. He died in a sitting posture at the corridor of a temple and left behind a verse which said:

“Maitreya is a real Maitreya, who manifests uncountable transformed bodies.

Constantly he manifests before living beings who are not able to recognise them.”

Through this verse, people later began to accept him as an incarnation of the Maitreya Buddha which also explains the accepted appearance of the current day's depiction of him.

In his many other recorded incarnations in China, he frequently appeared as great and learned persons whose lives have been recorded in many books. The followers of the Tien Tao Movement,



MAITREYA BUDDHA

an energetic religious Order which embraces all the three great Chinese religions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, claimed that Maitreya made his appearance in China as their great teacher at the beginning of this century. However all these are but the minor transformed bodies of the Great Being whose real essence is now residing in the Temple of the Palace of the Seven Jewels of the Tusita Heaven. Buddhists are more concerned with his final incarnation when he ascends to the state of a Fully Enlightened Buddha to save countless beings from the world. In the meantime one should direct his energy to develop a strong affinity with Maitreya Buddha by reciting his name daily and living in a virtuous manner.

Maitreya Buddha's birthday is celebrated on the 1st day of the 1st moon of the Lunar calendar which coincides with the Chinese New Year Day, a day of joy in which all families traditionally keep pure and holy by avoiding the eating of any meat.



CHAPTER XIII

Kuan Ti

The Protector of Buddhism

In the year 162 A.D. during the period of the warring states of the Three Kingdoms, a child was born to a humble family in Shansi who grew up to become China's most illustrious and outstanding son, a great hero, and was later deified to become one of the most popular Gods of the Chinese people. His admirers and devotees ranged from Emperors to the common people and his popularity never waned over the long period of time. Thousands of temples and shrines have been erected in his honour and can be seen in all parts of the country. His images and portraits adorn home shrines or walls of countless homes whether they be Taoist, Confucianist or Buddhist.

In a country strifed with wars and rebellions throughout its history of the various Dynasties, great heroes have emerged and distinguished themselves in every way to deserve veneration and remembrance but none has ever equalled Kuan Ti to gain elevation into the ranks of Gods or enjoy worship by different classes of people as their patron saints. To the Taoists and others, Kuan Ti was their God of War, while the Buddhists confer upon him the great honour as their Protector.

Born as Kuan Yu he led a simple life and made his living as a young man by selling bean-curd which provided the excuse for the bean-curd sellers to respect him as their patron saint today.

He also devoted much time to serious studies and on one occasion, displayed his excellent memory power by reciting word for word, the entire volume of the Classics after reading it but once. Kuan Yu's other name is Yun-Chang.

Through his great love for justice and fair-play, Kuan Yu soon got himself into deep trouble when he slayed the licentious and corrupt magistrate who forced a poor girl to become his concubine. This made him into a criminal and Kuan Yu had to flee for his life into the mountains. As he was trying to cross over to the neighbouring province he chanced to stop by a stream to have a wash; when to his surprise he noticed a great change to his appearance! His facial complexion had changed from white to a reddish tint which saved him the trouble to disguise himself so that he was able to walk through the sentries who were guarding the mountain pass without the least of problem.

Upon reaching Chu-Chou of the Szechuan Province he soon befriended two others who shared his noble ideals and virtues and they ended up as "sworn brothers" in a ceremony which has been recorded in the history as the "Brotherhood at the Peach Orchard". Chang-fei, a butcher, became the youngest brother. He was a man of fiery temper who had an unyielding sense of justice and was well known for his immense appetite both for food and adventure. He also had a black face which was full of whiskers and together with his formidable frame of some seven feet high, very few would dare cross his path. His great love and loyalty to Kuan Yu has won him a place of honour so that he is always seen standing behind Kuan Ti in all depictions. Liu Pei, the elder brother who came from a distinguished but impover-

erished family with Imperial linkage, was known to be a man of honour. He was later to distinguish himself by founding the Later Han Dynasty. Kuan Yu, a powerful figure of more than eight feet tall, possessed an enigmatic personality and integrity which won him respect of all whom he met.

Together these three newly sworn brothers set out and became involved in military pursuits, Kuan Ti once serving under the crafty and famous Ts'ao Ts'ao. They displayed great military prowess and fought many battles which can be read in full details in the famous novels of "The Romance of the Three Kingdoms".

Kuan Yu proved himself worthy of the honour and affection of those who fought with him for he was brave and generous and was never known to turn aside from danger. He also proved his fidelity on the occasion when he was taken prisoner together with the wife and concubines of Liu Pei, and having been allocated a common sleeping quarters with the ladies, he preserved their reputation and his own trustworthiness by sitting all night through, outside their door, reading a book under the bright light of a candle. There is also another version of this account which stated that he stood through the night at the door of the ladies' room with a lighted lantern in his hand.

In the recorded history of his life Kuan Yu had many occasions to display his nobility, uprightness, integrity, loyalty and bravery. He lived at a time of great distress and chaos when the virtue of the Han Dynasty, set up in 202 B.C., began to decline and uprising, warring, dissatisfactions and rebellions were rampant. Temptations of acquiring wealth, fame and power did not deter



KUAN TI

him from remaining faithful to the oath that he had taken with his brothers at the peach orchard: "...to be loyal to each other in life and united in death..." And of his ability to bear pain unflinchingly, there was an occasion when he was wounded by a poisoned arrow which required the arrow and the poison to be removed. He calmly submitted himself to the terrible ordeal and allowed his arm to be cut open and scratched to the bone by his physician while he concentrated his attention on a game of chess, without showing the least sign of pain.

In the year 219 A.D. he was captured by Sun Chuan and put to death. It was recorded that on the night of his death, his spirit appeared to a Buddhist monk, to seek for instruction on the Buddha's teachings.

According to the Buddhist account, Kuan Yu manifested himself before the Tripitaka Master Chi Tsai, the founder of Tien Tai Buddhism, with a retinue of spiritual beings. The Master was then in deep meditation at the Yu Chien Mountain when he was distracted by Kuan Yu's presence. After receiving the teachings Kuan Yu requested for the Five Precepts and became a Buddhist practitioner. He then vowed that he would henceforth be a guardian for the Buddha-dharma and thus, for more than a thousand years, Kuan Ti has been worshipped as a Guardian or Dharma Protector in the Buddhist temples. The Pure Land Buddhists also respected him as the Sentinel to the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha. For these reasons Kuan Ti has earned a place in the Chinese Pantheon of Deities; his statues are normally found in the first hall of most temples and incense should be offered to him as a mark of respect.

The honours and tributes that the succeeding Emperors of the various Dynasties conferred upon him marked him as the greatest military hero that ever lived. Kuan Yu earned the rank of 'Ti' meaning "God" or "Emperor" and has ever since received worship as Kuan Ti or Wu Ti. Here are the other main awards which he had subsequently earned, elevating him to the ranks of Duke, Prince and then Emperor:

1. In 1120 the Sung Emperor ennobled him as the "Faithful and Loyal Duke". Eight years later he again conferred him another title, that of "The Magnificent Prince and Pacificator".
2. In 1330 Emperor Wen of the Yuan Dynasty honoured him with the title of "Warrior Prince and Civilizer".
3. In 1594 Emperor Wan Li of the Ming Dynasty conferred on him the title of "Faithful and Loyal Great Ti, Supporter of Heaven and Protector of the Kingdom". In his honour thousands of temples were built across the land so that people could honour and worship him, thus making him one of the most popular Gods of China.
4. In 1813 the Ching Emperor added the appellation "Military Emperor" and Kuan Ti was regarded as the Patron of the Manchu Dynasty.
5. In 1856 during the battle between the Imperialists and the rebels, Kuan Ti was said to have appeared in the heavens which helped to turn the tide of the battle in the Emperor's favour. After the victory, Emperor Hsein Feng quickly elevated him

to the position of reverence similar to that of Confucius, the great Sage of China.

All these awards have helped the people to remember and worship Kuan Ti not only as a God of War but also as their God of Chivalry and Prosperity. He is also regarded as the Guardian of the Brave, Loyal and Righteous, and so on. However it must be mentioned here that the manner of worship of Kuan Ti at his temples are not necessarily a Buddhist practice, although he has earned a place into the Chinese Pantheon. Buddhism may accept and even encourages its followers to revere the Gods for their virtues or pray to them for some protection or worldly boons, but they must always be aware that Enlightenment cannot be won by such practices and that their refuge should be sought in the Three Jewels only.

As a Buddhist deity, Kuan Ti stands alone but as a Taoist deity he is usually accompanied by two other companions. A young looking man is always portrayed beside him holding his seal while Chang Fei can be seen with his halberd which according to tradition, the edge of it facing towards the direction of the suspected danger from evil influence. For this reason he is often depicted as standing behind Kuan Ti's right so that his halberd may face the other direction, if so required.

Kuan Ti's anniversaries fall on the 13th day of the 2nd moon and the 13th day of the 5th moon in Malaysia and Singapore while Hong Kong celebrates it on the 24th day of the 6th moon. It is also customary for the Chinese to make their way to Kuan Ti temples at the start of the Chinese New Year to offer prayers

of gratitude for favours rendered and to seek his continued protection for the coming year.

<i>Dynasties of China</i>		
Mythical	2697–2206 BC	Legendary
Hsia Shang (Yin)	2205–1766 BC 1783–1122 BC	With the Chou, known as “San Tai” or “Three Dynasties”.
Chou	1122—222 BC	The classic period; Ch’un Ch’iu period 722–481; Chan Kuo period 403–221.
Ch’in	221—206 BC	China reunified.
Han	206 BC-AD 219	“Eastern Han” (from AD 25)
Wei	220–264	The “Three Kingdoms” (Wei, Wu and Shu) from AD 200
Ch’in	265–419	Eastern Ch’in from 317. Barbarian kingdoms in North China 304–439.
NORTH & SOUTH		
Sung	420–478	With the Wu and
Ch’i	479–501	Eastern Chin, known
Liang	502–556	as the “Six Dynasties”
Ch’en	557–588	of southern culture.
Sui	589–617	China reunified.
T’ang	618–906	Period of Spiritual Development.

WU TAI		
Liang	907—922	Known as “Wu Tai”; or “Five Dynasties” to distinguish them from other dynasties similarly named.
T'ang	923—935	
Chin	936—946	
Han	947—950	
Chou	951—959	
Sung	960—1280	“Southern Sung” from 1127 with Northern China under Manchus and Mongols.
Yuan	1280—1368	Mongolian rule.
Ming	1368—1643	Chinese rule restored.
	1368—1398	Hung–Wu
	1399—1402	Chien Wen
	1403—1424	Yung–Lo
	1425—	Hung–Hsi
	1426—1435	Hsuan–Te
	1436—1449	Cheng–Tung
	1450—1457	Ching Tai
	1457—1464	Tien Shun
	1465—1487	Cheng–Hua
	1488—1505	Hung–Chih
	1506—1521	Cheng–Te
	1522—1566	Chia–Ching
	1567—1572	Lung–Ching
	1573—1620	Wan–Li
	1620—	Tai–Chang
	1621—1627	Tien–Chi
	1628—1644	Chung–Chen

Ch'ing	1644–1911	Manchurian rule.
	1644–1661	Shun–Chih
	1662–1722	K'ang–Hsi
	1723–1735	Yung–Cheng
	1736–1795	Chien Lung
	1796–1821	Chia Ch'ing
	1821–1850	Tao–Kuang
	1851–1861	Hsien–Feng
	1862–1873	Tung–Chih
	1875–1908	Kuang–Hsu
	1908–1912	Hsuan–Tung
Republic of China	1912–1949	
People's Republic of China	1949–	



CHAPTER XIV

Wei-To P'usa

Wei-To is an important Deva or God in the Chinese Pantheon as his image is always present in all temples as the 'Entry Guardian'. He is the General-in-Chief of the thirty-two heavenly generals who come under the Four Heavenly Kings and has earned such titles as the 'Protector of the Buddhist Faith', the 'Protector of Monasteries' and the 'Protector of Dharma Books'. In all temples where his image is found, he is always placed with his back to the statue of Maitreya Buddha (Mi-Lo Fwo) so that he faces the Main or Grand Hall known as the 'Tai Hung Pao Tien' where the main images of the temple are installed.

According to the teaching, Wei-To was a son of a heavenly king who was so virtuous that when Sakyamuni Buddha was entering Nirvana, he instructed the prince to guard the Buddhadharma. Thus it became his duty to protect the members of the Sangha whenever they are disturbed in their cultivation by the retinue of Mara, the Tempter. And whenever a conflict arises among religious Orders, General Wei-to will discharge his duty to help bring about a peaceful settlement. His Sanskrit name is Skanda.

Quite often his images are also found in small shrines located at turning points of roads so as to afford protection against evil. It is very easy for people to be impressed with his looks which has a military bearing. He is always portrayed as a young and



WEI TO

good looking man clad in full armour and headgear of a general, standing and leaning upon an impressive looking sword or gnarled staff with both hands, or he could be holding a sceptre-shaped defensive weapon.

Just as Maitreya, who as a Bodhisattva, has earned the mark of respect of a Buddha, Wei-To, though only a Deva or God, is very often addressed as a Bodhisattva or 'Wei-To P'usa'. This is attributed to the prediction that he will in the future become the Buddha Rucika or 'Lou-Chi Fwo', the last of the thousand Buddhas in our world period. Since Vajrapani, a very popular Tibetan Buddhist Bodhisattva who is the God of Rain, and also known as the Thunderbolt-Bearer, also shares this prediction, one thus finds Wei-To being referred to as him. However he has not gained sufficient followers to become a major Deity in Buddhism. His birthday falls on the 3rd day of the 6th month which is hardly celebrated in a grand scale.



AN IMAGE OF WEI-TO

CHAPTER XV

Ta-Mo Bodhidharma *Patriarch of Zen Buddhism*

Ch'an Buddhism, another major school of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, came about as a result of the historical visit to China by the great Indian sage, Bodhidharma, who arrived at Canton in 520 AD. Chan is the Chinese equivalent for the Sanskrit word 'Dhyana', meaning meditation. Ch'an Buddhism therefore requires its adherents to practise strict and deep meditational practices which cut off intellectualism. This sometimes leads one to believe that it is quite similar to Pure Land practice which also does away with intellectual knowledge and teaches its followers to put their full faith in the Buddha Amitabha for salvation, although it is not, for Ch'an Buddhism is no 'easy-path'. It requires self power or effort to reach salvation and does not rely on any Buddha for help to attain full enlightenment. However, both schools became just as popular to the Chinese and then to the Japanese by the twelfth century. In Japan it is known as Zen Buddhism and the two major schools arising from it being that of Rinzai (Lin-Chi) and Soto (Tsao-tung) which differ only in their methods of approach towards enlightenment.

Bodhidharma (AD 470–543) the 28th Patriarch of Buddhism was also the 1st Patriarch of the Ch'an Buddhism, the school which he founded in China. His teaching was handed on in succession

by what is known as ‘mind-transmission’ to a number of Patriarchs, the most famous of whom was Hui-neng (AD 637–713), the Sixth Patriarch.

Upon his arrival to China, Bodhidharma was summoned to court by Emperor Wu-ti of the Liang Dynasty, who was an ardent Buddhist and prided himself on his great support for the Buddhist religion. Proud of his knowledge in Buddhism and the contributions he had made towards the Sangha, he asked the sage ‘how much merit he had gained’.

“No merit whatsoever” was the shocking reply of Bodhidharma.

The Emperor had often heard teachings from well-known masters who said, “Do good, and you will receive good; do bad and you will receive bad. The Law of Karma is unchangeable, effects follow causes as shadows follow figures” but now this sage declared that he had earned no merit at all. The Emperor was thoroughly perplexed.

Why did Bodhidharma reply the way he did? Perhaps he was trying to say, in a few words, that if one does good with the desire to gain merit for oneself, that is no longer a Buddhist practice. It will mean that one is not really practising the Dharma but more towards satisfying one’s own ego, or promoting one’s own welfare, or even for the sake of being recognised and appreciated. In this case how could there be any merit in such acts at all? And, being a Zen master, words were not to be wasted, so he answered, “No merit whatsoever.”

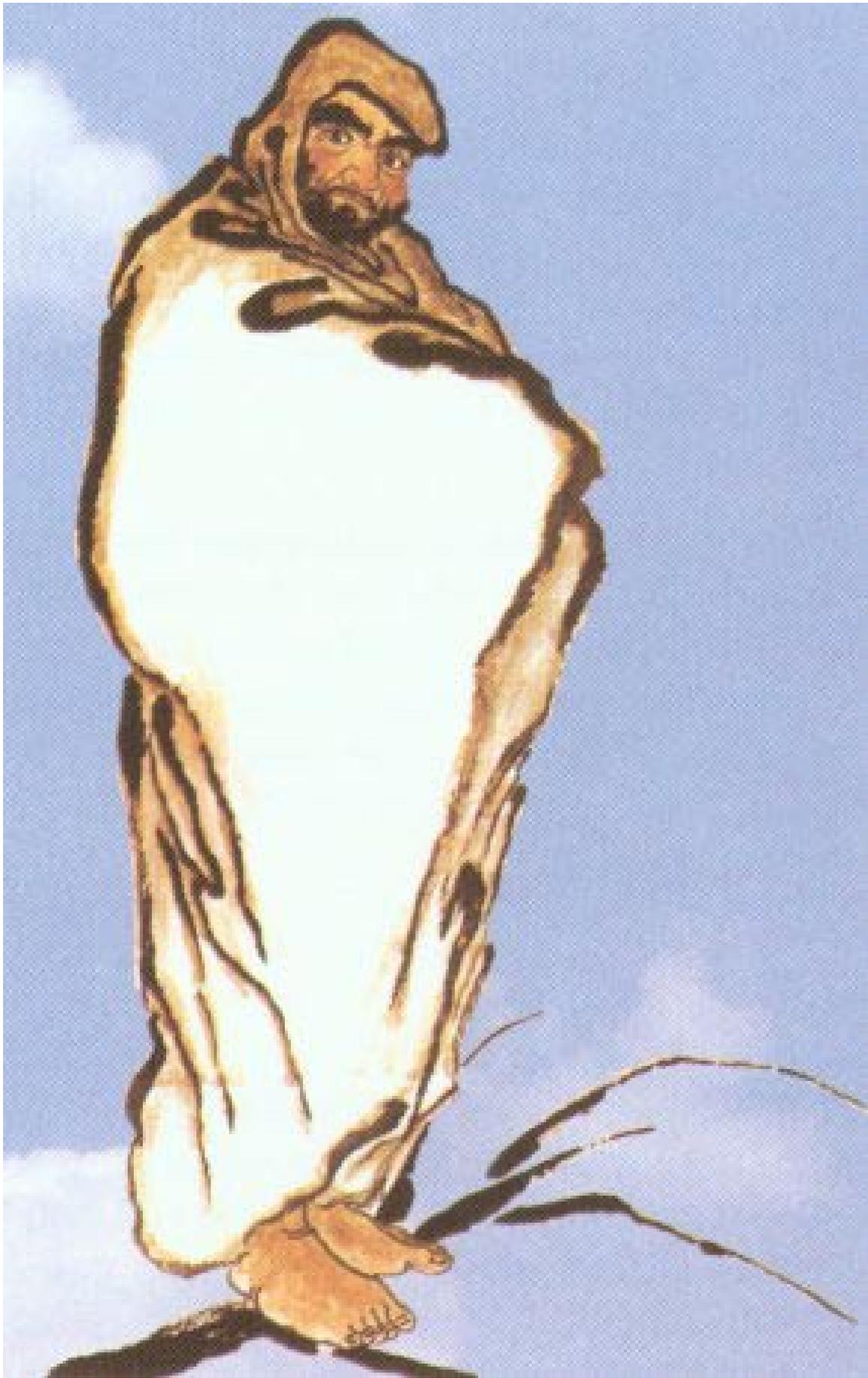
The Emperor, taken aback, then asked the next question, “What then, is the essence of Buddhism?”

Bodhidharma’s immediated reply was, “Vast emptiness and no essence at all!” This stunned the Emperor as he could not grasp the deep meaning of ‘no essence at all’ in the Buddha’s teaching. Other masters had taken great pains to explain that the essence was contained in the doctrines such as ‘Cause and Effect, the Four Noble Truths, the Bodhisattva Ideals, etc’, but this so-called great patriarch of Buddhism had just declared that there was ‘no essence at all’.

The Emperor then put his final question, “Since you say that in Buddhism all things have no essence, who then is speaking before me now?” Bodhidharma replied “I do not know.” The Emperor was taken aback, for he could not understand what Bodhidharma meant.

The thoroughly confused Emperor then dismissed the sage from the court and thus, China had its first taste of Ch’an teaching.

Thereafter, Bodhidharma, left to himself, reflected, ‘Since a learned and great scholar such as the Emperor was not able to understand what I am trying to impart perhaps the conditions are not ripe enough for me to teach yet...’ He then retired to a cave in the famous Shao Lin Temple where he sat in deep contemplation, facing a wall, for some nine years, waiting for the time when his teachings could be understood and accepted by the people.



TAMO — BODHIDHARMA

Bodhidharma came to China to give his special teaching which can be said to be contained in this verse:

“A special transmission outside the Scriptures;
No dependence upon words or letters;
Direct pointing to the mind of man;
Seeing into one’s own nature.”

Bodhidharma then lived in China for some fifty years, teaching when the occasion arose and using the Lankavatara scripture in his teachings. He was succeeded by Hui K’e (AD 486–593) as the second patriarch while Seng T’san (died 606), Tao-Hsin (580–651), Hung Jen (602–675) and Hui Neng (638–713), became the third, fourth, fifth and sixth patriarch respectively. It was Hui Neng, the illiterate woodcutter, who eventually made Ch’an flourish in China as never before.

It may be interesting to remark here that after Bodhidharma’s departure, Emperor Wu discussed the incident with his spiritual teacher, Master Chih, who asked him; “Does your majesty know who this man is?... This is the Mahasattva Avalokitesvara transmitting the Buddha Mind Seal...”

This made the Emperor filled with regret for having sent him out of the court. Years later; upon learning of the death of the sage, he mourned deeply and then wrote an inscription to pay his tribute to the great Patriarch which read:

“Alas! I saw him without seeing him;
I met him without meeting him;
I encountered him without encountering him;
Now as before I regret this deeply!”

Bodhidharma has a large following of devoted followers and his festive day falls on the 5th day of the 10th lunar month of the year. He is often depicted as a travelling monk, or in a meditative posture, or standing on top of a reed which carried him across a river, a feat which led people to have faith in his power as an Arhant or Lohan, the Chinese term for an Immortal. According to the Chinese tradition, Bodhidharma is one of the famous 18 immortals who has a great affinity with mankind. This group of Lohans are generally found in many temples and they are represented as possessing various kinds of supernatural power, symbolised either by the wild animals crouching submissively beside them and/or the special objects that are associated with them. Although the Lohans are a step below the rank of a Bodhisattva, they are Enlightened Beings who deserve our reverence. Bodhidharma or Ta Mo is venerated for being the founder of the Great Contemplative School of Ch’an or Zen by the Buddhists, and others, for his protective powers or as the great Sage of Shaolin Temple.



CHAPTER XVI

Vajrayana

Tibetan Buddhism

The third vehicle of Buddhism is Vajrayana, often known as Lamaism, which originated in Tibet in the eighth century and gradually spread to its neighbouring countries. Vajrayana is part of Mahayana Buddhism, an offshoot, developed out of Mahayana philosophy which is also regarded as Tantric or Esoteric Buddhism. To practise it, one must have the skilful guidance of an accomplished Lama because its emphasis is mainly on ritualistic ceremonial actions and practices which involve the body, speech and mind; the body being valued as the proper vehicle for salvation.

This brief account is meant as a general introduction to the Third Vehicle or 'Yana', which, together with the Hinayana and the Mahayana, make up the Three Yanas of Buddhism. Beginners to Buddhism are advised to have a thorough knowledge on the teachings of the Buddha as contained in the Hinayana before moving into Mahayana practices. Only when their foundations are strong enough and they have gained sufficient wisdom should they consider entering the Vajrayana. It may be a vehicle that promises enlightenment within a single-life-time and many are therefore likely to be attracted to it. However, it must be stressed that the slow and gradual paths of the Hinayana and the Mahayana should be preferred as they, have lesser pitfalls and are therefore much more suitable for the average person.

The training in Vajrayana must always be carried out under the direction of a teacher since it entails a variety of complicated ritual practices. Since such practices are never written in full, it is not advisable for anyone to practise them by relying mainly on written texts. Vajrayana teaches that every Buddha or Bodhisattva is associated with a particular mantra or mudra, which when recited or performed correctly, can link one with the deity in question and partake its transcendental powers. ‘A mantra consists of a number of syllables which when translated literally, may be quite meaningless but it can be extremely effective when pronounced by one who has undergone the proper training and discipline and is familiar with its operations. A mantra, when uttered correctly, can have the power to drive off evil spirits or thwart the actions of black magic sent by enemies. It must be warned that mantras should not be learned from books or freely used. However there are a number of universal mantras which may be recited by anyone and Avalokitesvara’s mantra, “OM MANI PADME HUM”, is one of them. This great mantra of compassion, when recited by one who is pure in mind, can bring about beneficial effects to oneself and others.

Guru Padmasambhava

The founder of Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism is Guru Padmasambhava, often endearingly addressed by his devotees as ‘Guru Rinpoche’ or the ‘Precious Guru’. He is undoubtedly a historical figure but since his life is so entwined with many fantastic legends which displayed supernatural powers, modern men, save

Tibetans, are likely to find it difficult to believe. However, two basic testaments which proved his existence are:

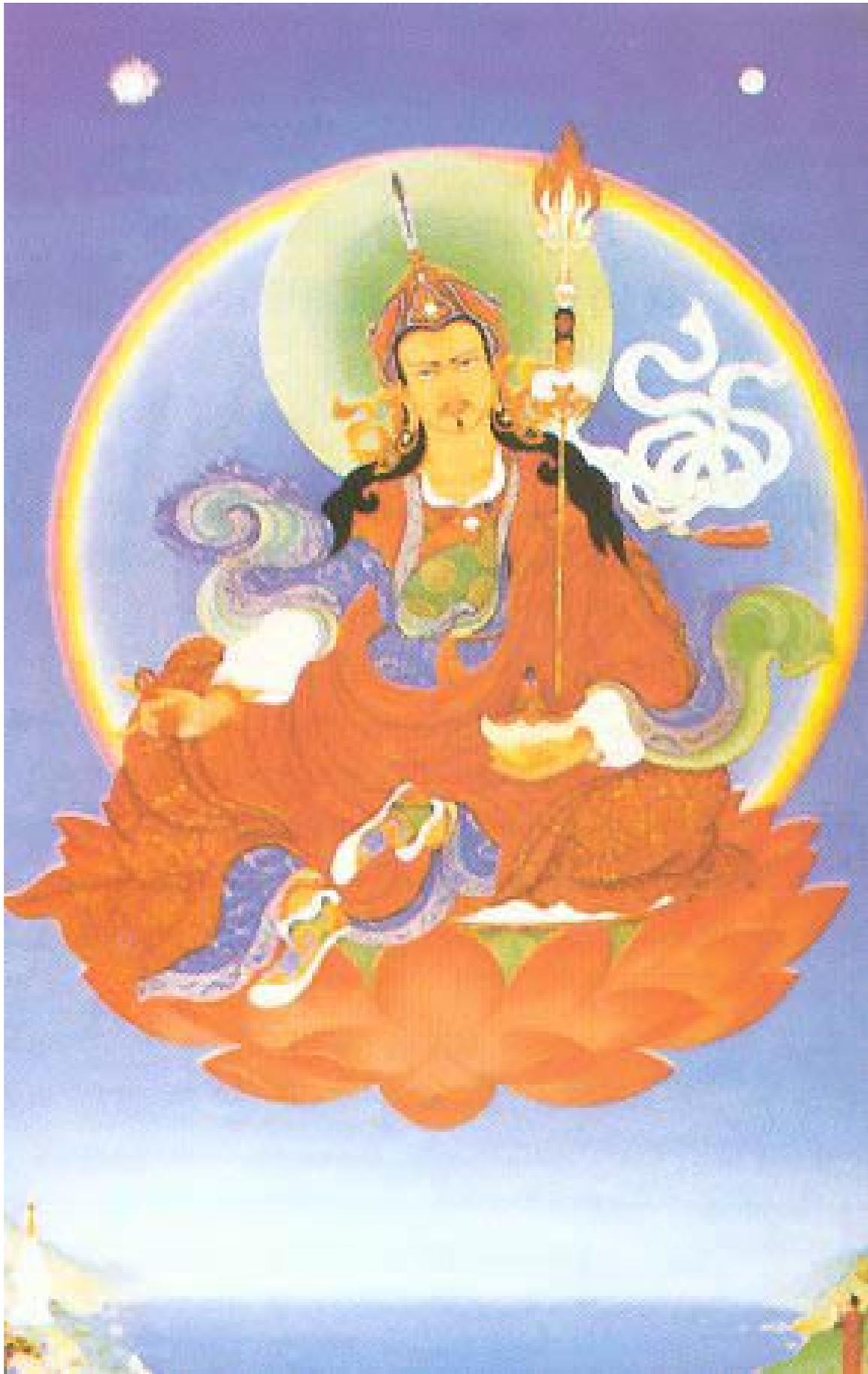
1. The famous Samye Monastery which was built under his directions.
2. Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism with all its body of teaching, learning and realisations which are so rich and profound that it is still converting and lifting the spiritual lives of not only Tibetans but people all over the world.

The Precious Guru has so earned the love and veneration of the Tibetans that they called him the 'essence of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future, the Mantra-holder', and a host of honorific titles. His miraculous birth on the pollen bed of a lotus caused by the ray of light emanating from the Buddha Amita-bha has caused Vajrayanists to call him the 'Lotus-born Guru'. History and legend has it that he was discovered and adopted by the King of Uddiyana of northwest India. When he was old enough, the king retired and handed his throne over to him. But Padmasambhava had no desire to be a king, and like Gautama Buddha some twelve centuries earlier, the lotus-born youth traded his princely robes for an ascetic's rags. He concentrated fully on Tantric Buddhism, mastering all the secret doctrines and mysterious powers associated with that aspect.

So begins the legend of Padmasambhava, the Great Tantric Master, the eminent Indian Guru who spread the teachings of the Buddha in the Himalayan lands rife with worship of spirits

and demons which required sacrifices of animals and human beings and other disgusting practices. History has it that when Santaraksita, the famed Abbot of Nalanda Monastery, was invited by King Trison-Detsun to teach the Doctrine to the Tibetans, he met considerable opposition from the spirits and priests of the local faith, the primitive Bon cult. In anger, the Bon spirits caused great destructions through flood and famine across the land so that Santaraksita had no choice but to ask the king to send for Guru Padmasambhava, who was then residing in Nepal, to take over the task of conversion of these very stubborn and powerful opposing forces. Thus the great guru arrived in Tibet in the year 747.

In Tibet Padmasambhava lived up to his fame as a demon-tamer, subduing the defiant spirits and sparing only those who accepted the Buddhist faith and agreed to become its defenders. As a reward, he included them into the Mahayana Pantheon so that they would be properly worshipped. Blending native beliefs with certain elements of Tantrism, he developed a new kind of Buddhism which is known to the world as Lamaism. Padmasambhava thus became the Precious Guru of all the lamas and is regarded as highly as the Buddha himself. The Nim-ma-pa or 'Red-Hat' sect regards him as their founder and worships him in various forms, both gentle and fierce, expressive of his different moods at different times. Through his efforts the famous Samye Monastery near Lhasa was built and it became the centre of Buddhist studies in Tibet. Santaraksita was appointed as its first abbot.



GURU PADMASAMBHAVA

In all, Padmasambhava stayed for eighteen years in Tibet, between 747 A.D. to 765 A.D., although some sources claimed that he was there for fifty years. He then disappeared mysteriously causing several speculations as to his whereabouts. Those of the Nim-ma Lineage believe that to this day, Guru Padmasambhava still come to visit and bless his devotees on the 10th day of every lunar month.

The Lotus-born Guru is the embodiment of the entire lineage of Teaching, both exoteric and esoteric, which has been transmitted by words, mudras and telepathy through 2,500 years. He is often depicted seated on a red lotus throne upon a white moon-mat with legs locked in a vajra position. He wears the three royal robes of the Three Yanas — Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. His right hand carries the golden Vajra (diamond-cutter) while his left, lying on his lap, the Patra or 'begging bowl which is filled with the Nectar of Immortality. Clamped to his left side is his special symbol, the Khatvarga, a three-pronged flaming staff which has three human heads attached to it, symbolic of impermanance and other deeper meanings. The Vajra, peculiar to Vajrayana, is used by Guru Rinpoche to cast spells or exorcise devils. On his head is a lotus cap adorned with sun and moon and surmounted by a feather from a vulture's wing. This master of all yogas often wears a strange smile, compassionate but with a hint of wrathfulness. If you are ready to accept him as your guru some day, he may take your mundane ego and hang it on his flaming staff. In return he will give you all the knowledge of the universe and give you a drink of the Nectar to make you forget pain and dissatisfaction forever; his Vajra wisdom will also

protect and guide you so that you will never know fear again. Since he is the guru who is powerful enough to break the dark spell which has kept you in the sleep of ignorance since countless lifetimes, why not seek his blessings for the awakening? You can easily develop a karmic link with him with the daily recitation of this mantra:

“OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM”.

The purpose of including this chapter in the book is to prepare the minds of those who are fortunate enough to come across Vajrayana teachings in the near future Vajrayana, or Mi-Tsung Jiao, is not new to the Chinese for its teachings have been in China for almost a thousand years and because of its esoteric nature of practice very few people were able to come across it. However, this seems to be the period of the Vajrayana teachings as a great number of energetic and highly qualified Lamas are currently ceaselessly spreading the Dharma across the world.



CHAPTER XVII

What The Buddha Taught

Dharma is the word Buddhists use, in general, to describe the teachings of the Buddha. It points to the Truth and is neither an ordinary philosophy nor an ordinary system, it is a moral and philosophical teaching that can be tested and verified by personal experience. All are welcome to experience it and those who have not can hardly call themselves Buddhists.

Dharma realisation is extremely important as it leads to ultimate happiness. Dharma is a Sanskrit term which literally means 'that which holds', so that those who exert great effort to achieve its realisation will be freed from sufferings, fears, dangers and delusion. Here are some of the key teachings of the Buddha which all Buddhists must have a clear understanding of otherwise Buddhism will not be very meaningful to them and they may fall prey to superstitious beliefs and practices.

The Four Noble Truths

After attaining enlightenment, the Buddha made His way to the Deer Park in Isipatana near Benares and there He gave His first discourse to His first five disciples which is known as "The Discourse of the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Doctrine".

He declared that those who wish to lead a pure life should avoid the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Self-indulgence is the constant attachment to sensual pleasures which the Buddha described as “low, vulgar, ignoble, harmful and profitless”, which surely retards one’s spiritual progress. Self-mortification or self-torture of the body for the sake of religious belief, which is not usually practised by the ordinary person, is “painful, ignoble, harmful and profitless”, which weakens one’s intellect.

The Buddha himself had gone through both these extremes in His search for enlightenment and said that “He (the Tathagata) realising the error of both these two extremes, followed a middle way.” He therefore asked His followers to take the Middle Way which opens the eyes and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to higher wisdom, and to full enlightenment.

The Buddha then expounded the Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is subject to all kinds of Suffering (Dukkha).
2. This Suffering is caused by Ignorance which results in Desire.
3. This Suffering can be eliminated by the elimination of Desire.
4. The Way to eliminate Desire and attachment.

The Buddha discovered these truths and revealed them to the ignorant world. We can, therefore, put an end to sorrow by adopting the Middle Way which, to all Buddhists, is the philosophy

of life itself. This Middle Way of self-conquest which leads to a complete cessation of suffering and sorrow, which is Nirvana, the ultimate goal of Buddhists is known as the Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of:

1. Right Understanding
2. Right Thought
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

Understanding the meaning of the Four Noble Truths is essential to cultivation otherwise the essence of the Buddha's teaching will be lost.

The First Noble Truth of Suffering reveals to us that everyone is subject to birth, consequently decay, then disease and finally death. No one is exempted from these four causes of suffering.

Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, to be associated with things or persons one detests is suffering, to be separated from the pleasant is suffering and not to get what one desires is also suffering.

Buddhism may put much emphasis on the understanding of suffering but it does not follow that it is a pessimistic religion. It is neither totally pessimistic nor totally optimistic, it teaches

a truth that lies between them, it teaches one to see things as they are. Whilst emphasizing the truth of suffering, the Buddha shows us the way to get rid of our suffering and gain the highest happiness.

The Second Truth of the Cause of Suffering reveals to us that it is craving which produces rebirth which is accompanied by passionate clinging, desiring for this and that in life. It is the craving for sensual pleasures for wealth, for fame and materialistic possessions of life that are the causes of the great dissatisfaction with life.

The Dhammapada states:

‘From craving springs grief,
from craving springs fear;
For him who is wholly free
from craving, there is no
grief, whence fear?’

It is this gross and subtle craving that leads to repeated births in Samsara and that which makes one cling to all forms of life.

The Third Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering is the complete separation from, and the destruction of, this very craving which is a state of absolute quietude, the Bliss Supreme, Nirvana, wherein all the sufferings in human life are extinguished.

The Fourth Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path, the golden means of the Buddha.

The Four Noble Truths teach us to face the reality of human suffering, which is, the Truth of Suffering; to grasp its real cause,

which is the Truth of Cause; to practise at all times the Bodhisattva Way, which is the Truth of the Truth of the Cause, thereby extinguishing all kinds of sufferings — the Truth of Extinction.

For those who sought to be Sravakas the Buddha taught the Law of the Four Noble Truths for the overcoming of birth, old age, disease and death, and finally leading to Nirvana. A Sravaka is one who listened to the preaching of the Buddha and whose goal is to become an Arahant.

For those who sought to be Pratyekabuddhas, the Buddha preached the Law of the Twelve Causes or Dependent Originations. A Pratyekabuddha is one who is self-enlightened, and having done so, does not give teaching to others.

For the Bodhisattvas the Buddha preached the Six Paramitas or Perfections, to cause them to attain Perfect Enlightenment and to attain Wisdom. A Bodhisattva is one wishing to live for the benefit of all living beings and therefore strives for Buddhahood so that upon attainment, will assist others towards the same goal.

The Noble Eightfold Path

This Path that leads to the cessation of sorrow may be explained thus:

RIGHT UNDERSTANDING means the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths so that one is able to understand things as they really are.

RIGHT THOUGHT means developing the noble qualities of love and the aversion to cause hurt to others.

RIGHT SPEECH is to abstain from lying, idle-talk, slander and harsh words.

RIGHT ACTION is to abstain from taking life, taking what is not given, and sexual misconduct.

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD is to avoid any occupation that causes harm to others such as selling intoxicants of any kind, arms, poison and weapons, butchering, slave-trafficking, hunting, fishing and money-lending.

RIGHT EFFORT requires assiduous self-discipline to attain full control of the mind so that evil mental states are rejected and wholesome mental states developed.

RIGHT MINDFULNESS means developing full awareness of all actions of the body, speech and mind and to allow nothing to happen heedlessly or mechanically that may turn into an unwholesome act.

RIGHT CONCENTRATION is to attain mental quietude and the wisdom to realise the full significance of the Four Noble Truths.

He who accepts this noble Path as his way of life will have his mind free from selfish desires, hatred and cruelty and will be saturated with the spirit of selflessness, loving-kindness and harmlessness. He will be a blessing to himself and others for he will live his life in perfect peace.

The Law of the Twelve Causes

This Law is also known as the Law of Dependent Origination or the Wheel of Life (Paticca-Samuppada) and is a discourse on the process of birth and death, and not a philosophical theory of the evolution of the world. It deals with the cause of rebirth and suffering with the view of helping mankind to get rid of their ills of life. It is not an attempt to solve the riddle of an absolute origin of life. It merely explains the ‘simple happening of a state, dependent on its antecedent state’.

Ignorance of the truth of suffering, its cause, its end, and the way to its end, is the main cause that sets the Wheel of Life in motion. The Buddha said: “Ignorance is the deep delusion wherein we here so long are circling round’.

When ignorance is destroyed and turned into wisdom, all causality is shattered as in the case of the Buddhas and the Arahants. This Law was preached especially for the benefit of those who wish to attain Pratyekabuddhahood. By contemplating on it, they will come to an understanding of the birth and death of all things which results in the arising of their great inherent wisdom.

The Twelve Causes and their interdependent relationship are as follows:

IGNORANCE causes **ACTION** (Karma)

ACTION causes **CONSCIOUSNESS**

CONSCIOUSNESS causes **NAME** and **FORM** (Individuality)

NAME and **FORM** causes the **SIX ENTRANCES** (Six spheres of Sense)

The **SIX ENTRANCES** causes **CONTACT**

CONTACT causes **FEELING**
FEELING causes **CRAVING** (Love)
CRAVING causes **GRASPING** (Attachment)
GRASPING causes **EXISTENCE**
EXISTENCE causes **BIRTH**, and
BIRTH causes **OLD AGE** and **DEATH**.

These Twelve Causes of Dependent Origination when presented in the reverse order, may perhaps explain itself in a much clearer manner, therefore:

AGEING and **DYING** are caused by **BIRTH**, for without it there would be no death.

The next questions that follows then is, “How does Birth arise?”

BIRTH is caused by **EXISTENCE**.

EXISTENCE in turn is caused by **GRASPING** or **ATTACHMENT**.

GRASPING is caused by **CRAVING**.

CRAVING is caused by **FEELING** or **SENSATION**.

FEELING is caused by **CONTACT**.

CONTACT is caused by the **SIX ENTRANCES** or the Six Sense Organs.

The **SIX ENTRANCES** are caused by **NAME** and **FORM** or Mind and Body.

NAME and **FORM** are caused by **CONSCIOUSNESS**.

CONSCIOUSNESS is caused by **ACTION** or Karma (Conditioning Activities).

ACTION is caused by **IGNORANCE**.

IGNORANCE is therefore the ultimate link in the chain, the source from which our pain and suffering arise. Once Ignorance is destroyed by the gaining of Wisdom and Insight, then the whole Dependent Origination will collapse.

Pictorial representation of these Twelve Causes and Conditions can best be seen from the Tibetan Wheel of Life. At the rim of the Wheel are the twelve symbolic illustrations, each representing one of the links of the Twelfefold Chain of Causation whereby sentient beings are ensnared life after life. It can be explained thus:

1. **A BLIND MAN** as primordial **IGNORANCE**.
2. **A POTTER** as **ACTIVITY** which brings about Karmic Formations.
3. **AN ACTIVE MONKEY** as **CONSCIOUSNESS**.
4. **TWO MEN IN A BOAT** as **NAME** and **FORM**.
5. **HOUSES WITH SIX WINDOWS** as **SIX ENTRANCES**
6. **LOVE-MAKING** as **CONTACT**
7. **ARROW IN THE EYE** as **FEELING**.
8. **DRINKING** as **THIRST** or **CRAVING**.
9. **A MONKEY GRASPING FRUITS** as **GRASPING**.
10. **A PREGNANT WOMAN** AS **BECOMING** or **EXISTENCE**.
11. **CHILDBIRTH** AS **BIRTH**.
12. **MAN CARRYING A CORPSE** representing **DECAY** which results in **DEATH** to be followed by rounds of birth and death endlessly within the Samsaric existences.



THE WHEEL OF LIFE SHOWING THE TWELVE CAUSES OF
DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

This Wheel of Life is an unique and superb representation of Samsara, the world of Birth and Death, in it all kinds of living beings exist and are classified into six types. Samsara is held between the jaws of the King of Demons, Mara, who attempts to rule the mind of mankind and holding them in a state of delusion.

Within the spokes of the Wheel the Six Realms or Karmic Destinations, which is known as Cyclic Existence, can be seen. Cyclic existence is beginningless which means that each being has lived countless lifetimes and as such there is no being who has not been his mother or father at one existence or another. Buddhism therefore teaches that every being is in fact a kind mother being who has, in the past, shown great love, kindness and protection to each one of us and that we should in turn be ready to repay them with similar acts of kindness. This is a very important aspect of Buddhist practice that will help one to develop compassion and the mind of enlightenment.

The Six Realms of Existence

The Realm of the Devas or Gods is the happiest state as those who dwell there enjoy continual pleasure and sensual delight, mitigated only by the fact that they too must eventually die and pass on to the other states once their karmic forces die out. Birth into this realm is mainly due to one having lived virtuously and generously towards others.

The Realm of the Asuras is populated by 'jealous gods' or Demi-gods' who should be as happy as the Devas, but their minds are clouded with anger and envy over the better fortunes of the Devas. A close look at the picture will reveal that there is a tree growing from this realm to that of the Devas. This is a 'wish-fulfilling tree' whose fruits and flowers can fulfill every desire which they are unable to get hold of. This causes them great frustration, anger and jealousy and they therefore constantly wage wars against the gods to claim the fruits of their tree. However they are always defeated because the gods are far more powerful due to their karmic legacy. Despite being a heavenly realm the Asuras live in great suffering due to the delusion of anger and jealousy. The suffering is further increased by their being born with monstrous looks while their women are exquisitely beautiful. This situation causes their females to yearn for the love of the handsome gods and rejecting their own advances. Life in this realm is always filled with quarrels, fighting and great violence.

The Human Realm is where we are. It is filled with the ups and downs of life and we should be grateful for these conditions to be around. They bring about the awareness of the bliss of happiness and the misery of suffering and therefore become the very causes that lead to spiritual practice. It is therefore the most fortunate realm to take rebirth into, the world where one is able to listen to the Dharma and practise it to attain Buddhahood. In the heavenly realm the Gods are far too happily engrossed with their pleasures to bother about further cultivation while the Asuras are too much affected by anger, jealousy and dissatisfactions of their existence. Those who are born into the lower or suffering

realms are too concerned with their pains and survival to think about spiritual practice or enlightenment. Hell beings only await the exhaustion of their karma to end their indescribable sufferings while the Ghosts or Pretas are totally distorted by the deep frustrations to satisfy their unsatisfied passions. Animals, while suffering less, are born stupid due to the result of their willful ignorance and are therefore unable to derive any benefit from Dharma. They live only by instinct and must face a daily reality of searching for food or mate, and killing or be killed.

One's life thus move in endless cycles within these Six Realms of Gods, Asuras, Human Beings, Animals, Hungry Ghosts and Hell Beings so long as Ignorance is not uprooted and Enlightenment gained.

In the centre of the Wheel is seen the Three Animals which represent the Three Poisons or Root Causes of an unenlightened existence. The Rooster represents passionate desire and attachment, the Green Snake represents hatred, emity and aversion, and the Boar represents the darkness of ignorance and ego-delusion, the blind urge that drives beings round and round in the unending circle of births and deaths. They are depicted as biting each other's tails, linking in such a way that they too form a circle because Greed, Anger and Delusion condition each other and are inseparably connected. We must learn to recognise these poisons as the forces that control our quality of life and take proper steps to quell and remove them. How we perform in each life is dependent on these root causes, the result of which is quite clearly depicted by the figures of the outer rim of this hub — Virtuous

living that will lead to Buddhahood while a non-virtuous life will cause one to be dragged into the hell state.

The above explanation of the Wheel of Life helps us to understand clearly that our existence and sufferings are the result of the Twelve Causes and Conditions (which are without beginning) of birth, death and rebirth. Anyone wishing to be freed from Sam-saric existences should therefore take great pains to comprehend it so that with the realisation of the misfortunes of Ignorance, efforts will be expanded to free oneself from the endless series of rebirths. The Way to total freedom is through understanding and practising the Buddha Dharma and this is depicted by the figures of the Buddhas outside the Wheel of Life, who through attaining Enlightenment have freed themselves from the grips of Mara.

Karma — *The Law of Cause and Effect*

Everywhere we turn in the world misery is all around us. Yet have we ever stopped to consider the meaning of such pain and misery? Why should there be so many who are born sick, lame, deformed, ugly, blind, deaf and mentally defective? Some religions teach that it is the will of the Creator who inflicts these pains on mankind because of the sins of their forbears. Surely this idea is much too primitive for any serious consideration as no Creator-God, who is merciful and just, would want to senselessly inflict pain on the innocent who are but his creation!



THE WHEEL OF LIFE

Buddhism provides the answer to this great mystery of inequalities and imperfections of mankind. The Buddha taught that ‘all things spring from a cause’ and he clearly laid down the nature of good and bad Karma. Reduced to its most elementary meaning, Karma is action; it refers to the fruits of actions as well as the effects of causes and so on. If there is a cause, an effect is inevitable, where there is an effect, there must be a cause. Thus it is quite easy to understand that ‘what happens today is the result of yesterday and the cause of tomorrow’. This reasoning springs from what the Buddha has said:

“If you wish to know the past, then look at the present which is the result of it.

“If you wish to know the future, then look at the present which is the cause of it.”

The above teaching describes the oneness of cause and effect and also explains the inequalities of birth which are but the effects of causes generated in past lives. Understanding this Law will help us to put to a stop all the evil actions of our body, speech and mind — the three karmic vehicles. The three evils committed by the body are killing, stealing and adultery. The three evils of the mind are greed, anger and delusion and the evil deeds that are committed by the mouth are vulgar speech, false speech, harsh speech and duplicity.

Through such unwholesome actions of our body speech and mind we generate bad Karma which, when it ripens, will cause us to fall into states of misery either in this world or another. It

is by not knowing this Law that we have been wandering so long in Samsara:

“By Karma the world moves, by Karma men live, and by Karma are beings bound, as by its pin the rolling chariot wheel. By Karma one attains glory and praise, by Karma bondage, ruin and tyranny. Knowing that Karma bears fruit manifold, why say ye, ‘In the world no Karma is?’”

The Buddha has often explained the terrible fate that awaits those who transgress the moral laws. If we wish to be freed from the more extreme forms of suffering in the next life, we must do our best to curb our senses, to put a rein on the appetites, to restrain greed, anger, lust, violence and all other negativities. We should always remember that everything has to be repaid for in some way or another, at one time or another. We therefore cannot have the best of both worlds by indulging in all the delights of the senses and passions now, and letting them lead us into unwholesome ways, and also hope to experience happiness in the future life. Karma is all-pervading; one acts oneself and reaps the result oneself, tying oneself and binding oneself. There is no escape from it. Those who are able to penetrate this truth will not fear it but will learn how to make use of it by living a more meaningful and fruitful life. Then they will no longer ask this universal question whenever they are in despair: “What have I done to deserve this?” This answer is always, “Plenty!”

For a more vivid description of this Law of Cause and Effect refer to the **KARMA SUTRA** which has helped to enrich the lives

of many a Chinese Buddhist. May it also change your view and quality of life.

The Six Paramitas

This doctrine teaches the practice of the Perfection of the Six Virtues that will ferry one beyond the sea of immortality to Nirvana. They consist of the perfections of Giving, Morality, Patience, Perseverance, Meditation and Wisdom which lead to Bodhisattvahood.

GIVING (DHANA) includes all forms of charity and the imparting of Dharma to others.

MORALITY (SILA) which requires one to be ethical, to destroy all evil passions through the keeping of the Precepts. Although there are Ten Great Precepts which all Buddhists should try their very best to keep each day, only the first five are better known or kept by the average practitioners and they are:

1. To abstain from killing.
2. To abstain from stealing.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. To abstain from lying.
5. To abstain from intoxicants.
6. To abstain from harsh speech.
7. To abstain from slanderous speech.
8. To abstain from covetousness.
9. To abstain from hatred or animosity.
10. To abstain from erroneous views.

PATIENCE (KSABTI) which requires one to practise forbearance to prevent anger from arising over the deeds done by ignorant persons.

PERSEVERANCE (VIRYA) which develops vigour and strenuous effort in the practice of the Dharma.

MEDITATION (DHYANA) which reduces confusion of the mind and leads to peace and happiness.

WISDOM (PRAJNA) which develops the power to discern reality or truth.

The practice of these virtues will help to remove greed and stinginess, anger and hatred, immoral living, confusion of the mind and stupidity and wrong views. Together with the Noble Eightfold Path, they teach one to live and practise the Buddha's teachings in order to reach the state whereby all illusions are destroyed so that peace and happiness can be attained.

The Discourse on Loving Kindness

Buddhism lays great stress on the practice of loving-kindness (Metta) and compassion. This Discourse should serve both as a mark of protection and as a subject for contemplation. It teaches one how to practise the virtues which will benefit oneself and others.

1. He who is skilled in his good and who wishes to attain the state of Calm should act thus:

He should be efficient, upright, yea, perfectly upright, obedient, gentle and humble.

2. Contented, easily supportable, with few duties, of right livelihood, controlled in senses, discreet, not impudent, not be greedily attached to families.
3. He should not commit any slight wrong such that other wise men might censure him.
4. Whatsoever living beings there be, feeble or strong, long, stout or medium, small and large, seen or unseen, those dwelling near or far, those who are born and those who are to be born — may all beings, without exception, be happy!
5. Let none deceive another nor despise any person whatsoever in any place. In anger or ill-will let him not wish any harm to another.
6. Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so let him cultivate boundless heart towards all beings.
7. Let these thoughts of bondless love pervade the whole world — above, below and across — without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity.
8. Whether he stands, walks, sits, or lies down, as long as he is awake, he should develop his mindfulness. This, they say, is the Highest Conduct here.
9. Not falling into Error, virtuous and endowed with insight, he discards attachment to sense-desires. Of a truth, he does not come again for conception in a womb.

CHAPTER XVIII

Becoming a Buddhist

When a person wishes to become a Buddhist, he needs only to go to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha for refuge. This means that he will henceforth whole-heartedly, accept the Three Jewels as his shelter and guiding ideal. Generally the simple ceremony is done before a monk or, if one is not available, to do it at a shrine on which there is a Buddha-image, the symbol of one's spiritual direction and eventual realisation. Offering flowers, incense and light, one bows before the image, declares his intention, and repeats the Refuge prayer three times, making a bow after each repetition. The prayer may be in Pali, Sanskrit, English or Chinese, depending on the tradition one chooses to follow.

When the Threefold Refuge is done before a monk, one has to request for the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts. This clearly shows that one becomes a Buddhist after he has a thorough understanding of the Dharma and he should not be converted by others because Dharma is not a matter of belief, it uses no force, not even persuasion, to make convert. One will not make a good Buddhist if he is not ready to put to practice the Buddhist way of life. One should then make three bows to the monk and see in him as the personification of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The monk will then recite 3 times, the salutation to the Buddha:

“NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMASAMBUDDHASA”
which means ‘Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One,
the Perfectly Enlightened One’.

Then he will recite the Refuge prayer and the aspirant should
repeat after him, each line that has been recited:

“BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI
To the Buddha I go for Refuge.”

“DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI
To the Dharma I go for Refuge.”

“SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI
To the Sangha I go for Refuge.”

“DUTIYAMPI BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI
For the second time, to the Buddha I go for Refuge.”

“DUTIYAMPI DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI
For the second time, to the Dharma I go for Refuge.”

“DUTIYAMPI SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI
For the second time, to the Sangha I go for Refuge.”

“TATIYAMPI BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI
For the third time, to the Buddha I go for Refuge.”

“TATIYAMPI DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI
For the third time, to the Dharma I go for Refuge.”

“TATIYAMPI SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI
For the third time, to the Sangha I go for Refuge.”

The Refuges are always repeated thrice to ensure that the mind of the person taking them is fully aware of what has been said. They are recited either in Pali or English as given above, or in Sanskrit, which is as follows:

“**NAMO BUDDHAYA**
NAMO DHARMAYA
NAMO SANGHAYA”

Then the monk chants the **FIVE PRECEPTS** (Pancasila) one by one which the aspirant repeats after him. The Five Precepts may be called the “Dharma for human beings” as their practice will make our world more bearable to live in and they are the basic and minimal observance of moral conduct by a Buddhist. They teach him to refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants of any kind.

Going-for-Refuge to the Three Jewels is therefore an open declaration that we are Buddhists. The prayer said should not be mere recitation but should bring to our mind that the treasures in this lifetime consists of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We should understand fully what we are declaring so that we will commit ourselves to the declaration that we have made.

The Buddha

What is meant by going for a Refuge to the Buddha? Do we know who is the Buddha or what is the Buddha? Surprisingly, many Buddhists in this country have only a vague idea of Him. Many also believe that they are Buddhists just because they

think that their parents are Buddhists by their acts of offering incense to their family altars which, in fact, is ancestral worship and has nothing to do with Buddhism. Therefore it is important that such people be taught not only of who or what the Buddha is but what the Buddha is not.

The Buddha is not God or a deity whom one should pray to for some fulfillment in life. The Buddha is not an incarnation of God like Jesus Christ is to the Christians. He is not a prophet nor a messenger of God. The Buddha does not answer your wishes or bring you to heaven just because you have accepted him as your Saviour. He is not the creator who decides the destinies of your life nor can he save you if you have not lived a wholesome life. However, the Buddha can show the way by means of which you have to save yourself. This means that only you can save yourself and that you will have to work very hard at it in order to save yourself.

So if the Buddha is not God, who or what is He? He is a human being but a very special human being, one who has gained what we call "Enlightenment". He is the fully Awakened One and He is one who has become free from all kinds of worldly passions; whose mind is pure; whose mind is full of wisdom; whose mind is full of love and compassion towards all sentient beings; a super human, the purest, the noblest and most virtuous of beings. All these qualities He possesses in the highest possible degree. This is but a brief description that one can make of a Buddha. Going for Refuge to the Buddha therefore means taking and accepting the Buddha as our ideal. The Buddha was a man such as we, so what He achieved, we too can achieve. If we accept this, if we

act upon this, if we sincerely follow the path that has been trodden by the Buddha, then we are really going for Refuge to the Buddha — the First Refuge.

The Dharma

Going for Refuge to the Dharma is to accept it as the path that leads to Enlightenment. It is also the path of human development for it is the Teaching about the nature of life. It is pure by nature and bright like a light that destroys the darkness of Ignorance. It consists of the Truths as taught by the Buddha who has discovered and practised them in his lifetime so it is the Way of cultivation. Dharma is whatever helps us to be wise and compassionate, whatever helps us to lead a pure and beneficial life, a life of harmlessness towards all other living beings.

The Sangha

Finally the meaning of the Refuge in the Sangha. When going for Refuge to the Sangha we should not think of Refugegoing to the community of monks and nuns for though some of them are noble, a good number are still worldlings practicing Dharma. Among the lay community too, there may be those who are Noble. The noble monks, nuns and laity together form the Noble Order which, as it is made up of those who are able teachers of the Dharma, is truly a secure Refuge. In practical terms the Sangha Refuge means that it is the duty of those who are capable to help the other to know more about the Dharma. This is what is meant by the Sangha Refuge.

The Ways of Practice

1. For those who seek Enlightenment there are three ways of practice that must be understood and followed. First, disciplines for practical behaviour; second, right concentration; and third, wisdom.

What are the disciplines? Every man, whether he is a commoner or way-seeker, should follow the precepts for good behaviour. He should control both his mind and body and guard the gates of his five senses. He should be afraid of even a trifling evil and, from moment to moment, should endeavour to practise good deeds.

What is meant by the concentration of the mind? It means to get quickly away from greedy and evil desires as they arise and to hold the mind pure and tranquil.

What then is wisdom? It is the wisdom to perfectly understand and to patiently accept the Four Noble Truths — to know the fact of suffering and its nature; to know the source of suffering; to know what constitutes the end of suffering; and to know the Noble Path that leads to the end of suffering.

Those who earnestly follow these three ways of practice may rightly be called the disciples of the Buddha.

2. It is difficult to advance along the path that leads to Enlightenment so long as one is covetous of comfort and luxuries

and his mind be disturbed by the desires of the senses. There is a wide difference between the enjoyment of life and the enjoyment of the True Path. If the mind enjoys worldly affairs, illusions and suffering will inevitably follow, but if the mind enjoys the True Path, happiness, contentment and enlightenment will just as surely follow.

Therefore, those who are seeking Enlightenment should keep their minds pure and patiently keep and practise the Three Ways. If they keep the precepts they will naturally obtain concentration of the mind and if they obtain concentration of the mind it will be just as natural for them to grasp wisdom, and wisdom will lead them to Enlightenment.

Indeed these Three Ways are the true path to Enlightenment. By not following them, people have for a long time accumulated mental delusions, which are the root causes of all sufferings.

3. If the Three Ways of practice are analysed, they will reveal the Eightfold Path, the Four Viewpoints to be considered, the Four Right Procedures, the Five Faculties of Power to be employed, and the Perfection of the Six Paramitas.

The Noble Eightfold Path refers to right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Right View includes: to thoroughly understand the Four Noble Truths, to believe in the Law of Cause and Effect and not to be deceived by appearances and desires.

Right Thought means the resolution not to cherish desires, not to be greedy, not to be angry and not to do any harmful deed.

Right Speech is the avoidance of lying words, idle words, abusive words and double-tongues.

Right Action means not to destroy any life, not to steal, or not to commit adultery.

Right Livelihood means to avoid any life that would bring shame to a man.

Right Effort means to try to do one's best diligently towards the right direction.

Right Mindfulness means to maintain a pure and thoughtful mind.

Right Concentration means to keep the mind right and tranquil for its concentration, seeking to realise the mind's own essence.

The Four Viewpoints to be considered include: (1) To consider the body as impure, to remove all attachments to it. (2) To consider the senses as a source of suffering, whatever their feelings of pain or pleasure may be. (3) To consider everything in the world as being a consequence of causes and conditions and that nothing remains unchanged forever.

The Four Right Procedures are: (1) To prevent any evil from starting. (2) To remove any evil as soon as it starts. (3) To induce the doing of good deeds. (4) To encourage the growth and continuance of good deeds that have already started. One must endeavour to keep these four procedures.

The Five Faculties of Power are: (1) The faith to believe. (2) The will to make the endeavour, (3) The faculty of reliable memory. (4) The ability to concentrate one's mind and (5) The ability to maintain clear wisdom. These five faculties are necessary powers to attain Enlightenment.

The Perfection of the Six Paramitas for reaching the other shore of Enlightenment are: The path of offering, the path of keeping precepts, the path of endurance, the path of endeavour, the path of concentration of mind, and the path of wisdom. By following these paths, one can surely pass from the shore of delusion over to the shore of Enlightenment.

The practice of Offering gets rid of selfishness; the practice of the Precepts keeps one thoughtful of the rights and comforts of others; the practice of Endurance helps one to control a fearful or angry mind; the practice of Endeavour helps one to be diligent and faithful; the practice of Concentration helps one to control a wandering and futile mind; and the practice of Wisdom changes a dark and confused mind into a clear and penetrating insight.

Offering and keeping Precepts make the foundation necessary to build a great castle on. Endurance and Endeavour are the walls of the castle that protect it against enemies from outside. Concentration and Wisdom are the personal armour that protects one against the assault of life and death.

Extracted from 'The Teaching of Buddha' published by Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, Tokyo, Japan.

CHAPTER XIX

Famous Chinese Sutras

The Sutra of Forty-Two Sections

This Sutra was the first official Buddhist literature which was translated for the Chinese by two early Indian missionaries (Kasyapa Matanga and Gobharana) during the reign of Emperor Ming of the Later Han Dynasty. The translators extracted all the passages from different Buddhist Canonical books which they brought along for their missionary purposes. It was compiled after the fashion of the Confucian Analects to suit the Chinese and therefore each section begins with “The Buddha said,” which corresponds to the Confucian “The Master said.”

This Sutra was therefore specially prepared for the Chinese Buddhists and it contains a good collection of moral and religious sayings of the Buddha. It is still widely read by the Chinese and is very dear to their hearts.

“When the World-Honoured One had become Enlightened, he reflected thus: “To be free from the passions and to be calm, this is the most excellent Way.”

He was absorbed in Great Meditation, subdued all evil ones and later in the Deer Park caused to revolve the Wheel of Dharma, which consisted of The Four Noble Truths:

- (1) Life is Suffering.
- (2) Ignorance is the cause of Suffering.
- (3) The Cessation of Suffering which is the goal of life as it transcends pains and pleasure.
- (4) The Way to Cessation of Suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path which consists of:
 - (1) Right Understanding
 - (2) Right Thought
 - (3) Right Speech
 - (4) Right Action
 - (5) Right Livelihood
 - (6) Right Effort
 - (7) Right Mindfulness
 - (8) Right Concentration.

He converted the five Bhikshus, Kaudinya and the others, inducing them to attain Enlightenment.

Again, there were other Bhikshus who implored the Buddha to remove their doubts which they had concerning his doctrine. The World-Honoured One illumined all their minds through his authoritative teachings. The Bhikshus, joining their hands reverentially bowing, followed his sacred instructions.

1. The Buddha said: “Those who, taking leave of their families and adopting the homeless life, understand the mind, reach the source, and comprehend the immaterial, are called Sramanas.

Those who observe the two hundred and fifty precepts of morality, who are pure and spotless in their behaviours, and who

exert themselves for the attainment of the stages of progress, are called Arhats. The Arhat is able to fly through space and assume different forms; his life is eternal, and there are times when he causes heaven and earth to quake.

Below them is the Anagamin who, at the end of a long life, ascend in spirit to the nineteenth heaven and obtains Arhatship.

Next come the Skridagamin who ascends to the heavens (after his death), comes back to the earth once more, and then attains Arhatship.

Then come the Srotaapanna who cannot become Arhat until he has passed seven more rounds of birth and death.

By the severance of the passions is meant that like the limbs severed they are never again made use of.”

2. The Buddha Said: “The homeless Sramana cuts off the passions, frees himself of attachments, understands the source of his own mind, penetrates the deepest doctrine of Buddha, and comprehends the Dharma which is immaterial. He has no prejudice in his heart, he has nothing to hanker after. He is not hampered by the thought of the Way, nor is he entangled in karma. No prejudice, no compulsion, no discipline, no enlightenment, and no going up through the grades, and yet in possession of all honours in itself — this is what is meant by the Way.”

3. The Buddha said, “Those who shaving their heads and faces and become Sramanas and have accepted the Doctrine of the Way, should surrender all worldly possessions and be contented with whatever they obtain by begging. Only one meal a day and

lodging under a tree, he desires nothing else. For what makes one stupid and irrational is attachments and the passions.”

4. The Buddha said, “There are ten things considered good by all beings, and ten things evil. What are they? Three of them depend upon the body, four upon the mouth, and three upon the mind.

“Three evil deeds depending upon the body are: killing, stealing and unchaste deeds. The four depending upon the mouth are: slandering, cursing, lying and flattery. The three depending upon the mind are: envy, anger and foolishness. All these things are not in keeping with the Holy Way, and are therefore evil. When these evils are not done, they are ten good deeds.”

5. The Buddha said: “If a man who has committed many a misdemeanor does not repent and cleanse his heart of evil, retribution will come upon his person as sure as the stream runs into the ocean which becomes ever deeper and wider. If a man who has committed a misdemeanor comes to the knowledge of it, reforms himself, and practises goodness, the force of retribution will gradually exhaust itself as a disease gradually loses its baneful influence when the patient perspires.”

6. The Buddha said, “When an evil-man, seeing you practise goodness, comes and maliciously insults you, you should patiently endure it and not feel angry with him, for the evil-man is insulting himself by trying to insult you.”

7. The Buddha said, “Once a man came unto me and denounced me on account of my observing the Way and practic-

ing great loving-kindness. But I kept silent and did not answer him. The denunciation ceased. Then I asked him. 'If you bring a present to your neighbour and he accepts it not; does the present come back to you?' He replied, "It will," I said, 'You denounce me now, but as I accept it not, you must take the wrong deed back on your own person. It is like echo succeeding sound, it is like shadow following object; you never escape the effect of your own evil deeds. Be therefore mindful, and cease from doing evil'."

8. The Buddha said, "Evil-doers who denounce the wise resemble a person who spits against the sky; the spittle will never reach the sky, but comes down on himself. Evil-doers again resemble a man who stirs the dust against the wind, the dust is never raised without doing him injury. Thus, the wise will never be hurt but the curse is sure to destroy the evil-doers themselves."

9. The Buddha said, "If you endeavour to embrace the Way through much learning, the Way will not be understood. If you observe the Way with simplicity of heart, great indeed is this Way."

10. The Buddha said, "Those who rejoice in seeing others observe the Way will obtain great blessing." A Sramana asked the Buddha, "Would this blessing be destroyed?" The Buddha replied, "It is like a lighted torch whose flame can be distributed to ever so many other torches which people may bring along; and therewith they will cook food and dispel darkness, while the original torch itself remains burning ever the same. It is even so with the bliss of the Way."

11. The Buddha said, “It is better to feed a good man than one hundred bad men. It is better to feed one who observes the Five Precepts of the Buddha than to feed one thousand good men. It is better to feed one Srotaapanna (Stream-enterer) than to feed ten thousands of those who observe the Five Precepts of Buddha. It is better to feed one Skridagamin than to feed one million Srotaapanna. It is better to feed one Anagamin than to feed ten millions of Skridagamins. It is better to feed one Arhat than to feed one hundred millions of Anagamins. It is better to feed one Pretyekabuddha than to feed one billion of Arhats. It is better to feed one of the Buddha, either of the present, or of the past, or of the future, than to feed ten billions of Pratyekabuddhas. It is better to feed one who is above knowledge, one-sidedness, discipline, and enlightenment than to feed one hundred billions of Buddhas of the past, present, or future.

12. The Buddha said, “There are twenty difficult things to attain in this world:

- (1) It is hard for the poor to practice charity.
- (2) It is hard for the strong and rich to observe the Way.
- (3) It is hard to disregard life and go to certain death.
- (4) It is only a favoured few that get acquainted with a Buddhist sutra.
- (5) It is hard to be born in the age of the Buddha.
- (6) It is hard to conquer the passions, to suppress selfish desires.
- (7) It is hard not to hanker after that which is agreeable.
- (8) It is hard not to get into a passion when slighted.

- (9) It is hard not to abuse one's authority.
- (10) It is hard to be even-minded and simple hearted in all one's dealings with others.
- (11) It is hard to be thorough in learning and exhaustive in investigation.
- (12) It is hard to subdue selfish pride.
- (13) It is hard not to feel contempt toward the unlearned.
- (14) It is hard to be one in knowledge and practice.
- (15) It is hard not to express an opinion about others.
- (16) It is by rare opportunity that one is introduced to a true spiritual teacher.
- (17) It is hard to gain an insight into the nature of being and to practise the Way.
- (18) It is hard to follow the way of a saviour.
- (19) It is hard to be always the master of oneself.
- (20) It is hard to understand thoroughly the Ways of Buddha."

13. A monk asked the Buddha, "Under what conditions is it possible to come to the knowledge of the past and to understand the most supreme Way?" The Buddha answered, "Those who are pure in heart and single in purpose are able to understand the most supreme Way. It is like polishing a mirror, which becomes bright when the dust is removed. Remove your passions, and have no hankering, and the past will be revealed to you."

14. A monk asked the Buddha, "What is good, and what is great?" The Buddha replied, "Good is to practice the Way and

to follow the truth. Great is the heart that is in accord with the Way.”

15. A monk asked the Buddha, “What is most powerful, and what is most illuminating?” The Buddha replied, “Meekness is most powerful, for it harbours no evil thoughts, and, moreover, it is restful and full of strength. As it is free from evils, it is sure to be honoured by all.

The most illuminating is a mind that is thoroughly cleansed of dirt, and which, remaining pure, retains no blemishes. From the time when there was yet no heaven and earth till the present day, there is nothing in the ten quarters which is not seen, or known, or heard by such a mind, for it has gained all-knowledge, and for that reason it is called ‘illuminating’.”

16. The Buddha said, “Those who have passions are never able to perceive the Way; for it is like stirring up clear water with hands; people may come there wishing to find a reflection of their faces, which, however, they will never see. A mind troubled and vexed with the passions is impure, and on that account it never sees the Way. O monks, do away with passions. When the dirt of passion is removed the Way will manifest itself.”

17. The Buddha said, “Seeing the Way is like going into a dark room with a torch; the darkness instantly departs, while the light alone remains. When the Way is attained and the truth is seen, ignorance vanishes and enlightenment abides forever.”

18. The Buddha said, “My doctrine is to think the thought that is unthinkable, to practise the deed that is non-doing, to speak the speech that is inexpressible, and to be trained in the discipline that is beyond discipline. Those who understand this are near, those who are confused are far. The Way is beyond words and expressions, is bound by nothing earthly. Lose sight of it to an inch, or miss it for a moment, and we are away from it for evermore.

19. The Buddha said, “Look up to heaven and down on earth, and they will remind you of their impermanency. Look about the world, and it will remind you of its impermanency. But when you gain spiritual enlightenment, you shall then find wisdom. The knowledge thus attained leads you quickly to the Way.”

20. The Buddha said, “You should think of the four elements of which the body is exposed. Each of them has its own name, and there is no such thing there known as ego. As there is really no ego, it is like unto a mirage.”

21. The Buddha said, “Moved by their selfish desires, people seek after fame and glory. But when they have acquired it, they are already stricken in years. If you hanker after worldly fame and practise not the Way, your labours are wrongfully applied and your energy is wasted. It is like unto burning an incense stick.”

22. The Buddha said, “People cleave to their worldly possessions and selfish passions so blindly as to sacrifice their own lives for them. They are like a child who tries to eat a little honey

smearred on the edge of a knife. The amount is by no means sufficient to appease his appetite, but he runs the risk of wounding the tongue.”

23. The Buddha said, “Men are tied up to their families and possessions more helplessly than in a prison. There is an occasion for the prisoner to be released, but the householders entertain no desire to be relieved from the ties of family. Even into the paws of a tiger will he jump. Those who are thus drowned in the filth of passion are called the ignorant. Those who are able to overcome it are saintly Arhats.

24. The Buddha said, “There is nothing like lust. Lust may be said to be the most powerful passion. Fortunately, we have but one thing which is more powerful. If the thirst for truth were weaker than passion, how many of us in the world will be able to follow the way of righteousness?”

25. The Buddha said, “Men who are addicted to the passions are like the torch-carrier running against the wind; his hands are sure to be burned.”

26. The Lord of Heaven offered a beautiful fairy to the Buddha, desiring to tempt him to the evil path. But the Buddha said, “Be gone. What use have I for the leather bag filled with filth which you brought to me?” Then, the god reverently bowed and asked the Buddha about the essence of the Way, in which having been instructed by the Buddha, it is said he attained the Srotaapanna-fruit.”

27. The Buddha said, “Those who are following the Way should behave like a piece of timber which is drifting along a stream. If the log is neither held by the banks, nor seized by men, nor obstructed by the gods, nor kept in the whirlpool, nor itself goes to decay, I assure you that this log will finally reach the ocean. If monks walking on the Way are neither tempted by the passions, nor led astray by some evil influences; but steadily pursue their course for Nirvana, I assure you that these monks will finally attain enlightenment.”

28. The Buddha said, “Rely not upon your own will. It is not trustworthy. Guard yourself against sensualism, for it surely leads to the path of evil. Your own will becomes trustworthy only when you have attained Arhatship.”

29. The Buddha said, “O monks, you should not see women. (If you should have to see them), refrain from talking to them. (If you should have to talk), you should reflect in a right spirit: ‘I am now a homeless mendicant. In the world of sin, I must behave myself like unto the lotus flower whose purity is not defiled by the mud. Old ones I will treat as my mother, elderly ones as elder sisters; younger ones as younger sisters; and little ones as daughters’. And in all this you should harbor no evil thoughts, but think of salvation.”

30. The Buddha said, “Those who walk the Way should avoid sensualism as those who carry hay would avoid coming near the fire.”

31. The Buddha said, “There was once a man who, being in despair over his inability to control his passions, wished to mutilate himself: The Buddha said to him: ‘Better destroy your own evil thoughts than do harm to your own person. The mind is lord. When the lord himself is claimed the servant will themselves be yielding. If your mind is not cleansed of evil passions, what avails it to mutilate yourself?’ Thereupon, the Buddha recited the gatha,

“Passions grow from the will,
The will grows from thought and imagination.
When both are calmed,
There is neither sensualism nor transmigration.”

The Buddha said that this gatha was taught by Kashyapabuddha.

32. The Buddha said, “From the passions arise worry, and from worry arises fear. Away with passions, and no fear, no worry.”

33. The Buddha said, “Those who follow the Way are like unto warriors who fight single-handed with a multitude of foes. They may all go out of the fort in full armour; but among them are some who are fainthearted, and some who go halfway and beat a retreat, and some who are killed in the affray, and some who come home victorious. O monks, if you desire to attain enlightenment, you should steadily walk in your Way, with a resolute heart, with courage, and should be fearless in whatever environment you may happen to be, and destroy every evil influence that you may come across for thus you shall reach the goal.”

34. One night a monk was reciting a sutra, bequeathed by Kashyapabuddha. His tone was so mournful, and his voice so fainting, as if he were going out of existence. The Buddha asked him, "What was your occupation before you became a homeless monk?" The monk replied, "I was very fond of playing a stringed instrument." The Buddha said, "How did you find it when the strings were too loose?" "No sound is possible." was the reply.

"How when the strings were too tight?"

"They crack."

"How when they were neither too tight nor too loose?"

"Every note sounds in its proper tone."

35. The Buddha then said to the monk, "Religious discipline is also like unto playing such a stringed instrument. When the mind is properly adjusted and quietly applied, the Way is attainable; but when you are too fervently bent on it, your body grows tired, and when your body is tired, your spirit become weary; when your spirit is weary, your discipline will relax; and with the relaxation of discipline there follows many an evil. Therefore, be calm and pure, and the Way will be gained."

36. The Buddha said, "Even if one escapes from the evil creations, it is one's rare fortune to be born as a human being. Even if one be born as human, it is one's rare fortune to be born as a man and not a woman. Even if one be born a man, it is one's rare fortune to be perfect in all the six senses. Even if he be perfect in all the six senses, it is his rare fortune to be born in the middle kingdom. Even if he be born in the middle kingdom, it is his rare fortune to be born in the time of a Buddha. Even if he be born in the time

of a Buddha, it is his rare fortune to see the enlightened. Even if he be able to see the enlightened, it is his rare fortune to have his heart awakened in faith. Even if he has faith, it is his rare fortune to awaken the heart of intelligence. Even if he awakens the heart of intelligence, it is his rare fortune to realise a spiritual state which is above discipline and attainment.”

37. The Buddha said, “O children of Buddha! You are away from me ever so many thousand miles, but if you remember and think of my precepts, you shall surely gain the fruit of enlightenment. You may, standing by my side, see me always, but if you observe not my precepts, you shall never gain enlightenment.”

38. The Buddha asked another monk, “How do you measure the length of a man’s life?” He answered, “By days.” The Buddha said, “You do not understand the Way.”

The Buddha asked another monk, “How do you measure the length of a man’s life?” The monk answered, “By the time that passes during a meal.” The Buddha said, “You do not understand the Way.” The Buddha asked the third monk, “How do you measure the length of a man’s life?” The monk answered, “By the breadth.” The Buddha said, “Very well, you know the Way.”

39. The Buddha said, “Those who study the doctrine of the Buddhas will do well to believe and observe all that is taught by them. It is like unto honey; it is sweet within, it is sweet without, it is sweet throughout; so is the Buddhas’ teaching.”

40. The Buddha said, “O monks, you must not walk on the Way as the ox is attached to the wheel. His body moves, but his heart is

not willing. But when your hearts are in accord with the Way, there is no need of troubling yourselves about your outward demeanor.”

41. The Buddha said, “Those who practice the Way might well follow the example of an ox that marches through the deep mire carrying a heavy load. He is tired, but his steady gaze, looking forward, will never relax until he comes out of the mire, and it is only then that he takes a respite.

O monks, remember that passions and sins are more than the filthy mire, and that you can escape misery only by earnestly and steadily thinking of the Way.”

42. The Buddha said, “I consider the dignities of kings and lords as a particle of dust that floats in the sunbeam. I consider the treasure of precious metals and stones as bricks and pebbles. I consider the gaudy dress of silk and brocades as a worn-out rag. I consider this universe as small as the holila fruit. I consider the lake of Anavatapa as a drop of oil with which one smears the feet. I consider the various methods of salvation taught by the Buddhas as a treasure created by the imagination. I consider the transcendental doctrine of Buddhism as precious metal or priceless fabric seen in a dream. I consider the teaching of Buddhas as a flower before my eyes. I consider the practice of Dhyana as a pillar supporting the Mount Sumeru. I consider Nirvana as awakening from a day dream or nightmare. I consider the struggle between heterodox and orthodox as the antics of the six (mythical) dragons. I consider the doctrine of sameness as the absolute ground of reality. I consider all the religious works done for universal salvation as like the plants in the four seasons.”

The Karma Sutra

This Sutra has changed the lives of many who have read it for it explains the direct results of causes. It is also called the Golden Precepts by Lord Buddha and is reproduced here in its entirety:

“Once upon a gathering attended by 1,250 followers, the venerable Ananda, after circling thrice with folded hands around the Buddha and bowing with respect, asked: ‘In the present dark age where the majority of our people are indulgent in unrighteousness, disrespectful to the Lord’s teaching, undutiful to their parents, immoral, miserable and sordid, among them some are deaf, some blind, some mute, some idiotic, some handicapped in other aspects, and most people inured to killing, how could we understand the cryptic and fundamental principle or causes that have brought about this reality and what consequences each individual is to suffer eventually for his deeds. My Lord, would you kindly explain these to us’?

The World-honoured One then answered, “Listen carefully, I will now expound the Law of Karma. Because of Karmic effects inherited from previous lives, some people are poor, some rich, some happy and some miserable. These are four rules inseparable in obtaining happiness and prosperity for your next life. They are: to be dutiful to parents; to be respectful to Buddhas, to Buddha’s teaching, and to Buddhist monks; to abstain from killing and set free sentient beings; and to abstain from eating meat and be charitable. Then the Buddha proceeded on the Karmic Sutra:

“Destiny is aggregate karmic effects from the past. To believe in and practise this sutra will bring you eternal prosperity and happiness.

Learn the Law of Karma expounded as follows:

‘To be able to hold office in the Government is a reward for your building Buddha’s statues in previous lives. For building Buddha’s statues is likened to moulding yourself, and to protect the Tathagata is protecting yourself.

To be a public officer cannot be taken for granted, for without practising Buddhism it will not befall you.

Having helped in the construction of bridges and roads in your past life is conducive to your present enjoyment of various transportation facilities which prevent you from getting foot-worn.

To donate clothing to monks will ensure you to be well provided with clothing in future or in your next life.

To be free from want in food is the result of your providing food to the poor in your previous life.

To be miserly and unwilling to help the needy gives rise to future starvation and clothlessness.

To have ample housing is a reward for donating food to monasteries in your past life.

To build temples and public shelters will give you future prosperity and happiness.

To be pretty and handsome is the reward for your respecting and offering flowers to Buddha’s altar in the past.

To abstain from eating meat and to pray constantly to Buddha will assure you to be reborn a very intelligent child in your next reincarnation.

To have a good wife and son is reward for your disseminating Buddha’s teaching in your past life.

Furnishing Buddhist temples with hangings and tapestries will enable you to have a good marriage in your next rebirth.

To have good parents is a reward for your respecting and helping those who were lonely and desolate in your past life.

Being a bird hunter in your previous life has resulted in your being an orphan now.

To have plenty of children is attributable to your setting free birds in your previous life.

To have destroyed flowers habitually in your previous life has caused you to be heirless now.

Your longevity is due to your setting free sentient beings in your past life.

Being short-lived is the result of your committing too many killings in your previous life.

To steal the wife of another man will cause you to have no spouse in your next reincarnation.

To be a widow now is due to your disrespecting your husband in your previous life.

Being ungrateful in your previous life has caused you to be a serf at present.

To covet another man's wife will cause you to have no spouse in your next reincarnation.

To distort truths habitually will cause you to suffer blindness in your next life.

To have dry mouth is due to your intentionally blowing out candles before Buddha's altar in your past life. To vituperate your parents will cause you to be reborn a deaf mute in your next incarnation.

Being a hunchback is punishment for jeering at the Buddha's followers in your previous life.

To have committed evil with your hands in your past life is the cause for your having disabled hands now.

Your being lame is imputable to your being a robber in your previous life.

To be born a horse or an ox is the result of your denying your debts in your previous life.

To be reborn a pig or dog is the punishment for your deceiving and hurting others in your previous life.

Offering flesh to monks in your past life has given rise to your constant illness now.

To be healthy is a reward for your offering drugs and medications to save the sick and wounded in your past life.

Relentlessly perpetrating evil in your previous life is the cause for your present imprisonment.

Plugging snake-pits and mouse holes habitually will cause you to starve to death in your next incarnation.

To intentionally poison a river or water-source will cause you to die of poison in your next life.

Being forlorn and friendless is the punishment for being unfaithful and deceitful to others in your past life.

Disrespecting Buddha's teaching will bring you constant starvation in your next rebirth.

To spew blood is the punishment for eating meat while praying to Buddha.

To have attended Buddhist instruction with levity in your previous life is the cause for your present deafness.

To be afflicted with ulcers is the punishment for offering flesh before Buddha's altar in your past life.

To have bad bodily odour is the punishment for selling incense with dishonesty in your previous life.

To hunt animals with rope and net will predestine your death by hanging in your next incarnation.

Being unduly envious and jealous in your past life is the cause for your being lonely or being bereft of spouse at present.

To be struck by lightning or burnt by fire will be the punishment for dishonest trade dealings.

Being wounded by beasts or snakes tells you that those creatures were your enemies in your previous life.

Whatever you do will come back on you, so accept whatever justice and retribution that befalls you.

Be not mistaken that karma is fallacious. You will live to bear the consequences of your deeds, either within this lifetime or in your future life.

Should you doubt the virtue of practising Buddhism, could you not see the happiness of the Buddha's followers.

Past karma determines your present destiny.

Present karmas are to mould your next life.

Whoever slanders this sutra will not be reborn again a human being.

Whoever accepts this sutra will witness the truth.

Whoever writes this sutra will prosper in successful lives.

Whoever carries this sutra will be free from mishaps.

Whoever preaches this sutra will become a very intelligent person in successive lives.

Whoever recites this sutra will be well-respected by people in his next reincarnation.

Whoever distributes this sutra free to all will become a leader to humanity in his next life.

If karma did not produce effect, what prompted Wu-Lin, a dutiful son, to rescue his mother under grave danger.

Whoever is faithful to this sutra will not fail to witness the eternal paradise.

The Law of Karma works forever, and the fruit of good deed will come in due course.”

Having spoken the above Sutra to Ananda and the other followers, the World-honoured One added, “There are innumerable examples of Karmic Law, but I have only mentioned in generalisation.”

Then Ananda said, “Until the end of the present Dark Age, most human beings would have, through successive lives accumulated countless misdeeds because of their ignorance of the karmic consequences, but thanks to our Lord and the Sutra he has so kindly given us, whoever writes and reads, prints and distributes this Sutra, upon praying to the Buddha, will be blessed with eternal happiness and be admitted to see Amitabha Buddha, Kuan Shih Yin P’usa and all other Buddhas in the heavenly paradise.

After Ananda spoke, all Buddha’s disciples and followers felt ecstatic and enlightened and, after bowing respectfully and vowing to abide by this Sutra, took their journey home.

The Diamond Sutra

(The Vajracchedika-Prajna-Paramita Sutra)

This is undoubtedly one of the most popular Sutras among the Chinese. Almost every Buddhist has heard of or read it, though the number of those who are able to comprehend its full meaning are very small indeed. It is believed that the merit for those who assiduously study this doctrine is immeasurable and even without comprehension of its highest meaning, a measureless efficacy is ascribed to recitation of the words of this Sutra in devout faith. This explains for the great popularity of the Sutra with the people so that almost every Buddhist home has a copy of it. The most famous amongst all the translations from Sanskrit into Chinese is that of KUMARAJIVA and here is its version which was translated by Upasaka Lu Kuan-Yu.

Thus have I heard. Once upon a time, the Buddha sojourned in the Jetavana park near Sravasti with an assembly of twelve hundred and fifty bhiksus.

One day, at mealtime, the World Honoured One put on His robe, took His bowl, and entered the great town of Sravasti to beg for His food. After He had begged from door to door, He returned to His place. When He had taken His meal, He put away His robe and bowl, washed His feet, arranged His seat and sat down.

At the time, the elder Subhuti who was in the assembly, rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, knelt upon his right knee, respectfully joined the palms of his hands and said to the Buddha: 'It is very rare, O World Honoured One! how well the

Tathagata protects and thinks of all Bodhisattvas; how well He instructs all the Bodhisattvas.

“O World Honoured One, when virtuous men or women develop the supreme-enlightenment mind, how should their minds abide and how should they be subdued?”

The Buddha said: ‘Excellent, excellent, Subhuti! As you say, the Tathagata protects, cherishes and instructs Bodhisattvas so well. Now listen attentively and I will tell you how the minds of virtuous men and women, who develop the supreme enlightenment mind, should thus abide and be subdued’.

(Subhuti replied:) ‘Oh yes, World Honoured One, I shall be glad to hear (your instruction)’.

The Buddha said: ‘Subhuti, all Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas should subdue their minds as follows: All living beings born from eggs, wombs, humidity or by transformation, with or without form, either thoughtful or thoughtless, and neither thoughtful nor thoughtless are all led by me to the final nirvana for the extinction of reincarnation. Although immeasurable, uncountable and unlimitable numbers of living beings are thus led to (the final nirvana for) the extinction of reincarnation, it is true that not a living being is led there. Why so, Subhuti? (Because) if a Bodhisattva (still) clings to the false notion (laksana) of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, he is not (a true) Bodhisattva.

‘Furthermore, Subhuti a Bodhisattva’s mind should not abide anywhere when giving alms; that is to say, he should give without a mind abiding in form, or he should give without a mind abiding in sound, or in smell, or in taste, or in touch or in things. Subhuti, thus a Bodhisattva should give alms without a mind abiding in false notions of form laksana.

‘Why? (Because) if a Bodhisattva’s mind does not abide in forms (laksanas) when practising charity (dana), his merit will be inconceivable and immeasurable. Subhuti, what do you think? Can you think of and measure the extent of space in the East?’

‘I cannot, World Honoured One!’

‘Subhuti, can you think of and measure (all) the extent of space in the South, West and North, as well as in the intermediate directions, including the zenith and nadir?’

‘I cannot, World Honoured One!’

‘Subhuti, (when) a Bodhisattva practises charity without a mind abiding in forms, his merit is equally inconceivable and immeasurable’.

‘Subhuti, a Bodhisattva’s mind should **THUS** abide as taught.

‘Subhuti, what do you think! Can the Tathagata be seen by means of His bodily form?’

‘No, World Honoured One, the Tathagata cannot be seen by means of His bodily form. Why? Because when the Tathagata speaks of bodily form, it is not (real) form’.

The Buddha said to Subhuti: ‘Everything with form is unreal; if all forms are seen as unreal, the Tathagata will be perceived’.

Subhuti said to the Buddha: ‘World Honoured One, will there be living beings who can develop a true belief in these words, sentences and chapters when they are expounded to them?’

The Buddha said: ‘Subhuti, do not speak like that. In the last 500 years, before the final passing of the Tathagata, there will be those who will observe the rules of morality and perform good actions which will result in blessing. These people will be able to develop a faith in these sentences (which they will consider as) embodying the Truth. You should know that they will

not have planted good roots in just one, two, three, four, or five Buddha lands. They will have planted them in countless thousands and tens of thousands of Buddha lands. Upon hearing these sentences, there will arise in them a single thought of pure faith. Subhuti, the Tathagata knows and sees all; these living beings will thus acquire immeasurable merits. Why? (Because) they will have wiped out false notions of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, of Dharma and NotDharma. Why? (Because) if their minds grasp form (laksana), they will (still) cling to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. If their minds grasp the Dharma, they will (still) cling to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Why? (Because) if their minds grasp the Not-Dharma, they will (still) cling to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Therefore, one should not grasp and hold on to the notion of Dharma as well as that of Not-Dharma. This is why, the Tathagata always said: “Ye Bhiksus, should know that the Dharma I expound is likened to a raft” Even the Dharma should be cast aside; how much more so the Not-Dharma?

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata (in fact) obtained Supreme Enlightenment (Anubodhi): Does the Tathagata (in fact) expound the Dharma?’

Subhuti replied: ‘As I understand the meaning of the Buddha’s teaching, there is no fixed Dharma called Supreme Enlightenment and there is also no fixed Dharma the Tathagata can expound. Why? (Because) the Dharma the Tathagata expounds cannot be clung to and cannot be expressed (in words); it is neither Dharma nor Not-Dharma. Why is this? All Bhadras and Aryas differ on account of the Eternal Asamskrta Dharma!’

‘Subhuti’ what do you think? If someone filled the Universe with the seven treasures and gave them all as alms, would his merit be great?’

Subhuti replied: ‘Very great, World Honoured One. Why? Because this merit is not the nature of merit, the Tathagata says it is great’.

‘Subhuti, if on the other hand, someone received and kept even a four line stanza of this sutra and expounded it to others, his merit would surpass that (of the giver of treasures). Why? (Because), Subhuti, all Buddha and their Supreme-Enlightenment-Dharma originate from this sutra. Subhuti the so-called Buddhas and Dharmas are not real Buddhas and Dharmas’.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Can one who has entered the stream (srota-apanna) have this thought (in his mind): I have obtained the fruit of entering the stream?’

Subhuti replied: ‘No, World Honoured One. Why? Because srota-apanna means ‘entering the stream’, but actually there is no entry into either form, sound, smell, taste, touch or dharma. Therefore, he is called srota-apanna’.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Can a Sakrdagamin have this thought (in his mind): I have obtained the fruit of a Sakrdagamin?’

Subhuti replied: ‘No, World Honoured One. Why? Because Sakrdagamin means “once more to come”, but actually there is neither coming nor going. Therefore, he is called a Sakrdagamin!’

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Can an Anagamin have this thought (in his mind): I have obtained the fruit of an Anagamin?’

Subhuti replied: ‘No, World Honoured One. Why? Because Anagamin means “no-coming” but actually there is no such a thing as no-coming. Therefore, he is called an Anagamin’.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Can an Arhat have this thought (in his mind): I have obtained the enlightenment of an Arhat?’

Subhuti replied: ‘No, World Honoured One. Why? Because there is no Dharma which is called Arhatship. World Honoured One, if an Arhat thinks “I have obtained the enlightenment of an Arhat”. he will still grasp and hold on to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. World Honoured One, the Buddha has declared that I have obtained the Passionless Samadhi and that I surpass all men. I am, therefore, the highest passionless Arhat. World Honoured One, I do not think “I am a passionless Arhat” for, World Honoured One, if I had thought “I have attained Arhatship”, the World Honoured One would not have said: “Subhuti takes delight in the calm and quiet, free from temptation and distress.” The fact that Subhuti does not act (mentally) is called the calm and quiet in which Subhuti takes delight’.

The Buddha said to Subbuti: ‘What do you think? Did the Tathagata obtain anything from the Dharma, when in the past He was with Dipankara Buddha?’

‘No, World Honoured One. When the Tathagata was with Dipankara, He did not obtain anything from the Dharma’.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Do Bodhisattvas adorn Buddha lands (by their moral actions)?’

‘No. World Honoured One. Why? Because this is not real adornment; it is (merely) called the adornment of Buddha lands’.

‘Subhuti, this is why all Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas should thus develop a pure and clean mind which should not abide in form, sound, smell, taste, touch and dharma. They should develop a mind which does not abide in anything.’

‘Subhhuti, supposing a man has a body as great as Mount Sumeru, what do you think? Would such a body be great?’

Subhuti replied: ‘Very great, World Honoured One. Why? Because the Buddha says it is not the real body but is (merely) called a great body’.

‘Subhuti, if there were as many rivers like the Ganges as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, would the total of grains of sand in all these rivers be very great?’

Subhuti replied: ‘Very great, World Honoured One! These rivers would be innumerable; how much more so would be their sand-grains’.

‘Subhuti, I now tell you truly. If a virtuous man or woman filled a number of universes, as great as the number of sand-grains in all these rivers, with the seven treasures, and gave them all away in alms (dana), would his or her merit be great?’

Subhuti replied: ‘Very great, World Honoured One!’

The Buddha said to Subhuti: ‘If a virtuous man or woman receives and holds (in mind) even a four-line stanza of this sutra and expounds it to others, his or her merit will surpass that of the almsgiver. Furthermore, Subhuti, wheresoever this sutra or even one of its four-line stanzas is expounded, you should know that all devas, men and asuras should make their offerings there as if the place as a Buddha stupa or a Buddha temple. How much more so if someone is able to receive, hold (in mind), read and recite the whole sutra! Subhuti, you should know that such a person will achieve the highest and rarest Dharma. Wheresoever this sutra may be found, the Buddha and His respected disciples will be there also’.

Subhuti then asked the Buddha: ‘World Honoured One, what name should be given to this sutra and how should we receive and hold it (in mind)?’

The Buddha said: ‘This sutra should be called “The Diamond prajna-paramita” under which name you should receive and hold it. Why? Because, Subhuti, the Prajna-paramita as expounded by the Buddha, is not Prajna-paramita but is (merely) so called’.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata expound the Dharma?’

Subhuti said: ‘World Honoured One, the Tathagata does not expound anything’.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Are there many particles of dust in the universe?’

Subhuti replied: ‘Many, World Honoured One!’

‘Subhuti, the Tathagata says these particles of dust are not (real), (but) are (merely) called particles of dust. The Tathagata says the universe is not (real), but it is (merely) called the universe’.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be perceived by means of His thirty-two physical characteristics (laksanas)?’

‘No, World Honoured One. The Tathagata cannot be perceived by them. Why? Because the Tathagata says they are not real but are (merely) called the thirty-two physical characteristics’.

‘Subhuti, if on the one hand, a virtuous man or woman, in giving alms (dana), sacrifices as many lives as there are sand-grains in the Ganges, and on the other hand, someone receives and holds (in mind) even a four-line stanza of this sutra, and expounds it to others, the merit resulting from the latter will be greater’.

At that time, after listening to this sutra, Subhuti had understood its profound meaning and was moved to tears. He said to the Buddha: ‘How rare, O World Honoured One! The Buddha has expounded such a very profound sutra. Since I have acquired the wisdom eye, I have not heard of such a sutra. World Honoured One, if someone after listening to this sutra believes that his mind is clean and pure, he will realize reality. We should know that such a person will achieve the highest and rarest merit. World Honoured One, this Reality is not Reality but the Tathagata calls it Reality. World Honoured One, as I now listen to this sutra I have no difficulty in believing, understanding, receiving and holding it, but in the last epoch, the last five hundred year period if there be a man who (happens to) listen to this sutra, believes, understands, receives and holds it, he will be most rare. Why? Because he will no longer (think in terms of) an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Why? Because the forms of an ego, a personality, a being and a life are not forms. Why? Because when he has rejected all forms he is called a Buddha’.

The Buddha said: ‘Just so! Subhuti, just so! If on the one hand, there be a man who listens to this sutra and is not filled with alarm, fear, or dread, you should know that such a person is most rare. Why? Because, Subhuti, as the Tathagata says, the first perfection (paramita) is not so (but) is (merely) called the first perfection (paramita).

‘Subhuti, the Tathagata speaks of the Perfection of Patience (ksanti-paramita) which is not but is called the Perfection of Patience. Why? Because, Subhuti, in (a) past (life) when my body was mutilated by Kaliraja, I had at that time no notion of an ego, a personality a being and a life. Why? Because, in the

past, when my body was dismembered, if I (still) held the conception of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, I would have been stirred by feelings of anger and hatred. Subhuti, I also remember that in the past, during my former five hundred lives, I was a Ksantyrsi and held no conception of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Therefore, Subhuti, Bodhisattvas should forsake all conceptions of form and resolve to develop the Supreme Enlightenment Mind (Anuttara-samyak-samodhi). Their minds should not abide in form, sound, smell, taste, touch and dharma. Their minds should abide nowhere. If minds abide somewhere, it will be in falsehood. This is why the Buddha says that Bodhisattvas' minds should not abide in form when practising charity (dana). Subhuti, all Bodhisattvas should thus make offerings for the welfare of all living beings. The Tathagata speaks of forms which are not forms and of living beings who are living beings.

‘Subhuti, the Tathagatas’ words are true and correspond to reality. They are ultimate words, neither deceitful nor heterodox. Subhuti, the Dharma the Tathagata has obtained is neither real nor unreal.

‘Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva practises charity (dana) with a mind abiding in things (dharma), he is like a man entering the darkness where he cannot see anything; (but) if a Bodhisattva practises dana with a mind not abiding in dharma, he is like a man with open eyes, who can see everything in the sunshine.

‘Subhuti, in future ages, if a virtuous man or woman is able to receive, hold (in mind), read and recite this sutra, the Tathagata, by means of His Buddha Wisdom, will know and see clearly that such a person will achieve immeasurable and unlimitable

merits. Subhuti, if (on the one hand) a virtuous man or woman sacrifices in the practice of charity (dana), as many lives as the sand-grains of the Ganges in the morning, at midday and again in the evening, and continues so doing throughout numberless aeons; and if (on the other hand) a person after listening to this sutra believes in his own mind without (further) contradiction, the latter's merit will surpass that of the former. How much more so if this sutra is written, received, held, read, recited and expounded to others!

'Subhuti, to sum up, the merits resulting from this sutra are inconceivable, inestimable and without limit. The Tathagata expounds it to those initiated into the Mahayana and the Supreme Yana. If they are able to receive, hold (in mind), read and recite it and expound it widely to others, the Tathagata will know and will see that they will achieve inexpressible and inconceivable merits that are without measure or limit. They will bear (responsibility for) the Tathagata's Supreme Enlightenment (Anuttarasamyak-sambodhi.) Why? Because, Subhuti, those who take delight in the Hinayana and hold the view of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, cannot listen to, receive, hold (in mind), read and recite this sutra and explain it to others.

'Subhuti, wheresoever this sutra may be found, all worlds of devas, men and asuras should make offerings, for you should know that such a place is just a stupa which should be revered, worshipped and circumambulated, with offerings of flowers and incense.

'Furthermore, Subhuti, if a virtuous man or woman receives, holds (in mind), reads and recites this sutra and is despised by others, this person who is bound to suffer from evil destinies in retribution for his past sins, and whose karmic sins are now

eradicated by the others' contempt, will attain Supreme Enlightenment (Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi).

'Subhuti, I remember that in the past countless aeons before the advent of Dipamkara Buddha, I met 84,000 millions of Buddhas to whom I made offerings and whom I served faultlessly. Now if in the last period (of 500 years) in the Buddha kalpa someone is able to receive, hold (in mind), read and recite this sutra, his merits will far exceed mine which resulted from my offerings made to Buddhas, for mine cannot be reckoned as one hundredth, one thousandth, one ten thousandth or one hundred thousandth part thereof; in fact no computation or comparison is possible. Subhuti, in the last period of the Buddha kalpa, if a virtuous man or woman is able to receive, hold (in mind), read and recite this sutra, my full statement of this person's merits will create derangement, doubt and disbelief in the minds of all listeners. Subhuti, you should know that as the meaning of this sutra is inconceivable, so is the fruit of its reward.'

At the time, Subhuti asked the Buddha: 'World Honoured One, if a virtuous man or woman is determined to develop the Supreme Enlightened Mind, how should his or her mind abide and how should it be subdued?'

The Buddha said to Subhuti: 'A virtuous man or woman who is determined to develop the Supreme Enlightened Mind, should thus develop it: I have to lead all living beings to put a

stop to (reincarnation) and escape (suffering), and when they have been so led, not one of them in fact stops (reincarnating) or escapes suffering. Why? Because, Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva clings to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, he is not a (true) Bodhisattva. Why? Because, Subhuti, there is not really a Dharma which can develop the Supreme-Enlightenment-Mind.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? When the Tathagata was with Dipamkara Buddha, did He have any Dharma by means of which He attained Supreme Enlightenment (Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi)?’

‘No, World Honoured One. As I understand the meaning of the Buddha’s teaching, when He was with Dipamkara Buddha, He had no Dharma by means of which He attained “Supreme Enlightenment”.’

The Buddha said: ‘Just so! Subhuti, just so! There was really no Dharma by means of which the Tathagata attained Supreme Enlightenment. Subhuti, if there had been, Dipamkara Buddha would not have predicted: ‘In your next life, you will be a Buddha named Sakyamuni’.’

‘Why is it? Because “Tathagata” means the suchness of all Dharmas. If someone still says: “The Tathagata obtained Supreme Enlightenment,” (I tell you, Subhuti, there is no Dharma by means of which the Buddha did so, (because), Subhuti, that Enlightenment was by itself neither real nor unreal. This is why the Tathagata says that all Dharmas are Buddha’s Dharmas. Subhuti, these so-called Dharmas are not, but are (expediently), called all Dharmas. Subhuti, supposing there is a man whose body is great.’

Subhuti said: ‘World Honoured One, the great body of which the Tathagata speaks is not great, but is (expediently) called a great body.’

‘Subhuti, in like manner, if a Bodhisattva says: “I should lead uncountable living beings to put a stop to (reincarnation) and escape (from suffering)”, he cannot be called a Bodhisattva. Why? Because there is really no dharma called the Bodhisattva (stage). Therefore, the Buddha says: “Of all dharmas, there is not a single one which possesses an ego, a personality, a being and a life.” Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva says: “I should adorn Buddha lands”, he cannot be called a Bodhisattva. Why? Because when the Tathagata speaks of such adornment it is not, but is (expediently), called adornment. Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva is thoroughly versed in (the doctrine of) the unreality of ego and of things (dharma), the Tathagata will call him a true Bodhisattva.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess human eyes?’

‘Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathagata possesses human eyes.’

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess deva eyes?’

‘Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathagata possesses deva eyes.’

‘Subhuti, What do you think? Does the Tathagata possess wisdom eyes?’

‘Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathagata possess wisdom eyes.’

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess Dharma eyes?’

‘Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathagata possess Dharma eyes.’

‘Subhuti, what do you think? does the Tathagata possess Buddha eyes?’

‘Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathagala possess Buddha eyes.’

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata say that the sand-grains in the Ganges are sand-grains?’

‘Yes, World Honours One, the Tathagata says they are sand-grains.’

‘Subhuti, what do you think? If there were as many, Ganges rivers as sand-grains in the Ganges, and if there were as many Buddha realms as sand-grains of all these Ganges rivers, would there be many world systems?’

‘Many, World Honoured One!’

The Buddha said: ‘The living beings in all these world systems have many different minds which are all known to the Tathagata. Why? Because the minds the Tathagata speaks of are not minds, but are (expediently) called minds. And why? Because, Subhuti, neither the past, the present nor the future mind can be found.’

‘Subhuti, what do you think? If someone filled the universe with the seven treasures and gave all away in his practice of dana, would this (good) cause enable the giver to gain a great merit?’

‘Yes, World Honoured One, because of this (good) cause the giver would gain a great merit.’

‘Subhuti, if the merit was real, the Tathagata would not say it was great. He says so because there is no merit.’

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Buddha be perceived by His completely perfect physical body (rupa-kaya)?’

‘No, World Honoured One, the Tathagata should not be so perceived. Why? Because the Buddha says the completely perfect rupa-kaya is not, but is called the completely perfect rupa-kaya.’

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be perceived by His completely perfect forms?’

‘No, World Honoured One, the Tathagata should not be so perceived, because the Tathagata says the completely perfect forms are not, but are called completely perfect forms.’

‘Subhuti, do not say that the Tathagata thinks: “I must expound the Dharma”. Do not have such a thought. Why? Because if someone says so, he will really slander the Buddha and be unable to understand my teaching. Subhuti, when (the Tathagata) expounds the Dharma, there is really no Dharma to teach: but this is (expediently) called teaching the Dharma.’

Then the wise Subhuti said to the Buddha: ‘World Honoured One, will there be in future ages living beings who will believe this Dharma when they hear it?’

The Buddha said: ‘Subhuti, the living beings (you just mentioned) are neither living nor not-living beings. Why? Because, Subhuti, the Tathagata says these living beings are not (really), but they are (expediently), called living beings.’

Subhuti said to the Buddha: ‘World Honoured One, does your (own) attainment of Supreme Enlightenment (Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi) mean that you have not gained anything whatsoever?’

The Buddha replied: ‘Just so, Subhuti, just so, I have not gained even the least Dharma from Supreme Enlightenment, and this is called Supreme Enlightenment. Furthermore,

Subhuti, this Dharma is universal and impartial; wherefore it is called Supreme Enlightenment. The practice of all good virtues (Dharmas), free from attachment to an ego, a personality, a being and a life, will result in the attainment of Supreme Enlightenment. Subhuti, the so-called good virtues (Dharmas), the Tathagata says, are not good, but are (expediently) called good virtues.

‘Subhuti, if (on the other hand) a man, in his practice of charity (dana) gives away the seven treasures piled up in a heap as great as all the Mounts Sumeru in the Universe put together, and (on the other hand) another man receives, holds (in mind), reads and recites even a four-line stanza of this Prajna-Sutra, and expounds it to others, the merit resulting from the former’s dana will not be worth one-hundredth, one-thousandth, one-ten-thousandth and one-hundred thousandth part of that obtained by the latter, as no conceivable comparison can be made between the two.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? You should not say the Tathagata has this thought (in His mind): “I should liberate living beings’.” Subhuti, you should not think so. Why? Because there are really no living beings whom the Tathagata can liberate. If there were, the Tathagata would hold (the concept of) an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Subhuti, (when) the Tathagata speaks of an ego, there is in reality no ego, although common men think so. Subhuti, the Tathagata says common men are not, but are (expediently) called, common men.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be recognised by His thirty-two physical characteristics?’

Subhuti replied: ‘Yes, yes, He can.’

The Buddha said: ‘Subhuti, if the Tathagata can be recognised by His thirty-two physical characteristics, a world ruler (cakravarti) would be the Tathagata.’

Subhuti said to the Buddha: ‘World Honoured One, as I understand your teaching, the Tathagata cannot be recognised by His thirty-two physical characteristics’

Thereupon, the World Honoured One recited the following gatha:

‘He who sees me by outward appearance
(And) seeks me in sound,
Treads the heterodox path
(And) cannot perceive the Tathagata.

‘Subhuti, if you have (in your mind) this thought: “The Tathagata does not rely on His possession of characteristics to obtain supreme Enlightenment,’ Subhuti, banish that thought. Subhuti, if you think it while developing the Perfect Enlightenment Mind, you will advocate the annihilation of all Dharmas. Do not have such a thought. Why? Because one who develops the Supreme Enlightenment Mind, does not advocate the annihilation (of things).

‘Subhuti, if (one the one hand) a Bodhisattva gave in his practice of dana, all the seven treasures in quantities sufficient to fill worlds as many as sand-grains in the Ganges, and (on the other hand) another man comprehended that all dharmas were egoless and thereby achieved perfection of patience (ksanti), the latter’s merit would surpass that of the former. Why? Because, Subhuti, all Bodhisattvas do not receive reward for their merits.’

Subhuti asked the Buddha: ‘World Honoured One, why do Bodhisattvas not receive reward for their merits?’

‘Subhuti, Bodhisattvas should have no longing and no attachment when they practise meritorious virtues; therefore, they do not receive a reward.

‘Subhuti, if someone says the Tathagata comes or goes, sits or lies, he does not understand what I mean. Why? Because the Tathagata has neither whence (to come) nor whither (to go); therefore, He is called the Tathagata.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? If a virtuous man or woman reduced to dust all the worlds in the Universe, would those particles of dust be many?’

Subhuti replied: ‘Many, World Honoured One. Why? Because if they really existed, the Buddha would not say they are particles of dust. And why? Because when the Buddha speaks of particles of dust, they are not, but are (expediently) called, particles of dust. World Honoured One, when the Tathagata speaks of worlds, they are not, but are (expediently) called, worlds. Why? Because if they really exist, they are just agglomerations. The Tathagata speaks of agglomerations which are not, but are (expediently) called, agglomerations.’

‘Subhuti, that which is called an agglomeration cannot be spoken of, but the vulgar man has longing for and attachment to this thing.

‘Subhuti, what do you think? If someone says: “The Buddha speaks of the view of an ego, a personality, a being and a life”. Subhuti, does that person understand what I mean?’

‘No, World Honoured One, that person does not understand. Why? Because (when) the Tathagata speaks of the view of an

ego, a personality, a being and a life, it is not really, (but) is (expediently) called the view of an ego, a personality a being and a life.’

‘Subhuti, he who develops the Supreme Enlightenment Mind, should thus know, see, believe and comprehend (all things); he should not set up the perception of things (dharma-laksana) in his mind. Subhuti, the so-called form of things (dharma-laksana), the Tathagata says is not, but is, (expediently) called the form of things.

‘Subhuti, if on the one hand, someone gave away in alms (dana) the seven treasures in quantities sufficient to fill all the worlds in uncountable aeons, and if on the other hand, a virtuous man or woman developed the Bodhi-mind, and received, held (in mind), read and recited even a four-line stanza of this sutra and expounded it to others, the latter’s merit would surpass that of the former. In what manner should it be taught to others? By teaching it without attachment to form with the immutability of the absolute.

‘Why is it? Because:

All phenomena are like
A dream, an illusion, a bubble and a shadow,
Like dew and lightning.
Thus should you meditate upon them’.

When the Buddha had finished expounding this sutra, the elder Subhuti, together with bhiksus, bhiksunis, upasakas, upasikas, and all the worlds of devas, men and asuras who had listened to His teaching, were filled with joy and believed, received and observed it.

CHAPTER XX

The Dhammapada

The Dhammapada preserves the “Words of the Buddha” for it carries the spirit of the Lord’s teachings. It is one of the best loved Buddhist scriptures which is recited daily by millions of devotees who chant its verses in their native dialects. There exist several renditions of the Dhammapada in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan languages which all contain the sayings that Sakyamuni Buddha had given during the forty-five years of his ministry.

NAMO BUDDHAYA!

All that we are is the result of what we have intended, it is founded on our intentions, it is made up of our intentions. If a man speaks or acts with a bad intention, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the cart.

All that we are is the result of what we have intended, it is founded on our intentions, it is made up of our intentions. If a man speaks or acts with a pure intention, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.

‘He insulted me, he beat me, he frustrated me, he deprived me’,
— in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never end.

‘He insulted me, he beat me, he frustrated me, he deprived me’,
— in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred will end.

For never does hatred end by hatred anywhere, hatred ends by love; this is the eternal law.

He who lives seeking pleasures only, his senses uncontrolled, immoderate in his food, idle and weak, him Mara (the tempter) will surely overthrow, as the wind throws down a feeble tree.

He who lives without seeking pleasures, his senses well controlled, moderate in his food, faithful and strong, him Mara will certainly not overthrow any more than the wind throws down a rock mountain.

As rain breaks through an ill-roofed house, desire breaks through an ill-trained mind.

As rain does not break through a well-roofed house, desire will not break through a well-trained mind.

The evil-doer mourns in this world and he mourns in the next; he mourns in both. He mourns and suffers when he sees the evil of his own work.

The virtuous man delights in this world, and he delights — in the next; he delights and rejoices when he sees the purity of his own work.

The evil-doer suffers in this world and he suffers in the next; he suffers in both. He suffers when he thinks of — the evil he has done; he suffers even more when he has gone in the evil path (of hell).

The virtuous man is happy in this world and he is happy in the next; he is happy in both. He is happy when he thinks of the good he has done. He is even happier when he has gone on the good path (to heaven).

As the bee gathers honey and goes without injuring the flower or its colour or scent, so let a sage go about a village.

Not the perversities of others, not what they have done or left undone should a sage take notice of.

Like a beautiful flower, full of colour, but without scent, are the fair but fruitless words of him who does not act accordingly.

Like a beautiful flower, full of colour and full of scent, are the pure and fruitful words of him who acts accordingly.

Even as one may make many kinds of wreaths from a heap of flowers, so should one born to the mortal lot, perform good deeds manifold.

The scent of flowers does not travel against the wind, nor that of sandal-wood, or of Tagara and Mallika flowers; but the fragrance of good people travels even against the wind; a good man pervades every place.

Mean is the scent that comes from Tagara and Sandal-wood; the perfume of those who possess virtue rises up to the god as the highest.

Long is the night to him who is awake;
long is a league to him who is tired;
long is the round of rebirth to the
foolish who do not know the True Law.

How is there laughter, how is there joy, as this world is always burning? Why do you not seek a light, ye who are shrouded in darkness?

This body is wasted, frail, a nest of disease; this heap of corruption breaks to pieces, life indeed ends in death. The brilliant chariots of kings wear away, the body likewise waxes old, but the virtue of good people knows no age, thus do the good say to the good.

A man who has learnt little, grows old like an ox, his flesh grows but his knowledge does not grow.

Looking for the maker of this tabernacle I ran to no avail through a round of many births; and wearisome is birth again and again. But now, maker of the tabernacle, thou hast been seen; thou shalt not rear this tabernacle again. All thy rafters are broken, thy ridgepole shattered, the mind approaching the Eternal, has attained to the Extinction of all desires.

If a man makes himself as he teaches others to be, then being himself well subdued, he may subdue (others); one's own self is indeed difficult to subdue.

Self is the lord of the self, who else could be the lord? With self subdued, a man finds a lord difficult to find.

Even as a creeper over-spreads (and drags down) a Sal tree, so a man's wickedness, when it is very great, brings him to that state where his enemy wishes him to be.

The foolish man who scorns the teaching of the saintly, of the noble, of the virtuous, and follows false doctrines, bears fruit to his own destruction, like the Katthaka reed.

By oneself is evil done, by oneself one is defiled. Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another.

Let no one forget his own good for the sake of another's, however great; let a man, after he has discerned what this good is, be ever intent upon it.

Better than a sovereignty over the earth, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over all the worlds, is the reward of the first step in holiness.

He whose conquest is not conquered again, into whose conquest no one in this world enters, by what track can you lead him, the Awakened, the all-perceiving, the trackless?

Even the gods envy those who are awakened and mindful, who are given to meditation, who are steadfast and delight in the peace of retirement.

Difficult it is to obtain birth as a human being, difficult is the life of mortals, difficult is the hearing of the true Law, difficult is the rise of the Buddhas.

Patience, long-suffering, is the highest form of penance, Nirvana the highest of all things, say the Awakened; for he is not an anchorite who strikes another, he is not an ascetic who insults another.

If a traveller does not meet with one who is his better or equal, let him keep firmly to his solitary journey; there is no companionship with the young in wisdom.

‘These sons belong to me and this wealth belongs to me’, with such thoughts a fool is tormented. He himself does not belong to himself, how much less sons and wealth?

The unwise one who knows his foolishness is wise at least so far; but the unwise one who thinks himself wise, he is called a fool indeed...

If a person young in wisdom be associated with a wise man even all his life, he will perceive the truth as little as a spoon perceives the taste of soup.

If an intelligent man be associated for one minute only with a wise man, he will soon perceive the truth, as the tongue perceives the taste of soup.

People with little understanding are their own greatest enemies, for they do evil deeds which must bear bitter fruits.

That deed is not well done of which a man must repent, and the reward of which he receives crying with a tearful face.

No, that deed is well done of which a man does not repent and the reward of which he receives gladly and cheerfully.

As long as the evil deed done does not bear fruit, the unintelligent person thinks it is like honey; but when it ripens, then he suffers grief.

If you see an intelligent man who detects faults and blames what is blame-worthy, follow that wise man as though he were a revealer of (hidden) treasures.

Let him admonish, let him teach, let him forbid what is improper — he will be beloved of the good, by the bad he will be hated.

Do not have evil-doers for friends, do not have low people for friends; have virtuous people for friends, have for friends the best of men.

Irrigators guide the water; fletchers bend the arrow; carpenters bend a log of wood; wise people fashion themselves.

As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind, wise people falter not amidst blame and praise.

Wise people, after they have listened to the laws, become serene like a deep, clear and still lake.

There is no suffering for him who has finished his journey and abandoned grief, who has freed himself on all sides and thrown off the fetters.

They depart with their thoughts well-collected, they do not delight in an abode; like swans who have left their lake, they leave their house and home.

The gods even envy him whose senses like horses well broken in by the driver, have been subdued, who is free from pride and free from evil propensities.

In a hamlet or in a forest, on the sea or on the dry land, wherever venerable persons (Arhats) dwell, that place is delightful.

Forests are delightful; where the worldly find no delight, there the passionless will find delight, for they look not for pleasure.

Even though a speech be composed of a thousand words, but words without sense, one word of sense is better, which if a man hears he becomes quiet.

If one man conquers in battle a thousand times a thousand men, if another conquers himself, he is the greatest of conquerors.

Even an evil-doer sees happiness as long as his evil deed has not ripened but when his evil deed has ripened, then does the evil-doer see evil.

Even a good man sees evil as long as his good deed has not ripened; but when his good deed has ripened then does the good man see happiness.

Let no man think lightly of evil, saying in his heart, it will not come unto me. Even by the falling of water-drops a water-pot is filled, the fool becomes full of evil, even if he gathers it little by little.

Let no man think lightly of good, saying in his heart, it will not come unto me. Even by the falling of water-drops a water-pot is filled; the steadfast man becomes full of good, even if he gathers it little by little.

He who has no wound on his hand may touch poison with his hand; poison does not affect one who has no wound; how is there evil for one who does not commit evil?

Whosoever offends a harmless, pure and innocent person, that evil falls back upon that fool, like light dust thrown up against the wind.

Not in the sky, not in the midst of the sun, not if one enters into the clefts of the mountains, is there known a spot in the whole world, where if a man abide, he might be free from an evil deed.

Not in the sky, not in the midst of the sun, not if one enters into the clefts of the mountains, is there known a spot in the whole world where if a man abide, death could not overcome him.

All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death; remembering that thou art like unto them, do not strike or slay.

All men tremble at punishment, all men love life, remembering that thou are unto them, do not strike or slay.

He who, seeking his own happiness, does not injure or kill beings who also long for happiness, will find happiness after death.

Do not speak harshly to anybody; those who are spoken to will answer thee in the same way. Angry speech breeds trouble, thou wilt receive blows for blows.

If like a shattered gong, thou speakest not, then thou hast reached Nirvana, contention is not found in thee.

As a cowherd with his staff drives his cows to pasture, so do Old Age and Death drive the life of men.

Not to blame, not to strike, to live restrained under the precepts to be moderate in eating, to sleep and sit alone, and to dwell on lofty thoughts, this is the teaching of the Awakened.

There is no satisfying lusts even by a shower of gold-pieces; he who knows that lusts have a short taste and bring suffering in their train is wise.

Even in heavenly pleasures he finds no delight; the follower of the Supremely Enlightened One delights only in the destruction of every craving.

Men driven by fear go to many a refuge, to mountains and forests, to shrines and graves and sacred trees.

But that is not a safe refuge, that is not the best refuge; a man is not delivered from all pains after having gone to that refuge.

He who takes refuge with the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Order; he who with clear understanding sees the Four Noble Truths, is delivered from all pains after having gone to that refuge.

Let us live happily then, free from ailments among the ailing. Among men who are ailing, let us dwell free from ailments.

Let us live happily then, free from greed among the greedy. Among men who are greedy let us dwell free from greed.

Let us live happily then, though we call nothing our own. We shall be like the bright gods, feeding on happiness.

Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy. He who has given up both victory and defeats, he, contented, is happy.

There is no fire like lust; there is no losing throw like hatred; there is no pain like this body, there is no happiness higher than peace.

Hunger is the greatest affliction, the body the chief of sorrow; of one who knows this truly, that is Nirvana, the highest happiness.

Health is the greatest blessings, contentedness the best riches; trust is the best of relationships, Nirvana the highest happiness.

He who has tasted the sweetness of solitude and tranquility, is free from fear and sin, while he drinks in the nectar of the Law.

The sight of the noble is good, to live with them is always blessedness; if a man did not see the unwise, he would be truly happy.

He who consorts with the immature in wisdom suffers a long journey; company with fools, as with an enemy, is always painful; company with the steadfast is pleasant like meeting with kinsfolk.

Therefore one should follow the wise, the intelligent, the learned, the much enduring, the dutiful, the noble, one should follow a good and wise man, as the moon follows the paths of the stars.

He who gives himself to vanity and does not give himself to meditation, forgetting the real aim of life and grasping at the pleasurable, will come to envy him who has exerted himself in meditation.

Let no man cleave to things that are pleasant or to those that are unpleasant. Not to see what is pleasant is pain, and it is pain to see what is unpleasant.

From pleasure comes grief, from affection comes fear; he who is free from affection neither sorrows nor fears.

From (earthly) affection comes grief, from affection comes fear; he who is free from affection neither sorrows nor fears.

From (sensuous) delight comes grief, from such delight comes fear; he who is free from delight neither sorrows nor fears.

From lust comes grief, from lust comes fear; he who is free from lust neither sorrows nor fears.

From craving comes grief, from craving comes fear; he who is free from craving neither sorrows nor fears.

He who possesses character and discrimination, who is just, speaks the truth, and does what is his own business, him the world will hold dear.

He in whom a desire for the ineffable has sprung up, whose mind is permeated by this desire and whose thoughts are not bewildered by sensuality is said to be 'bound upstream'.

Kinsmen, friends and well-wishers salute a man who has been long away and returns safe from afar.

In like manner his good works receive him, who has done good and has gone from this world to the other — as kinsmen receive one who is dear to them on his return.

He who holds back rising anger like a rolling chariot, him I call a real driver; other people are but holding the reins.

Let a man overcome anger by mildness, let him overcome the niggard by liberty, the liar by truth.

There is an old saying, O Atula, it is not only of today: 'They blame him who sits silent, they blame him who speaks much, they blame him who says little'. There is no one in the world who is not blamed.

There never was, there never will be, nor is there now, a man who is always blamed, or a man who is always praised.

Beware of bodily anger, and control thy body. Leave the sins of the body and with thy body practise virtue.

Beware of the anger of the tongue and control thy tongue. Leave the sins of the tongue and practise virtue with the tongue.

Beware of the anger of the mind and control thy mind. Leave the sins of the mind and practise virtue with thy mind.

The taint of prayers is non-repetition, the taint of houses ill-repair, the taint of (bodily) beauty is sloth, the taint of a watchman, lack of vigilance.

The fault of others is easily perceived but that of one's self is difficult to perceive; a man winnows his neighbours' faults like chaff, but hides his own, even as a dishonest gambler hides a losing throw.

If a man looks after the faults of others and is always inclined to take offence, his own evil propensities will grow; far indeed is such a man from their destruction.

A man is not learned because he talks much; he who is patient, free from hatred and fear, he is called the learned.

A man is not an elder because his head is grey; his age may be ripe, but he is called 'old-in-vain'.

He who is beyond merit and demerit, who lives chastely, who with knowledge passes through the world, is truly called a mendicant.

A man is not a sage because he observes silence, if he is foolish and ignorant; but the man who taking the balance, chooses the good and rejects the evil, is a sage and for that very reason, he who understands both worlds is therefore called a sage.

He who does not rouse himself when it is time to rise, who though young and strong, is full of sloth, whose will and thought are weak, that lazy and idle man will never find the way to wisdom.

Through meditation wisdom is won, through lack of meditation wisdom is lost; let a man who knows this double path of pain and loss so conduct himself that wisdom will grow.

Cut down the whole forest (of lust), not a tree only. Danger comes out of the forest (of lust); when you have cut down the

forest (of lust) and its undergrowth, then, monks, will you be rid of the forest and be freed.

Death comes and carries off that man absorbed in his children and flocks, his mind distracted, as a flood carries off a sleeping village.

Sons are no help, nor a father, not relations, there is no help from kinsfolk for one whom Death has seized.

If by leaving a small pleasure one sees a great pleasure, let a wise man leave the small pleasure and look to the great.

He who by causing pain to others wishes to obtain happiness for himself, he, entangled in the bonds of hatred, will never be free from hatred.

What ought to be done is neglected, what ought not to be done is done; the evil proclivities of unruly, heedless people are always increasing.

But they who, ever alert, meditate on the body do not follow what ought not to be done, but steadfastly do what ought to be done, the evil proclivities of watchful and wise people will come to an end.

They who are ashamed of what they ought not to be ashamed of, and are not ashamed of what they ought to be ashamed of, such men, embracing false doctrines enter the downward path.

They who fear when they ought not fear, and fear not when they ought to fear, such men, embracing false doctrines, enter the downward path.

They who see sin where none exists, and do not see it where it does exist, such men, embracing false doctrines, enter the downward path.

They who know what is forbidden as forbidden, and what is not forbidden as not forbidden, such men, embracing the true doctrine, enter the good path.

Patiently shall I endure abuse as the elephant in the battle endures the arrows sent from the bow; for the world is ill-natured.

They lead a tame elephant to battle, the king mounts a tame elephant; the tamed is the best among men, he who patiently endures abuse....

Mules are good if tamed, and noble Sindhu horses, and great elephants; but he who tames himself is better still.

If a man become lazy and a great eater, if he is sleepy and rolls himself round like a great hog fed on wash, that fool is born again and again.

The mind of mine went formerly wandering about as it liked, as it listed, as it pleased; but I shall now control it perfectly as a rider controls with his hook a rutting elephant.

If a man does not find a prudent companion to walk with, not one who is upright and steadfast, let him walk alone like a king who has left his conquered country — behind, like an elephant in the forest.

It is better to live alone, there is no companionship with a fool; let a man walk alone, let him commit no sin, let him do with few wishes, like an elephant in the forest.

If an occasion arises friends are pleasant; enjoyment is pleasant when one shares it with another; a good work is pleasant in the hour of death; the giving up of all grief is pleasant.

The gift of the Law exceeds all gifts; the sweetness of the Law exceeds all sweetness, the delight in the Law exceeds all delights; the extinction of thirst overcomes all suffering.

The fields are damaged by weeds, mankind is damaged by lust; therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from lust brings great reward.

The fields are damaged by weeds, mankind is damaged by hatred; therefore a gift bestowed on those who do not hate brings great reward.

The fields are damaged by weeds, mankind is damaged by delusion; therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from delusion brings great reward.

The fields are damaged by weeds, mankind is damaged by craving; therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from craving, brings great reward.

Restraint in the eye is good, good is restraint in the ear, in the nose restraint is good, good is restraint in the tongue.

In the body restraint is good, good is restraint in speech, in thought restraint is good, good is restraint in all things. A monk restrained in all things, is freed from all suffering.

As the jasmine sheds its withered flowers, even so, O monks, men should shed lust and hatred.

The monk who is quiet in body, speech and mind, who is collected and has refused the baits of the world, is truly called tranquil.

Rouse thyself, examine thyself by thyself; thus selfguarded and mindful, will thou, O monks, live happily.

For self is the lord of the self, self is the refuge of self, therefore curb thyself as the merchant curbs a good horse.

EXTRACTS OF THE DHAMMAPADA



CHAPTER XXI

The Twelve Principles of Buddhism

(DRAFTED BY THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY, LONDON, IN 1945)

1. Self-salvation is for any man the immediate task. If a man lay wounded by a poison arrow and he would not delay extraction by demanding details of the man who shot it, or the length and make of the arrow. There will be time for ever-increasing understanding of the Teaching during the treading of the Way. Meanwhile, begin now by facing life as it is, learning always by direct and personal experience.
2. The first fact of existence is the law of change or impermanence. All that exists, from a mole to a mountain, from a thought to an empire, passes through the same cycle of existence, namely, birth, growth, decay and death. Life alone is continuous, even seeking self-expression in new forms. 'Life is a bridge; therefore build no house on it.' Life is a process of flow, and he who clings to any form, however splendid will suffer by resisting the flow.
3. The law of change applies equally to the 'soul'. There is no principle in an individual which is immortal and unchanging. Only the 'Namelessness', the ultimate Reality, is beyond change and all forms of life, including man, are manifestations of the Reality. No one owns the life which flows in him any more than the electric light bulb owns the current that gives it light.

4. The universe is the expression of law. All effects have causes, and man's soul or character is the sum total of his previous thoughts and acts. Karma, meaning action-reaction, governs all existence, and man is the sole creator of his circumstances and his reaction to them, his future condition, and his final destiny. By right thought and action he can gradually purify his inner nature, and so by self-realisation attain in time liberation from rebirth. The process covers great periods of time, involving life after life on earth, but ultimately every form of life will reach Enlightenment.

5. Life is one and indivisible, though its everchanging forms are innumerable and perishable. There is, in truth, no death, though every form must die. From an understanding of life's unity arises compassion, a sense of identity with the life in other forms. Compassion is described as the 'Law of laws-eternal harmony', and he who breaks this harmony of life will suffer accordingly and delay his own Enlightenment.

6. Life being One, the interests of the parts should be those of the whole. In his ignorance man thinks he can successively strive for his own interests, and this wrongly directed energy of selfishness produces suffering. He learns from his suffering to reduce and finally eliminate its cause. The Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths:

- (a) The omnipresence of suffering.
- (b) Its cause, wrongly directed desires.
- (c) Its cure, the removal of the cause.
- (d) The Noble Eightfold Path of self-development which leads to the end of suffering.

7. The Eightfold Path consists in Right (or perfect) Views, or preliminary understanding, Right Aims or Motive, Right Speech, Right Acts, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Concentration or mind development, and, finally, Right Samadhi, leading to full Enlightenment. As Buddhism is a way of living, not merely a theory of life, the treading of this Path is essential to self-deliverance. 'Cease to do evil, learn to do good, cleanse your own heart: this is the Teaching of the Buddhas'.

8. Reality is indescribable, and a God with attributes is not the final Reality. But the Buddha, a human being, became the All-Enlightened One, and the purpose of life is the attainment of Enlightenment. This state of Consciousness, Nirvana, the extinction of the limitations of self-hood, is attainable on earth. All men and all other forms of life contain the potentiality of Enlightenment, and the process therefore consists in becoming what you are. 'Look within: thou art Buddha'.

9. From potential to actual Enlightenment there lies the Middle Way, the Eightfold Way 'from desire to peace', a process of self-development between the 'opposites', avoiding all extremes. The Buddha trod this Way to the end, and the only faith required in Buddhism is the reasonable belief that where a Guide has trodden it is worth our while to tread. The Way must be trodden by the whole man, not merely the best of him, and heart and mind must be developed equally. The Buddha was the All-Compassionate as well as the All-Enlightened One.

10. Buddhism lays great stress on the need of inward concentration and meditation, which leads in time to the development of

the inner spiritual faculties. The subjective life is as important as the daily round, and periods of quietude for inner activity are essential for a balanced life. The Buddhist should at all times be 'mindful and self-possessed', refraining from mental and emotional attachment to 'the passing show'. This increasing watchful attitude to circumstances, which he knows to be his own creation, helps him to keep his reaction to it always under control.

11. The Buddha said: 'Work out your own salvation with diligence'. Buddhism knows no authority for truth save the intuition of the individual, and that is authority for himself alone. Each man suffers the consequences of his own acts, and learns thereby, while helping his fellow men to the same deliverance; nor will prayer to the Buddha or to any God prevent an effect from following its cause. Buddhist monks are teachers and exemplars, and in no sense intermediates between Reality and the individual. The utmost tolerance is practised towards all other religions and philosophies, for no man has the right to interfere in his neighbours's journey to the Goal.

12. Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor 'escapist', nor does it deny the existence of God or soul, though it places its own meaning on these terms. It is, on the contrary, a system of thought, a religion, a spiritual science and a way of life, which is reasonable, practical, and all-embracing. For over two thousand years it has satisfied the spiritual needs of nearly one-third of mankind. It appeals to the West because it has no dogmas, satisfies the reason and the heart alike, insists on self-reliance coupled with tolerance for other points of view, embraces science, religion, philosophy, psychology, ethics and art, and points to man alone, as the creator of his present life and the sole designer of his destiny.

Peace to all beings



*“May all beings receive
the blessings of
Kuan Shih Yin P’usa.”*