

# Great Harmony

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**The Great Harmony in calligraphy by  
Dr. Yutang Lin**



**Dr. Yutang Lin offering precious vases to  
the Dragon King**

# Great Harmony

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# Great Harmony

*In Great Perfection no trace of stairways.  
On Stages of the Path levels well defined.  
Not confined by concepts or non-concept,  
All Dharmas universal in Great Harmony.*

Comment:

Great Perfection is a teaching at the stage of fruition. In Great Perfection there is no differentiation among View, Practice, Activity and Fruit because it is beyond conceptual distinctions. In teachings on Stages of the Path levels and steps are well defined; even though there are also teachings on how to generalize principles to subsume steps at various levels, nevertheless the definitions of steps and levels are such that the boundaries remain clear.

In my humble opinion, once the real significance of limitless oneness is thoroughly grasped, then it automatically matches Great Perfection, and harmonizes all steps and levels in Stages of the Path. Thus it is not confined by concepts or non-concept. Instead, any teaching can be imbued with the right view of limitless

oneness and thereby sublimated to become a teaching of the Dharmadhatu that transcends levels and steps. Such all-round and harmonious comprehension of the essence of Dharma, I propose, is to be called "Great Harmony."

I had expounded several times on the Four Boundless Minds so that it was no longer limited by its regular position on Stages of the Path, but had become a practice that could lead to the cultivation of Great Bodhicitta. This is an example of the application of Great Harmony.

September 16, 2005

El Cerrito, California

# Great Harmony Activities

*Wondrous practice of Chod had long since set epitome.  
Great Samadhi of Dharmadhatu was the root profound.  
Pondering over my Dharma writings I suddenly realized,  
This life has been dedicated to cultivate Great Harmony.*

Comments:

Days ago I proposed the notion of Great Harmony, namely, it means to match Great Perfection through the view of limitless oneness, and also use this view to harmonize all teachings among Stages of the Path so that they all become imbued with the perspective of Dharmadhatu as a whole, and are thus sublimated into Dharmadhatu teachings. On brief reflection I instantly realized that Chod as taught by Patriarch Machig Labdron was a creative work in the light of Great Harmony. Guru C. M. Chen emphasized the view of Dharmadhatu as a whole and taught Great Samadhi of Dharmadhatu, and hence rooted the view in my mind; it is more than appropriate to call this the Root of Great Harmony. Reflecting on my writings, most of them are creative works dedicated to expounding applications and aspects of Great Harmony. Among them the

prominent ones are: "Wisdom and Compassion in Limitless-Oneness," "The Sixfold Sublimation in Limitless-Oneness," "Chod in Limitless-Oneness," etc. The main theme of my life's works is given a name only now; it may be called, "Great Harmony Activities."

Written in Chinese on September 16, 2005

Translated on September 17, 2005

El Cerrito, California



# Unifying the Eight Stages at this Instant

*Right now is no different from the time of facing death,  
Thus all considerations held in mind should be put asides,  
Abide in the limitless-oneness of all things,  
Pray to Buddhas for the salvation of all sentient beings!  
At each encounter of hardship appreciate the suffering of beings,  
Constantly practice patience and tolerance,  
Thereby recognize the pure light hidden in the dust of the worldly,  
Without complaint, at ease with activities that harmonize the environment.*

Comment:

Guru Chen taught the Eight Stages of Buddhist Practice as follows:

Use Impermanence as money,  
To purchase the land of Renunciation,  
Build the fence of Silas,  
Plant the seed of Bodhicitta,  
Irrigate with the water of great Compassion,  
Add the manure of Dhyana,  
Bloom the blossom of Wisdom,  
Yield the fruit of Buddhahood.

Unifying the eight stages at this instant, a life of liberation would float on.

Written in Chinese: July 11, 1995

Translated: August 8, 1999

El Cerrito, California

# **The Sixfold Sublimation in Limitless-Oneness**

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## **Preface**

In Mahayana Buddhism teachings on practice center around the Six Paramitas. They are labeled as Giving, Law-abiding, Tolerance, Diligence, Meditation and Wisdom. There are already many works in English expounding this important topic; and the usual terminology used in translation for paramita is perfection.

In this work I am presenting, besides the traditional teachings, a new perspective on the Six Paramitas in the light of Enlightenment as Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness. Also I am using sublimation instead of the common perfection to spotlight an important function of Buddhist practice it is not a completion at the original level but a transformation resulting in essential change.

The materials gathered here can be traced back to my books "A Golden Ring," "An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation" and "The Buddhist Practice of Chanting 'Amitabha'." Nevertheless, the importance of this new perspective on the Six Paramitas calls for a special treatment.

May the readers gain insight into the unity underlying all Buddhist practices and apply the principles presented here to improve their particular practices!

Yutang Lin

August 16, 1994

El Cerrito, California

# 1. Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness

The fundamental principle of Buddhism is that the whole universe is in Limitless-Oneness, it is originally so, and pure, i.e., free from artificial limits of concepts, values and judgments.

This is an abstract idea and seems to be far from reality, even contradictory from a logical point of view. How could we accept it, and how could we adopt it in daily life?

The concept of Limitless-Oneness is contradictory from a logical point of view because when we talk about one, there is implied some defining limitation of it, otherwise we could not refer to it. Hence, if we say oneness and limitless, it is the same, from a logical point of view, as saying something unknowable or practically non-existent.

Nevertheless, from limitless and oneness respectively we can learn the fundamental aspects of Buddha's Enlightenment. Buddha's Enlightenment is essentially undefinable and inexpressible, therefore, when we resort to concepts in explaining that experience, either we are limited by the concepts used or we have to go beyond the concepts used. If we stay within logical limits we can hardly transmit the essential aspects of Buddha's Enlightenment. Hence I introduce the paradoxical notion of Limitless-Oneness.

How could we accept this notion of Limitless-Oneness?

When Sakyamuni attained Enlightenment he had the experience of everything in Limitless-Oneness. Its truth has been witnessed by Buddhist practitioners over the ages. It is not stated here as a dogmatic doctrine to be blindly followed, rather it is a spiritual insight revealed to guide practitioners on the path toward Enlightenment. Its truth can be experienced by devoted practitioners as they continue on the path, thus it is not a dogma based on blind faith.

This notion of Limitless-Oneness serves a twofold function: on the one hand, it points out that Buddha's Enlightenment transcends all limits is beyond languages, concepts, senses, and even the natural limits of space and time; on the other hand, it points out that this transcendence is not beyond or above, but one with all, and all are one.

From our ordinary point of view the two aspects of Limitless-Oneness may seem all too abstract, metaphysical and lacking in substance in the reality we know. Hence, I need to explain them in more detail.

First, let me explain the meaning of oneness when I say that all are one. For example, our bodies have many different parts: eyes, ears, hands, etc. All of them form one body because they are all connected. Similarly, although the world consists of so many things, they are all connected as one. This seems to contradict the fact that in the world, it is survival of the fittest. In the human world, we have wars against one another; how

could we be one? Buddha's experience of the oneness of all is beyond our ordinary experience, yet it is possible for any one of us to share this experience through the cultivation of Buddhist practice. Only when one has some taste of this oneness can one see clearly that hostility and selfishness are wrong.

The Buddhist practice does not aim at establishing a new conceptual perspective which would inevitably bring about the duality of right and wrong. If it were such, then it would be only trying to replace one set of artificial standards with another, and consequently cannot free people from prejudice. Rather, Buddhist practices aim at freeing us from the delusive limitation of concepts and senses, and help us regain our innate spiritual purity. In the light of our original purity, we will realize that selfishness and hostility are ill-founded, but not simply because we are subscribing to certain ideals.

Furthermore, it is of utmost importance that we understand this oneness, because if we are limited by our conceptual selves, then our lives are certainly miserable. When all things are constantly subject to change, how could we keep our tiny selves above water all the time? It would seem that the whole world is running against our will most of the time if we are self-centered. Our lives are so fragile what guarantee do we have for our safety and subsistence?

Second, as to limitlessness of Buddha's Enlightenment, I



offer the following explanation: We know that concepts have limited applicability to reality and that the range of human senses is limited; how, then, could Buddha transcend such limits? Buddha transcends conceptual limits by returning to the original state of no concepts, which is freedom from concepts even in the subconscious. This does not mean that Buddha is incapable of using concepts; it simply means that Buddha's mind is not confined or directed by concepts. The possibility of transcending normal human senses is shown by reports of people with supernatural abilities. From the Buddhist point of view, such supernatural abilities are within the reach of all human beings, provided that they free themselves from cultural barriers that prevent the development of innate subtle abilities. Since Buddha is one who has attained freedom from all artificial barriers, no matter how subtle they are, his innate abilities are fully developed. Hence, he naturally transcends the limitation of normal sensation.

How could Buddha transcend the basic framework of the Universe the space-time continuum? We are accustomed to the limits of space and time; omnipresence, omniscience and eternity seem unreal to us mortals. Did not Buddha die at the age of eighty even though in Buddhist terminology it is labeled as "entering Nirvana"? Yes, from our ordinary point of view, no matter what you call it, Buddha died at eighty, and so it seems that he is at least subject to death, if not rebirth. Nevertheless, when he attained Full Enlightenment, he lost his identification with the mortal

body and life, he was at once in eternal union with the whole universe, the universe not limited by our concepts of space and time, and it is precisely in this way that he achieved his transcendence of space and time. Furthermore, his transcendence is not just a psychological event, it has been witnessed by Buddhists over the ages that as long as a Buddhist is sincere in taking refuge in Buddha and devotes himself to Buddhist practice, he will receive numerous inspirations from Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and protectors. The only reasonable explanation for all those miraculous inspirational events is that Buddha and holy beings have achieved omnipresence, eternity and omniscience.

There is no way that I can advocate the above to people simply because it is my belief. Any one who adopts the Buddhist practice will sooner or later experience the truth of the above statements. It is only because it is based on such a general fact that I dare to advocate Buddha's transcendence to the world.

When one, through the cultivation of Buddhist practices, experiences the Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness, his life is no longer limited by his mortal existence. Even the concepts of space and time become meaningless in the sense that they are no longer operative in the usual way. If we study the basis of science, we will realize that the basic measurement and hence operational significance of space and time are indeed defined by man. When Buddha was able to free himself from all concepts that were consciously or

subconsciously present to him, spatial and temporal distinctions faded away, and all became one. This is not just theoretical projection of what Buddhahood should be like, be it realizable or not. Buddhists through the ages can testify that, as a result of their practice, many extraordinary phenomena have occurred which baffle scientific explanations, but can be reasonably accounted for according to the Buddhist teaching of Limitless-Oneness. The working of prayers that affect people thousands of miles away is one such miraculous phenomenon. Even if someday science may be able to explain supernatural phenomena, it will still be unlikely that science can have the power to reproduce such extraordinary events.

Science is built on theoretical systems which in turn are built on concepts, and concepts by their nature divide and define limits. Even the concept of infinity hinges on the concept of finiteness and can be understood only as being non-finite. Buddha's Enlightenment, on the contrary, is completely beyond conceptual confinement. Here lies the fundamental reason why science can never achieve Buddhist Enlightenment and its accompanying supernatural powers.

Science can provide us with instruments and technology that help us hear and see things thousands of miles away, but it cannot do so without those instruments and energy sources; whereas telepathy and clairvoyance come to practitioners naturally.

Human knowledge today is based on the fundamental duality of subject and object, the observer and the observed. Nevertheless, in quantum mechanics we have come to recognize the Uncertainty Principle which illuminates the limit of a dualistic approach. In using the concept of a field to establish General Relativity Theory, Einstein is approaching the Buddhist teaching of all are one. In Limitless-Oneness the fundamental characteristic of human cognitive activities, the subject/object distinction, has been transcended.

The Buddhist practice will help us realize our original state of Limitless-Oneness. As we gradually approach Enlightenment, the broadening of our horizons and the openness of our lives will enable us to face the difficulties of life with a proper perspective. Consequently we will be able to handle things more satisfactorily and even enjoy a spontaneous feeling of peace and happiness. As we turn the center of our attention from selfish interests to the well-being of all sentient beings, we will naturally live a life of service and find such a life meaningful and spiritually rewarding. Besides, as we gain experience of Limitless-Oneness, we will be able to use such experience to help others in many extraordinary ways.

The future seems to lie beyond the scope of human knowledge. However, a Buddhist practitioner may sometimes know future events in advance. It is revealed to him in dreams or through heavenly voices. Ordinarily we lack the ability to see the causal consequences of

events, hence the future is full of surprises. Nevertheless, phenomena occur according to the Law of Causation and Consequence, hence the future is, to some extent, predictable. This does not imply fatalism because events that are bound to happen due to past events, may still be changed by additional efforts before they actually happen. This and the fact that all are connected as one are the reasons why prayers can help people who are suffering the consequence of past negative activities. Theoretically we can explain as above the fact that practitioners do sometimes know things in advance; practically, we have no mechanical way to achieve such results. It remains a mystical spiritual reality known to devoted practitioners through the ages.

To say that this Limitless-Oneness is originally pure, we mean that it is not the result of practice or cultivation, rather, it is naturally free from artificial limitations. Usually we are not aware of this fact because we are accustomed to being limited by concepts and the senses. To people who are able to free themselves from the limiting effect of concepts and senses, the truth of Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness will become self-evident simply because it is so. What Buddhist practice does is simply help remove our prejudice and habits so that we may return to the original state of purity which is beyond value systems and judgments. It is a process of unlearning our cultural differences we are born American, French, or Chinese, which is an accidental event but it affects our upbringing and outlook on life. Only when we are free from cultural prejudice can we

see that essentially we are all the same. Whatever we do to others based on cultural prejudice is simply due to ignorance of the fundamental unity and equality among all beings; when we hurt others we are indeed hurting ourselves. These are not abstract religious ideals the modern awareness of ecology and of the need for environmental preservation testifies to the truth of these wise teachings.

Another aspect of Original Purity is that when we achieve Full Enlightenment we are simply returning to a natural state; it will not be something foreign to our nature and thus needs some effort to keep. Were Full Enlightenment an object to pursue and preserve with effort, it could not bring complete liberation because then we would need always to be on the watch for it and never able to relax. Just the opposite; we need to learn to let go. We have been holding on to the notion of a self for too long. Our minds are constantly running with thoughts: I am like this, you are like that, and our relationship is such and such, , without end. When our minds are so conditioned and complicated, we simply cannot relax. We need to unlearn all this and return to the state of simplicity and childlike innocence. Only then will we find freedom and happiness in life.

Returning to our innocent state does not mean that we need to abolish our culture and social structures. It is an obvious fact that social structures have their limits the peace of a society is basically maintained by its people's goodness and mutual trust, rather than by police and

lawyers. It is important to cultivate the spiritual innocence of people so that laws and law enforcement agencies will not be misused but can serve properly as tools to help the innocent.

Original purity is beyond our judgments and preferences. All our values and propensities relate to our cultural backgrounds; what is considered good in one culture may be considered bad in another. For example, in America, people name their children after someone they love, hence a child may be given the name of a grandparent. In the Chinese culture, it is disrespectful to use the name of a parent in naming a child. Original purity is beyond these cultural differences and relative judgments.

## **2. No Attachment and Opening Up**

How can we apply Limitless-Oneness in real-life situations? It does not mean that we could intrude into others' rights and properties and act simply as we please. Rather, we should give up our prejudices and attachments, open our mind to the world, and be tolerant and considerate to one another. In this way, we will gradually approach Limitless-Oneness even in our daily lives.

As a Buddhist practitioner, I used to ask myself the question: how do I apply Buddha's teachings in my daily life? There are so many theories and rules of conduct in Buddhism, and it would be very difficult to know how to apply them to our daily lives. Furthermore, new elements of the modern world and the complications of each individual's situation cannot be given full treatment in any religious treatise. Real-life situations often require immediate attention and responses; we may not have the chance to consult a spiritual teacher in advance. Hence, in order to apply Buddha's teachings to our daily lives, it is necessary that we use very simple and fundamental principles to guide our considerations and activities.

How do I obtain such workable guidelines? I look directly at Buddhahood which is in Limitless-Oneness, and our situation which is limited in all practical aspects, then it becomes obvious that our approach to Buddhahood is a process of transcendence from



finiteness to limitlessness. Thus, the main principles to guide our activities and practices are, on the active side, to open up, and, on the reductive side, to let go of attachments. What I have learned for my own use are the two basic principles of Opening Up and No Attachment. I offer them to all Buddhist friends who also want to apply Buddha's teaching to their daily lives.

These two principles are complementary to each other and interconnected. Without letting go of attachments, there is no real opening up. Without opening up, one can hardly let go of attachments. Opening up means to see things from all angles, to love all equally, and to consider things in long term instead of the immediate result. No attachment means to give up one's prejudices, preferences and partialities. We need to let go of our limited views, desires, emotions, and habits, and open up to the openness, impartiality and tranquility of Limitless-Oneness.

Let us consider, for example, opening up in space. Please imagine you are in the center of a big balloon, and try to expand this balloon as much as possible. Could you please tell me how large your balloon is?

The answers that I have received are as follows: Some says that he feels some curvature, a boundary, but he can not specify where it is. Another says that as his balloon enlarges he gradually loses feeling of it. A woman says that she feels that the balloon is limited by

the room, so she closes her eyes and has a mental image of a big balloon in the sky, with herself in the center.

In all three answers, we find a sense of boundary, and the woman points out that the walls are limiting her imaginary space. Once I had an answer from a man that the sphere was not only limited by the walls, but stayed in front of him, although he was told to think of himself as being in the center of the sphere. These responses show that our sense of space is unconsciously limited by the room we are in or by the habit of looking forward.

Thus to open up in space means to adopt Buddhist practices so that our minds will not be limited as in the above examples and will have the freedom to transcend sensual and habitual limits. It also means that we should transcend the views and customs of a locality.

Opening up in time means not to be confined by the present situation, but to have a perspective that sees the continuity of past, present and future, an overall view of life, a sense of history and even beyond history.

Opening up in emotions means to be kind and considerate to people you meet and adopt an attitude of service in your work. If we confine our love, goodwill and generosity to a certain few, then we may never achieve peace of mind because life is impermanent and all those we care for are not free from life's ups and downs. However, if we enlarge our caring and loving to all beings, then we will live in peace that comes from a

commitment to serve all equally with love. Of course, we can actually help only those we happen to encounter, nevertheless, to each one we equally offer what is appropriate with the awareness that the underlying love transcends worldly considerations and is in the light of Limitless-Oneness.

Opening up in perspectives means to see things from all angles, with an overall view, and free from personal and cultural prejudices.

Opening up in perceptions means to go beyond the normal sensory limits and develop our potential for supernatural powers. This is not something sought after by Buddhists, but it may develop naturally as one advances on the path toward Enlightenment. When one's worldly worries and attachments fade away, one's innate subtle abilities will automatically exhibit their functions.

The teachings of Confucius were respected and followed in China because they teach a broader view how to live a life so that society is harmonious, instead of a primitive, self-centered view of life. The teachings of Taoism, Hinduism, Christianity and many other religions all aim at harmony between man and nature, or man and heaven; they offer a even broader view than the social order of Confucianism. Nevertheless, it is only Sakyamuni who became aware of the subtle attachment to an illusive notion of self in the realizations of heavenly religions, and became free from

such illusions thereby attaining Limitless-Oneness. Thus, Buddhism is most thorough in teaching one how to open up and let go. Consequently, it is only Buddhism that teaches that even its teachings are simply means to help one become liberated, and that in the final liberation one should not be confined by these teachings.

### **3. The Sixfold Sublimation One by One**

In English works on Mahayana Buddhism one frequently encounters mentioning of the Six [Kinds of] Perfection. Perfection in such cases is a translation of Paramita which in Sanskrit means to reach the other shore. When you are in transmigration you are on the shore of endless recycling of life and death. In order to be safe, you have to sail across the ocean of sorrows to reach the other shore which is the Enlightenment of Buddha. There, you are eternally free from transmigration and its suffering. Through engaging in the sixfold practices, you will be able to reach the other shore; therefore, they are called Paramita. However, once you become a Buddha, you will not remain idle on the shore. You will be working as a lifeguard, trying to help other beings out of the ocean of suffering. This is the profound meaning of Paramita to reach the other shore in order to save all beings from suffering. Traditionally the Bodhi-mind, the dedication to help all sentient beings reach Enlightenment, is distinguished into three types:

(A) Resembling a shepherd wishing to reach Enlightenment only after all sentient beings have done so.

(B) Resembling a ferryman wishing to reach Enlightenment simultaneously with all sentient beings.

(C) Resembling a prince wishing to become enlightened first, like assuming the throne with full authority, in order to save all sentient beings from transmigration.

A shepherd is capable of goading the flock of sheep; a ferryman is capable of maneuvering the ferryboat; and a prince will assume the throne in time. In all three cases the underlying assumption is that one should first become capable of helping others before conducting the salvation activities. Therefore, the first priority of a sincere practitioner should be to reach the other shore by devoting himself to Buddhist practice and service.

The usual translation of Paramita as Perfection, I think, means that by adopting these practices you will become perfect. Following the precedence of my late Guru, Yogi Chen, I choose instead to use Sublimation for the following reasons: Whenever there is a change from a state of imperfection to a state of perfection, there may still be lacking a change in essence. For example, polluted water after distillation is still water. However, the final result that Buddhist practice may bring about is not just a "perfect" person, but an indescribable state labeled "Enlightenment." There is a fundamental change in essence from manhood to Buddhahood. In order to bring out this essential distinction Sublimation is used to indicate that the purification process of Buddhist practice may vaporize our attachment to a physical existence into the thin air of Limitless-Oneness, and thereby enabling us to fully utilize our temporary

existence to participate in the endless salvation activities of Compassion.

What is this Sixfold Sublimation? It consists of Giving, Law-abiding, Tolerance, Diligence, Meditation and Wisdom. All of them are central practices of the Bodhisattva path. Is there some significance in the sequential order they are mentioned? Yes, it is as follows.

At the first stage, they want to free you from self-centeredness through the practice of giving. If you have attachment to material or non-material things, then it would be difficult for you to observe the Buddhist rules of conduct. These rules are designed in such a way that, on the one hand, they keep you from getting into trouble, and on the other hand, they nourish you by guiding you to do service for others. For people with strong attachments to personal well-being or belongings, it is very difficult to do more for others because their self-interests always come first. That is why the first stage is to practice giving.

Practice giving will free you from attachments, on the one hand, and broaden your horizons, on the other hand. You will gradually realize the spiritual truth that we are all one. Your attachment to self-interests forms a big blockade between you and the rest of the world. Through giving, such a wall will gradually crumble, and only after its removal will you see that we are all one. Originally the wall did not exist; it was built by your

self-centeredness. That is why the first stage is giving. Only those who can give freely can observe the rules of conduct; whenever there is conflict, one becomes accustomed to giving up self-centered considerations. Then it is easier to follow the rules of conduct, even when it is against one's selfishness.

Why does tolerance come next? The "tolerance" here is not the kind of tolerance that an adult has when he endures receiving an injection of medicine. The whole thing is directed toward Buddhahood; the tolerance here is rather difficult. If you want to live a life of renunciation of worldly pursuits so as to concentrate your efforts on Buddhist practice and service, you have to give up all worldly, social activities. Your relatives and friends may not agree with you and you will have to face the consequences of their possibly disliking you. In order to practice Buddhism, you have to tolerate many things; for example, if you are the only Buddhist in a Christian family, others may laugh at, criticize or try to convert you. You need to practice tolerance in order to continue your quest. The tolerance you developed during the stage of practicing law-abiding will enable you to face many difficulties that you may encounter later in life. One who has this kind of tolerance can use its strength to practice diligence. It is not easy to remain constantly diligent. Ordinarily one may be able to remain diligent for a period of a few months, however, traversing the path toward Enlightenment requires constant effort for the duration of one or more life-time.



Therefore, a practitioner needs a very strong foundation of tolerance to maintain such diligence.

We shall examine the practices involved in meditation. At first you must learn to concentrate on one point; this is called Samatha. After you have developed this kind of ability, you practice Vipasyana by using the power of Samatha. Vipasyana is doing contemplation or visualizations with single-mindedness. You may visualize certain images, seed-words, or Buddha, or use the power of Samatha to contemplate the meaning of Buddha's teachings. When Samatha and Vipasyana are functioning in balance, it is called Samapatti.

Sometimes the practice of visualization or contemplation may weaken your ability to concentrate because now you are thinking of something far more complex. With continued practice you will gradually reach the stage where you can do it in a balanced way, i.e., do a visualization simultaneously with good concentration. From this stage of Samapatti, you gradually achieve Dhyana which refers to the stages of attainment of meditation practices. In order to reach the various Dhyanas, you have to go through a long sequence of practices. For some people it means decades or even a life-time of meditation. It is not only a matter of a long period of time, but also a matter of diligence. Without practicing diligently on a daily basis, you will never achieve Dhyana.

Finally, why does Wisdom come after Dhyana? This is a subtle point. When you read the Sutras and understand the philosophy you might think that you have acquired this wisdom. But do you have the wisdom? The wisdom here is not just book knowledge; it is not just a certain system of concepts; nor does the wisdom here mean the wisdom of Buddha at the final stage. When one reaches the final stage of Buddhahood, the wisdom of Buddha at that time is knowing and understanding everything. We are now talking about sublimation, namely, the practices that will lead us to Buddhahood, hence we should bear in mind that this is not the ultimate Enlightenment. Of course, it was born from Buddha's teachings. Buddha gave us the teachings in words so that we would have the ideas to work on, but understanding those words alone is not enough. You have to absorb those ideas through meditation; only through the penetrating force of meditation can Buddha's teachings become the central guidance, the heart essence of your life. This is the kind of wisdom you need to reach Buddhahood. One uses this wisdom to guide oneself and others on the path toward Buddhahood.

From the above we see why the Sixfold Sublimation is traditionally presented in that particular order. This order had been well sorted out and carefully arranged to guide practitioners.

## **4. The Sixfold Sublimation All in One**

When we examine closely the Sixfold Sublimation it becomes apparent that in each practice all the others are also involved. I will illustrate this perspective by considering the practice of Giving and that of Law-abiding.

### **A. The Practice of Giving All in One**

In the practice of giving you may be giving material things, fearlessness or Dharma. When you see an animal that is harmed or a child who is crying, you comfort them. These are examples of giving fearlessness, i.e., freeing sentient beings from fear or difficulties. As to the giving of Dharma, you offer Buddhist teachings freely to people.

By practicing giving, you are following the rules of conduct of Buddha because Buddha encourages us to benefit others and to stay away from bad deeds. Besides, purity of intention is essential to the practice of giving. Guarding this key factor is a practice of law-abiding at the most crucial juncture.

When you give someone something, be it of a material or spiritual nature, the recipient may say that this is not good enough or desirable; then you need to practice tolerance. When you try to give Buddha's teachings to others they may reject it based on worldly considerations or the teachings of other religions. Again

you need to be tolerant. It is not in the Buddha's teachings to become enemies of others. You need to wait until the appropriate time comes when they want to listen to you, and then you can explain the teachings to them again. In order to give fearlessness to the weak and needy you might incur hardship on yourself; such sacrifice calls for one's tolerance to fulfill the compassionate commitment and achieve spiritual transcendence. That is how tolerance is involved in giving.

In order to practice giving perfectly, you need to be diligent; you try to do it with great effort. Constantly ask yourself, "What and how to do under the circumstances to help more and serve better?" Giving without prudent consideration and genuine effort may yield the opposite result of hindering and meddling others' business. Thus diligence is involved in giving.

When you practice giving, it's also a chance to practice meditation. When you are giving something to others, you understand that its significance is to carry out the philosophy of caring for others, of realizing oneness with others. So you remain mindful on this during the giving. The reason for giving is not because the recipient is liked by you or useful to you, but simply because he is a fellow sentient being. Although you are doing only one act of giving, it should be done in the spirit that you are giving everything to whomever in need. That is how meditation is involved in giving.

What is the wisdom involved in giving? It is the realization, not just a conceptual understanding, gradually gained through practice that there is no spiritual boundary between the giver and the receiver. All things are in oneness; that is the fundamental wisdom involved.

## B. The Practice of Law-abiding All in One

Through observing Buddhist rules of conduct that avoid harmful activities we are passively giving fearlessness to the world; through following the rules that promote the well-being of others we will actively give material, fearlessness or Dharma to people in need.

In observing Buddhist rules of conduct one needs tolerance to transcend worldly loss and gains, to remain tranquil and free from hatred in adverse circumstances, to pray for all beings including those who prosecute Buddhists out of ignorance or misunderstanding, to continue on the spiritual quest even when there is few support and lots of mistrust, etc. In short, observing the rules involves activities and their consequences, and one needs tolerance to abide by Buddha's laws.

Buddha's commandments are very comprehensive, regulating one's activities of body, speech and mind. To live up to these commandments one needs constant reflection on one's intentions, thoughts, emotional responses, and verbal or physical acts. One also needs to maintain practices and activities that are in the altruistic

spirit of Buddhism for the rest of one's life. In short, it is a complete program of transformation that cannot yield proper results without diligent working out in full compliance.

Mindfulness is essential to Law-abiding. Without concentration one may inadvertently infringe some rule or commit serious mistakes out of carelessness. Law-abiding as a spiritual practice must be accompanied by both an understanding of the underlying philosophy and a sincere willingness to undertake it. These two factors are maintained by the meditative aspect of Law-abiding. Law-abiding as a life-long practice amounts to a continuous meditation in itself. Law-abiding will become a natural habit only when the practitioner lives in a well-established meditative state.

Law-abiding should not be superficial and tied down by formality. It should not involve a sense of pride, superiority, or righteousness; nor a feeling of hostility, contempt, or anger toward the Law breakers. In brief, Law-abiding as a practice should not be limited by appearance, the distinction of self and others, or the judgment of good or bad. The goal is to attain Limitless-Oneness transcending such limitations, and therefore, it should be practiced under the guidance of such transcendental wisdom.

### C. The Rest of the Sublimation Practices All in One

It is a very important part of learning Buddha's teachings to figure out, on one's own, their application in areas not mentioned in the teachings. In the light of the above discussions, the reader is encouraged to think about the details of the all-in-one perspective in the remaining cases of Tolerance, Diligence, Meditation and Wisdom.

## **5. The Sixfold Sublimation in Limitless-Oneness**

From the goal it is easier to understand the function of the means and their interconnection. Thus in the light of the Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness we can appreciate the Sixfold Sublimation better. Furthermore, the principle of No Attachment and Opening Up will indicate clearly the directions in which to apply them.

### **A. Sublimation through the Practice of Giving**

In practicing giving of material things or fearlessness we are enlarging the sphere of our care and transcending our self-centered attachments. Since the goal is Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness, our giving should not stem from selfish or prejudiced motives and should not be discriminating to the recipients. The ideal act of giving should be sincere, spontaneous, and responsive to the need of whomever one encounters. It should also be free from expectation of any return, reward, fame, admiration, affection, etc.

Helping others obtain material comfort or physical well-being is important but temporary because what one can do is little and there is no end to needs and suffering. Besides, one's well-being is also determined by his inner life, and when he lacks peace of mind or falls into deep depression, all the external comforts in the world mean nothing. The giving of Dharma aims at this fundamental salvation to show everyone the path to inner peace and freedom and help them advance on it. In addition to the



ideal qualities mentioned in the last paragraph, the giving of Dharma should base on both knowledge of Buddhist teachings and insight gained through practice.

All practices of giving should be brought into connection with the giving of Dharma because only in this way can the help become ultimate and thorough. In this way the giving of material or fearlessness becomes truly a sublimation toward Limitless-Oneness. The connection with Dharma can be indirect and remote such as maintaining an intention to introduce the teachings of Buddha in the future when the circumstance becomes appropriate. The connection with Dharma can be direct and immediate such as repeating silently a Buddha's name or a mantra during the act of giving.

In Limitless-Oneness each act of giving is an expression of boundless compassion to all beings. On the surface an act of giving benefits only a certain number of beings at a particular juncture of space and time; nevertheless, through continuous practice with the awareness of Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness the artificial boundary of self-centeredness will diminish and disappear, and consequently each act of giving becomes a wave in the ocean of compassionate salvation activities of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas transcending limits of recipient, space and time. In Limitless-Oneness the fundamental discrimination of giver and recipient has vaporized into thin air; each act of giving is as

natural and free from an awareness of self-and-others as one taking food when hungry.

## B. Sublimation through the Practice of Law-abiding

The Buddhist rules of conduct teach us either to benefit others by selfless service or to stay away from troubles by avoiding harmful activities. The former type aims at opening us up and the latter type works at reducing our attachments. Engaging in Buddhist practice is a selfless service because the goal is to become able to help realize the Enlightenment of all beings, and it is also a positive way to avoid harmful activities by reducing the source of suffering selfishness.

From a self-centered point of view many Buddhist rules of conduct would be too demanding how could we help others beyond considerations of our self-interests when we ourselves are just as vulnerable to the ups and downs of life? Besides, are we not too strict on ourselves when we aim at no attachment? A little holding on to personal aesthetic tastes seems to liven up our dull and routine lives. However, in Limitless-Oneness others' suffering is just as dear as one's own, and one will become free from suffering only when others are also free. It is exactly because that all of us are equally vulnerable that we need to cultivate selfless service to help one another. No attachment is not a desert without oasis, rather it is a weeded field ready to yield fruits of compassionate service. No attachment will broaden our aesthetic tastes

without strangling it because it aims at reducing attachment but not the goodness and beauty of life.

It is difficult to follow Buddhist rules of conduct against personal habits, preferences, convenience and apparent worldly interests. It is even more difficult when it incurs disapproval or animosity from family members, friends, society or other religious groups. Even among Buddhists there may be disagreement on interpretation of the teachings, the correct way to practice, or the proper fashion to spread the Dharma. In some cases it can become quite complicated and formidable to sincere practitioners. However, looking up to Limitless-Oneness will illuminate what is essential in life and render it easier to abide by the Buddhist rules of conduct. Personal attachments fade in the great openness of Limitless-Oneness. Even when we disagree with others or are treated with hostility by others on account of our faith, we shall bear no grudge against them because we are simply acting in the ultimate interest of all Limitless-Oneness.

### C. Sublimation through the Practice of Tolerance

For many of us who are submerged in the self-centered worldly life the Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness is a truth very difficult to appreciate. Even for people who can appreciate to some extent the value of such teachings it is still rather difficult to live up to the ideal. Nevertheless, if we give up striving toward this ideal, we will lose the chance to attain eternal liberation from

suffering. Furthermore, our endeavors in this sublimation process will improve the quality of our lives and mature us spiritually. Therefore, we should continue to learn, practice and propagate the teachings of Buddha.

Since the truth of Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness can be realized only through practicing and living the selfless way, there has never been a forcing of Buddhist teaching on people, and Buddhists are always tolerant to people of other faiths. Truth needs no follower; people need to humble themselves to learn and benefit from truth. It takes time for people to learn to be humble which is an aspect of selflessness and a sign of wisdom. In tolerance there is both the wisdom of understanding the variance of people and the compassion of embracing even the ignorant and the hostile.

Tolerance in the light of Limitless-Oneness is not an exhibition of cowardice, but a wise choice of how best to invest our very limited and precious time and energy. Instead of inconsequential disputes and fights, we had better devote ourselves to constructive contributions and service. Rather than fighting over worldly interests which nail our minds down to trifles, let us open up to the serenity, warmth and joy of Limitless-Oneness all beings are one. Tolerance dissolves disputes, brings harmony, and free us from hatred and violence. In the openness of Limitless-Oneness tolerance naturally arises; most of the time intolerance is simply the offspring of narrow-mindedness.

Tolerance does not imply inability to distinguish between right or wrong. Nor does it mean mixing of good and evil. It is born from the awareness that truth cannot be forced on people and ideas that need to be upheld by force are not true. Consequently, the reasonable approach is to live one's life in the light of Limitless-Oneness and to spread the message to all who are interested.

#### D. Sublimation through the Practice of Diligence

In the light of Limitless-Oneness there is not a fraction of time when the truth is inoperative. The practice of diligence is essentially to remain in this natural rhythm of Oneness. It is not striving toward austerity, physical self-mortification, or extraordinary endeavors displaying endurance of hardship. Of course, it is also possible to train one in understanding Oneness through undertaking artificially imposed hardships; nevertheless, it should not deteriorate into a show to attract fame or followers.

When a practitioner is sound asleep he may be in a meditative state or entering a dream inspired by Buddhist holy beings, then he is diligent because he is progressing on the path toward Enlightenment. When a practitioner is taking a rest after hours of practice or Dharma service he is diligent because he needs the refreshment to resume thrusting on the path. When a practitioner is enjoying a meal he is diligent because he needs the nutrition to continue his quest for

Buddhahood. When one engages in Dharma service out of worldly motives or conduct Dharma activity mixed with worldly considerations, no matter how hard one works one is not practicing Diligence. In brief, diligence should not be measured by appearance.

Diligence in Limitless-Oneness has no time limit. It is a life devoted to continuous practice and Dharma service. The main concern of a diligent practitioner is Dharma, its practice and its propagation, in other words, the ultimate Enlightenment of all beings. On the scale of diligence the moment of actual renunciation of worldly engagements for practicing Dharma weighs more than a lifetime spent only talking about it because it is the beginning of an actual identifying process with the Limitless-Oneness. Diligence in daily life prompts a constant association of others' suffering with the compassion and salvation practice of Dharma. When one learns of unfortunate incidents one prays for and dedicates the merits accumulated through Buddhist practice to those involved. Diligence in Limitless-Oneness has no space limit. Wherever a practitioner goes he remains constant in his way of life, his devotion and practice. Whatever he does is with the compassion that transcends all spacial boundaries and the wholesome spirit of all are equal and united as one.

Diligence in Limitless-Oneness transcends worldly distinctions of race, sex, nationality, religious affiliation, social status, personal merits or disability. A Buddhist

practitioner should pray for all, serve all equally with compassion, and spread the teachings to all.

Limitless-Oneness is originally pure. Hence diligence is not strenuous maintenance of artificial formality but rather sincere renunciation of self-centered attachments. Limitless-Oneness is not an empty stage but the drama of life in its entirety variegated and colorful. Hence diligence is not escaping from life but opening up to the facts of life. Renunciation of worldly activities in order to devote oneself to Dharma practice and service is not escaping from life but active engagement to improve life from its root.

#### E. Sublimation through the Practice of Meditation

We are all within Limitless-Oneness and yet still attaching to self-centered ideas, habits and activities. We have never stepped outside Limitless-Oneness and yet still failed to appreciate its unfathomable openness. We will never separate from Limitless-Oneness and yet still acting contrary to original purity. To become awakened to the subtle truth of Limitless-Oneness one needs the force of meditation to eradicate the blindfold of selfishness. To engage continuously in activities that are in accordance with Limitless-Oneness and hence in conflict with the self-centered worldly life, one needs the spiritual strength and maturity attained through meditation practice. To achieve the profound transformation and abide in the ego-less state, supreme

achievement in meditation is a necessary tool for removing the self-imposed hindrances.

The usual practices of Buddhist meditation are merely preparation for attainment of Limitless-Oneness. Limitless-Oneness is originally so and beyond the reach of artificial maneuvers. The realization of Limitless-Oneness is an awakening to truth while the meditation practices are the wake-up calls. More wake-up calls might help but there is no telling when the awakening will take place. What will touch off the awakening to the truth of Limitless-Oneness, not just a conceptual appreciation but a total experience, is a mystery. In the history of Buddhism there are many, many examples such as a love song, a sound of stone hitting bamboo, seeing one's image in the reflection of water, seeing the sticking up of a finger, etc. Just as anything may bring up one's memory of something, any object may lead to the totality of all experiences and thereby absorb one into Limitless-Oneness. When one's life is devoted to Dharma, the whole life is a continuous meditation which warms one up for the great explosion into infinity. Sooner or later, under Buddha's blessings, a devoted practitioner will reach the threshold of Enlightenment and at that instant anything will ignite the wisdom fire of Enlightenment.

#### F. Sublimation through the Practice of Wisdom

In Limitless-Oneness we embrace all things as they are, and work on the liberation for all sentient beings



through practicing and advocating no attachment to self-centered interests. The wisdom to live in accordance with Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness will grow only when one lives a life observing Buddhist rules of conduct, devotedly adopts daily practice and sincerely engages in Dharma service. The wisdom should be pure and innate, hence it should be free from the self-awareness of "being wise" and arise spontaneously without striving. Although our lives are very limited in time and space, abiding in Limitless-Oneness will free our minds from such a trap and realizing Original Purity will spark joy in the lives of all beings.

The wisdom to practice in accordance with Limitless-Oneness is beyond concepts. It can be cultivated through engaging in Buddhist practices such as Giving, Law-abiding, Tolerance, Diligence and Meditation. The principles of Opening Up and No Attachment may guide our daily lives in the spirit of such wisdom. Praying to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with sincerity, compassion and altruism will also benefit the growth of such wisdom.

Wisdom is intangible and seems impossible to be transmitted from one to another. Nevertheless, according to Buddhist practitioners' experiences, it is known that devotion in Buddhist practice and compassionate service will yield transcendental wisdom.

## **Concluding Remarks**

In this work we are presenting the Sixfold Sublimation in view of the Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness; in other words, we are reviewing the path from the summit of achievement in order to obtain a correct and direct orientation. Since it is a perspective from achievement, its directives may seem harder to follow for the beginning practitioners. Furthermore, the ideal state may seem too abstract to make sense of and become connected with the events and relationships of daily life. Nevertheless, such a presentation will be of more and more help to practitioners as they advance further and further on the path to Enlightenment because it contains insights born from experiences on the path.

The practices covered in this work should be based on the basic teachings of Buddhism such as Impermanence and Renunciation. These basic teachings emphasize the limits of our temporal existence and thereby prompt us to devote our lives to Dharma practice and service. They bring the high ideal of Limitless-Oneness down to the hard reality of Earth and thereby bridging the apparent gap between ideal and fact. Although we enjoy the aerial perspective of Limitless-Oneness, to realize it we need to climb up from the foothill of Impermanence and Renunciation. May the readers not be satisfied with talking about Limitless-Oneness but wisely choose to start with practicing Impermanence and Renunciation.

It is beyond the scope of this work to explore  
Impermanence and Renunciation in the light of  
Limitless-Oneness. Perhaps the readers will be  
interested to contemplate this topic on their own?

# Wisdom and Compassion in Limitless-Oneness

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# Sky and Ocean

*No cloud stays forever in the sky;  
No water is ever refused by the ocean!  
Birds fly in the sky, leaving no traces;  
Fish swim in the ocean, knowing no bounds!*



A Statue of the Reverend Xuan-Zang

## Foreword to the Revised Edition

This work was originally titled "The Unification of Wisdom and Compassion." It appeared as a supplement in my "Chan and Pureland" which was published for free distribution in 1992.

In February 1992 I was invited by the Buddhist Association of Employees of the National Telecommunication Bureau of the Republic of China to give a talk in Mandarin on this topic; the lecture was given in their official conference hall in Taipei, Taiwan. The tape containing that talk was subsequently transcribed by Shu-Zhen Su and reviewed by me for publication. During the course of my reviewing the transcript I thought of a few interesting questions that people may ask regarding certain passages in the famous "Heart Sutra." These points seem to have eluded the discussion of known commentaries on this Sutra. I have included my observations and commentaries on these points in the Chinese transcript, and it is contained in my book 《無限的慈悲》 ("Limitless Wisdom and Compassion") published for free distribution in 1993.

In the present edition I have revised the version of my Miami talk as it appeared in "Chan and Pureland" to include my findings that I had previously presented in my Chinese work mentioned above. Also, references have been updated. My version of the "Heart Sutra" and my "Compassion Sastra" have been improved with

slight modifications following the guidance of Andrew Ellis and Ann Klein.

The Reverend Xuan-Zang (玄奘) was the translator of the well-known Chinese version of the "Heart Sutra"; and his life exemplified the unification of Wisdom and Compassion. After I had completed the revision of this work I was considering whether I should include his image in this book. Miraculously on that day a letter arrived from India asking for a copy of Yogi Chen's Buddhist Meditation and enclosed a postcard with the Reverend Xuan-Zang's image on it. It was clear to me that this was a sign to include the image in this book.

My sincere thanks to Ann Klein for her continuous help over the years in improving my English writings, including the present work. My sincere thanks to Andrew Ellis for improving the English of this work and providing a better translation of both my Chinese poem and my Bodhicitta Vows. I also thank Shu-Hui Wan for helping with formatting.

May readers of this book grasp the Limitless-Oneness of Wisdom and Compassion in theory, and then achieve its realization through devoted Buddhist practice and service. May all sentient beings be free from suffering and receive the joy of the Dharma!



September 7, 1994  
El Cerrito, California  
U.S.A.

## Preface

The "Heart Sutra" is well-known for its essential teaching on Wisdom. Following the style of this famous Sutra which was translated into Chinese by the Reverend Xuan-Zang (玄奘), I have written in Chinese a Sastra 〈大悲波羅蜜多心要〉 to present an essential teaching on Compassion. My purpose in doing so is to help others understand the unification of Wisdom and Compassion based on the Limitless-Oneness of all things.

In this booklet I present the readers with the following three articles:

First, my English translation of the Reverend Xuan-Zang's Chinese version of the "Heart Sutra." This is a revised version of the one contained in my "Pureland Daily Practice"; the minor revisions simply serve to elucidate the meaning. My original translation was done in August 1989, and the revisions were made on March 30, 1992.

Second, my English version of the "Sastra on Limitless-Oneness Compassion" which appeared as the appendix to my book, "A Blessed Pilgrimage." It was originally composed on December 6, 1990, and the minor revisions presented here were made on April 5, 1992.

Third, a refined transcript of a talk on "The Unification of Wisdom and Compassion" given by me to members of the Miami Buddhist Lotus Society on July 29, 1991. Readers who are not familiar with Buddhist terminology are advised to first read the talk before reading the Sutra and the Sastra.

My sincere thanks to Manli Peng, Ann Klein and Chun Jane Chen for their help with this work.

July 18, 1992  
El Cerrito, CA  
U.S.A.

The Heart of Sublimation through  
Transcendent Wisdom Sutra  
(The Heart Sutra)

Translated into English by  
Dr. Yutang Lin  
from the Chinese translation by  
the Reverend Xuan-Zang

Whenever Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara practices deeply sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom, He intuitively perceives that the five aggregates are of Blank Essence, thus transcending all suffering and difficulties. "Sariputra, phenomena are inseparable from Blank Essence, and Blank Essence is inseparable from phenomena; phenomena are identical to Blank Essence, and Blank Essence is identical to phenomena. Feeling, conceptualization, motivation and consciousness are also inseparable from and identical to Blank Essence."

"Sariputra, the characteristics of Blank Essence of all these things are: neither born nor deceased, neither dirty nor clean, neither increasing nor decreasing. Therefore in Blank Essence there are no phenomena, no feeling, conceptualization, motivation, consciousness; no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; no color, sound, odor, flavor, touch, impression; no eye-species up to and including no perceptual-consciousness-species; no Ignorance and no elimination of Ignorance, up to and including no senility and death and no elimination of senility and death; no suffering, its causes, its

transcendence, the path toward its transcendence; no Wisdom and no attainment. Since there is no attainment, by sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom, a Bodhisattva's mind has no attachment. Since there is no attachment, there is no fear. There is freedom from perversive delusions, and Nirvana is realized."

"Buddhas of the past, present and future attain the Unsurpassable Right and Full Enlightenment by sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom. Therefore sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom is known to be the great wondrous mantra, the great open mantra, the unsurpassable mantra, the no-equal-rank mantra, capable of eliminating all suffering, truthful and without deceit. Hence, the mantra of sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom is to be proclaimed." So He utters the mantra:

Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha

## The Heart of Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion Sastra

Wherever Bodhisattva Manjusri practices sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion effortlessly, He intuitively understands that the five aggregates are of one essence, thus enduring all suffering and difficulties. "Sudhana! Phenomena are inseparable from essence, and essence is inseparable from phenomena; phenomena are identical to essence, and essence is identical to phenomena. Feeling, conceptualization, motivation and consciousness are also inseparable from and identical to essence."

"Sudhana! The Limitless-Oneness of all these things transcends existence and non-existence, attraction and repulsion, plurality and singularity. Therefore the Limitless-Oneness contains phenomena, contains feeling, conceptualization, motivation, consciousness; contains eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; contains color, sound, odor, flavor, touch, impression; contains eye-species up to and including perceptual-consciousness-species; contains Ignorance and elimination of Ignorance, up to and including senility and death and elimination of senility and death; contains suffering, its causes, its transcendence, the path toward its transcendence; and transcends Loving-kindness and loss. Since there is transcendence of loss, by sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion, a Bodhisattva's mind is free from attachment. Since there is no attachment, there is no

criticism. There is freedom from prejudiced discriminations, and Nirvana is realized."

"Buddhas of the past, present and future attain the Unsurpassable Right and Full Enlightenment by sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion. Therefore sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion is known to be the great mind mantra, the great loving-kindness mantra, the indiscrimination mantra, the all-encompassing mantra, capable of enduring all suffering, absolute and joyous. Hence, the mantra of sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion is to be proclaimed." So He utters the mantra:

Tolerance, tolerance, tolerance for all, tolerance  
with joy, bodhi svaha!

# The Unification of Wisdom and Compassion

July 29, 1991  
Miami, Florida, U.S.A.

This evening I would like to talk about The Unification of Wisdom and Compassion. When Buddha realized Buddhahood he attained the original state of the oneness of everything without limit. That state is beyond any description; however, in order to help sentient beings who were not aware of this reality, he used language that they could understand in order to guide them toward that experience. In so doing there is a limitation, because languages are built upon concepts, and concepts automatically set limits. The concepts are limited by nature, so how are we going to accomplish the task of using limited tools to describe a limitless state? Because of that, in describing Buddhahood, quite often in the Sutras you will find that they will have to say, "Buddha is complete in two ways."

Because of the limits of language we can speak only about certain aspects at one time. The rational aspect of Buddhahood is called Wisdom, and the emotional aspect or the aspect of the will is called Compassion. So we always say, "Buddha is complete in Wisdom and Compassion." However, we should realize that in Buddha himself there is no such distinction between Wisdom and Compassion. Whatever he does, whatever he says, whatever he thinks, is the totality and the



unification of Wisdom and Compassion. But for us to understand it, we must describe it from different angles, therefore we say it has two sides.

So in our practice it is important to know that although our goal seems to be Wisdom and Compassion, ultimately they should be unified to the extent that the practitioner makes no distinction between Wisdom and Compassion. Also, precisely because of this, for our theory to be correct as to what Buddhahood is and how to achieve the unification of Compassion and Wisdom, it should be such that you can start from the practice of Wisdom and finally reach Compassion, and also from the practice of Compassion you should be able to reach Wisdom.

Wisdom and Compassion are abstract ideals. What are the principles that we can use in order to practice Wisdom and Compassion? In order to explain this, I will give an explanation of two articles. Both are included in the beginning of this book. One is the famous "Heart Sutra" which I have translated and published in a booklet entitled "Pureland Daily Practice." The "Heart Sutra" emphasizes the Wisdom aspect of Buddhism; it contains the essence of Buddhist Wisdom. But what about the essence of Buddhist Compassion? Parallel to the "Heart Sutra," I have written an article entitled "The Heart of Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion Sastra." Because it has been written by me, not something given by Buddha, it cannot be called a Sutra; it is called a

Sastra. In Buddhism, Buddhists are allowed to offer their theses as long as they are consistent with the Sutras, and those are called Sastras.

I wrote this Sastra in Chinese, and you can find it in my book called 《無限的慈悲》(Wu Xian De Zhi Bei) It is the second article in that book called 〈大悲波羅蜜多心要〉(Da Bei Bo Luo Mi Duo Xin Yao). Following that is the transcript of my expounding talk, given in Taipei, called 〈心經與大悲心要之會通〉(Xin Jing Yu Da Bei Xin Yao Zhi Hui Tong) ("The Unification of the Heart Sutra and the Compassion Sastra.") So, I am telling the Chinese members of the audience about the sources in case they are interested in reading more about this. For the English readers, in addition to the "Heart Sutra" in the "Pureland Daily Practice," I have provided the English version of my Sastra as the appendix to my book entitled "A Blessed Pilgrimage." All of these books are available as Dharma gifts.

So let us start with the famous "Heart Sutra." Since we have only a very short time, I am not going to give a detailed explanation, but I will try to emphasize the essentials of this Sutra. Then I will compare it with my Sastra to help you learn how to practice them in a unified way. I have given a succinct explanation on the concept of Blank Essence in the preface to the "Pureland Daily Practice." Now I will go directly to my explanation of the "Heart Sutra" and explain the concept of Blank Essence along the way in details.

Usually the title of the "Heart Sutra" is translated as the "Heart of Wisdom Paramita Sutra." Paramita means reaching the other shore, meaning that from this shore of suffering we reach the other shore which is the state of liberation and peace of Buddhahood. It is sometimes translated into English as Perfection. You may wonder why I use sublimation instead of perfection. The reason is because when you say something is perfect, you mean it is complete. Although it may be complete, it is still at the original level. But in Buddhism, the Wisdom is to transform you in such a way that you transcend your ordinary level of being human. It is a sublimation, a refinement, so I translated it as sublimation to emphasize this aspect. It is not the same level as becoming a "complete" man. You reach a higher level and you become a Buddha.

I translated it from the Chinese version which was done by a great monk, the Reverend Xuan-Zang of Tang Dynasty. It begins with, "Whenever Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara," this Bodhisattva represents the Compassion of all Buddhas. Here, there is a hidden teaching which is extraordinary. In Buddhism, it is said that the essence of all Buddhas' Wisdom is embodied in the Bodhisattva Manjusri. But here, the Sutra is about the essence of Wisdom, and yet the teaching is not coming from Manjusri; instead, it is from Avalokitesvara who is the essence of Compassion. You may ask why. It is because the Sutra implies that Wisdom and Compassion are fundamentally inseparable

and that profound Wisdom is contained in great Compassion. This is a very subtle point.

So, when He "practices deeply Sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom, He intuitively perceives that the five aggregates are of Blank Essence, thus transcending all suffering and difficulties." What is meant by Sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom? Namely, Avalokitesvara goes into meditation to reach the oneness of all. That is the sublimation. Ordinarily we are confined by concepts. We think, "body is body, mind is mind, I am I, and you are you; they all have boundaries." Nevertheless, when Avalokitesvara goes into meditation to go beyond all these boundaries, all become one. When He is able to reach that experience, He will transcend all suffering and difficulties. You may ask why. Because all our experiences are transient. For example, when we are in pain, at first we are very aware of it, but with time it seems to disappear. But when you add the psychological complaining "Oh! I'm in such terrible pain." That is what really causes the trouble. Because Avalokitesvara's mind is so large as large as the whole universe, the severe pain, by comparison with the whole universe, becomes insignificant. He would not allow all these thoughts to bother him: "Oh! This is painful! I'm unlucky! Why is God so unfair to me!" All these kinds of complaints will increase the pain. Just take it as it is, and let it be part of the universe. That is the best way to take it; since it is transient, it will just disappear by itself. That is the way to truly free yourself from all suffering.

What I have just talked about is not just theoretical. It can be realized through practice, however it is not magic. You need to train yourself in order to reach that state of mind. It becomes a problem only when we blow it out of proportion. Release those thoughts, and life will not be so difficult. Many of our problems in life are created by our conceptions. The "Heart Sutra" continues with "He intuitively perceives" which means it is not the result of rational thinking. Whenever you are still using ideas to explain or understand phenomena, you will not be able to have the freedom of becoming one with the whole universe. Therefore you have to go beyond. You have to go beyond through your meditation so that your thinking can stop. In meditation the first step is the concentration practice. We want to be able to concentrate on one point, for example, a dot. When you are able to concentrate on that dot, the ideal state is such that your thoughts have stopped. No other thoughts will distract you from that mindfulness.

In the "Heart Sutra" it says: "He intuitively perceives that the five aggregates are of Blank Essence," What are the five aggregates? In Buddhism, we classify our experiences into the following five categories: phenomena, feeling, conceptualization, motivation and consciousness. All the things that we experience are of Blank Essence. What is meant by Blank Essence? The Chinese character is 空性 (Kong Xing); 空 (Kong) literally translated into English means empty, but in Buddhism, when we talk about emptiness it does not mean nothingness. The word itself, unless you

understand it well, usually means nothingness. So it may be misleading if I use emptiness. Nevertheless, there is a proper way to explain it, but it is very philosophical; the philosophical meaning is empty of inherent existence. To understand why they use this kind of terminology would require a long explanation of how they arrived at this concept. Let us not get into a philosophical analysis in this talk; we want to be able to understand it as ordinary people, not as philosophers.

This concept in Buddhism is usually called Emptiness (空性 Kong Xing); but I have translated it as Blank Essence. 性 (Xing) means essence, but what kind of essence is this? It is the essence of all; all things share this common essence. But what is the property of this common essence? The property is that of being blank. I use the term "blank" to help you understand it. You may ask why. Since it is common to all, it cannot have any particular property of its own. For example, if it is white, and then combined with red, it will become pink. Therefore, this essence cannot have any property of its own in order for it to be so universal.

So, in order to introduce this concept, I use the word blank because it is easy to understand. We have a blank board here, but it is not nothing, it is just blank. You can draw whatever you like on it. Another way to understand this concept is to look at it as you would a blank TV screen. Before you turn on your TV, the screen is blank, but once you turn it on, all kinds of things appear and come and go, just like our experiences.

This example should make it a little easier to understand the concept of this essence, without mistakenly thinking of it as nothingness. No, it is not nothingness. It is common to all and yet has no particular property of its own; it is everywhere, and yet nowhere to be found. Since it has no particular property, you cannot pinpoint it and you cannot picture it. But why do we need to use such a concept that has no reference to anything? Isn't it just a thought? Yes, it is just a concept. The whole teaching is just a system of concepts trying to bring you from your ordinary experiences to the experience of oneness with everything without limits.

But then what is the function of this concept? It is as follows: All of our concepts are limiting; they set boundaries. Now we introduce this concept of Blank Essence which is at the same level as other concepts because they are all only concepts. But this concept tells you, "Let us erase all the boundaries." Since the characteristic of this concept is that it is common to all, let us forget about the boundaries and recognize that all are basically the same. At first, you begin to learn to free your mind from conceptual limits. In one of the Sutras it says, "the emptiness is also empty (空性亦空 Kong Xing Yi Kong)" which means after you achieve unification of everything and erase all the boundaries, then you should be free from even this concept. Since this is simply an artificial tool to induce you to a certain natural state, after you become free from all the other concepts, you also need to become free from the tool itself. As long as you have a concept, there is bound to

be a distinction between subject and object, and you cannot reach the oneness of all. So, after you free yourself from conceptual limits through Buddhist practice, you should also become free from Buddhist concepts. That is how free Buddhism is, and that is the real essence of Buddha's teachings. It gives you all the teachings, but in the end there is nothing to hold you down. So I hope that by translating 空性 (Kong Xing) into Blank Essence and providing such an explanation you will understand how useful it is. It should now be easier for you to understand the rest of this Sutra.

The Sutra continues with "Sariputra," Sariputra is one of the ten foremost disciples of Sakyamuni Buddha, and he is famous for his wisdom. It is said that among all Buddha's disciples, Sariputra's wisdom is the most profound; therefore he is capable of receiving this teaching on the essence of Wisdom. Not everyone is capable of understanding such subtle teaching, so when it comes to teaching the essence, it is given only to the student who is ready for it. That is why Avalokitesvara gives this teaching to Sariputra. He called his name to get his attention and said, "Sariputra, Phenomena are inseparable from Blank Essence, and Blank Essence is inseparable from phenomena." That is exactly what we have just said. It is everywhere, but it is nowhere to be found. There is no such independent thing as a Blank Essence, therefore it is inseparable from phenomena. Furthermore, he said, "Phenomena are identical to Blank Essence, and Blank Essence is identical to phenomena." There is a very subtle point here. Earlier



we had said phenomena are inseparable from Blank Essence and vice versa, and now we say one is identical to the other and vice versa. It sounds redundant. Is Avalokitesvara just repeating Himself to emphasize His point? I don't think so.

Years ago the Buddhists developed their logic. It was not as detailed and as well-developed as the modern mathematical logic, however they had excellent philosophical studies and works. They were careful and had logic in mind when they composed the Sutra. First they said, "A is not different from B" the word inseparable in the sense of not different. (Literally I could have used not different to translate 不異 (Bu Yi), nevertheless, inseparable conveys more the appropriate sense in the context.) Then why do they have to say that they are identical? If I have two copies of the same book, one copy is no different from the other, but they are not identical. We know that they are two copies, but we cannot distinguish one from the other. When you say that they are not different, you still need to say that they are identical to make sure that it is not two copies of the same book, but there is only one copy there. Well, if that is the case, why not simply say they are identical and eliminate the first part, i.e., one is not different from the other. But then you have to examine it more closely to recognize the finer subtleties.

The Sutra says that Blank Essence and phenomena are identical. But what are they? They are two concepts. When we say phenomena we talk about all our

experiences, but this phenomena is just an abstract concept used to talk about all particular experiences. It is a concept, and Blank Essence is another concept. They are two concepts and they are defined differently. But now we say the two concepts are identical. What does this mean? The only way that you can say that two concepts, although defined differently, are identical is to say that they are referring to the same thing. Phenomena refers to all of our experiences, and Blank Essence also refers to all of our experiences. The classes of particular ones that they refer to are identical. That is the only way for us to understand that these two different concepts are identical. However, that is not what is meant, because there is no need to say that the universe is identical to the universe. Since the Sutra wants to bring out the even subtler part, it needs to say that they are not different, they are inseparable. This is very strange and logically a contradiction. They are two concepts, defined differently, yet the Sutra says that they are inseparable, not different. How could that be? Here lies the key point. The essence of Buddhism can be explained only through the use of contradiction because if everything is understood through definitions, then the distinction of subject and object will always be there, leaving us with no way out. The only way out of this dilemma is to recognize the basic fact that language is just a tool. Blank Essence is a concept which is just an artificial device. When we say that they are inseparable, that they are not different, we are emphasizing that they are simply our mental constructions and we should not be fooled into thinking that concepts have an

independent existence. So Blank Essence helps us to be free from concepts. Eventually we also have to go on without this device.

I added the following remarks on July 12, 1994:

The "Heart Sutra" states first, "Phenomena are inseparable from Blank Essence, and Blank Essence is inseparable from phenomena;" and then, "Phenomena are identical to Blank Essence, and Blank Essence is identical to phenomena." The order of this presentation, in the light of my explanation given above, makes sure that the subtle identification of phenomena and Blank Essence is conveyed, without bringing forth the underlying logical paradox.

In contrast, consider the case when the order of presentation of these two pairs of sentences were reversed. Then the logical difficulty becomes protrusive and bewilders novices.

Reflecting as above, I cannot but admire the beauty of the underlying structure in this part of the Sutra.

I added the following remarks on March 31, 1992:

There are two additional subtleties in the composition of the "Heart Sutra" that I would like to point out. Instead of simply stating that phenomena are inseparable from Blank Essence, it says, "Phenomena are inseparable from Blank Essence, and Blank Essence is inseparable

from Phenomena;" Similarly presented are the statements on the identification of phenomena and Blank Essence.

My explanation is that in both cases the underlying logic is to avoid the misunderstanding of a partial inclusion relationship between the two classes referred to by these two concepts, and to ensure the correct understanding of a complete identification of the two classes. Consider the following examples: "Human beings are inseparable from mammals," and "Human beings are mammals," are both true, but the reverse statements are not true.

Following this, the Sutra talks about feelings, conceptualization, motivation, and consciousness. These are the traditional Buddhist classifications of our experiences. In all these classifications, each class has the same relationship with Blank Essence as explained above in the case of phenomena. The function of the concept of Blank Essence is to erase the limits set by all of them.

The Sutra continues: "Sariputra, the characteristics of Blank Essence of all these things are: neither born nor deceased," Originally we have the polarized pair of concepts of born and deceased, but this Blank Essence is not a polarized concept. If it is polarized, then it is still within the subject, object distinction. "Neither born nor deceased" is about existence; "neither dirty nor clean" is about quality; and "neither increasing nor

decreasing" is about quantity. The concept of Blank Essence transcends all such distinctions. It is not limited by existence or non-existence, quality or quantity.

The Sutra continues with: "Therefore in Blank Essence there are no phenomena, no feeling," The Sutra seems to be denying the existence of all things, but it is not denying the occurrences of our experiences. It is just telling us to be free from all these categorizations. It does not mean that we would become incapable of differentiating our experiences, rather it teaches that only after we have learned to become free from conceptualization, can we experience things as they are. Basically it is saying that the function of Blank Essence is to remove all boundaries set by the concepts of phenomena, feeling, conceptualization, motivation and consciousness. We don't even pay attention to the distinction of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. The Sutra continues with "No color, sound, odor, flavor, touch and impression; no eye-species up to and including no perceptual-consciousness-species." Up to this point the Sutra is talking about various Buddhist categorizations of our experiences. Now we are told to forget about all these classifications.

Then we are also told to forget about the basic classifications that constitute the Buddhist teachings. Here the Sutra begins to talk about the Twelve Dependent-Origination Links. It states, "No Ignorance and no elimination of Ignorance, up to and including no senility and death and no elimination of senility and

death; " These are the basic teachings within Buddhism, however, the Sutra says that Blank Essence goes even beyond the teachings. The teaching tells us: "If the Twelve Dependent-Origination Links go one way, then it is Samsara; if it goes another way, then it is Nirvana." Now we should forget about all of that; everything should be erased. Furthermore, the Sutra even says that it is not limited by the Four Noble Truths, "No suffering, its causes, its transcendence, the path toward its transcendence; " And finally it even says that there is no fruit, "No Wisdom and no attainment." Previously we wanted to achieve the Wisdom of Buddha and attain Buddhahood. But now it says "No Wisdom and no attainment." Since these are still concepts, now in view of Blank Essence, let us erase them, let us return to the original blank.

The Sutra continues with: "Since there is no attainment, by sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom, a Bodhisattva's mind has no attachment." This is most important. If we are obsessed with the question of whether or not we have achieved Buddhahood, then we can never be truly free, even though Buddhahood means complete liberation. For example, you cannot really enjoy your marriage if you always have an ideal wife or ideal husband in your mind. Then you will always criticize the one you married by making the comparison with the ideal one who has never existed and will never exist. If you really understand the teaching of Buddhism, you will realize that the teachings are not only for attaining Buddhahood, but are also applicable to our

daily lives. According to the teaching, from the Wisdom aspect, the distinctions are to be forgotten. Then what happens? It follows that we need to learn no attachment. This is the key to practicing Wisdom. In my previous talks on "Introduction to Buddhist Meditation" (available now as a book titled "A Golden Ring") I said, in order to achieve this Limitless-Oneness, the principle of the inactive aspect, both for our practice and for our daily lives, is no attachment, i.e., to give up our prejudices and our attachments.

The Sutra continues with: "Since there is no attachment, there is no fear." Actually, in the Chinese translation of the Reverend Xuan-Zang, if I translated it literally, it would read, "a Bodhisattva's mind has no hindrance. Since there is no hindrance, there is no fear." But according to his version we don't know what the hindrance is. Therefore I point out that the hindrance of a Bodhisattva is nothing external but rather his own attachment. When you are free from your attachments, then there is no fear. When you have some attachments, then you start worrying about what is good or bad, or better or worse. If it is good, can I keep it from deteriorating? There will be no end to your worries. Only when you are free from attachments, can you have no fear you simply accept things as they are. When your mind is as large as the entire universe, there is nothing that you cannot accept. Whatever happens will not bother a mind so great.

Hence, the Sutra continues: "There is freedom from perversive delusions" which means we are free from all attachments and the limited views that we previously had. "and Nirvana is realized." "Buddhas of the past, present and future attain the Unsurpassable Right and Full Enlightenment by the sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom." That means all Buddhas of past, present and future attain complete freedom through the realization of this state of Limitless-Oneness.

"Therefore sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom is known to be the great wondrous mantra," Since it has such a magical effect, it is comparable to a mantra. Once you realize the Limitless-Oneness, you can achieve great results. Therefore, it is called "the great wondrous mantra." "the great open mantra," and in Chinese, it literally means the great brightness mantra. But I use "open" to emphasize that brightness is attained through the active principle of opening up, that is why I translated it as "the great open mantra." The Sutra concludes with: "the unsurpassable mantra, the no-equal-rank mantra, capable of eliminating all suffering, truthful and without deceit. Hence, the mantra of sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom is to be proclaimed." So He utters the mantra: "gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha." Why does the Sutra give us a mantra at the end? Although the teaching is simple, it is contrary to the actual practice of our daily lives. Life in our society is based upon concepts, customs and culture. What can we do to unlearn them?



We need a practice, and the practice implicitly recommended here is the chanting of this mantra.

An essential way to reach Wisdom through practice is to chant a mantra or the name of a Buddha, for example, "Amitabha Buddha"; it does not matter which one you choose. After you have chosen one, just stay with it and you will grow and gradually have the strength to free yourself from many layers of conceptual bondage. Do not be concerned that it will bring disorder into your life. On the contrary, the fewer mental limitations you have, the more you will become one with and compassionate to others. Do not worry that the result will be anarchy. No! The result will be a natural feeling of love and fellowship for all beings. Then you will only do good deeds.

Usually we do not need to know the meaning of a mantra. Nevertheless, the meaning of this mantra is "Reach, reach, reach the other shore, reach beyond the other shore, and reach Enlightenment soon!" It is a blessing from the Great Compassion of Avalokitesvara to whomever receives this teaching. He is giving you a blessing, wishing that you will soon achieve this liberation.

I have given you a brief explanation of the "Heart Sutra." It is a teaching from the Wisdom aspect, but we also want to learn about the other aspect which is the Great Compassion. When you realize the Oneness of all things without limits, then stemming from that Oneness,

the Great Compassion comes naturally and it knows no boundaries. With this Great Compassion there is no distinction made between species, friends, relatives, etc.; it is a natural outflow of loving-kindness from your heart.

Let us examine my work "The Heart of Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion Sastra." I gave it this title because this Compassion is the result of Limitless-Oneness. The best way to learn how to achieve the Great Compassion is to look at the result of Buddhahood which is the Limitless-Oneness. It is obvious that the emotional aspect of the Limitless-Oneness is limitless Compassion.

The "Heart Sutra" begins with: "Whenever Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara;" parallel to that, this Sastra begins with: "Wherever Bodhisattva Manjusri " Although using whenever and wherever are essentially the same, however, the "Heart Sutra" is talking about the time aspect, so in contrast I am bringing out the other coordinate which is the space aspect. The Sastra reads, "Wherever Bodhisattva Manjusri practices Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion effortlessly," In the "Heart Sutra" the teaching on Wisdom is given by the Bodhisattva of Compassion; hence, in my Sastra the teaching on Compassion is given by the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. When Avalokitesvara was giving the teaching on Wisdom, He went into the Meditation of Transcendent Wisdom, which is the static state. Now I am bringing out the dynamic aspect, because out of

Compassion you have to act. When you see someone suffering, you must help. So Compassion brings out the dynamic state, the salvation activities of Buddha. So, I am saying that when Manjusri practices, His practices are the salvation activities. Why does He practice effortlessly? It does not mean that He does not work, it just means that it is a natural result of such Compassion. In His Compassion everything He does is natural, just as what a mother is giving to her children. His activities are without selfish motives, never being compelled by anyone. He acts naturally, effortlessly and spontaneously out of Great Compassion. Besides, the Great Compassion is not just a transient feeling; it has matured into devoted activities. Therefore He practices compassionate activities.

The Sastra continues with: "He intuitively understands that the five aggregates are of one essence," because this insight is not merely a conceptual understanding. Anyone who practices compassionate activities will gradually see many kinds of people and learn that all of them are capable of both happiness and sorrow. All want happiness and all worry about unpleasant things happening to them; all have attachments. You see the sameness in them and yourself. Through service you will learn the Oneness of all. The reason that we are prejudiced is because we are limited to certain environments and certain views. If we never encounter varieties of situations, then we will not broaden our minds. We are limited by what we are accustomed to.

Once you begin to serve other people in the Buddhist way, when the time is right, you will tell them about the benefits of chanting "Amitabha" without expecting any rewards. You simply keep doing this. Gradually, you will learn that we are all the same, and we can all benefit from doing Buddhist practices. That is how Manjusri became able to intuitively understand and realize that we are all the same. "thus enduring all suffering and difficulties." In the Wisdom aspect, His mind becomes so broad that He transcends suffering; and through the practice of Buddhist service His Compassion grows. The more He serves, the more He is able to endure all the difficulties and suffering that others cannot endure. Others may complain when someone hurts or offends them, but because Manjusri has helped many people and has been through many situations, He understands that someone did something out of ignorance, or suffers because of limited views, or does not know how to be nice to others, or does not understand others' intentions. He understands why others act in such ways. Gradually He will understand that, as long as He keeps His intentions pure and does pure service, eventually all misunderstandings will be resolved. Then He can endure everything through practicing Compassion.

Now, Manjusri begins to give the teachings, and the disciple he chose is called "Sudhana." Sudhana (善財童子 Shan Cai Tong Zi) is the main disciple of Manjusri in the "Avatamsaka Sutra" (《華嚴經》 Hua Yan Jing). In this Sutra, Sudhana, under the guidance of Manjusri,

went through fifty-three teachers and many kinds of training; he learned many things. I have chosen Sudhana to be the disciple who is capable of receiving this teaching on the essence of Compassion because he has gone through a lot and has seen many different situations. What I am trying to say is that when you start to serve others, you have many new experiences. In your services you need to maintain the humble attitude of a disciple so that you will respect everyone as if they were your teachers. If you learn from all beings just as Sudhana had done in the Sutra, then you will gain the essence of Compassion.

So he says, "Sudhana! Phenomena are inseparable from essence, and essence is inseparable from phenomena." This part, in English, I have to state like this because there is no other proper way to do it. In Chinese, what I am saying is, phenomena are inseparable from this Oneness. Everything is within this Oneness, the concept of Oneness. Then, again, it is similar to the "Heart Sutra" that phenomena are identical to essence and so forth. As to feeling, conceptualization, motivation and consciousness, they are all the same as in the "Heart Sutra." Then, "Sudhana! the Limitless-Oneness of all these things transcends existence and non-existence, attraction and repulsion, plurality and singularity. Therefore the Limitless-Oneness contains phenomena," Now comes the beautiful part.

In the Wisdom aspect, they say, let us forget about the boundaries. Erase them, there is no this, no that;

everything is erased. But that is contradictory to our daily lives. In our daily lives, everything is there. But now from this Compassion aspect, it says, all is one. So, it does not matter that there are many things. If I exclude anyone from this Compassion, then this is not the Limitless-Oneness Compassion. This Compassion does not care that there are differences, or varieties, or this, or that; all are embraced. This makes it easier for us to handle our lives. How do we achieve greatness? All are embraced; accept all!

Of course, there is contradiction in this approach, but let us stay at the abstract ideal level for now. At the abstract level it sounds simple, all are embraced. Of course, it is very difficult to do. Nevertheless, if your mind is really as large as the universe, then what is there that you cannot accept, that you cannot embrace? Life-death is just a part of the universe. Our life-death is a very tiny thing in the whole universe, in the history of the universe. So, it is insignificant in that sense; we can even accept our own life-death with ease. Since this Sastra is parallel to the "Heart Sutra," here it reads, "contains phenomena, contains feeling," i.e., everything.

Finally, in the "Heart Sutra," it says, "No Wisdom and" Parallel to that, I said this Limitless-Oneness "transcends Loving-kindness." In the "Heart Sutra" it mentions Wisdom, so in this Sastra I mention Compassion, and Compassion here is paraphrased as Loving-kindness. The point here is that the Limitless-Oneness not only contains Loving-kindness

but transcends it. You may ask why. When your mind is so open, you are not limited by anything. If you think that you are doing this out of Compassion, then you are still limited by the concept of Compassion. The Great Compassion transcends even that. This means in practice you become so pure in doing good deeds that you do not know that you are good. It is just natural to you. A child sometimes just naturally offers something to you. He does not think that he is doing a good deed. No! He just likes you, so he offers you something. It is natural, pure goodness without the reflective awareness of being good.

Furthermore, it "transcends loss." In the "Heart Sutra," it says, "no attainment;" here in my Sastra it says, "no loss." You may ask why. Everything is contained here. When money goes to others' pockets, if I am identifying with the universe, then there is no loss. So, when your car is stolen, well, there is no loss in that sense. It transcends the ordinary outlook on life. When your mind is open, this is possible. For example, if you are very, very rich, losing a car does not matter. Just think like that and gradually it will be possible to achieve such broadness of mind. "Since there is transcendence of loss, by Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion, a Bodhisattva's mind is free from attachment." In the Wisdom aspect, we say there is no attainment. Since there is no attainment, you have nothing to worry about, therefore you are free from attachment. Now, we are talking about the Compassion aspect. In the Wisdom aspect it talked about attainment;

hence, in the Compassion aspect, for contrast, I talk about loss. If there is no loss, then again, you have nothing to worry about. I am showing the essence of Wisdom and Compassion by parallel comparisons. Using language always involves a polarization you are limited to only one side at a time. He is practicing Wisdom in that way, and I am practicing Compassion in this way. However, the point is not to antagonize, but rather to unite. Buddhism is actually free from any polarization. We should know both sides, know how to unify them, and thus be free from one-sided limitations.

"Since there is no attachment, there is no criticism." When you have a panoramic view, you can see that each person is acting from a one-sided view. They are attached to their view and acting in their particular way, therefore they have conflicts. People fight because of their ignorance and attachment. But once you have awakened to this Oneness, then you are beyond conflicts. When you are criticizing others, you are judging from a certain point of view; from that point of view, people are right or wrong. Whenever you are involved in criticism, you are standing on some ground. But this Oneness transcends all grounds, consequently all criticism just disappears. You do not have to waste your life fighting or criticizing others, you will live in harmony with all. You will see the reason for everyone's actions; all actions are based on certain views or attachments, and are limited by such views or attachments.



If all of us are free from narrow-mindedness, then we will not fight and we will naturally do only good deeds for others. The basic difficulty in obtaining peace is ideological. Instead of the Russians and the Americans trying to live together, they were blocked by their ideologies; previously there was no free communication; anyone who came from the other side was considered a spy. No matter how good they were, they were already labeled as spies; consequently they never found out what they all had in common.

"There is freedom from prejudiced discriminations, and Nirvana is realized." In our lives, we are limited by our culture; we have many prejudices. We mistreat other people and we discriminate against others according to our prejudices. But when you are free from prejudiced discriminations, you will not mistreat others. And then "Nirvana is realized." "Buddhas of the past, present, and future attain the Unsurpassable Right and Full Enlightenment by Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion. Therefore Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion is known to be the great mind mantra," Great mind indicates the mind that is limitless. "the great loving-kindness mantra, the indiscrimination mantra, the all encompassing mantra," It is great loving-kindness because it is limitless; it is beyond the concept of loving-kindness.

In the "Heart Sutra," the approach is to eliminate suffering through transcendence; but here in my Sastra it is "capable of enduring all suffering, absolute and

joyous." That means to obtain transcendence through endurance. When you practice accepting things and enduring hardships, at the beginning, of course, it is difficult. You will have complaints and you will have to make an effort to endure. You will still think: "Oh! I am suffering without complaining." Later when you have practiced it to the extent that your endurance is absolute you are free from complaints and you simply take it as it is, then it becomes joyful. What to others may seem like intolerable suffering and endurance, to one who has practiced tolerance to the extent that he is really free from being bothered by these things, it may bring joy. Such a person sees that what had previously engulfed him in sorrows has now become nothing to him. He realizes that he is really free from it. How joyful it is when you have that freedom! A child cries over a toy that is broken, but when he grows up he no longer cries for toys. Then he senses the freedom and happiness of growing up. You might understand my point through reflecting on this parable.

"Hence, the mantra of Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion is to be proclaimed." What is the mantra? In Chinese, it has exactly the same number of characters as that of the "Heart Sutra" in Chinese. It is:

容忍，容忍，無不容忍，無不樂容忍，菩提娑婆訶！  
(Rong Ren, Rong Ren, Wu Bu Rong Ren, Wu Bu Le  
Rong Ren, Bodhi Svaha!)

The meaning is: Tolerance, tolerance, tolerance for all, tolerance with joy, and reach Enlightenment soon! This tolerance is limitless, hence it is for all. If you practice tolerance for all, some day you will experience tolerance with joy. You will enjoy your tolerance and then you can become enlightened very soon. Thus, I have explained the unification of Wisdom and Compassion through the Limitless-Oneness of all.

Question from Mr. David Tseng:

To practice Buddha Dharma, either using the Wisdom approach of emptiness or the Compassion approach of tolerance to transcend life and death, that is the supreme goal. But for me, personally, the immediate question is how to apply either one of them to help me through the dentist's drilling of my teeth? That hurts!

Answer from Dr. Lin:

The first thing is to understand that all these teachings come from that final awakening to the truth of the Limitless-Oneness of all. So, first, try to broaden your mind. But this is not something you can achieve at once. Nevertheless, you still can have immediate tolerance for your immediate suffering. What you should do is rely on your daily practice and your chanting. Both the Sutra and the Sastra, at the end, give you a mantra. You do not need to switch to these mantras; just keep your original one. When you come to a difficult situation, do the chanting because the strength of the habit of

chanting will calm you down. That is the most effective way relying on one basic practice that you always do. Furthermore, this is the one you rely on in case of emergency or crisis. For example, in case of an accident, you do not have time to think of what to do, it has to be a natural response Amitabha simply comes to your mind and it will help you.

# Circulation in Harmony

*Views and capacities dictate spheres of activities;  
Insistence at one time leads to confrontation.  
Content with cultivating Bodhi according to  
circumstances;  
Circulation of things is in itself harmonious.*

Comment:

The circulation and evolution of all things are in accordance with the laws of causes and conditions, and could not be measured by views and capacities. Sentient beings in transmigration are limited by views and capacities, and consequently suffer in confrontation. Renounce enforcing, and be content with practicing Bodhicitta in accordance with circumstances. Only then would one gradually merge into the original harmony of the circulation of all things.

Written in Chinese: August 21, 1998

Translated: August 15, 1999

El Cerrito, California

## All-round beyond Blockage

*Disregarding branching issues but not out of carelessness;*

*Could broad-mindedness be the same as being negligent?*

*Perfectly corresponding to time, place, and conditions,*

*Act in the spirit of the harmony of oneness of all involved.*

Comment:

Some explained "all-round" as not being hindered by minor points. Were that the case, carelessness would resemble it. Not being bothered by branching issues of minor consequences could be called "broad-minded." However, it is still far from being all-round. Having mastered the harmony of theory and practice, acting exactly in accordance with the time, place and conditions involved so that it is a perfect balance of all factors, this could then be called "all-round." "All-round" describes the state of oneness of all; how could there be distinctions of trunk and branches?

Written in Chinese on October 24, 2000

Translated on October 25, 2000

El Cerrito, California

# Unification of High and Low

*Little impatience could fall one into vines and tendrils;*

*Let others do what they want, so one becomes foe-free.*

*Abased oneself to the least and yet then one transcends;*

*An open and clear mind in immediacy of Dharmadhatu.*

Comment:

Having the slightest distinction of high and low in mind would yield antagonism. Boundless humbleness and yielding would, to the contrary, bring about transcendence. Harmonized in oneness, the lowest is the highest. Be thoroughly selfless to accomplish unification with Dharmadhatu.

Written in Chinese on October 19, 2002

Translated on October 26, 2002

El Cerrito, California

# Unification of the Twelve Yanas

## Origination

About two years ago I heard a heavenly voice saying in Chinese, "Reorganize the twelve yanas." At that time I still had projects of translating the Chinese Sutras, the "Diamond Sutra" and the "Sutra of Bodhisattva Earth Treasure," together with my works on these Sutras into English, hence I did not work on the instruction right away. However, I never forgot it. Recently I had finished those translation projects already, so I started to study works that are related to this topic. Then I pondered over the principle and direction to do this work. As a result, I had written an article on this topic in Chinese. In the evening of the day when that work was done I began to translate it into English. And this is the translation.

## Foreword

Recent development of scientific technology is moving on a large scale at a rapid pace; it certainly inspires admiration and a sense of wonder in people. Nevertheless, hardship and suffering of sentient beings have not been universally reduced; in some areas the difficult situations have even become worsen or more enhanced due to technological developments. Thus it is clear that happiness and technological development are



not necessarily synchronized. Human knowledge is confined within the sphere of deduction based on data that are verifiable through sensual experiences, and hence it could not probe into spheres that are beyond sensual experiences. Therefore, in order to comprehend thoroughly the real situation of the universe and to possess the wisdom to handle suitably various problems of human life we need to look for approaches that are outside human cognition.

Dharma is the teaching of beings that have attained oneness with the reality of the universe. Only through practicing in accordance with the Dharma could one thoroughly comprehend reality, and furthermore, possess the wisdom and ability to ease sentient beings' predicaments. Dharma has gone through evolution in time and propagation over vast and distant areas, and thus has taken shape of multi-layer teachings. All these teachings are pedagogical devices to suit beings of various propensities in variegated situations, and they all share the same goal of guiding beings toward the right and full enlightenment. Consequently, all sorts of Buddhist teachings should not be regarded as the same as ordinary human knowledge, nor should they be subjugated to the evaluation or interpretation of current scientific views. In order to attain enlightenment we need to rely only on the Dharma and practice accordingly, without engaging in cognitive study and discussions. Only in this way can one thoroughly appreciate the real benefits of the Dharma.

## Main Text

What Buddha attained and realized was just the auto-appearance of original purity that is indescribable because it is free from duality and hence beyond the reach of words, and further it is beyond the sphere of sensual experiences and hence inexpressible.

Since it is a matter that all sentient beings have originally, therefore any sentient being could comprehend it and thereby return to the original state. When opportunity and conditions of a given sentient being is suitable it is possible for the sentient being to attain enlightenment without outside help or through the kind blessing and guidance of some enlightened being to facilitate the return to original purity. This is the reason why there are Chan anecdotes that are beyond grasping and without handles.

Original purity is not something that ordinary worldlings, who are drown in deviated views and deluded activities, could comprehend, not to mention to realize it. In enlightenment all are in limitless oneness; from the great compassion that arises automatically from this oneness there arises intolerance to the deluded state and its consequent sufferings of sentient beings, and hence naturally all sorts of salvation activities will come forth. In responses to various propensities of

sentient beings and variegated situations there naturally arose and developed pedagogical devices of multiple levels so that suitable but gradual guidance and propagation on the path toward original state could be achieved. Therefore, Dharma having gone through long-term evolution and widespread propagation consists now of many lineage branches with multi-layer teachings and practices.

The Nyingma School of Tantric Buddhism classified Buddhist teachings into a graded system of twelve yantras. This kind of classification, were it examined from the point of view of worldly historical evolution, would be full of disputes even on the determination of which teachings were taught personally by Buddha and which were unauthentic as being added upon by later generations of Buddhists. And there could hardly be a unified comprehension of the whole system through that approach.

In this essay, based on the traditional classification, I will first mention briefly the main teachings and practices of these twelve yantras. Next, I will explain the graded evolution from lower yantras to higher yantras. Then I will bring out the fundamental philosophical principle that runs through all twelve yantras, and explain how it is applied and adjusted in the various yantras. Thus it would become transparent that the twelve yantras indeed form a unified and congruent system of teachings. Based on such a unified and harmonious

comprehension a practitioner would know clearly as to which right view and appropriate practices to choose as he or she advances on the path to enlightenment.

The construction of a system of twelve yanas is purely theoretical. The real situation and propensity of each individual practitioner could not be an exact match of a certain level therein. Therefore, while we follow the graded steps of the twelve yanas as a reference scheme, we should not demand or expect artificial compliance. As to adjusting the variance between theory and real situation, if one has an authentic Guru to rely on for guidance, then it is more likely that mistakes and deviations could be avoided and that a suitable shortcut might be indicated.

## I. Classification of the Twelve Yanas

1. Sravakayana
2. Pratyekabuddhayana
3. Bodhisattvayana
4. Kriyayoga
5. Charyayoga, or Upayoga
6. Yogatantra
7. Mahayoga
8. Anuyoga
9. Atiyoga, or Mahasandhiyoga; in Tibetan, Dzogpa Chenpo
10. Semde
11. Longde

## 12. Mengagde

Among the system of twelve yantras the first two yantras belong to Hinayana, while the yantras from the third one upwards all belong to Mahayana. The first three yantras belong to exoteric teachings, while the remaining ones belong to esoteric teachings of Vajrayana. However, all esoteric yantras of Vajrayana embrace the exoteric teachings as their fundamental roots. The fourth to sixth yantras comprise the Lower Three Tantras of Vajrayana; they are called "Three Outer Tantras" in Nyingma system. The seventh to ninth yantras comprise the Anuttarayoga Tantra of Vajrayana; they are called "Three Inner Tantras" in Nyingma system. From the ninth yantra upwards they belong to the special teachings of Nyingma called "Dzogpa Chenpo, Great Perfection." Indeed, the tenth to twelfth yantras constitute a subtle division of the ninth yantra.

### II . Brief Indication of Main Contents of Each Yantra

The main contents of each yantra indicated below are based on traditional Nyingma teachings.

#### 1. Sravakayana

It teaches the insight that persons are intrinsically selfless. (Note: I am using intrinsic selflessness instead of the usual terminology of "no self" or "non-self." This

new terminology seems to be more in line with the view and expression of original purity.) It aims at the tranquility of Nirvana. It abides by the silas of individual liberation. It trains in concentration stability and the contemplation of the Four Noble Truths. Its attainment consists of four levels with Arhat as the ultimate one.

## 2. Pratyekabuddhayana

It comprehends the insights that persons are intrinsically selfless and that things in general are also intrinsically selfless, and yet it still considers that there are ultimately indivisible elements that are solid. It relies on individual efforts alone to reach the attainment of Pratyekabuddha. It abides by the silas of individual liberation. It trains in concentration stability and the contemplation of the Four Noble Truths as well as of the Twelve Links in the Chain of Interdependent Causation, both in its successive order and in its reverse order. Its ultimate attainment is no different from Arhat.

## 3. Bodhisattvayana

It teaches that all things are intrinsically selfless. It aims at leading all sentient beings to attain ultimate Buddhahood. It trains mainly in the Six Paramitas. It contemplates the intrinsic selfless nature of persons as well as of things. It goes through training in the Thirty-seven Bodhi Branches to complete the sequential

course of views, training, practices and fruition. Its attainment is Buddhahood with complete Dharmakaya (Formless-body) and Form-bodies.

#### 4. Kriyayoga

A practitioner practices attending to the needs of Buddha in order to receive blessings in the form of various spiritual achievements. It emphasizes on strict observation of tedious ritual details. It trains in six branches of visualization associated with chanting of mantras so as to purify body, mind, sentient beings and environment. Within this life one would attain common accomplishments. Within sixteen lives one would attain Buddhahood complete with three bodies and wisdom complete with five aspects.

#### 5. Charyayoga or Upayoga

A practitioner regards Buddhas as friends or siblings. It trains in chanting and visualization of form and of formlessness (Sunyata). It emphasizes maintaining the cleanliness of both body and mind. Within this life one would attain various accomplishments. Within seven lives one would attain Buddhahood complete with three bodies and wisdom complete with five aspects.

#### 6 . Yogatantra

It emphasizes visualization. It trains in visualization with five classes of actualization. One visualizes oneself as the Yidam. Within this life one would attain various meritorious realization. Within three lives one would attain perfect Buddhahood.

#### 7 . Mahayoga (Development Stage)

It trains in visualization of gradual development of mandala and Yidam. It trains in the practice of wind (breathing) and channels to attain realization of Sunyata Light.

#### 8, Anuyoga (Perfection Stage)

It trains in visualization of instant appearance of mandala and Yidam. It trains in the practice of wind (breathing), channels, essence drops, Tummo, blazing and dripping, and sexual union to attain the harmonization of four levels of joys and four levels of Sunyata.

#### 9. Atiyoga or Mahasandhiyoga (in Tibetan, Dzogpa Chenpo)

It teaches the view that all are originally pure. Its view, practice, action and fruit are inseparable. All are naturally self-arising and self-appearing.



Atiyoga is further divided in its subtlety as the following three yantras:

#### 10. Semde

All are appearances of Mind. Mind is the original awareness that is Sunyata Light. It employs non-dual Mind-only to transcend all duality.

#### 11. Longde

View all things as originally pure, i.e., free from the pollution of dualistic views, and hence all things are liberated as they originally are. It employs original purity to transcend possible grasping to Mind. All things are naturally self-arising and self-appearing.

#### 12. Mengagde

Wisdom light of original awareness is naturally omnipresent and eternal, transcending the framework of time and space and all dualistic distinctions, and therefrom all sorts of Buddha bodies and salvation activities naturally and unceasingly arise. Through practicing Thregchod, Cutting Through, realize all are originally pure in the unification of original awareness and Sunyata, and ultimately attain Rainbow Body that is invisible. In addition, through practicing Thodgal, Direct Approach, realize the unification of Sunyata and Form as self-arising and self-appearing, and ultimately

attain Light Body that is invisible or visible to other beings at will. The starting point for practices in this yana is already the experience of self-arising of original awareness as Sunyata Light.

### III . Graded Sequential Order of the Yanas

From the point of view of the twelve yanas classification as a system, the yanas form a stairway that begins with Sravakayana at the bottom and leads upward yana by yana till the topmost Mengagde. The teachings of each yana above have some refinement that makes them superior or more complete than the teachings of the yanas below. In this section I will give some clarification to illustrate this point of view. Nevertheless, at this point I also would like to emphasize that, indeed all twelve yanas are based on the same reality and are stemming from basic views and principles that run through the whole system. It is only because that, in order to provide suitable guidance to match variance in propensity of the recipients, teachings at various levels are needed to yield desirable pedagogical results. Once this is understood, the practical value of each yana in providing salvation guidance is all the same, and due to their appropriate function in providing suitable teachings as guidance, they should all be esteemed with equal respect.

In Sravakayana the emphasis is on comprehension of intrinsic selflessness of persons and diligent personal

practice to achieve individual liberation. In Pratyekabuddhayana the basic views and practices are no different from those of Sravakayana, but it emphasizes that each individual could, without learning teachings of enlightened beings, comprehend truth through careful observation of causal connections. In these two yanas once a practitioner comprehends the intrinsic selflessness of persons, a feeling of compassion for others' deluded grasping to a notion of self would naturally arise and lead to salvation teaching activities. Therefore, it is not the case, as some traditional criticism would have it, that these are merely "self-help" teachings.

Bodhisattvayana emphasizes instead that the central view should be expanded to the salvation of all sentient beings; through devotion to altruistic services one cultivates departure from self-centeredness, and thereby gradually merges into intrinsic selflessness. In fact, without the ability to self-discipline and self-control, how could one readily abide by the vast and abstract ideal of "salvation of all sentient beings"? Therefore, the practices of Bodhisattvayana must be rooted on cultivation of individual propensity and activities. Thus we can see that the traditional distinction of Hinayana and Mahayana could not separate a practitioner's practices and activities into two exclusively separate categories. In fact, there is a need and necessity to harmonize these two yanas.

As to the philosophy of intrinsic selflessness Bodhisattvayana is indeed more thorough; it directly points out that all things are intrinsically selfless. However, to those who could not readily comprehend this idea the approach to limit the scope of discussion to only persons so as to make it easier to clarify and guide is obviously rather reasonable.

The teachings of the first three yantras are meant for people to start practices from the level of ordinary humans. Practitioners of such yantras would often have to engage in the quest for ultimate liberation for many lifetimes just to make some advancement. In Bodhisattvayana practitioners keep in contact with the multitude in order to benefit them with Dharma guidance; consequently, many kinds of connections and situations would arise to easily delay the crucial juncture of attaining enlightenment. In order to help practitioners that have wholeheartedly devoted their efforts to the quest to attain enlightenment sooner the teachings and arrangements of the later Tantric yantras were instituted to provide the experiences of realization as models for imitation. Nevertheless, such "grade-skipping" practices are not within the capability of ordinary folks. Therefore, all Tantric practices need to be preceded by receiving blessing through "initiations or empowerments" so that the practitioner would have possessed the seed of wisdom that would grow into real Dharma fruits. Only through having received such direct

blessing that stems from merits of fruitful attainment could the Tantric practices really grow and mature.

This is a very important fundamental condition that one could not do without it. Many people mistakenly think that it is enough to have books or Dharma texts, then one can start practicing on one's own and engaging in a kind of "building a cart behind closed doors." (This is a Chinese proverb meaning to create without consulting experiences.) In fact, to practice any Tantric teaching basically one need to take refuge in and follow an authentic Guru that has the virtuous attainments, only then could realizations be expected. Otherwise, it would be like "steaming sand as cooking rice" (again, a Chinese proverb), one would be fussy blindly and getting nowhere.

The Lower Three Tantras of Vajrayana, Kriyayoga, Charyayoga and Yogatantra, trains one gradually through the processes of attending to Buddhas, befriending Buddhas, up to visualization of oneself as Yidam. The emphasis of their practices gradually shift from external formal compliance to ritual details and requirements to inner concentration stability and visualization.

The Anuttarayoga Tantra of Vajrayana was uniquely sustained in Tibetan Buddhism. It begins with Mahayoga of the Development Stage that trains in visualization of gradual development of mandala and

Yidam. It also trains in the practice of wind (breathing) and channels in a Yidam's body. It is followed by Anuyoga of the Perfection Stage that trains in visualization of instant appearance of mandala and Yidam. It trains in the practice of wind (breathing), channels, essence drops, Tummo, blazing and dripping, and sexual union. For advanced practitioners there are also practices of Powa (transference of consciousness), Dream State, Sleep Light, etc.

The Atiyoga above them is commonly called, "Great Perfection" (in Tibetan, "Dzogpa Chenpo"). It is based on the view that all things are originally pure. Thus, there are no dualistic distinctions, and the usual classifications of view, practice, action and fruit are fused away. All things are naturally self-arising and self-appearing. The teachings of this yana may be further distinguished and classified into three yanas. They are: Semde that teaches all things as appearances of Mind-only and thereby transcends all duality, Longde that teaches all things as originally pure and thereby transcends duality that is based on making distinctions, and Mengagde that dispenses with rational comprehension but attains direct experience of original purity as Sunyata Light through the blessing of enlightened Guru.

Great Perfection is not just a mental comprehension of the truth of original purity of all things. It is rooted in the direct experience of Clear Light of original awareness that is inseparable from Sunyata Light and is

omnipresent and eternal. Through practicing Thregchod, Cutting Through, the practitioner realizes that all are originally pure in the unification of original awareness and Sunyata, and ultimately attain Rainbow Body that is invisible. In addition, through practicing Thodgal, Direct Approach, the practitioner realizes the unification of Sunyata and Form as self-arising and self-appearing, and ultimately attain Light Body that is invisible or visible to other beings at will. As to the starting point for practices in this yana, the experience of self-arising of original awareness as Sunyata Light, except those beings that are reincarnations of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas or those that have received the special blessing from virtuous Guru through their complete dedication of body and mind, for most practitioners it would be possible to realize it only as a result of diligent practice through trainings in Development Stage and Perfection Stage that transform practitioners' body and mind.

#### IV . The Unifying Philosophic Principle

Philosophic principles of Buddhist teachings are rooted in the experiences of enlightenment. Out of indescribable experiences teachings that seem to be graspable are skillfully developed only to serve as pedagogical devices so that sentient beings that are lost in their grasping to forms may be guided. All these teachings are ultimately and in reality not to be grasped. However, as pedagogical conveniences they may be accepted as transient principles and be observed.

Within the system of twelve yanas the highest view that all things are originally pure serves as the unifying philosophic principle. To those that have had the direct experience of universal prevalence of Clear Light of original awareness, this amounts to describable absolute truth. Nevertheless, this principle would be too abstract to be comprehensible to most remaining sentient beings. Therefore, in the next lower yanas of Anuttarayoga Tantra this philosophic principle is substituted by other expressions in the form of inseparability of Clear Light and Sunyata, inseparability of Compassion and Sunyata, and inseparability of Joy and Sunyata; these are just another way of saying that the Clear Light, Compassion and Joy as experienced in the attainment of those yanas are all pure originally. (Sunyata means intrinsic selflessness. In intrinsic selflessness there is no dualistic distinctions, and hence all return to the original oneness that is limitless and originally pure.)

In the remaining lower yanas this principle is expressed through the guise of intrinsic selflessness. This is because in theory original purity and intrinsic selflessness are congruent and mutually implied each other, while in reality most practitioners could not experience the self-arising of Clear Light of original awareness.

At this juncture I offer the following basic and



significant observation: for a basic principle to serve as a unifying principle of all Buddhist teachings it simply need to adopt a monism that transcends duality. For example, in Semde all are appearances of "Mind-only." This Mind is not the mind that is dualistic to matter, but a philosophic concept encompassing everything and is conventionally referred to as "Mind." The lack of characteristics of Sunyata, Blank Essence, is also not the same as the emptiness of non-existence that is dualistic to existence, but only the lack of particulars, like a blank sheet. Thus the concept of Sunyata could serve to explain the function of wondrous applications without falling into the vain trap of insubstantial emptiness. Similarly, I often used the notion of "limitless oneness" to explain Dharma. The harmonization in this oneness transcends duality because it is limitless, and thus this notion could serve as a unifying principle for Buddhist teachings.

## V . Unification of the Twelve Yanas

Once it is understood that the construction of the twelve yanas are all based on experiences of the same reality, that there is an unifying principle that runs through the whole system as its fundamental philosophy, and that the various diversities that existed among the yanas are merely due to pedagogical considerations so as to suitably guide sentient beings of various propensities under diverse situations onto the path of enlightenment, then the so-called twelve yanas are indeed no different

from a single and only Buddhayana. Just as in worldly education system, from kindergarten to graduate school the degree of differences may be likened to heaven and earth, and yet they all form a unified and orderly graded sequence of learning. Similarly, the twelve yantras of Dharma also constitute a complete system of conversion and salvation to guide Buddha's sons and daughters all the way until they all become Buddhas.

## Dedication of Merits

May all those who come across and receive this teaching comprehend perfectly the universal harmony of the whole system of Dharma, and thereby become able to advance on the practice path at all levels without hindrances, and thus soon attain Great Perfection!

Written in Chinese on December 19, 2003

English translation completed on Christmas Eve of 2003

El Cerrito, California

# Unification of One and All

*One sentient being is intricately connected to all sentient beings.*

*Do not add personal preferences to establish limits and blocks.*

*The great power and application of the Dharmadhatu in totality*

*Will naturally converge and unify in even fairness without drags.*

Comment:

Upon seeing or hearing sufferings or calamities a Buddhist would pray to Buddhas for help on behalf of the suffering beings. Even though upon such occasions there are specific victims that are prayed for, nevertheless, one should realize that all sentient beings could have run into such circumstances. And hence one should not mix in the prayer any ideas that limit or enhance one's efforts to only certain particular beings. Thus, each individual being is representative of all beings, and the real situation that all beings in the Dharmadhatu are originally in oneness without any boundaries or limits will not be subject to the hindrance of partiality and prejudice. Consequently, Buddhas' blessings through the practitioner's praying would converge and unify the great power of the whole Dharmadhatu to induce miraculous applications. In short, while praying to Buddhas on behalf of others the

more one could be selfless the more miraculous the outcomes would be. Do remember this key point; do remember this key point!

Written in Chinese and translated on March 18, 2005  
El Cerrito, California

# Six Yogas in Great Harmony

## Causal Origination

About fifty days ago in a dream I saw a light brown color transparent thick board of irregular shape, seemed like made of crystal rock, and inside it there were two flat shapes of pagoda made of silver-color metal representing respectively Guru Chen and me. Simultaneously a heavenly voice was heard, saying in Mandarin, "Ming Xing Dao Liu Cheng Jiu Fa (Wisdom Activities Path Six Methods of Accomplishment)." (This is the traditional title in Chinese for what is known to the west as The Six Yogas of Naropa or The Yoga of the Six Doctrines.) Furthermore, I knew then that it was referring to a work of mine that had been adopted by many in practice, and I said in Mandarin in the dream, "Zhe Shi Mi Cheng Chu Jie (This is "The First Steps of Vajrayana"), Yi Jing Xie Hao Le (and it is already written)."

After I woke up from this dream I reflected on it, and thought that, since the heavenly voice clearly stated "Liu Cheng Jiu Fa," its intention should be for me to expound on this subject. The Six Yogas are profound practices of Vajrayana. Even though English version and Chinese version of these teachings are available in bookstores nowadays, practitioners that are up to the point of actually practicing them should only be rare, therefore, I had never thought of expounding on this

subject. Now that an inspirational dream had occurred to remind me of this, I started to review relevant teachings and organize the materials so as to present a brief account with expositions, with the intention to provide a helpful source for references and guides to practices.

The Six Yogas discussed here are: Tummo Yoga, Illusion Yoga, Dream Yoga, Clear Light Yoga, Bardo Yoga, and Powa Yoga. As to details of their actual practices, since they can be found in books available in bookstores and should be transmitted through personal teachings of Gurus, I will not delve into them here.

## 1 . Basic Theory

Sentient beings of variegated varieties committed all sorts of deeds out of ignorance, and then are drawn by habitual forces of their karmas into cyclic existence in the six realms of transmigration. Thus they went through life and death again and again. The transition from one life to the next one may be described in terms of three stages: 1. From life to death, 2. From death to Bardo (intermediate state), and 3. From Bardo to life. Here, "life" refers to the period when a sentient being is alive in its realm, "death" refers to the process of dying and it ends as the "clear light of death" appears, and "Bardo" refers to the intermediate state that begins from the moment the clear light of death disappears and ends at the moment when the next life begins.

According to Tantric Buddhist teachings, in the case of human beings, the dying process begins with the deterioration and loss of sensations obtained through the five senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling, and these are considered as experiences at a coarser level of consciousness, and afterwards at the finer level of consciousness one also experiences a gradual cessation. In terms of one's inner visions the whole transition may be described as consisting of the following eight stages:

1. Mirage
2. Smoke
3. Fireflies
4. Flame of a candle
5. Radiant white appearance
6. Radiant red increase
7. Radiant black near-attainment
8. Clear light

Here we will call the transition in this sequential order as "tranquilization," while the transition in its reverse order will be called as "resurrection." Both tranquilization and resurrection consist of very subtle inner visions; therefore, it is questionable whether all dying persons or consciousnesses that are resurrecting into Bardo could be fully aware of each and every stage of the transitions. Besides, in cases of people died of tragic deaths, such as having their bodies been exploded into pieces all at once, it is also questionable whether their dying process could also go through such an orderly transition.

As to the sequences of inner visions that occurred

during the transition from life to death, and then from death to Bardo, the basic theory of Tantric Buddhist teachings states that, at first it was tranquilization, and then it was resurrection.

When the clear light of death disappears the subtlest consciousness leaves the body, and owing to the habitual force of karma there arises a Bardo body that is the indiffereniable union of the subtlest consciousness and air. The arising of this Bardo body goes through the resurrection process. According to Tantric Buddhist teachings this Bardo body resembles the karmic body in the next life. However, in spiritual experiences the deceased ones usually appear in the shape of their last life. This does not in itself conflict with the Tantric teachings because a shape formed by indiffereniable union of consciousness and air will certainly change according to the state of the consciousness, and the deceased will certainly assume its old form to facilitate communication with the living.

For a Bardo body, before it enters the next life (in case the next life is a human birth, it is the moment when it enters the womb), at the end of every seven days it will go through a small "life and death," i.e., a fast process of tranquilization followed by resurrection. In the end when a Bardo body "dies" and enters the next life the process it goes through is also tranquilization followed by resurrection. And the demarcation between Bardo and next life is also the appearance of the clear light of death.



Our usual transition from a wakeful state into sleep is also a tranquilization at a shallow level. Our dream bodies are formed from the clear light of sleep through a resurrection at a shallow level; and they again disappear via a tranquilization at a shallow level as we wake up from sleep.

## 2 . Antidotes to the Three States of Existence

The path toward Full Enlightenment is a process of purification of karmic hindrances toward restoration of original purity. To purify karmas of body, speech and mind practices of prostration, chanting, meditation, almsgiving, observance of rules of conducts, etc., are adopted. To practitioners who had already undergone trainings in Sutrayana both in theory and in cultivation of practices Tantric teachings reveal further practices in visualization and breathing that are based on the principle of mutual correlation of body and mind and that of indiffereniable union of mind and wind (subtle inner air). These practices aim at speeding up the simultaneous purification of body and mind. Furthermore, in applying the principle of indiffereniable union of phenomena and Blank Essence and that of complementary union of Yin and Yang (female and male energies), and based on the foundation of accomplished Yidam visualization and vase-breathing accomplishment, both cooperative engagement of Yin and Yang within one body and that of two bodies are practiced. All these above-mentioned practices are antidotes to the state of living.

The Illusion Yoga among the Six Yogas, on the one hand, serves as antidote to the grasping to the karmic body as being substantial, and on the other hand, through visualization of Yidam body helps one to arrive at the realization that all sentient beings are manifestation of the Yidam. Consequently, one would comprehend that all things are illusive, and thereby thoroughly extinguish grasping to things as being substantial, in the sense that they have absolutely independent existence. The Tummo Yoga among the Six Yogas serves as antidote to the state of living through the practice of cooperative engagement of red Bodhis and white Bodhis within one's body.

At the final stage of death, the dying process, clear light appears. This clear light is basically no different from the light of original purity. However, ordinary sentient beings are incapable of recognizing, abiding in and making use of this juncture to reemerge into the originally pure limitless oneness. Instead, they could not help but instantaneously follow the pulling of habitual karmic forces to enter the resurrection into Bardo. Tantric practitioners, who had practiced meditation on Blank Essence, Mahamudra, or the Great Samadhi of Dharmadhatu, and had attained stability in boundless clear light, would be able to recognize, abide and unify the clear light of death as it appears with the clear light attained in practices during lifetime and thereby attain Dharmakaya.

Since during sleep one also goes through tranquilization

at a shallow level, it is therefore possible to use the opportunity to practice clear light of sleep. The practices of clear light during wakeful hours and during sleep mentioned above constitute the main content of the Clear Light Yoga among the Six Yogas.

Dream body is similar to Bardo body because both are formed by union of mind and wind (subtle inner air). The Dream Yoga among the Six Yogas helps one to comprehend the insubstantiality of dream contents through trainings in recognizing dream state and transforming dream contents. Consequently, one develops fearlessness in dreams and becomes capable of playing in dreams at ease and at will. Based on this foundation during Bardo it will be easier for one to practice diligently meditation on Blank Essence so as to facilitate the reappearance of clear light, and then to emerge therefrom in Yidam body to attain Sambhogakaya.

When one is already in Bardo and if one could still remember to practice Dharma, then the ideal path to liberation is to attain Sambhogakaya as mentioned above. If one could not attain Sambhogakaya in Bardo, then one should regard all scenes encountered in Bardo as illusions, and maintain thoughts on Dharma and practice diligently. Thus one will have a better chance to attain rebirth in Pureland or in one of the three better realms (heavenly realm, Asura realm or human realm). This is the essence of the Bardo Yoga among the Six Yogas.

The Powa (transference of consciousness) Yoga among the Six Yogas is a practice that uses wisdom wind to send the subtlest life-sustaining bindu (wisdom drop) at the center of the heart chakra of one's Yidam body straight up the central channel and exit through the top aperture to merge into the bindu at the center of the heart chakra of the wisdom body of the Yidam. Thus one may instantaneously attain Sambhogakaya or Dharmakaya. In daily practices one also visualizes that the bindu comes down to the heart chakra, and, in addition, practices some long-life sadhana to prevent one's earlier departure from this life. When Powa is practiced near death the bindu is sent only upwards and no more visualization of its coming down to the heart chakra. Practitioners accomplished in this practice may apply it to help deceased beings to attain rebirth in Pureland.

In general, the Six Yogas are basically practices and applications of the followings: meditation on Blank Essence, visualization on Illusion, visualization on Yidam, winds and channels, bindus, and clear light. Hence, they are very advanced practices in Tantra. In order to adopt these Yogas in a substantial manner a practitioner should be well equipped with the following qualifications in Dharma practice: having profound appreciation of impermanence, renounced worldly engagements to devote oneself completely to Dharma practice and service, abiding around and attending a Guru, having received Tantric initiations, having completed the foundational practices, thoroughly

mastered basic theories of Dharma, having attainment in Dhyana meditation, having experiences in Yidam visualization and wind practices. Without whole-hearted devotion and long-lasting engagement in Dharma practices, even if one had learned about these advanced practices and attempted to practice them, it would be unlikely that attainments will be achieved. This is because on the Dharma path the transformation process of purification of the whole being could not be faked or bypassed.

### 3 . Mutual Complements

During wakeful hours one practices Illusion Yoga and Tummo Yoga. During sleep one practices Clear Light Yoga. In dreams one practices Dream Yoga. During lifetime one practices Illusion Yoga, Powa Yoga and Clear Light Yoga, and applies them during the dying process. If one entered Bardo, then one practices Bardo Yoga to attain Sambhogakaya or Dharmakaya, or adopts other Dharma practices to attain rebirth in Pureland or better realms. Thus, there is no period when one is not using it for Dharma practice, and hence no time when it is not an opportunity for accomplishment toward enlightenment. This is the mutual complement of the Six Yogas in terms of time.

One practices meditation on Blank Essence and Clear Light Yoga to purify clear light of sleep and clear light of death so as to attain Dharmakaya. One practices Illusion Yoga, Tummo Yoga and Dream Yoga to attain

Rupakaya of Buddha during lifetime or Bardo. One practices Powa Yoga and Bardo Yoga so as to attain liberation in time even during the dying process or in Bardo. This is the mutual complement of the Six Yogas in terms of ultimate attainment of liberation.

When one is well versed in Illusion Yoga then one's visualization in Tummo Yoga, Dream Yoga and Bardo Yoga will be effective. When one is well versed in Tummo Yoga winds and channels are fully developed, and then attainment in Powa Yoga and Clear Light Yoga are easier to secure. When one is well versed in Dream Yoga then practices in Bardo Yoga would readily be effective. The existence of common elements in the Six Yogas renders them mutual complements.

#### 4 . Harmony in Oneness

All myriads of Dharma practices are none other than practices for liberation toward enlightenment. What the Dharma path revealed and leads to ultimately is the realization that all things are originally in limitless oneness. In the great harmony of this limitless oneness the division into Six Yogas is also merely a temporary pedagogical device. All are in limitless oneness, and hence there is no substantiality in the absolutely independent existence of individual entities. Therefore, all phenomena appear as an illusion. Buddhas as well as sentient beings are right there and then illusions, without the need to first visualize them as illusive. Wakeful states, sleeps and dreams are all natural

transformations of this limitless oneness. Therefore, there is no fear, no expectation and no unease. As the limitless oneness returns to tranquility only clear light appears. As the limitless oneness moves into action all phenomena appear. Life, death and Bardo are just transitions of the limitless oneness, and at any instant there is no separation from the limitless oneness. One only need to cease creating delusive distinctions for all to harmonize naturally into oneness, and original purity resumes.

The Six Yogas are antidotes to the habitual tendency to grasp things as being substantial and thereby making deluded distinctions. To the limitless oneness the Six Yogas are adding nothing and eliminating nothing. To the grasping that holds karmic body as being substantial there is the need to practice meditation on Blank Essence, Illusion Yoga, winds and channels, bindus, Tummo Yoga, etc., in order to purify it. If it is comprehended that the karmic body is only a bubble of foam in the ocean of limitless oneness of all things, and that it will disappear in a flash, then it will naturally and gradually approach original purity and original insubstantiality. Be it here or there, the consciousness remains none other than being originally pure. Since consciousness has never been separated from limitless oneness, what does it matter whether it had been transferred or not to other realms?

The views above belong to Great Perfection or Great Harmony, and are easier to state but very difficult to

attain. For those who cannot attain such views it is only solid approach to begin one's practices with taking refuge in the Three Gems and developing Bodhicitta.

Written in Chinese on May 23, 2006

Translation completed on July 10, 2006

El Cerrito, California



# Five Poisons Harmonized

*Practicing no grasping along Greed moves the totality.*

*Five poisons rise up and down beyond human control.*

*Taming habitual tendencies is not a matter of one handle.*

*Harmonize Five Poisons and eradicate them concurrently.*

Comments:

In theory, various practices in Buddhist Tantras are to be employed as antidotes to one of the Five Poisons respectively. In actual practices, as one advances along one of the Five Poisons, the totality of all Five Poisons will be activated beyond the practitioner's control, and then they will need to be all tamed and visualized as of the Blank Essence. Therefore, to practice Tantra one needs to harmonize the Five Poisons by understanding all of them to be grasping, and hence allow their presence freely but renounce them completely. Furthermore, all concepts, thoughts and emotions are appearances of biased grasping, and a Tantric practitioner should remedy them through harmonization, i.e., seeing all of them as habitual tendency of grasping, and therefore not to follow them in deeds but to renounce and stay away from them. Thus we come to comprehend that realization of attainment in Dharma practices is not maturity in some single aspects, but the fruitful result of Five Poisons concurrently diminished gradually till their eventual extinction and eradication.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 23, 2007

# El Cerrito, California

# Great Harmony Samadhi

Dharma nature is everywhere but could not be grasped. Any sensation as it arises is the apparent aspect of dharma nature, and as it immediately disappears is the hidden aspect of dharma nature. In the absence of thoughts and ideas, as soon as a concept arises, let it go. In no grasping totality of experiences remains distinctly clear. Thus, comprehension of boundless and inconceivable oneness naturally and gradually develops.

Comments:

Dharma practitioners who can naturally be without thoughts may practice this according to the teachings given above.

Those who are still in the midst of incessant thoughts may practice chanting Buddha name or mantras for all sentient beings as a preliminary practice to this.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 28, 2007  
El Cerrito, California

# Heart Essence of Great Harmony

Shapes, colors, sounds, odors, tastes, feelings and mental impressions are originally in harmonious union, pure and boundless. Anything will become hindrance due to grasping; as soon as grasping ceased harmonious union resumed. Let all things arise and disappear as they are; in the flow (of changing phenomena) of no-flowing (of the totality) of all things, naturally merged into limitless harmony. From the harmonious totality naturally arise originally pure intentions and activities to melt away illusive appearances of all sorts of grasping, and resume harmony of totality.

Harmonious totality encompasses all things.  
Intentions born of totality are free from biases.  
Originally pure activities are born boundless.  
Flow of no-flowing is naturally harmonious.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 1, 2007  
El Cerrito, California

# Harmonious Unification

*Five Wisdoms and Four Compassions are displayed by aspects  
Entrance, Exit, Use and Ultimate are levels deeper by degrees  
Having comprehended the unification of Four Boundless Minds  
In limitless oneness all dharmas are to be harmoniously unified*

Comments:

Just as I had described in my works that the Four Boundless Minds should be harmonized through practices into oneness, all classifications in Dharma such as the four layers of outer, inner, secret and most secret, the four stories of entrance, exit, use and achieving the ultimate, the four initiations of Tantras, the five Wisdoms and the four Compassions, they should all be similarly harmonized through practices so as to gradually arrive at the originally limitless oneness of all things. Interested practitioners may follow my explications on the harmonization and unification of the Four Boundless Minds and apply those ideas to the rest. Teachings through words are quite limited, and yet application of wise comprehension should be extended to all the rest.

Written in Chinese and translated on January 18, 2008  
El Cerrito, California

# Unification of Four Boundless Minds

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# Abiding in the Boundless Mind

## Foreword

This article is based on a Chinese work of mine, titled 〈住無量心〉 and appeared in my book 《無限的慈悲》 ("Limitless Wisdom and Compassion") which was published for free distribution in 1993.

Shou-Yean, my wife, found the message contained in this article to be very helpful for people immersed in worldly daily life. Therefore she suggested that I make it available for English readers as well.

August 8, 1994  
El Cerrito, California

## **Abiding in the Boundless Mind**

In the "Diamond Sutra" there is a famous saying often quoted by Buddhists, namely, "One should abide nowhere and yet develop one's intentions. Abiding nowhere means to be free from attachments; and to develop one's intentions [in such a state of mind] means to apply one's mind in an intuitive and spontaneous manner. In the "Alta Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch" [of the Chinese Chan School] it is said that Hui-Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, comprehended the essence of the teaching upon hearing this sentence. However, for ordinary people it is puzzling as to how to follow this teaching when trying to attain such a state of freedom; how can one develop any intention without abiding somewhere; and what would it be like to abide nowhere?

To be free from attachments and the consequential prejudices is a very difficult task because some attachments and prejudices are easier to discern and formulate while others may be inexpressible and almost humanly impossible to relinquish even when recognized to be such. Therefore, it cannot be accomplished merely by others' pointing them out; it can only be achieved by one's conscious and continuous effort in adopting Buddhist practice. Clarity and tranquility is an innate quality of our mind; however, for those who have become aware of their inner pollution and turmoil it will



take long-term nourishing to gradually regain purity of mind. "Abiding nowhere" is an ideal goal of freedom of mind which is hardly applicable to an ordinary person even if he is aspiring to it. In actual practice we need to find a practical guideline showing us the direction toward the summit of abiding nowhere, thereby we may gradually climb out from the whirlpool of worldly suffering and sorrows.

In the course of Buddhist practice it is generally taught that one should develop the Bodhi-mind, establish one's Bodhi-vows, and practice Bodhi-activities; all of these aspire to help all sentient beings attain Enlightenment. This is of course a correct teaching. Nevertheless, upon closer reflection one recognizes that the essential factor in Bodhi-mind, Bodhi-vows and Bodhi-activities, namely, the Enlightenment of Buddha, is only an abstract concept to us ordinary people. Be it described generally as the unification of Wisdom and Compassion or in more detail as the five aspects of Wisdom and the four levels of Compassion, it is simply beyond the reach of our ordinary daily lives.

Our daily lives are subject to many conditions and restrictions, and are full of antagonism, hindrance, judgment and choices. The state of Buddhahood is inconceivable and even beyond the limits of time and space. Therefore, the process of reaching Enlightenment is an approximation from a finite state to an infinite one. In the light of this observation it seems to me that the

well-known Four Kinds of Boundless Mind would serve as an appropriate guideline in the process of purification toward Buddhahood—our original purity.

The Four Kinds of Boundless Mind are:

Loving-kindness: May all beings have happiness and its causes!

Compassion: May all beings be free from suffering and its causes!

Joy: May all beings enjoy the fruits of Dharma which are beyond suffering!

Equanimity: May all beings abide in the equanimity which renounces all worldly discriminations!

All of them share one essential feature—its scope encompasses all sentient beings without limitation of space and time.

These four kinds of Boundless Mind guide us to serve all sentient beings in the following order: First, we should endeavor to help them become free from suffering and attain happiness, and we need to consider rationally the causal conditions involved in order to plant proper causes and develop favorable conditions. Secondly, we should pursue the joy which is beyond the suffering of transmigration, hence we need to learn and practice the teachings of Buddha. In our daily activities we should endeavor to incorporate a spirit of being free from attachments beyond selfish considerations, and

opening up to the world in taking others' interest to heart. Thirdly, only when we abide nowhere, i.e., staying in the equanimity and clarity of mind which is free from discrimination and prejudice, can we attain liberation and also serve sentient beings sincerely and appropriately. This means, in practice, we should be patient, tolerant, above prejudiced favoritism, and maintain a universal loving-kindness.

The spirit of these four kinds of Boundless Mind should be integrated as a whole. Thus they teach us to abide in the equanimity of abiding nowhere, from which spontaneously develop activities that relieve suffering of and bring happiness to all sentient beings, and perfect our services by bringing about the joy of Enlightenment transcending transmigration. Following this teaching we will have a definite goal in reflecting on ourselves, namely, to purify our intentions and enlarge our horizons. We will also have a tangible guideline in serving others, namely, to relieve suffering, bring happiness and share the joy of the Dharma. Furthermore, since all four kinds of Boundless Mind center around all sentient beings and together they aim at the ultimate joy of Buddhahood, their application is naturally boundless in time and space. Consequently, the ultimate realization of Buddhahood is forthcoming from their backstage, and the Bodhi-activities are interwoven into their functioning.

In reality, how could we relieve suffering of all sentient beings, bring happiness to them, and share the joy of the

Dharma with them? We are so limited in our resources and abilities that neither a definite answer nor a feasible solution is apparent. Upon such a cool and rational reflection one may wonder if the four kinds of Boundless Mind are merely fanciful idealism that can yield only temporary and psychological self-deceit. No, that is not the case. Although absolute ideals need to be seasoned by real-life experiences to become pragmatic wisdom, and a paradise on earth requires constant maintenance and reconstruction from damage and destruction caused by nature or human folly, if we do not march step by step toward truth, beauty and goodness, we will inevitably sink inch by inch into the mire of survival by violence and brutal force. Whatever we enjoy now is the result of an accumulation of effort and labor, and the cocoon of sorrow enclosing us has been woven continuously by tiny threads of selfishness, therefore we cannot but be cautious in choosing the direction of our activities. Stop not from doing even trivial acts of goodness; and stall not from marching onto a long journey. The higher the ideal, the more diligent and strenuous we should be.

As far as an individual is concerned, without the guidance of the four kinds of Boundless Mind one would be immersed in the sorrows and conflict of interests of daily life, then how could one be free from agony and self-centeredness, and when will one find a moment of tranquility and rest? In contrast, when one

abides in the openness of the four kinds of Boundless Mind the ups and downs of personal life is readily accepted as it is—a small potato—in the universe. The four kinds of Boundless Mind guide us to transcend the antagonism and criticism among individuals and to direct all our efforts toward relieving suffering of and adding happiness to the world. Engaging in the endless activities of compassionate service would free ourselves from the prison of self-centeredness and nourish all of us with the universal love encompassing all sentient beings. To engage in compassionate service it is not necessary to go in an eccentric way. One may just as well spread the spirit of Boundless Mind in daily life with the awareness of boundless compassion—be helpful and kind to people you encounter, be tolerant to induce peace and harmony, and you will add happiness to life and gradually mature in wisdom.

"Abiding nowhere" is too difficult to practice for most of us; therefore, I suggest that we adopt the more tangible Four Kinds of Boundless Mind as the guiding principle of our daily activities. I hope that in this way the practitioner may gradually approach and realize the state of abiding nowhere and yet developing one's intentions. However, right at the moment of complicated weighing and calculating of loss and gain it is almost impossible to even think of Boundless Mind. To overcome such a difficulty we need to develop the habit of doing certain Buddhist practices daily at a regular time. A good practice recommended by many

Buddhist sages and teachers as suitable for most of us is the chanting of "Amitabha." Through the force of habit developed by daily practice our mind may become clearer and purer.

On the one hand, we need to remind ourselves of the impermanence and transience of life, and conclude that life is too short and precious to throw into inconsequential arguments and fights. Such an awakening will free us from our sorrows. On the other hand, we need to practice diligently the chanting of "Amitabha" (or some other Buddhist practice) to purify our minds through constant repetition of a pure and holy name. In this way we will not get lost in the necessity and triviality of worldly subsistence and may retain a peace of mind for enjoying the leisure of a simple and pure life as revealed in the following stanza of the Chinese poet Tao Yuan Ming:

*Gathering flowers near the East fence  
In leisure the South Mount I notice!*

August 8, 1994  
Chinese Father's Day

# Unification of Four Boundless Minds

Benevolence means to bring happiness to sentient beings. Compassion means to relieve sentient beings of sufferings. Joy means the delight of original purity. Release means freedom from all attachments. Based on these basic notions recite the following stanza and think about the meaning a bit along side the recitation:

*Benevolence of benevolence, compassion of benevolence, joy of benevolence, release of benevolence;*

*Benevolence of compassion, compassion of compassion, joy of compassion, release of compassion;*

*Benevolence of joy, compassion of joy, joy of joy, release of joy;*

*Benevolence of release, compassion of release, joy of release, release of release;*

And then repeat three times:

*Benevolence, compassion, joy, release.*

During this recitation of benevolence, compassion, joy, release, each one of them would naturally comprise all the remaining three in its meanings.

## Explanation

This practice was invented by me and has been

practiced by me for some time. I found it to be rather beneficial in helping me to unify the Four Boundless Minds into oneness. Therefore, I am writing it for the public to share. Through this practice one may increase comprehension of the interdependence and mutual support among the Four Boundless Minds. When the Four Boundless Minds are unified and harmonized into oneness, Bodhicitta would ensue.

While reciting the stanza above there is no definite thought connected to the phrases. As long as the thoughts are in accordance with the Dharma the practitioner may think in whatever direction so as to explore possible relevant significance. Below is only an example but not for practice of recitation. It is better to use the stanza above for recitation practice because that stanza allows the practitioner to explore in thinking and consequently, in the long run, would increase the width and depth of comprehension.

Benevolence of benevolence, pure altruism; compassion of benevolence, could not stand others' suffering; joy of benevolence, free from gratitude and grievance; release of benevolence, no more entanglement.

Benevolence of compassion, reduce karma and nurture merits; compassion of compassion, equal salvation; joy of compassion, complete escape from sufferings; release of compassion, no calculation of merits or faults.



Benevolence of joy, share with all sentient beings; compassion of joy, transmigration has not stopped; joy of joy, no later problems; release of joy, no way to be greedy.

Benevolence of release, devoted to services; compassion of release, sufferings due to delusive grasping; joy of release, no more worries; release of release, originally no grasping.

This practice may be integrated with prostration, making offerings, etc. For example, the practitioner may do one prostration or offer a spoon of sandalwood incense while repeating "benevolence of benevolence," and then do prostration or offering of incense again while repeating "compassion of benevolence"...

Written in Chinese on June 7, 2001

Translated on July 14, 2001

El Cerrito, California

# Boundless Harmony

*Benevolence embraces compassion, joy and release.  
Compassion is based on joy, release and benevolence.  
Joy depends on benevolence, compassion and release.  
Release all to attain joy, compassion and benevolence.*

Comment:

The Four Boundless Minds as taught in Buddhism may be described as benevolence, compassion, joy and release. (Here release means the releasing of all partiality.) Together they provide clear criteria for intentions and conducts that are appropriate to the cultivation of Bodhicitta. These four should be harmonized into oneness in order to achieve the intended goal. Upon careful reflection one would realize that any one of them is inseparable from and entails the rest. They support one another to form a complete whole. In benevolence there is naturally compassion, joy and release. Compassion is inseparable from joy, release and benevolence. The rest are similar.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 3, 2001  
El Cerrito, California

# Visualization for the Unification of Four Boundless Minds

*Practice to attain the unification of Four Boundless Minds Had been taught by Guru through a gatha for associations. Additional visualization is again revealed through guidance: Simply regard all sentient beings as having attained Buddha.*

Comment:

Disciple Pao-Yuan asked, "For the practice of Four Boundless Minds: May all beings have happiness and its causes! May all beings leave suffering and its causes! May all beings be inseparable from the joy of no more suffering! May all beings abide in the equanimity of non-discrimination! Besides the practice of pondering in associations of "Four in One" and "One implying Four," as taught by Guru already (Cf. my work, "Unification of Four Boundless Minds"), how to practice visualization?"

I taught her that one should regard all beings as having attained Buddhahood. In this visualization the Four Boundless Minds are unified and accomplished. This belongs to the Tantric teachings of "applying fruits as means of practice," where the enlightened state is assumed for the sake of providing practices. As such a visualization becomes deeper all prejudices in the practitioner's mind toward any sentient being would

gradually fade away, and hence the mind would return to its original purity, and consequently it would naturally realize the unification of Four Boundless Minds.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 19, 2004  
El Cerrito, California

## **Cycling the Four Boundless Minds**

If one could harmonize and unify the Four Boundless Minds, naturally one will gradually merge into Bodhi. I had written four articles on this subject in the past: "Abiding in the Boundless Mind," "Unification of Four Boundless Minds," "Boundless Harmony," and "Visualization for the Unification of Four Boundless Minds." Upon invitation I also gave a talk in mandarin on "Harmonizing the Four Boundless Minds," and a Chinese transcript is available.

In the article "Unification of Four Boundless Minds" mentioned above I introduced the repetition and sequence of contemplation that would harmonize and unify all Four Boundless Minds in each one of them, and the main stem of that practice is as follows:

Benevolence of benevolence, compassion of benevolence, joy of benevolence, release of benevolence;  
Benevolence of compassion, compassion of compassion, joy of compassion, release of compassion;  
Benevolence of joy, compassion of joy, joy of joy, release of joy;  
Benevolence of release, compassion of release, joy of release, release of release.

Often I practiced this repetition, and employed it in combination with daily counting. Daily while I do sit-ups, with repetition of one item among them, I do one sit-up and one inhalation and one exhalation. Thus when I

finished one round of this repetition, I had done sixteen sit-ups. Then in similar fashion I do push-ups, and with one round of this repetition I had done sixteen push-ups.

Counting the above sixteen sit-ups and sixteen push-ups as one cycle, I do the four cycles of Benevolence, Compassion, Joy and Release. So, in total I do each kind of exercise sixty-four times. Finally I do a "Buddha" cycle, and hence daily the total number of each kind I do is eighty.

Recently, to avoid becoming stagnant in this formula I revitalized it by cycling it. It is done as follows:

### Cycle of Benevolence

Benevolence of benevolence, compassion of benevolence, joy of benevolence, release of benevolence;  
Compassion of compassion, joy of compassion, release of compassion, benevolence of compassion;  
Joy of joy, release of joy, benevolence of joy, compassion of joy;  
Release of release, benevolence of release, compassion of release, joy of release.

### Cycle of Compassion

Compassion of compassion, joy of compassion, release of compassion, benevolence of compassion;

Joy of joy, release of joy, benevolence of joy,  
compassion of joy;  
Release of release, benevolence of release, compassion  
of release, joy of release;  
Benevolence of benevolence, compassion of benevolence,  
joy of benevolence, release of benevolence.

This means that each of the four rows of Benevolence, Compassion, Joy and Release in each cycle is to begin with benevolence of benevolence, compassion of compassion, etc., and then the remaining three items follow in the sequential order. Furthermore, each cycle is to begin with the row that begins with the same name as the cycle, and then the remaining rows follow in the sequential order.

Hence the remaining cycles are:

### Cycle of Joy

Joy of joy, release of joy, benevolence of joy,  
compassion of joy;  
Release of release, benevolence of release, compassion  
of release, joy of release;  
Benevolence of benevolence, compassion of benevolence,  
joy of benevolence, release of benevolence;  
Compassion of compassion, joy of compassion, release  
of compassion, benevolence of compassion.

### Cycle of Release

Release of release, benevolence of release, compassion of release, joy of release;  
Benevolence of benevolence, compassion of benevolence, joy of benevolence, release of benevolence;  
Compassion of compassion, joy of compassion, release of compassion, benevolence of compassion;  
Joy of joy, release of joy, benevolence of joy, compassion of joy.

If, in addition, Cycle of Buddha is added, then just repeat the Cycle of Benevolence, or any one of the remaining three cycles.

To cycle the formula in this way, it takes great concentration at each and every step along the way lest one gets lost or confused. After such a session mind is very clear and senses no attachment to anything. This is probably because Benevolence, Compassion, Joy and Release were constantly cycling, and hence naturally there was nothing left to be grasped. This reminded me of meeting Master Hong Fa in a dream many years ago. He showed me two balls that were swiftly turning around by themselves and simultaneously circling each other swiftly. I supposed that he was displaying the same teaching then. The Japanese Tantra is well-known for its meticulous care of details in rituals; perhaps they should pay attention to this kind of teaching lest they fall stagnant in attachment to Dharma.



Written in Chinese and translated on January 12, 2008  
El Cerrito, California

Amendment:

Recently during my daily physical exercises it occurred to me that the Cycle of Buddha mentioned above may employ the following formula:

Cycle of Buddha

Buddha's benevolence, Buddha's compassion, Buddha's joy, Buddha's release;

Buddha's compassion, Buddha's joy, Buddha's release, Buddha's benevolence;

Buddha's joy, Buddha's release, Buddha's benevolence, Buddha's compassion;

Buddha's release, Buddha's benevolence, Buddha's compassion, Buddha's joy;

And here "Buddha" signifies the original harmonious oneness of the Four Boundless Minds. Thus, cycling of the Four Boundless Minds reached its perfect completion!

January 22, 2008  
El Cerrito, California



# Chod in Limitless-Oneness

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Thangka of Machig Labdron

## Praise to Ma Machig

Tantric Disciple Yutang Lin

*Cutting through attachment to body to offer  
compassionate sacrifice,*

*In wondrous application of wisdom and compassion  
all things unite.*

*Intangible non-self, though hard to grasp, is given a  
practical shortcut.*

*Originating a Tantric path to feed back India, none  
other than Machig!*

Comment:

Tibetan lady patriarch Machig Labdron originated the tantric practice of Chod, and thereby enabled the practice and attainment of intangible non-self through cutting down the attachment to body. (See my work, "Chod in Limitless-Oneness.") This is the only tantric Buddhist practice that was originated in Tibet, widely spread to neighboring regions, and even fed back to India. From her profound wisdom was revealed the teaching that, while cutting through the root of self-grasping, the attachment to body, it can be simultaneously utilized as a compassionate and universal offering so as to achieve paying off of karmic debts, accumulation of merits and cultivation of compassion. Such wondrous application of unified wisdom and compassion is fully integrated in this practice. Consequently, the practitioners can rely solely

on cultivation of Chod practice to gradually realize the Dharmakaya. Magnificent indeed, the skillful wisdom of Ma Machig!

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El Cerrito, California

## Preface

Chod, meaning cutting through, is a Buddhist tantric practice. In Tibetan Buddhist Tantra it is taught to beginners for accumulation of merits; it is also practiced by ardent devotees for realization of Dharmakaya—the pinnacle of Buddhist realization. How could one practice be so common and yet profound? Its original teacher, Machig Labdron (1055-1153), was a Tibetan lay lady, a very rare phenomenon in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, and for generations up until now, her serious followers are mostly wondering beggars and yogis. Chod as formulated by Machig Labdron is the only Buddhist tantric practice that originated in Tibet, instead of India, and then spread to its neighboring regions, including India. The combination of these factors certainly renders Chod unique and intriguing. This practice involves visualization of cutting and offering the body, and hence may seem barbaric or gruesome from the ordinary point of view. How could such a practice be related to the cultivation of wisdom and compassion?

The fact that Chod is a practice for both beginners and advanced yogis drew my interest in writing the present exposition. For the general public who are intrigued by the mysterious aspects of this practice and its lineage, an explanation in layman's terms will be offered, and some related topics will be discussed. For serious Buddhist practitioners the philosophical significance involved in this practice will be brought to light. In particular, the

significance of Chod in the light of Limitless-Oneness will be explained. This is completely in accordance with the spirit of Chod, as it was labeled by Machig Labdron to be the Chod of Mahamudra.

Yogi Chen, my late Guru, taught me how to practice the Chod ritual written in Chinese by him. I was very impressed by the profound meaning and open perspective conveyed through the ritual text. Now that I am writing on Chod, I take the opportunity to introduce it to readers who do not read Chinese. My translation of the ritual is included in this work as an independent chapter. My sincere thanks to Stanley Lam and Chen-Jer Jan for the corrections, improvements and suggestions they made to this translation.

In 1955, with the help of an interpreter, Yogi Chen translated from Tibetan into Chinese a version of "An Exposition of Transforming the Aggregates into an Offering of Food, Illuminating the Meaning of Chod." This book was printed in 1983 for free distribution. Now it has been revised by me and included in Volume 17 of "The Complete Works of Yogi Chen." The Chinese titles of these two works are listed in the References at the end of this book.

During the course of my preparation for this work I have received teachings in a dream that Chod is not only an antidote to attachment to body but also one to all five poisons, i.e., greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance and doubt. Again, in a dream state I saw a curved knife



cutting through my joints and brought relaxation to those areas; thus I was blessed with and taught about the releasing effect of Chod.

Furthermore, one day as I slept I saw the following Chinese Characters:

元鈴

將此譜傳下去

The word 元(yuan) means the origin, and the word 鈴(ling) means bell. In the tradition of Chod there are eight pairs of teachings and lineages, hence I interpret the character formed by two 元, which does not exist in Chinese, to signify the origin of all these pairs of traditions, and in tantric context the bell refers to the Vajra Bell which represents the Dakinis. Therefore, this phrase denotes the Founder Dakini, Machig Labdron. The second set of characters forms an imperative sentence, commanding: Pass down this record! The character 譜(pu) is usually employed to denote a lineage record. Hence in this context the meaning is clearly: Pass down this lineage (record)! To me, this is a clear sign of approval from the Great Mother, Machig Labdron.

I am grateful for all the teachings and blessings, including those not mentioned here, that have been bestowed on me for my humble service to the glorious tradition of Chod.

No matter how marvelous a practice is, if one does not have the determination to adopt it as a regular activity and persist in learning through it, there would be no significant results whatsoever. I hope that this work of mine would have illustrated the wondrous aspects and functions of Chod, and provided enough clarification to motivate and improve its practice. May readers of this work gain real and ultimate benefits of Chod through regular and persistent practice!

Thanks to comments from Chen-Jer Jan I have added some clarifications to this book. I am also grateful to Stanley Lam for formatting the entire book for publication.

Yutang Lin

July 6, 1996

A Study for the Cultivation of Harmony  
El Cerrito, California

# I. General Introduction

## 1. The Body and Spiritual Quests

The condition of one's body is a major factor of one's enjoyment or suffering in life; and one's existence is usually understood to be determined by the subsistence of one's physical life. Consequently, preservation of our physical existence and promotion of our physical well-being is at the heart of most human endeavors. From such motives and activities it is inevitable that self-centered prejudices and selfish practices become dominant and customary.

Since our physical existence and well-being is dependent upon many factors, and many conditions in life, of natural or human origin, are beyond human control, suffering and death are lurking like traps and land-mines. Suffering in our lives is further compounded by everyone's self-centered prejudices and selfish practices. In order to promote selfish interests people often go to the extent of ignoring or sacrificing others. Wars and fighting are waged at almost every corner and every level of human existence.

To free us from such seemingly insoluble miseries the fundamental approach is to learn about and practice freedom from self-centeredness. Only then can we see clearly that living in the spirit of cooperation and empathy is a far more sensible approach to life. To become free from self-centeredness our preoccupation

with the body and its well-being need to be reexamined and readjusted in an all-round view of life. As a result of such reflections, many spiritual practices consider a simple way of life as a prerequisite.

In addition to our physical conditions, our spirituality is also a major factor of the quality of our lives. No one can be happy without harmony between physical and mental states. The growth of one's spirituality is intimately connected with how one faces and utilizes one's mental states as well as one's physical situations. Goals of spiritual quests usually involve unity of the mind and the body and transcendence of the physical existence. Transcendence in spirituality will be achieved only after one's mentality is no longer bound by one's physical conditions and environment.

Due to the intimate connection between the physical and spiritual aspects of one's life, spiritual practices often involve physical training. Most of these consist of posture, breathing and simple maneuvers. There are also yogic exercises that are very difficult, and it often takes years of training to attain such performance. To transcend considerations originating from the root of one's physical existence, the body, there are ascetic practices that punish the body to achieve self-mortification or self-denial. Self-sacrifice of the body through offering of physical or sexual services, or even donation of organs, is also sometimes used as a spiritual practice. Practices involving punishment or self-sacrifice of the body are rarely adopted, and due to

their extreme nature may lead to unintended consequences.

## 2. Buddhist Teachings Related to the Body

On one hand, Buddhist teachings point out that attachment to the body and identification with one's physical existence is the main source of suffering, while on the other hand, respect for life is also clearly taught by stipulating no-killing as one of the five basic rules of conduct. The Buddhist teaching emphasizes no killing of born and unborn lives of human beings as well as of other sentient beings. A popular Buddhist practice is to save endangered lives such as birds, fish and animals in captivity and release them back to nature.

Respect for life and recognizing the body as the root of suffering are not contradictory. Destroying the body and putting an end to this life would not resolve the misery of conditional existence because the consciousness of a sentient being will continue to transmigrate in the cycle of endless living and dying as long as grasping to the notion of a self lingers. Killing of others or oneself will in itself become a major cause leading to more suffering in this and future lives. The body can also serve as an instrument for attaining the liberation of oneself and others from transmigration. The key to transforming the status of the body from the root of suffering to an instrument for liberation lies in one's ability to recognize and renounce one's blind and blinding attachment to the body as the embodiment of the self

which is illusive and unattainable upon philosophical analyses.

Buddhists do use medicine to heal themselves of diseases, do clean their bodies, houses and gardens, and in so doing killing of micro-bacteria, insects and mice is often inevitable. Are Buddhists hypocritical in accepting no-killing as a basic rule of conduct? These kinds of activities, although involving killing of sentient beings, are aiming at the protection of human lives without a malice to kill other beings. Before such actions are taken a Buddhist would try with every effort to avoid killing unnecessarily and look for alternatives. When such killing is unavoidable, it is done with repentance and prayer for a better rebirth for the victims.

As recorded in biographies, some advanced Buddhist practitioners would sacrifice their bodies willingly to feed hungry mosquitoes or even tigers. When Sakyamuni Buddha in one of his previous lives offered his only possession, his body, to a hungry tiger, he did not intend to commit suicide but simply to alleviate the tiger's hunger. Thus it is clear that the teachings of no-killing and compassion for all beings are taken seriously by Buddhists. The extent to which one is able to harmonize such a rule of conduct and the ideal of compassion for all beings varies with individual efforts and devotion.

The discussion presented in the last two paragraphs clearly demonstrates that a practitioner's intention may

be simple but due to the circumstances his practice may become a complicated matter from various points of view. Putting Buddhist teachings into practice in real-life situations is therefore not a easy matter. My humble opinion is that a Buddhist practitioner should maintain a pure motivation, aiming at the Enlightenment of all beings, and learn how to practice in daily life through experiences. Just as a Chinese proverb says, "As one grows older, one keeps on learning more." (活到老，學到老。)

Buddha taught the middle way which points out that neither asceticism nor hedonism is the right path toward liberation. He used the analogy of a stringed instrument which can produce melodies only when the strings are neither too tight nor too loose. Hence, the body as an instrument for achieving liberation from transmigration should be properly taken care of. However, as an antidote to past indulgent behavior patterns or as a horsewhip to push forward one's spiritual endeavor, ascetic practices are sometimes adopted by some devoted and diligent Buddhist practitioners.

In Asian Buddhist countries some monks or nuns would undertake the ritual of Burned Scars of Sila Commitment. By enduring small piles of incense burned on top of one's shaven head or arm, permanent scars are left as a sign of one's devotion and vows. Some would even burn one or more fingers over candle flames as offering to Buddha. Although these are practices adopted by Buddhists, they lack proper Buddhist

explanation and origin. It is said that the custom of Burned Scars of Sila Commitment was initiated in China by the government of Tang Dynasty to prevent criminal fugitives from posing as monks and hiding in monasteries.

In tantric Buddhism it is emphasized that the body is the residence of Buddhas and the very instrument through which to attain Buddhahood. Hence, one of the fundamental rules of conduct for tantric practitioners is not to have disregard for the body. This is not the same as cultivating attachment to the body. The usual attachment to the body is due to grasping of a self and its subsistence. The tantric teaching on proper caring of the body is with the understanding that self is an illusion and that with proper training the body may help one to realize the selfless nature of all phenomena.

Many Buddhist teachings center around the body. The practice of chanting a list of thirty-six impurities, referring to all the various parts of the body, aims at reminding oneself of the body as a collection of undesirables. Observation and visualization of the various stages of a decaying corpse is a practice both for reminding oneself of impermanence and for reducing one's unreflective attachment to sensual objects. Visualization of a skeleton is a practice for purifying one's greed. Being mindful of one's sensations, feelings, breathing and action is also taught as meditation practices. To advance on the Bodhisattva Path almsgiving of wealth, services, knowledge, teachings,



and even bodily parts are encouraged. In tantric Buddhism a Yidam body is maintained in visualization instead of one's physical body. Chod, the main topic of this work, is a tantric practice which involves visualization of the offering of the body. In highly advanced tantric practices sexual activities are employed to experience the selfless nature of ecstasy which is free from the stains of jealousy, obsession, possessiveness, greed, attachment, envy, etc.

It is interesting to note that among Buddhist teachings which revolve around the body, there are various attitudes toward the body. Some consider it as an object of impurity, some the root of self-centeredness, some an object of fundamental attachment, some an object for the practice of mindfulness, some an object for the practice of almsgiving and offering, some an object to be meditated away in Sunyata, some an instrument for enlightened experiences, and some the abode of Buddhas. This illustrates the relative nature both of the functionality of the body and of the Buddhist teachings revolve around it. All these views, teachings, functions and practices may coexist in harmony as long as their respective functions in guiding toward Enlightenment are thoroughly understood and adopted accordingly.

## II. Chod — the Tantric Practice of Cutting through Attachment

Chod, meaning cutting through, is a Buddhist Tantric practice. Although it is rooted in Buddhist teachings transmitted from India, its main features were molded by the Tibetan Yogini Machig Labdron (1055-1153) based on her insight and spiritual experiences. On the transcendental and supernatural level, she received blessings directly from the primordial enlightened mind manifesting as holy beings to originate these tantric teachings for the salvation of all beings. Although India is the birth place of Buddhist teachings, Chod stands out as the only teaching that was molded anew in Tibet and then spread to its neighboring areas including India. It has been a wide-spread practice adopted by monks, nuns and laity alike, especially by devout beggars and wandering yogis who travel from cemeteries to desolate places and never stay at one place for more than seven days. Many systematic and unique teachings on Chod, complete with rituals, precepts, visualizations, and instructions about stages of realizations are well-preserved by many lineages up to this day. For details on its history, lineage and spreading, please refer to Jerome Edou's book listed in the References.

## 1. A General Characterization of Chod

Recognizing the body as the root of one's attachment to self, Machig Labdron formulated Chod to be a practice that would destroy this fundamental attachment and simultaneously develop compassion for all beings. The main part of a Chod practice can be outlined as follows:

*A. Transfer one's consciousness into space and identify it with the black Vajra Yogini.*

*B. Through visualization, identify the body with the universe and then offer it completely to all beings who would want them, especially one's creditors, enemies, and evil beings.*

For details, please refer to Chapter III below for an example of a Chod ritual.

To handle worldly or spiritual problems there are many types of approaches. Some try to dissolve the problems, some plan to escape from the problems, some attempt to stay at a safe distance and tackle through theoretical discussions, and some would face the problems and work on them. When one is not ready to handle the problems, the first three types of approaches are temporarily appropriate; nevertheless, the ultimate test of a solution lies with the head-on approach.

Chod is obviously a head-on approach to the spiritual problem of subconscious attachment. It also exemplifies the ultimate wisdom of facing the reality to realize its

conditional nature instead of being satisfied with merely conceptual understanding. Chod is learning through enacting. One's attachment to the body, fear of its destruction, greed for its well-being, and displeasure for its suffering are all put to test in a Chod practice. When all these subconscious mental entanglements are brought to light through the visualization of dismemberment, one is really fighting with one's self. No one who cannot pass the test of such visualizations would have a chance of achieving liberation under real-life circumstances.

Advanced Chodpas (practitioners of Chod) do not satisfy themselves with just the ritual practices. They often stay in cemeteries, desolate places, and haunted houses in order to face the fearful situations and experience the interference from desperate or evil spirits. By developing compassion for all beings, including those trying to scare or harm them, by sharpening wisdom through realizing the non-substantial nature of fearful phenomena and fear itself, and by deepening meditation stability through tolerating fearful situations, Chodpas gradually achieve transcendence over attachments, fear, greed, and anger. Through the hardship of direct confrontation they advance, step by step, on the path toward Enlightenment.

The separation of the consciousness from the body indicates the mistake of identifying with the body. It is the aboard of this life; both this life and its aboard are transient and cannot be grasped for good. The

identification of the consciousness with the black Vajra Yogini signifies the recognition of the wisdom of non-self. On one hand, the black Vajra Yogini is a manifestation of the primordial wisdom of non-self; and on the other hand, due to the non-self nature of both the consciousness and the Yogini, they may be identified. Furthermore, the identification with the black Vajra Yogini, as it is the case in all tantric identification with a Yidam, is not grasping to a certain image but involves salvation activities. In other words, it is a dynamic approach to personality changes.

On the surface Chod seems to be an offering of only the body. Nevertheless, during the visualization the body has been identified with the universe, and consequently the offering means the offering of all things desirable. Thus, Chod is not just aiming at reduction of attachment to the body but also of all attachments. In terms of the traditional tantric classification of four levels, Chod could be characterized as a practice which frees one: outwardly from attachments to the body; inwardly, to sensual objects; secretly, to all desires and enjoyments; and most secretly, to self-centeredness. A Chodpa would gradually experience the transforming effects of Chod practices and become aware of its ever deeper penetration into the subtle and elusive core of one's attachments.

## 2. The Essential Ingredients of Chod

Chod as a tantric practice consists of the following

essential ingredients:

## A. The Blessing of the Lineage

In Tantric Buddhism lineage, meaning an unbroken line of proper transmissions of the teachings, is essential to practice and realization. This is because what is transmitted is not just the words but something spiritual and special. Through proper transmissions the blessings of all the generations of teachers are bestowed on the disciples. Without such blessings no one can even enter the invisible gate of Tantra. Tantric practices without the blessing of lineage may be likened to automobiles out of gas.

In Tantric Buddhism lineage is always emphasized and the teachers are revered as the root of blessings. In Sutra-yanas the importance of lineage is often overlooked by scholars who lack interest in practice and ordinary Buddhist followers. This is probably the main reason why in Tantric Buddhism blessings can often be directly sensed by practitioners while in Sutra-yanas such experiences are less frequently encountered.

All tantric practices derive their special effectiveness from the blessing that is transmitted through the lineage. In the case of Chod, the blessing from Machig Labdron is the source of such blessings. All other teachers that form the various lineages of Chod are also indispensable to the continuation of these lineages; without their accomplishments and devoted services to the Dharma,

the teachings would not be still available today. Therefore, we should remember their grace and always hold them in reverence.

To a practitioner who is fortunate enough to have received the blessings of a lineage, the meaning of lineage becomes his devotion, with all his heart and soul, to carry on, to preserve and transmit the teachings for all generations (of disciples, the real beneficiaries,) to come.

## B. The Wisdom of Recognition and Transformation

Self-clinging is the fundamental hindrance to Enlightenment and the fundamental cause of transmigration in samsara. Although it is the main obstacle for a Buddhist practitioner to eradicate, its subtle nature and elusive ways are beyond easy comprehension. Even the very attempt to attack or reduce self-clinging might very well be indeed an expression of egocentrism, if the motive is limited to self-interest. Facing the dilemma of an invisible enemy who is possibly lurking behind one's every move, it amounts to an almost impossible task! Thanks to the wisdom insight of Machig Labdron, the root of self-clinging has been singled out to be the body. Once this is made clear, and the body being a concrete object, the remaining task is much simpler, though not easier.

According to the wisdom insight of Machig Labdron, the real demons are everything that hinders the

attainment of liberation. Keeping this wisdom insight in mind, on one hand, all judgments based on personal preferences and interests should be given up, and on the other hand, all obstacles and adversaries could be transformed by one's efforts into helping hands on the path toward liberation. For example, a gain could be a hindrance to liberation if one is attached to it, while an injury could be a help to liberation if one uses it to practice tolerance, forgiveness and compassion.

Applying this wisdom insight to the root of self-clinging, the body, Machig Labdron formulated the visualization of Chod, and thereby transformed the root of hindrance into the tool for attaining compassion and liberation.

### C. Impermanence and Complete Renunciation

The body is the very foundation of our physical existence. Even after it has been recognized to be the root of self-clinging, it is still very difficult to see how to treat it to bring about spiritual transcendence and liberation. Destroying the body would certainly end the possibility of further spiritual advancement in this life but not necessarily the self-clinging. The fact that beings are transmigrating from life to life attests to this. Ascetic practices may temporarily check the grip of physical desires over spiritual clarity and purity, but transcendence depending on physical abuse can hardly be accepted as genuine liberation. The Buddha had clearly taught that the right path is the middle one away from the extremes of asceticism and hedonism.



A fundamental and common approach of Buddhist teachings is to remind everyone of the fact of Impermanence. All things are in constant changes, even though some changes are not readily recognizable. The change from being alive to dead could occur at any moment and could happen in just an instant. Keeping impermanence in mind, one can clearly see that all our attachments to the body are based primarily on wishful thinking. To be ready for and able to transcend the events of life and death one needs to see in advance that all worldly possessions, including the body, will be lost sooner or later. Hence, a determination to renounce all worldly possessions is the first step toward spiritual awakening and liberation. Chod as a Buddhist practice is also based on such awareness of impermanence and complete renunciation. In fact, many Chodpas adopt not just the ritual practice but also a way of life that exemplifies such awakening. Many Chodpas are devout beggars or wondering yogis who stay only in cemeteries or desolate places and do not stay in one place for more than seven consecutive days.

The offering of the body through visualization in a Chod ritual is an ingenious way to counter our usual attitude toward the body; instead of possession, attachment, and tender, loving care, the ritual offers new perspectives as to what could happen to the body as a physical object and thereby reduces the practitioners' fixation with the body, enlarge their perspectives, and help them to appreciate the position of the body on the cosmic scale. Chodpas would fully realize that the body

is also impermanent, become free from attachment to it, and ready to renounce it when the time comes. When one is ready to renounce even the body, the rest of the worldly possessions and affairs are no longer of vital concern, only then can one make steadfast advancement on the quest for Enlightenment.

#### D. Bodhicitta

Machig Labdron emphasizes that the offering of the body in Chod practice is an act of great compassion for all beings, especially toward the practitioner's creditors and enemies. Great compassion knows no partiality, hence the distinction of friends and foes, or relatives and strangers does not apply. Great compassion transcends all attachments to the self, hence all one's possessions, including the body, may be offered to benefit others. In every act of visualized offering of the bodily parts, the practitioner is converting an unquestioned attachment into an awakened determination to sacrifice the self for the benefit of all. In short, this is the ultimate exercise in contemplating complete self-sacrifice for achieving an altruistic goal.

Chod is a practice that kills two birds with one stone. On one hand, the attachment to the body and self would be reduced through the visualized activity of dismemberment; on the other hand, the visualized practice of satisfying all beings, especially one's creditors and enemies, through the ultimate and complete sacrifice of one's body would nurture one's

great compassion. When the attachment is weakened, the wisdom of non-self would gradually reveal itself. Consequently, Chod develops wisdom and compassion simultaneously in one practice; or to put it in another way, Chod is a practice that nurtures the unification of wisdom and compassion.

In Buddhism "Bodhicitta" refers to the ultimate unification of wisdom and compassion, the Enlightenment, and to the aspiration of achieving it. Therefore, we may say that Chod stems from the Bodhicitta of Machig Labdron, guides practitioners who are with Bodhicitta through the enactment of Bodhicitta, and would mature them for the attainment of Bodhicitta.

Only when one is completely devoted to the service of all sentient beings can one gain complete liberation from self-centeredness. Just as a headlong plunge takes a diver off the board, complete devotion to Dharma and complete attainment of liberation happens simultaneously. Only when considerations involving oneself is eradicated, will an act in the name of the Dharma become indeed an act of Bodhicitta, of Enlightenment. Developing Bodhicitta in place of self-centeredness is the effective and indispensable approach to liberation from self, and Chod is the epitome of this approach.

## E. Meditation Stability and Visualization

The visualization practice of Chod is not an act of

imagination. Were it just imagining things in one's mind, there is no guarantee that such practice would not drive one insane. To practice Chod properly one should have some attainment of meditation stability so that the visualizations are focused and not mixed with delusive and scattered thoughts or mental images. Indeed, Chod should be practiced as akin to meditation in action.

To be free from attachments to the body, we have seen above that destroying or abusing it would not do. It is the great ingenuity of Machig Labdron to recognize that attachments being mental tendencies can be properly corrected by mental adjustments. Visualizations performed by practitioners with meditation stability could have the same or even stronger effects as real occurrences. Furthermore, visualizations can be repeated over and over again to gradually overcome propensities until their extinction.

Using visualization in Chod practices the body remains intact and serves as a good foundation for the practitioner's advancement on the path to Enlightenment, while the attachment to the body and all attachments stemming from it are being chopped down piece by piece.

Visualizations performed in meditation stability is a valid way of communication with the consciousness of beings who are without corporeal existence. Hence Chod visualizations as performed by adepts are real encounters of the supernatural kind. They could yield

miraculous results such as healing of certain ailments or mental disorders that are caused by ghosts or evil spirits, and exorcism that restores peace to a haunted place.

The five essential ingredients as stated and explained above constitute the key to the formulation of Chod as a Buddhist tantric practice. A thorough understanding of the significance of these essentials is both a prerequisite to and a fruit of successful Chod practices.

### 3. The Benefits of Chod Practice

Enlightenment is of course the ultimate goal of Chod practice. Machig Labdron revealed her vast spiritual experiences by indicating signs of various stages of realization in Chod. These teachings are still well preserved in Chod traditions. Through the References listed at the end of this work serious readers may find some of these teachings.

In addition to the fruits of realization as indicated above and the application of spiritual power to healing and exorcism as mentioned earlier, there are other benefits that may be derived from Chod practice. Chod practice can help booster the courage and determination to devote one's whole being to practice, beyond considerations of physical well-being and life, thereby achieving complete renunciation and significant realization. Chod practice could help total removal of subconscious hindrances that are most difficult to become aware of because these would surface only

when challenged by grave situations like dismemberment.

In a dream state I sensed the relaxing effect of Chod; those joints of my body that were tense became relaxed when a curved knife cut through them. The tension in our mind is enhanced by our underlying concept of the body. By removing the mental image of the body through Chod the tension is reduced. The natural state of one's body exists before the arising of concepts, and hence, to return to it one needs to transcend the grip of conceptuality.

Many kinds of death are horrible to normal thinking; through practicing Chod it is possible to go beyond attachment to physical existence, and have enough spiritual experiences to understand that whatever the manner of death may be they are just different ways to exit from the physical existence. Such a broad perspective would enable one to remain serene in facing unthinkable tragedies. Such an understanding would make it easier to tolerate, forgive and forgo vengeance.

#### 4. Dispelling Misconceptions about Chod

A fundamental rule of conduct of tantric Buddhism is the proper caring of, though not attachment to, the body. In tantric Buddhism the ritual of Burned Scars of Sila Commitment and the offering of burned fingers are not practiced. Most tantric practices transfer one's preoccupation with the body by visualization of the

wisdom body of one's Yidam. In Chod the visualization and identification with the black Vajra Yogini is important, but emphasis is on the visualization of cutting and offering the body. The dismemberment is done in visualization only, hence there is no infringement of the rule of conduct.

In tantric practices the body is usually "meditated away" by returning it in visualization to its empty nature of formlessness. Chod differs from the rest by cutting it away for the compassionate cause of satisfying others' needs. Chod should not therefore be considered as a practice contrary to the rest. As far as the body is concerned, either approach depends on and makes use of the conditional nature of the body.

The activities visualized in Chod may seem like outbursts of anger, hatred or other negative mentalities or barbaric drives. Indeed the dismemberment visualized in Chod is not intended as a redirection or outlet for any negative impulse or drive. Nor would it result in habitual actions that are negative or barbaric because the visualizations are clearly understood to be born of compassion and there is no bodily enactment that imitates the visualizations. To a Chodpa these visualized activities represent determinations to destroy the illusion of a permanent body which exists in concepts only. In the motivation of Chod there is not even the faintest trace of a wanton disregard for life and the body. The coolness to see and use the body as an object without reference to self is a display of wisdom,

while the intention to satisfy all others' needs is born of great compassion. We should not commit the fallacy of deducing intention from behavior because similar behaviors may have originated from diverse motives. Nor should we be confined by considerations involving appearances into submission to the tyranny of taboos; the liberation of employing whatever means that seems appropriate is a true mark of wisdom.

The dismemberment visualizations of Chod are opposite to morbid obsession with cruelty, sadism, self-mortification, masochism and suicidal mania. Obsession with cruelty, sadism, self-mortification, masochism and suicidal mania are results of self-centeredness or its consequential inability to appreciate the vast openness of the world and what life could offer for the better. Chod works directly toward the reduction of self-centeredness. Chod and the rest may appear to have similar elements, but they are squarely opposite in motivation, mentality during practice, and the consequential results.

The dismemberment visualizations would seem gruesome from an ordinary point of view; however, from the point of view of things as they are and life as it is, there is nothing frightful in what could have happened, nor in what had happened. It is very important to appreciate the openness of mind that Chod visualizations may lead to. In this respect Chod may be compared to inoculation.



The black Wisdom Yogini is a manifestation of the wisdom of selflessness. Her appearance may seem peculiar to people who have not been initiated into her secret teachings, but the reader should be assured that every aspect of her appearance signifies a certain aspect of the wisdom and compassion of Enlightenment. This remark is to dispel shallow mislabeling of Chod as a kind of demonic worship.

Actually none of the misunderstandings discussed above would occur to a Buddhist practitioner who has undergone the preliminary practices and possesses a proper understanding of the philosophy and significance of Chod. However, such misunderstandings would readily occur to most people who happens to come across Chod rituals. Therefore, I think it advantageous to bring them out for discussion so that they would be put to rest once for all.

Chod is an antidote to grasping of the body and the self, but not a method to increase antagonism. The basic spirit of Chod is not to destroy, conquer or become an enemy of creditors, evil spirits, etc. Its essence is self-sacrifice out of compassion and wisdom. Chod is an antidotal practice; a Chodpa should not thereby become over concerned with the body in the opposite direction, e. g., feeling aversion toward the body. The ideal result should be freedom from preoccupation with the body and the self.

Chod is an extreme practice. It is not the only path

toward liberation from self, but it is a valid path toward liberation. Without such understanding one's knowledge of what it means to be liberated from the self is incomplete and possibly erroneous.

### III. Yogi Chen's Ritual of Chod

The Sadhana of Almsgiving the Body to Dispel  
Demonic Hindrance, Karmic Creditors, Attachment  
to Self and the Concept of the Body

written in Chinese by

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#### 1. Brief Introduction

From Lama Gensang Zecheng I received "Great Perfection Pinnacle Wisdom," and from Dharma teacher Rev. Yan Ding I received the oral instruction on the text and commentary of the preliminary practice of this practice, which I had written down. The Gushali (Kusali) Accumulation, i.e., the practice of almsgiving of the body, contained therein consists of only eighteen sentences. The supreme practice of this method belongs to the Jiulangba (Chodpa) Lineage which has been transmitted from Maji Nozhun (Machig Labdron; the transliteration is in accordance with Guru Chen's pronunciation) down to the present day. The practitioners of this lineage do not practice other sadhanas but concentrate on this practice, and many attained realizations. This practice can dispel the concept of the body, cut through the attachment to self, and ward off hindrance caused by Karmic creditors, thereby enabling a straightforward advancement on the Great Path toward Bodhi. I searched for this teaching,

but due to the absence of an Tibetan-Chinese interpreter, I failed to translate the root tantra of this teaching. Consequently, based on the eighteen sentences on Gushali which constitute one of the six preliminary practices of Great Perfection, I expand the sequence and write down this work.

## 2. Main Text

### (1) Motivation

*May all sentient beings, who are limitless, like space, in number and are like mother to me, possess pure and joyful body, and the causes resulting in such a body!*

*May all sentient beings, who are limitless, like space, in number and are like mother to me, be free from impure and tormenting body, and the causes resulting in such a body!*

*May all sentient beings, who are limitless, like space, in number and are like mother to me, be inseparable from Great Pleasure Wisdom Non-death Rainbow Body!*

*May all sentient beings, who are limitless, like space, in number and are like mother to me, stay far away from distinguishing friends and foes, relatives and enemies, and abide in the equanimity of the Great Essential Body!*

## (2) Contemplation on Impermanence

Visualize that all Karmic creditors, from present and past lives, of oneself and others in the cemetery, appear and gather in front, simultaneously become keenly aware of impermanence, and preach Dharma to them. Then recite the following stanza with the accompaniment of bell and drum, chanting in a slow tempo.

*All those present and gather here have a sorrowful body;*

*Our sufferings are rooted in dependence on the body.*

*All things are originally pure, without a polluted body;*

*Defilement is piled up by one owing to this ignorance.*

*Possessing an impure body causes grasping of it as a castle of self;*

*Benefiting oneself and annoying others, all faults are thus accomplished.*

*Mind having grasped at this body, the body is no longer light;*

*Piling layers upon layers of impurity, the coarse five elements are formed.*

*Coarse wind drifts and flows, with ignorance riding on this trend;*

*Like a horse out of control, the five poisons are ever winding.*

*The body leads to greedy love, such love leads to seven sorts of emotions;*

*The body leads to ignorance or anger, these are also*

*causes for downfall.*

*Killing and Robbing are mainly committed by hand,  
leading to sexual misconduct are the eyes;*

*How many sinful deeds are committed by voice from  
the mouth!*

*Empty stomach and dried intestines, frostbite and  
cracked skin,*

*Unbearable hunger and cold are followed by  
misdeeds.*

*Eating salty dried animal corpse, wearing materials  
woven by silkworms,*

*Trampling on insects while walking, how many lives  
have we damaged?*

*When heavy and coarse five poisons pervade, anger  
and killing cause the downfall into hell;*

*The body will be broken into pieces and then revive  
instantly to repeat the punishment, no break for such  
sins!*

*Leprosy and cholera are born from greed in food and  
sex;*

*Crippled legs, cramped hands and venereal diseases  
may thus gather in the body.*

*Followers of other religions practice with attachment  
to the body, and hence cannot transcend samsara;*

*The wrong view of a self leads to ascetic practice of  
vainly covering the body with ashes.*

*Variation in Karma of the three realms is dependent  
on the coarseness of their bodies;*

*Formless realm is free from the body and yet still  
bound by the confines of space.*

*To pursue clothing and food for the body, family*

*members fight against one another;  
Distinguishing friends and foes, families and countries,  
the world is full of wars.  
Heavenly bodies suffer five defects, human beings may  
die young suddenly;  
Having tiny neck but huge stomach, hungry ghosts are  
even more pitiful.  
The strong preying on the weak, bows and arrows, nets  
and traps,  
Knives and cutting boards, pans and pots, the sorrow  
of animal bodies are multiple.  
Eight freezing and eight sizzling hells, lasting for  
many kalpas,  
Suffering without a break, the body is restored as soon  
as it is in pieces!  
Sinful deeds are committed by the body, consequences  
are also received by the body;  
In transmigration beings are preying on others who  
were their children in past lives, without realizing this  
fact.  
Just considering the debts and hostility of this life,  
when can they be paid off?  
Understanding that the grasping mind is without  
substance, we attain equanimity.*

### **(3) Visualization of Impure and Pure Bodies**

Visualize in the impure body a white wisdom drop, the size of a pea, situated within the medium channel at the center of the heart chakra. This wisdom drop gathers all wisdom wind and the pure six elements—the

constituents of all Buddha bodies, the essence of life and merits without remains; the rest of the body is impure. Yell "Pei" (Phat) once to eject this wisdom drop upward through the Gate of Rebirth in Pureland at the top of the head. Visualize that this wisdom drop transforms into the black Hai Mu (Dorje Pagmo) whose appearance is just as described in the Sadhana of Hai Mu.

Abide in the Samadhi of All-in-One, a Hua-Yen (Avatamsaka) Mystic Gate, and visualize that the sinful Karma, sickness, hindrance, and evil disturbance of all sentient beings in the three realms are gathering into the impure body left below. All beings, including oneself, who have been persecuted by Karmic creditors and enemies, merge into this body and are ready to be offered.

#### **(4) Transformation of Impurity through Offering**

A. At first visualize the usual offering of five kinds of meat and five kinds of nectar in a skull cup. Recite these six words: Lang, Yang, Kang, Weng, A, Hong, and simultaneously visualize according to their respective meanings of fire, wind, space, increase, purify and transform.

B. Then visualize in accordance with the following stanza. At the beginning of each sentence yell "Pei" first, and visualize the pure body of Hai Mu cut this part off the impure body and add it into the skull cup.



*The thick forest of delusions, the self grasped by other religions, chop off the head, contain the offerings to be rid of heavenly demons.*

*The sinful Karma of the five-limb body, accumulated from killing and erotic behavior, mince it to pieces and powder, thereby all grievances are forgiven.*

*The five organs and six intestines, the thirty-six impurities, chop them into pieces and stripes, the demons of Death and Aggregates are eliminated.*

*Leprosy and malignant poisons, all sorts of contagious germs, transformed into nectar, what can the Demon of Disease employ?*

*Sinful speeches are issued from the tongue, throat and windpipe, chop them off and offer them to Buddha, grudge and animosity are thereby released.*

*Delusions and scattered thoughts, all Karmic winds, join the air to blow up the fire, after the offering all are relinquished.*

*Mental Karma of greed, anger and ignorance, most are rooted in the sexual organs, chop it off and transform it into offering, enemies of jealousy are forever pulverized.*

*Six imbalances of fire and water elements,*

*transformed into the soup in the skull cup, or help the cooking fire, they will not run wild from now on!*

### **(5) Bless the Offerings**

A. Recite in the usual fashion, "Lang, Yang, Kang" and consider the fire of desires and the wind of Karma transform into those of wisdom, and the skull of the impure body merge into the huge skull cup visualized earlier, and all delusions also merge into the skull cup. Recite as usual, "Weng, A, Hong" and consider all parts of the body that have been chopped off are thereby transformed from scant to abundance, from impure to pure, and from Karmic to transcendental; then all these merge into a boundless ocean of nectar for limitless offering.

B. Recite the following stanza and visualize accordingly:

*The supreme blessing, like a shadow without substance, beyond awareness and intention, light of equanimity pervades.*

(Abide in the Mahamudra Samadhi of Wisdom Light)  
The secret blessing, the A-Han (Ewam) joy of the Yidam, proper and improper sexual behaviors, all are full of wisdom drops.

(Abide in the Embrace Union Samadhi of Bliss Sunyata.  
All worldly and transcendental beings merge with the Yidam parents, thereby even beings engaging in wrong sexual behaviors are blessed and offer their wisdom drops.)

***The inner blessing, Maha Yoga, the Great Harmony, killing in itself or as means, killing indiscriminately, the meat is piling up.***

(Abide in the Great Subduing Samadhi of Mahakala. Killing all evil, demonic beings and yet transfer their consciousness into Yidam bodies, and their corpses are added into the ocean of nectar for offering.)

***The outer blessing, all sorts of red and white delicacies, pure without pollution, all inclusive without omission.***

(Abide in the Pervading Heaven-and-Earth Samadhi of Great Offering. Abide in the incomprehensible Mystic Gate of Mutual Complementary of Visible and Invisible; all meat and vegetables in the world, of men or heaven, become offerings without interfering one another.)

## **(6) Formal Offering and Almsgiving**

A. First make offerings to the Gurus, Yidams, Dakinis, Protectors, etc.

B. Then make almsgiving to all grudgers and creditors of oneself and others in present and past lives, fulfill their appetites so that they are all very pleased and become Dharma protectors, no longer causing obstacles. After the almsgiving of nectar, offer them Buddhist teachings, at least recite the Heart Sutra once and the Mantra of Releasing Grievances seven times, or recite, in addition, other sutras, mantras or stanzas to instill wisdom and compassion. The details are omitted (by the author, but not the translator) here.

## **(7) Participation in Realization**

Eat and drink the food offerings that are displayed in the Mandala; visualize oneself as the Yidam and recite the following stanza:

*Like gold in ore, once purified would not be ore again,  
majestic and magnificent, the vajra body is holy and  
pure.*

*Tummo needs no clothing, nectar needs no food,  
partaking food on behalf of all beings, there is neither  
gain nor loss.*

*Karmic winds are exhausted, scattered thoughts no  
longer arise, abiding in right thoughts, Dharmakaya is  
as indestructible as diamond.*

*Lion king entering the forest, pacing at will without  
fear, in contact with five poisons, the four demons  
dare not confront.*

*Wisdom body with wisdom eyes, seeing without duality,  
no trace of self, neither intention nor mistake.*

*Abiding in the equanimity of friends and foes,  
renouncing all love and hatred, the great compassion  
of same entity, turning all connections into  
enlightening activities.*

*Great enjoyment of wisdom, the sublime joy offered by  
Dakinis, the precious youthful vase body, supreme joy  
everlasting.*

*Pure body with all channels open, supernatural  
transformations occur without limit, fulfill completely  
all wishes, salvation of all beings that ends samsara!*

*Inconspicuously, as the Eternal Silent Light;*

*conspicuously, as the wondrous rainbow; completing with the eight merits, it is the treasure of all Enlightenment.*

*Free from preconception and live in ease, without the body yet the great self remains, as long as there are beings remain in samsara, that would be the reason for my non-death.*

## **(8) Dedication of Merits**

*Seer and hearer, ridiculer and accuser, when being thought of, they all become liberated.*

*From the impure body transform into wisdom body; eternal, joyful, free and pure, all attain Buddha's five bodies.*

In the years of the Republic of China, Ji Chou (year), First month, the fourth day (i.e., Feb. 1, 1949), on the occasion of the auspicious birthday of the Maha Siddha of Non-death, Dangtong Jiapo (Thangtong Gyalpo), and the auspicious date of Holy Mind Green Dragon, composed in the retreat room in the Burmese Buddhist Monastery on the Vulture Peak in India.

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## IV. Chod in the Light of Limitless-Oneness

Chod was named by its founder Machig Labdron as the Chod of Mahamudra. This indicates that the goal and function of this practice is nothing other than achieving Full Enlightenment. Enlightenment may be characterized in various ways to help people appreciate the value of working toward it and understand the principles underlying practices leading toward it. In recent years I have chosen to characterize Enlightenment as Limitless-Oneness which is originally pure. For a detailed exposition please read the first two chapters of my book "The Sixfold Sublimation in Limitless-Oneness" which is available for free distribution.

In the light of Enlightenment as Limitless-Oneness, the fundamental guiding principle of all Buddhist practices may be likened to a sword of liberation with two blades; one side is Opening Up, and the other side is No Attachment. The function of each Buddhist practice may be understood through these two aspects. As to advanced practices that emphasize non-duality as the approach, or refinement of all practices through non-duality in Sunyata meditation, one simply needs to remember that both blades are of the same sword.

In Limitless-Oneness all notions of a self are extinguished by limitlessness. No attachment in this indescribable state features two aspects: On one hand, it is the growing out of all kinds of attachments, like a

man free from the importance of childhood toys; on the other hand, it is freedom from the self-deceit that one could judge or control others. With full awareness of the selfless and conditional nature of all things, one would not interfere in others' ways but become liberated in such open-mindedness. Only thorough understanding of the conditional nature of all things could one help shape a sensible and tolerant outlook on life. The significance of this remark would become more obvious if one looks at ways of life that are guided by fanatic and dogmatic beliefs.

Limitless-Oneness implies, on one hand, the oneness of different aspects such as all aspects of Buddhahood, all aspects of samsara, etc., and on the other hand, the oneness of opposites such as good and evil, wisdom and ignorance, compassion and cruelty, etc. Both kinds of oneness would seem either confusing or impossible from the normal logical point of view. Therefore, its transcendental purport will be carefully explained below.

Limitless-Oneness is the originally pure state that a Buddha became awaken to at the moment of Enlightenment, i.e., the complete and final emergence from engulfment in worldly life. In such a state all distinctions are harmonized in their original purity and oneness. Such oneness can be experienced but cannot be described. Such oneness is beyond the understanding of beings who are still dominated by worldly considerations and know only to grasp on transient

distinctions. In such oneness the distinctions are still recognizable and yet simultaneously undifferentiable. Please consider the analogy of a loving mother who can distinguish all her children and yet could not make any distinction in her love toward them.

The Limitless-Oneness of opposites, such as good and evil, wisdom and ignorance, compassion and cruelty, etc., could be understood in an additional light. These opposites are in oneness in the sense that they are like two ends of the same street, the street being the conditional nature of all things. The conditions may be pulling and pushing toward one end or the other and resulting in extreme opposites, but both ends are similar as results determined solely by the combination of conditions. Once this conditional nature of opposites is understood, what is the justification for us to be proud of our goodness, to blame others for their evil activities, or to hold our goodness in antagonism against others' evil activities? With a switch in the circumstances, they could have been in our position and we theirs. Lacking such understanding often results in shallow displays of moral indignation and condemnation. One who sees deeply into the conditional nature of opposites could not help but have sympathy and compassion for all the fightings of opposites in life. Without such insight how could anyone forgive and forbear all the wrong doings in the world, and persist in the pure pursuit of Enlightenment?

In the light of Limitless-Oneness the usual distinction



and antagonism of opposites would become meaningless. The one and only essential task would become the awakening of all beings to Limitless-Oneness because that is the ultimate and true solution to all problems and sufferings in samsara. Machig Labdron's teaching that the real demons are everything that hinders the attainment of liberation obviously stems from this transcendental and panoramic perspective. Furthermore, any method that is conducive to this transcendental awareness could be employed under suitable guidance by experienced teachers. Therefore, the dismemberment visualizations and the inhabitation at desolate places by Chodpas should be understood in this light and be respected for its transcendental significance. Just as the activities of surgeons and coroners are service to mankind, the visualizations of Chodpas are service to beings at the spiritual level.

Although the object of visualized cutting is the body of the practicing Chodpa, it has been identified through visualization with all things in the Buddhist cosmos. Such an identification may seem absurd from the ordinary point of view; nevertheless, it is not a delusive act of imagination or self-deceit. Such an identification is possible only in the light of Limitless-Oneness, and it is meaningful because all things lack self nature, and when the illusion of a self is cleared away, they are experienced to be originally in oneness. Indeed, a Chodpa must understand the philosophy of Limitless-Oneness, of the unity of Dharmadhatu and the

selfless nature of all things, in order to practice properly. Through such universal identification in visualization a Chodpa would gradually gain insight and experiences in the realization of Limitless-Oneness.

The main obstacle to realization of Limitless-Oneness is self-clinging. The main purpose of Chod visualizations is to reduce and eradicate self-clinging that is rooted in identification with the body. Hence Chod is a fundamental approach that works directly at the root of the hindrance, and its result would no doubt be a direct experience of Limitless-Oneness when the identification with the body is cut away. This is the reason why Machig Labdron characterized her teachings as the Chod of Mahamudra, thereby indicating that it is for the attainment of Dharmakaya.

The identification of a Chodpa's consciousness with the black Vajra Yogini should also be appreciated in the light of Limitless-Oneness. Vajra Yogini is a wisdom being meaning that she is a manifestation of the ultimate Limitless-Oneness. Through this manifestation all enlightened beings are represented, and all their wisdom, compassion and blessings are gathered. The practicing Chodpa is no longer an ordinary sentient being but the representative of all enlightened beings. Consequently all the visualized activities cannot have any connection with the self but aim only at the salvation of all beings in samsara. In modern terms, the Vajra Yogini serves as a role model for Chodpas, and in general, Yidams are transcendental role models for tantric practitioners.

In Limitless-Oneness spatial and temporal references would lose significance, consequently the salvation activities are unbounded by spatial and temporal considerations and limits. This is by no means fanciful talk only. Supernatural events and abilities that transcend the normal spatial/temporal limitations are abundant. The practice of Chod, indeed of any Buddhist teaching, should be undertaken in full accordance with such understanding. The practitioner should possess a firm conviction that the practice does affect the salvation of all beings everywhere for all eternity.

The transcendence of Buddhist practices over spatial and temporal limitations also implies the carrying over of Buddhist insight gained through practices into daily life. Chod practiced in the light of Limitless-Oneness would free one from worldly considerations and thereby enable one to see clearly what is of real significance in life and make wise decisions in daily life. Furthermore, Buddhist practices would last a whole life for devout practitioners and there are even practices for the dying process and the Bardo (intermediate) state between death and the next life. A Chodpa could practice the identification with the black Vajra Yogini during the dying process or the Bardo state and thereby transcend ordinary death. When the identification is achieved, the dismemberment practice would then become the first act of universal salvation for this enlightened being.

The non-dual state of selflessness is emphasized by all Buddhist practices as the ultimate goal and achievement.

No Buddhist practice is authentic without sublimation through meditation of non-duality. Chod practiced in the light of Limitless-Oneness is a direct attempt to realize non-duality. It is a practice of non-dual activities, or of non-duality in action. Even though Chod visualizations involve the cutter, the knife and the body dismembered, all of them are cooperating as a team in achieving freedom from superficial duality. Non-duality should not be synonymous to non-distinctions and non-activities. Were they synonymous, why not simply use "dead" instead? Non-duality is truly realized only when the bondage of attachment to appearances is dismembered. When the servitude of submission to formality and appearance ends, non-duality is everywhere all the time, alive and active in a natural way.

What is the difference between one action as performed by a Buddha and a similar action as done by an ordinary person? If the actions could be isolated, taken out of their contexts, then on the scale of the universe there would probably be no noticeable difference. Nevertheless, a fundamental difference does exist in that each action of an ordinary person is somehow connected to self-centeredness and limited by spatial and temporal connections and considerations, whereas each action of a Buddha is an opportune expression of the wisdom and compassion stemming from Limitless-Oneness. Any Buddhist practice, including Chod, should be an attempt to channel all mental and physical activities into Limitless-Oneness. A Buddhist practitioner should

practice with the intention to imbue the openness of Limitless-Oneness into all one's thoughts, emotions and activities.

Why is Chod a practice that can be taught to novices as a preliminary practice and yet is also characterized as a practice aiming at the highest achievement of Enlightenment? In the light of Limitless-Oneness the answer is forthcoming. In Chod there is a tangible object to work with, namely the body in visualization. Hence it can be taught to novices as a preliminary practice, and as such its main function is the accumulation of merits through almsgiving and the reduction of bad karma through paying back to creditors and enemies. As a Chodpa gradually understands better and better the philosophy of Limitless-Oneness and gains more and more insight and realization through accumulation of Chod practices, Chod gradually displays its intended function and power as a direct attack to the self-clinging rooted in attachment to the body. In other words, as a Chodpa expands gradually into Limitless-Oneness through Chod practices, Chod is simultaneously sublimated from a superficial enactment of imagined activities into an experience of Limitless-Oneness in action.

In the light of Limitless-Oneness the transient nature of one's physical existence becomes obvious. In fact, one's physical existence could end at any moment. This is no reason for despair because one's wisdom and compassion could take shape through activities that

would have influence everywhere forever. Furthermore, the transient nature of our physical existence, once fully understood, could help us become free from self-centeredness; it would then become easier to give up preoccupation with something that cannot be kept for good. One could then even sense the common fate of living beings, the fear, the dangers, the struggles and the sufferings of life, and awake to the compassion that encompasses all beings in oneness. The conditional nature of all things would dictate the continuation of samsara with its many pitfalls. Nevertheless, the compassion born of Limitless-Oneness also commands unceasing enlightened activities of salvation. Dedicating one's life to the service of the cultivation of all beings' Enlightenment becomes a deliberate choice and act of will that illustrates the transcendence of Bodhicitta, the unification of wisdom and compassion, over transient human existence. One who lives a life of Dharma service would enjoy what life could offer best. Chod practiced in the light of Limitless-Oneness becomes natural and meaningful; without the illumination of Limitless-Oneness Chod could become a bloody struggle with the self that even further tightens the bound of self-consciousness.

## V. Reflections on Chod

Through my Dharma practices I gradually become less concerned with myself and begin to attempt to appreciate the limitless perspective of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The basic structure of Chod consists of the destruction of the body and self, and identification with the black Vajra Yogini and her salvation activities. The underlying message of this structure seems to convey the following image: The great mother Machig, from her infinite compassion and liberation, is looking down at all sentient beings suffering in samsara and calling out: Do not be fooled by the body and its transient existence, cut through attachment to it and all worldly considerations, become one with the wisdom of selflessness and devote your life to salvation services!

Chod is a universal practice in almsgiving because what is given away is in everyone's possession, even a beggar can practice almsgiving in this way. However, Chod amounts to the most difficult practice in almsgiving because what would be given away, if the intention is taken seriously, is the body and that means one's very existence. The extent of sacrifice that a Chod practice is hinting at would be a challenge to one's sincerity in the practice of almsgiving.

Proper caring of the physical body is emphasized by Tantra. However, there is also the teaching that one should act with complete disregard for oneself in order to be liberated and to best serve others. How could these

contrary teachings be balanced or even harmonized in practice? Under normal circumstances proper caring of the body is adequate because it would enable one to perform and continue Dharma practices and services. Nevertheless, there are also situations when complete disregard for one's interests is needed in order to gain enlightened realization or provide better compassionate service. For example, very advanced tantric practitioners would live a life of spontaneity to realize non-duality. Such a way of life takes neither one's health and life, nor social norms and values into consideration. As recorded in the "Sutra of Compassionate Flowers," Great Bodhisattvas had willingly given all their possessions including bodily parts to satisfy sentient beings' wishes; their intention is simply to set ultimate examples of compassionate services. Chod is an ideal harmonization of these contrary teachings. On one hand, there is no physical damages involved in the practice, and on the other hand, self-sacrifice is practiced over and over again in visualization.

Viewing the body as the aboard of this life, then the practice of Chod also implies freedom from attachment to one's aboard, to one's native place, to one's experiences good or bad, and to a sense of familiarity. It is difficult to become free from attachments to all these; if one can observe oneself carefully then it will become apparent that one is always reacting to one's past experiences good or bad, and that one's activities are often tinted by the shadow of past experiences. The aim



of all Buddhist practices is the complete emancipation from all bondages, and to achieve this goal a practitioner needs to extend the implication of his practices to all aspects of daily life. Therefore, the extension of implication as indicated above is of great importance.

One basic constituent of the notion of something that exists independently is that it is there continuously without noticeable changes. In fact, all things change in time and there is no such continuity; the only continuity that anything might have is one's grasping to the concept of it, and, upon closer examination, this grasping often turns out to be also impermanent. Most of the time one's grasping to the body is simply a grasping to a vague mental concept or image. Through the visualization of dismemberment Chod is mentally destroying the spatial and temporal continuity of the imagery of one's body. Hence, Chod is a practice to go beyond the grasping to the mental image of one's body. Through Chod practices it is possible to reach the stage that is free from this image.

Ma Machig, as she is affectionately called by Tibetans, emphasizes that in Chod the offerings should be given out of compassion. Through the offering of the body in visualization the object of attachment is no longer there; consequently, two effects are arrived at simultaneously: To the donor, appreciation of both the wisdom of no attachment and the freedom from attachment increase; whereas to the recipients, they lost the object of their

antagonism (envy, animosity, malice, fighting, etc.), and instead of merely experiencing the non-existence of antagonism they are unexpectedly satisfied to their hearts' content. Due to such generosity they might reflect and gain some appreciation of Sunyata, especially the all encompassing aspect of it. How compassionate and wise is Ma Machig to have bestowed on us such a wonderful practice that all who are touched by it may grow in wisdom and compassion! This is indeed the epitome of a gift of compassion.

Transforming one's hindrances and weakness into helpful training grounds for advancement to the goal is the essential strategy that enlivens the quest for Enlightenment. Without such understanding and maneuvering the quest for Enlightenment could easily be trapped by formality and stereotyped thinking into the snare of dualistic antagonism, the very trap that one is trying to avoid. This is also the reason why some advanced teachings in Buddhism would emphasize non-action over purposeful activities. (Non-action in this context does not mean no activities, but only no preconceived activities.) Through Chod the object of fundamental attachment and delusion is not only reduced but also wisely employed toward the development of compassion and Enlightenment. One could say that the strategy of Chod is to transform attachment into useful compassionate service; this is the marvelous wisdom of Ma Machig, the Dakini, and a special feature of advanced tantric practices in general.

Chod also provides an opportunity to face the moment of departure from this life, even though it is only in visualization. At such a moment a reflection of one's whole life would naturally arise; and one could not help but ask oneself about what one has done with this life and what it all means. If all worldly relations and possessions would abruptly become naught in the end, what better choice does one have than to devote oneself to the everlasting Dharma service and quest for Enlightenment? In the universal service of salvation through propagation of Dharma, personal death no longer means the end of service or the vacuousness of life. Since the moment of departure from this life is uncertain, how could we keep procrastinating our Dharma practices and services? The fragile nature of our health and vitality dictates that we engage in Dharma practices and services now lest the opportunity of a lifetime would be lost.

Blood relation is a basic bond of humanity, and it is based on the body. Hence, Chod would be an effective practice to transcend considerations and biases that are rooted in blood relations. Marital and sexual relations are related to the body, therefore the liberating effect of Chod would also spread over to curtail attachments rooted in such relations. Health and economic considerations are rooted in the preservation of the body. Therefore, Chod would also affect the grip of such worries. In short, all worldly considerations would be affected by Chod. It is necessary to work toward clarity of mind that transcends these relations and

considerations in order to attain Enlightenment. However, this does not mean that these relations and considerations are necessarily hindrances to liberation. Transcendence does not mean indifference to nor avoidance of these relations and considerations; indeed transcendence should imply an impartial understanding of the nature of all these worldly relations and considerations.

In the traditions of Chod there are many rituals with varying visualizations as to the manner of dismemberment and the principal and attending recipients invited. Such details of visualization are important because they enhance the effects of visualization. Besides, in the light of non-inherent-existence which implies the futility of grasping at concepts, these details are all there is to the practice.

Ma Machig teaches that there are three ways to pronounce "Phat," the key word used during a Chod practice, and each conveys respectively the intention of calling, cutting through, and offering. On one hand, we should be grateful for such teachings on fine discriminations in the usage of expressions; on the other hand, this fine point illustrates the versatility of formal expressions and the possibility of being misled by fixed interpretations of expressions.

The offering of the body as visualized in Chod signifies complete offering of one's worldly possessions,

including one's life. In fact, the path for a spiritual quest is often one of spiritual attainment through complete offering of one's life and self. For example, in Christianity in order to provide a basis for universal salvation Jesus made the dramatic and extreme sacrifice of knowingly moving toward crucifixion. Even now the blessing of his sacrifice is conveyed through the sacrament which uses bread and wine to symbolize the offering of his body and blood. Eucharist as practiced in Catholic churches resembles in spirit the dismemberment offering of Chod. In most cases one's spiritual quest consists of lifelong cultivation of transcendence through spiritual practices and services. Chod is quite suitable for lifelong cultivation of wisdom and compassion.

When one is preoccupied with minor things, one would lose sight of higher goals. Engaging in disputes over minor points would prevent one from recognizing the essential meaning of one's existence— What kind of life would be worth living? Does one have a purpose in life to live and die for? Facing life and death could awake one from worldly entanglements and cause one to look for the meaning of one's life. Chod is vividly connected to life and death through visualization. Hence, Chod could serve as a constant reminder of impermanence and help one to stay awake from worldly sorrows. Why should one remain in the mental state of holding grudge against anyone? Wake up from such a miserable mental cage, and live in one's natural innocence and purity.

Physical appearance is a major source of prejudice. Racial prejudices are basically due to identification with physical appearances. People whose appearances are disfigured by diseases or accidents are sometimes shunned or mistreated. The underlying common nature of humanity and even of all sentient beings is identical. To thoroughly experience this truth one needs to be free from preconceptions based on attachment to appearances. Chod is the chopping off of all appearances and all attachments to appearances, therefore it is a very handy tool in achieving liberation from the tyranny of appearances.

Just as the quest for universal peace on earth and within human minds had risen from the ashes of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, from the destruction visualization of Chod would rise a sincere yearning for eternal liberation. The quest for peace would take generations of all people working together to maintain its vitality and obtain some tangible results. The quest for liberation would also require the continuous efforts and devotion of all who are drawn to it to grow, bloom and yield fruits. Chodpas with their profound yearning for liberation born of spiritual experiences would naturally endeavor to contribute to both the quest for liberation and the quest for peace. Peace without liberation is superficial and might entail suffering. Peace based on liberation will be genuine and everlasting.

## VI. Related Topics

Tantra is traditionally sealed in secrecy because many tantric practices are on the surface questionable and may lead to unnecessary controversies and hindrances. Chod is obviously one such practice, and that is why I tried to dispel possible misunderstandings earlier in this work. Another practice of this genre is the tantric love practice. It is beyond the scope of this work to go into a fine explication on this subject. Here I simply indicate that tantric love practice can also be regarded as a kind of offering of the body and the self. Of course, tantric love practice should not be considered as merely an offering because there are many significant and profound aspects of using and transcending sexuality to attain liberation.

In Tibetan culture a person's burial may take one of several forms such as burial under ground, cremation, water burial (scattering cremated ashes into a lake or river), and sky burial. Usually the burial to be chosen is determined by astrological calculations that take into consideration the times and dates of a person's birth and death. Sky Burials are usually conducted on a high plateau. It consists of Buddhist rituals as performed by Lamas, cutting off the corpse into pieces, including breaking the bones to expose the marrow, and thereby offering the body completely to the vultures. It is believed that such complete sacrifice would exhaust all one's bad karma, and that the merits generated through making such offerings to satisfy the vultures, representing all sentient beings, would enable one to

attain rebirth in a Buddha's Pureland of one's choice. Chod and the Sky Burial share the same outlook and belief as to the purpose and usefulness of dismemberment of the corpse.

How does Chod compare with organ and tissue donation and organ purchasing of our time? Besides the obvious that one is in visualization and the others are in deed, the motivation of Chod is neither for worldly rewards nor just limited to charity. Chod is motivated by the aspiration to achieve Enlightenment of all sentient beings. The fruits of Chod practices are often not immediately noticeable as in the case of organ transplants. However, real achievements do not go unnoticed; Chodpas who have attained realizations are inevitably recognized and revered by people who benefit from their healing or exorcism services. From our modern perspective Chod could be superficially linked to organ and tissue donation, and be introduced as a practice to prepare the mind for such donations. Actually, by learning more about Chod through practicing it, the outlook on life of a potential donor could be enlarged and even sublimated toward the quest for Enlightenment.



## References

1. Machig Labdron and the Foundations of Chod; Jerome Edou; 1996 Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York.

2. A Chinese translation of the Tibetan book "An Exposition of Transforming the Aggregates into an Offering of Food, Illuminating the Meaning of Chod"

《媽幾腦準祖師略傳及其施身法等教授》；裝巴阿度語，陳健民筆受。在圓明版《曲肱齋全集》第十七冊內。

3. My translation of this ritual constitutes Chapter III above: 〈除魔障冤孽我執身見施身法〉；在《曲肱齋推恩集》內，見圓明版《曲肱齋全集》第十六冊 207-214 頁。此即本書第三章之出處。

Appendices:

## **Giving Self up**

*Go no further into the haunting sorrows that are present.  
Consider instead how to respond to benefit all involved.  
Discarding what is hard to endure will lighten the load.  
Yielding to others' conveniences will open one's mind.*

Comment:

Chod, the tantric practice of cutting through, as taught by the female patriarch Machig Labdron simultaneously combines cutting attachment to body and making offerings to all beings into a superb practice. Now in the light of such wondrous unification of wisdom and compassion, one may apply the teaching to the cutting out of self-grasping. Since grasping to self is hard to discern one can confront only the sorrows that spring up in daily life. When one becomes aware of some sorrow or worry, on the one hand, one should practice not paying attention to it any further so as to get out of its shadow, simultaneously on the other hand, one should consider instead how to behave and respond so as to benefit all involved. In this way, whenever sorrows arise, one endeavors to practice giving self up to benefit others. Then all sorrows that are hard to endure will gradually dissipate out of neglect, while one's mind will gradually open up with the habit of making things convenient for others.

May this indication of how to extend the teaching of Chod into daily-life handling of sorrows and application of compassionate tolerance serve as a small token of my gratitude to the skillful teachings of Ma Machig.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 13, 2001  
El Cerrito, California

## Universal Chod

*In dream curved-knife cut through joints of limbs in blessing,*

*Immediately all joints of limbs to body felt relaxed and light.*

*Universally cut through all associations created by our minds,*

*In the absence of delusions and illusions original purity revives.*

Comment:

In 1996 during the course of my writing of the book, "Chod in Limitless-Oneness," in a dream I saw a curved-knife cut through the four joints that connect my limbs to the body, and immediately all those areas felt relaxed and I understood that it was the blessing of the releasing effect of Chod. This morning while I was asleep suddenly I comprehended that, if the principle of such blessing is applied universally to cutting through all associations to matters and objects that are created by our minds, then all delusions and illusions would be cleared away. Our worries never ceased because our mental association never stopped. If one could universally Chod (cut through) mental associations, then one would immediately resume the tranquility of original purity.

Written in Chinese on June 6, 2006

Taipei, Taiwan  
Translated on June 30, 2006  
El Cerrito, California

## Root Reflection

*As intention and ideas arise, do not follow their flow.  
Reflect on their roots to find out where grasping lies.  
Impermanence and Non-self mean no grasping good.  
Fixed ideas all gone, then originally all are at peace.*

Comment:

Non-self, no grasping, and impermanence constitute fundamental teachings of the Dharma. For a practitioner, at the juncture of arising of intention or ideas, if reflection could be done in accordance with these fundamental principles, and thereby one becomes aware of subtle grasping to Self or intentions and of lack of appreciation of impermanence, then it would often be the case that extensive and useless delusive thoughts could be avoided.

The tantric Buddhist practice of Chod is basically working on destroying the fixed view, that we are grasping on firmly, that recognizes the corporeal body as one's Self. Generalizing from this practice, we could practice visualization of destroying all fixed ideas and views with a curved knife. As soon as all ideas and views no longer abide in and hold sway over our minds, we will naturally resume peace and tranquility of mind in original purity.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 7, 2006  
El Cerrito, California

## **Dharmadhatu Mind**

One person, so minute  
One lifetime, brief as lightning  
No matter how diligent  
What can be accomplished is too limited

In light of these facts  
What can Dharma practices accomplish  
To escape from transmigration  
How could beginningless past karmic debts be cleared  
Attaining enlightenment and saving all beings  
Certainly sound like babbles of an ignorant dreamer

Therefore, believing in Buddha and engaging in Dharma practices

One need to make sure that one comprehends the Dharmadhatu Mind

Dharmadhatu is originally boundless and limitless

Dharmadhatu is originally in oneness

As long as one believes deeply in this without doubts

All Dharma activities are functions of the whole Dharmadhatu

And hence beginningless past karma can be extinguished

Countless sentient beings can be universally helped and saved

Ten Directions and Three Times have neither boundaries nor barriers



Bodhi aspirations and activities prevail everywhere  
forever

To the arising of any limited mind and view  
A Dharma practitioner should know to pity oneself  
How could one, for such a trifle, renounce  
Buddha's Dharmakaya, Buddha's compassion and  
Buddha's wisdom

Written in Chinese and translated on August 26, 2009  
El Cerrito, California

# Simple Ritual for Complete Offerings

Guru Yutang Lin

1. Arrange offerings, and then repeat the mantra "Weng A Hong" to bless them, so that they become multiplied in quantity, purified into original purity, and transformed into nectars.
2. Visualize that all beings in the whole Dharmadhatu, from the four levels of holiness (Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas and Arhats) to the six realms of worldly beings (heavenly being, Asuras, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts and hell beings), appear in front of the practitioner.
3. Visualize that all wondrous and sublime objects of offering are completely absorbed into the offerings that have been arranged in front.
4. Visualize that all these offerings are first presented to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and the rest of the holy beings. After they have enjoyed the offerings to their full contentment, they become delighted by the Bodhicitta that is inherent in this offering, and hence they emit lights as reward, and these lights bless all the offerings into superb wondrous nectars that will enable sentient beings to escape from sufferings, attain happiness and realize full enlightenment soon.

5. Visualize that all these nectars are equally offered to all beings in the six realms of transmigration to their full gratification. Having enjoyed them, the sentient beings become purified of their karmic hindrances, engaging in Dharma practices, and they become capable of diligent practices without sagging, and never regress on the enlightenment path.
6. Dedicate the merits of this complete offering to all sentient beings, so that they will realize that all are impermanent, and nothing can be hold onto, and consequently their personal intentions fade away and minds become open, and thus soon attain perfect awakening.

This ritual is applicable to all kinds of offerings, without being confined by the details of the particular offerings. If the practitioner can comprehend that the beings who receive offerings, the objects offered and the offerer are all manifestations of limitless oneness, then duality will be transcended, and all will merge into oneness through the original limitlessness of all three parties.

Composed upon request from disciple Ruo Song  
February 20, 2013  
El Cerrito, California

# **My Bodhicitta Vows**

(May be Used for Dedication of Merits)

Dr. Yutang Lin

1. May virtuous gurus remain with us and those departed return soon!
2. May perverse views and violence soon become extinct, and Dharma spread without hindrance!
3. May all beings proceed diligently on the path toward Buddhahood and achieve the goal before death!
4. May the Great Compassion flourish in all beings and never regress until they reach perfect Buddhahood!
5. May the Great Wisdom thrive in all beings and never regress until they reach perfect Buddhahood!

# Great Harmony

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Namo Protector Wei Tuo Bodhisattva



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