

# **Universal Goodness Activities and Vows**

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**Seal of  
"Universal Goodness Activities and Vows"  
in Chinese**

普賢菩薩十大願

禮敬諸佛

稱讚如來

廣修供養

懺悔業障

隨喜功德

請轉法輪

請佛住世

常隨佛學

恆順眾生

普皆迴向

佛子  
銘敬書

Dr. Lin's calligraphy on the list of ten  
"Universal Goodness Activities and Vows"  
in Chinese



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# Homage to All Buddhas

"Homage to all Buddhas" centers at reverence toward Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta germinates from thinking about salvation of all sentient beings from transmigration in the suffering Six Realms, and it attains completion through merging into originally pure limitless-oneness. Buddhas are sentient beings that have accomplished Bodhicitta.

One thought of reverence to all Buddhas, instantaneously lifts one above worldly considerations, and corresponds with germination and cultivation of the great Bodhi aspiration. One salutation to all Buddhas, be it folding palms together, prostration in small steps or full-length, or a gesture of looking up or kneeling down, instantaneously ceases all worldly connections, and brings about the function of inspiring others to look toward the enlightenment path.

Buddhas are immeasurable, sentient beings countless, while saluting all Buddhas, visualize all holy ones as well as the worldly ones together, then all in the ten directions and three times—past, present and future, are naturally embraced, and merged into limitless oneness.

Homage through salutation hinges on sincerity and faith.

Therefore, whether there is image or not in front, one may practice it. Dharmakaya of all Buddhas is omnipresent and everlasting without beginning, and hence any sentient being or non-sentient object in front may be regarded as an appearance of all Buddhas' Dharmakaya, and venerated as such.

Our karmas are heavy and profound, and we are hindered by ignorance and delusions. If we can take refuge in all Buddhas, look up to them whole-heartedly, and daily pay homage to them through salutations, then naturally in ways inconceivable we will receive blessings from them so that our karmic debts will decrease gradually, and karmic hindrances diminish by and by, while merits and wisdom grow step by step.

If, born of sincere reverence, we can practice further in making offerings to Buddhas, attending to their well-being, praising them and spreading the Dharma, then reduction of karmic debts, accumulation of merits, and cultivation of wisdom and compassion will speed up, so that it will become hopeful that we will soon accomplish the enlightenment quest and thus bring much joy to Buddhas' minds, and then we will be able to spread Buddhas' blessings to all sentient beings in everlasting ways.

Upon request from disciple Jing Xing

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El Cerrito, California

# Praising Tathagata

"Tathagata" means "thus come" or "thus gone."

Thus come and thus gone, but actually neither come nor gone. Boundless, and yet omnipresent. Immeasurable, so how could it be illustrated? Even though impossible to fathom its depth and width, in order to let sentient beings all realize that they were originally thus come, and no longer remain lost in the transmigration of births and deaths, it does not hurt to skillfully set up terminology—to distinguish "Buddha" from "sentient beings"—so as to lead the ignorant and deluded multitude toward enlightenment.

Once the state of Buddhahood had been established, its meritorious qualities of five wisdoms, four compassions, six supernatural abilities, and eighteen transcendental qualities, etc., must be explicated in details to illustrate the superiority of perfect enlightenment so that all beings would look up to it and aspire to attain it. Also, so that beings would be able to discern its distinction from and transcendence to other teachings.

Having practiced in accordance with the Dharma for long, one would receive inspirational blessings from Buddhas now and then, and hence naturally born from one's heart

praises of respect and gratitude. In praising Buddhas one merely expresses one's true feelings of admiration and gratitude, and yet such praises could move others to developing faith and admiration, and hence yield functions of conversion.

Words and expressions are quite limited, and yet meritorious virtues of Buddhas could not be exhaustively praised. To illustrate Buddhas' virtues to beings in the worldly realms, no better way than to personally carry out Buddha's deeds by following his path step by step. Thus, even if one remained silent, the resulting illustration of Dharma path would supersede constant praising in words.

All phenomena in the Dharmadhatu, including all sorts of sounds and silence, are nothing but thus come and thus gone. When thus comprehended all are nothing but appearances of Tathagata. Without waiting for our aspiration to sing in praising, endless and immeasurable praising and illustration of Tathagata are incessantly and perpetually on display.

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# Extensively Conducting Offerings

All contrivances, in correspondence with Bodhicitta, only then constitute Dharma practices. Bodhicitta is immeasurable, and universally and equally applies to all sentient beings. Therefore, to practice offering, one should first of all regard it as one case among boundless and universally equal offerings to all beings. The goal of making offerings is to help all beings to attain full enlightenment sooner and smoother; hence, it could be conducted only when it is in accord with this goal, and at least, it should be accompanied by such an aspiration in mind. Within the reach of one's means and resources, offer the best to Bodhi activities, and these include offerings to the Triple Gem, propagation of Dharma, etc. When one's intention is limited by one's means and resources, then it may be supplemented by well-wishing, approval and visualization.

Making offerings is not confined to fulfilling material needs; it also includes providing Dharma guidance, offering spiritual support and relief, and deliverance from dangers or hardships. Extensively conducting offerings should be practiced constantly as occasions arise and in proportion to one's means and resources. Constantly sustaining a Buddha's name or mantra in mind so that all who come into contact with one would have a Dharma connection; this is

also one way to extensively conduct offering. Whenever one is about to enjoy something nice, first think of offering it to Buddhas, and then enjoy it; thus one's mind will be trained to abide more and more in Dharma and in Bodhi.

Chod, the Tantric practice of offering one's body, identifies the body with the whole Dharmadhatu, and then in visualization offers it completely, piece by piece, to all beings in needs. Thus, simultaneously released one's grasping and accumulated merits and wisdom, and in addition, it is a practice that all with Bodhicitta can practice, so it is indeed a wondrous practice for extensively conducting offerings.

Within one's means and resources, to practice offering one need to carry it out through deeds for it to count as real practice. Within one's abilities and capabilities, as Dharma activities arise one need to take part to help their completion, only then can it be counted as genuine practice of offering. If it is beyond one's means and abilities, then one may still practice offering of one's mental efforts in well-wishing and prayers to Buddhas for blessings.

Conducting offerings is the easiest way to reduce grasping; to extensively conduct offerings one should face situations as they arise without making distinctions, and in response to the circumstances and beings in front, exhibit great Bodhi aspiration through all kinds of skillful offering of suitable

ways and means. Thus, while conducting offerings one is indeed practicing Bodhi and the harmonious unification of all in oneness!

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# Repenting Karmic Hindrances

Believing and knowing that one's hindrances are due to activities accumulated in the past, and humbly recognized that one had made mistakes, furthermore, realizing the minuteness of one's abilities and strength, and the need to rely on Buddha's graceful blessings and the remedy through accumulation of merits through Dharma activities, in order to hope for attainment of pacification of hardships, resolution of karmic debts, and extinction of countless sins and misdeeds.

Past deeds accumulated through countless lives and time could hardly be fully comprehended. Therefore, when practicing repentance one should not limit the practice to matters that one can think of or remember, but should include all deeds mental, physical or verbal that one had done in all past lives.

During repentance practice one should be keenly aware that such temporary efforts could hardly be expected to counter balance karmic debts accumulated as high as mountains and as deep as oceans. And hence one should be most earnest and cling to the Bodhi aspiration to repent for all sentient beings. Only through such great aspiration could one be expected to become channeled with the endless and

boundless living spring of Buddha's grace, virtues and merits, and thus receive the wondrous fruit of purification of karmic hindrances.

After repentance practice one should constantly remain on guard of relapse, and constantly abide in Bodhi aspiration to practice Dharma diligently for all sentient beings, and thus safeguard the purity of one's mental, physical and verbal activities. Thus it could be counted as sincere and genuine repentance of karmic hindrances, and capable of receiving superior Dharma benefits through graceful blessing from Buddhas.

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# Rejoicing in All Meritorious Deeds

One is too minute, and yet sentient beings to be emancipated by Bodhicitta, sufferings and hardships to be relieved by Bodhicitta, delusions to be unveiled and expelled by Bodhicitta, and even up to attainments of Buddha fruits to be helped achieved by Bodhicitta are immeasurable, boundless and endless. Without grasping to self, naturally one sees clearly that the boundless and endless Dharma activities of conversion would require all Buddhists to unify in one mind and single effort for Bodhi to truly spread and expand. Therefore, carrying out charitable deeds need not be done only by one, and yet one dare not stay behind in such efforts. To practice Dharma, no grounds to demand others to conform, and yet one must reflect on one's own intentions, views and approaches. Upon hearing or seeing some meritorious deeds or Dharma activities, one should sincerely rejoice in them and give expressions of approval so as, on the one hand, to submit one's respect, and on the other hand, to help conversion and make others to look up to such deeds and thereby they would gradually follow suit.

Being keenly aware of impermanence, resolved to stay away from worldly engagements, dedicated wholeheartedly to Dharma practices, and even in the face of all sorts of hindrances and hardships still continued to advance on the

enlightenment path without pauses, such practices are rare and most valuable, and yet are not commonly recognized by ordinary people as precious, nor would they readily inspire worldly people to offer support and sustenance. We, as Buddhists, while rejoicing in the merits of such practitioners, should not confine our expressions to only feelings and words of admiration, but must add actual offerings of supports to express our admiration in all genuineness.

Attainments of realization of enlightenment often can be comprehended only by very few fortunate ones through inspirations. Buddhas' blessings did render all sorts of sufferings and hardships that are normally insolvable to dissipate or reduce. Those who had experienced such graceful and miraculous blessings should, when time and circumstances are appropriate, make them known to the public, so as to help spread Buddhas' blessings, and to help increase the number of beings gaining faith in Dharma, so that all may share Dharma's salvation. This is also an extension of rejoicing in meritorious deeds.

Mindful only on the details of one's Dharma practices and activities, one would find it difficult to merge into the great ocean of Buddhas' grace. Wherever there are Dharma efforts or accomplishments, one rejoices; whenever there are opportunities for propagation of or conversion to Dharma, one participates. Thus, mind naturally expands as days go by, and in the long run, without one's awareness, one's mental,

verbal and physical activities are all fulfilled with nothing but Dharma joy. Then it would be rather approximate to no more practices!

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# Pleading for Turning the Wheel of Dharma

Truths as formulated in Dharma are clearly prevalent among evolution of phenomena—impermanence, non-self, conditional arising, causality—thus, one might as well say that the Wheel of Dharma is constantly turning by itself. Nevertheless, sentient beings are accustomed to grasping to forms, to self, and are narrow-minded and prejudiced, and hence, instead of recognizing the real situations, they have fallen into the mire of entanglements. Buddhists, out of compassion for sentient beings' suffering, want to save them from transmigration through showing them the Buddhist teachings and practices. Therefore, Buddhists would plead for "Turning the Wheel of Dharma," i.e., whenever they notice Sutras or articles that reveal the true significance of teachings and teach the correct way of practices, they would recommend, print and freely distribute them to interested parties; whenever they encounter learned teachers, virtuous and seasoned practitioners, they would reverently plead them to give exposition on Dharma in speech or in writing so as to benefit all parties that will have the opportunity to come across it; whenever they run into extraordinary Buddha images, chanting, Mantra wheels, calligraphy of Dharma works, etc., they would duplicate them and offer them freely to the public. All such efforts aim at making

Dharma available to people through their seeing, hearing and reading so that they are constantly aware of Dharma, and will gradually become accustomed to Dharma teachings, and eventually will become motivated to pursue the enlightenment path.

As to focusing on the puzzles or predicament of certain kind of sentient beings or even those of one particular sentient being in certain situations under particular circumstances, or focusing on lack of clarity on some particular points in Dharma theories or particular Dharma practices, to plead to Dharma teachers who have harmonious comprehension of the teachings and attained some degree of realization, that would be even more opportune for and suitable to the recipients, and hence especially need to be carried out. This is because how to apply Dharma theories in daily life and carry them out in a harmonious manner is extremely difficult to comprehend.

Whenever an opportunity to plead for turning of the Wheel of Dharma arises, one should do so right away. Do not complain that it is repetitive because exposition on Dharma is of tremendous benefit to all involved. Furthermore, depths of comprehension could vary from time to time, so one should not hinder a turning of the Dharma Wheel out of prejudice and thereby lose an opportunity to gain deeper comprehension. Even to topics that one is well familiar with one should remain humble in receiving the teachings anew

so that one might gain some fresh perspectives. All in all, seeing and hearing Dharma is far superior to engaging in worldly affairs.

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# **Pleading to Buddhas for Their Staying in This World**

Buddha's Dharmakaya transcends time and space, and yet is omnipresent at any time-and-space juncture; Buddha's Sambhogakaya abides in boundless and everlasting enjoyment at will; and Buddha's Nirmanakaya fulfills the Six Realms of suffering and serves as guide to and protector of each and every sentient being. Thus, why do we still need to plead to them for staying in this world?

It is only because sentient beings are so ignorant that they could not recognize Buddhas, could not know how precious Dharma is, and thus even more difficult for them to aspire toward enlightenment and then move onto the enlightenment path; therefore, Buddhists who are aware of the situations, in order to benefit all sentient beings so that it will become possible for them to escape transmigration and even eventually and ultimately attain right and full enlightenment, should constantly supplicate to all Buddhas for the followings: in front of those who are blind in mind, appear to guide them; behind those who are astray, appear to pull them around; above those who are trapped in hindrances, appear to emancipate them; below those who are sinking into sins, appear to uplift them; and thus even up to, within virtuous Dharma teachers, appear to fulfill them

with debate skills and supernatural abilities so that they become capable of converting the multitude to Dharma. Thus, it would amount to "pleading to Buddhas for their staying in this world."

Buddhists, who had firmly resolved to aspire toward Bodhi, diligently engage in Dharma practices and extensively carry out all sorts of Dharma services so as to attain full enlightenment sooner and thus adding one more instance of Buddhas appearing in this world; this approach would also amount to "pleading to Buddhas for their staying in this world."

Tantra teaches disciples to regard Guru as Buddha. Therefore, pleading to Guru for staying in this world is pleading to Buddha for staying in this world.

Buddha's staying in this world is not the same as a worldling's physical subsistence. Truths as conveyed through Dharma abide everlastingly in complete irrelevance to whether sentient beings recognize them or not. As to whether a certain worldly sphere has the meritorious conditions to discern right teachings from devious sayings, to propagate Dharma and to nurture and sustain Dharma practices, that would be the key juncture to whether such a worldly sphere could plead to Buddhas for their staying in it and be successful or not. If we could sustain Dharma in this worldly sphere continuously without intermittence, that

would also amount to a genuine "pleading to Buddhas for their staying in this world."

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# Constantly Learning from Buddha

Sakyamuni, the universally recognized Buddha, had entered Nirvana over thousands of years; how do we constantly learn from Buddha? Dharma consists of guidance based on truths, and truths are the general principles, such as impermanence, no ultimate arbitrator, mutually conditional coexistence and causality, that prevail in the evolution and working of all phenomena. If we could constantly practice in accordance with these principles, then we would be constantly learning from the Dharmakaya of Buddha.

Scriptures of Buddhism and treatises on Dharma are still prevalent, and contain personal examples and verbal teachings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, so we could still study them and imitate the epitomes through them. But teachings limited by words and expressions, due to the limited nature of languages, are artificially confined. Therefore, researching within Buddhist studies, we should comprehend that the goal is to see the moon through the pointing finger, but not to recognize the finger as the moon. Eventually when merging Dharma teachings into daily life we need to be able to let go of and thereby transcend the limitation of words and expressions. Hence, we need to watch out that, ultimately we should not constantly follow Buddhist studies.

Dharma is guidance for practice. Long-term practitioners through their comprehension and realization could yield inconceivable functions to teach and help sentient beings. One could even recognize practitioners with virtues of attainment as appearance of Buddha's Sambhogakaya or Nirmanakaya in salvation activities. Furthermore, such recognition cannot be forced onto others, but may be learned and comprehended only through inspirational experiences that arose in practitioners' life. If one has had the fortunate opportunities to come across such virtuous ones, then one should revere the Guru as Buddha, and try to learn constantly from Buddha—attending to Guru's daily needs and learn drip by drip from daily activities to absorb blessing and teachings. Practicing through observation and imitation like this would be the easiest and fastest way to grow and mature on the Dharma path. If one delays such approaches to Guru due to worldly considerations, then one had better realize that the evolution of the whole Dharmadhatu does not wait for any sentient being's individual conveniences, and that in the future such opportunities might be lost, and then there is no telling how much longer one will have to wait for such opportunity to turn up again!

The distinction between "Buddha" and "sentient being" was pedagogically contrived for convenience of conversion. If one comprehends that all phenomena were originally pure

and that the whole Dharmadhatu is in limitless oneness, then such distinction also exists only in human consciousness but was originally without innate existence. Hence, a practitioner may also regard all sentient beings as Buddhas, and consider only oneself as still confined by grasping to self and hence suffering under the five poisons of greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance and doubts. And then remain respectful to all sentient beings, observe and regard all their actions and inactions as display of skillful means to convert this sentient being who is still suffering under sins. Thus one constantly learns from Buddhas, and respectfully accepts their pedagogical treatments, until grasping to self dissolved and five poisons revealed their original purity and displayed the functions of five wisdoms. Only then could one realize that originally all are in oneness and that originally there were no problems of suffering in life-and-death, and thus become capable of abiding in innate purity to respond to the world.

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# **Always Accommodating to Sentient Beings**

To save sentient beings we should lead them from state of delusion toward enlightenment; how come there are Bodhi activities under the category of "Always Accommodating to Sentient Beings"? Isn't it contrary to enlightenment but sinking into the realm of common worldly beings? This is only because sentient beings are of extremely diverse varieties and each is of individual propensities and interests, so that they are difficult to convert to Dharma, and even more difficult to be persuaded to pursue the enlightenment path, and hence, in order to ultimately benefit them, we can only accommodate to their propensities and capacities individually to provide step by step coaching and guidance, but cannot expect to liberate them immediately, in the fashion of "instant relief," from being lost in the delusions of transmigration.

A Dharma practitioner certainly would like to convert other beings toward enlightenment. Nevertheless, one is also still a worldly being among the multitude sunk in transmigration. Therefore, often one would find it difficult to persuade beings around oneself to move toward enlightenment. Rather, one could use interactions with sentient beings around one as opportunities to practice letting go of

grasping and self-centeredness, and to greatly opening up one's perspectives and attitudes. To practice in this way there is no better approach than "always accommodating to sentient beings"—forgetting about one's own concerns to simply benefit others, and through always yielding to others' feelings and never standing up against others' intentions, one's grasping to self reduced in unobservable ways and one's mind widens daily, until sorrows and worries no longer show up and incomparable ease and leisure gained.

As to taking actions to devote oneself completely to Dharma practices and services, then even if it is against others' ideas, still one must attempt roundabout approaches to advance on the enlightenment path. This is because all accommodations to sentient beings aim only at their ultimate salvation, but not at their temporary appeasement. One should not seek only temporary but unsatisfactory harmony without looking after the awakening and peace that is eventually genuine. How to respond skillfully to beings surrounding one so that harmony is maintained while all are gradually moving toward enlightenment, this is the point where a practitioner need to grope for a suitable way and simultaneously is being tested in the practice of "always accommodating to sentient beings." If one could not accomplish both ends smoothly, then one must put preference to ultimately benefiting others instead of remaining stagnant in a temporary and unsatisfactory harmony.

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# Universal Dedication of Merits

Dharma activities begin with developing Bodhi aspiration, and hence it is appropriate to visualize that the four classes of holy beings, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyeka-Buddhas and Arhats, are granting blessing from above, and that all beings in the six realms of transmigration are practicing together, to remind the practitioner that all in the Dharmakaya are in limitless oneness, and conclude with dedication of merits to all sentient beings for their earlier attainment of perfect enlightenment. Thus from beginning till end it is purely for ultimately benefiting all sentient beings, and only then matches Bodhi vows and activities, and then can be expected to bring about success.

Some said that such tiny bit of merits, could hardly be enough for reducing one's own karmic debts; how could it be further distributed to countless beings for sharing? Wouldn't it then become a futile effort? When limited to such bit by bit calculation based on a deluded grasping to "self" one would not know how many great-kalpas it will take to offset one's karmic debts that is as high as mountains and as deep as oceans and had been accumulated since beginning-less time. Not to mention that, during this long period of renewing efforts, one could hardly avoid creating new karmic debts, so how much longer shall one wait for all

karmic debts to completely clear? Thus it is clear that grasping to "self" would render one trapped in transmigration with little hope of escaping! The tiny bit of merits depends squarely on the great Bodhi intention to merge into the great ocean of Buddhas' boundlessly compassionate vows and activities, and hence become capable of yielding effects of genuinely benefiting sentient beings. If one fails to comprehend the necessity of dedicating merits to all beings, then the efforts will fall short of success by one huge gap, and can harvest only little bit of meritorious fortune.

Universally dedicating merits to all beings and dedicating merits to individual sentient beings within one's awareness through hearing and seeing to help relieve them from sufferings are not in conflict. But one need to recognize clearly that only by first dedicating merits to all beings for their enlightenment can the merits with superior power and effect be generated, and hence capable of blessing individual sentient beings. Furthermore, one should understand thoroughly that it is not the case that by merely mouthing "dedicating merits to all beings"—but indeed only hoping for benefiting personal relations through such merits—genuine merits will ensue. One need to do it with all sincerity for all beings, and regard personal relations as among the sentient beings and are included so as to make concrete the abstract notion of "all beings," only then will it work.

There are also those who believed and knew that dedication of merits indeed has potential of yielding results, and hence requested persons with attainment of realization to grant blessings. These people should diligently practice Dharma on their own to pay back the grace of granting blessing, or reward or assist in Dharma activities through ways such as making offerings, praising, and making it known to others, etc. If they fell into expecting harvests without contributing efforts, then it would not be in accord with Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' grace of blessing beings to help them attain ultimate emancipation. Since causes and consequences do not match, then they could not expect constant results time after time.

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# Boundless beyond Spatial and Temporal Limitations

*Boundlessness of Bodhicitta*

*Spatially it expands endlessly in the ten directions*

*Temporally it continues without interruption in the three times*

*Such expansion would seem sufficient*

*And yet it could hardly avoid the conceptual limitation of*

*A fixed spatial/temporal point in subconsciousness*

*The Bodhi activities of Bodhisattva Universal Virtues*

*Revealed that within any tiny bit of dirt*

*Namely inside infinitesimal unit of spatial/temporal continuum*

*There are fully present*

*Immeasurable Purelands, Buddhas, Holy Assemblies, and sentient beings*

*Of the boundless Dharmadhatu*

*With incessant and endless displays of the salvation activities such as*

*Worshipping, offering, praising, and supplication to Buddhas for staying and teaching*

*This is not illusive delusion*

*But the naturally attained inconceivable realm of phenomena*

*That arises after having thoroughly realized absence of "self"*

*And entered the originally pure limitless oneness*

*Once such boundlessness of boundlessness is comprehended  
Great Bodhi aspirations are readily infused into Bodhi activities  
No longer vacuous wishes but turned into solid practices  
Therefore it is stated in the Sutra that  
Bodhi activities of Universal Virtues are far superior to Bodhi  
aspirations  
That is because this utmost wondrous guidance  
Blew up into pieces the limitations imposed by  
Finite spatial and temporal concepts in subconsciousness*

*In daily life when one is besieged by worries and sorrows  
If one could cast the Wisdom Eye of this boundlessness of  
boundlessness  
On the cages of all conceptual constructions and shatter them  
Then no doubt one would escape instantaneously  
And right away resume clarity and tranquility of mind*

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El Cerrito, California

# **Always Complying with Sentient Beings in the Dharmadhatu View**

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## **II. Main Text**

### **Introduction**

"Always complying with sentient beings" is an often-quoted saying in Buddhism. And yet sentient beings are of all sorts and varieties, even if only human beings are considered, there are those who are utterly violent and evil, and couldn't be reformed; how could one then "always comply with" beings? In other words, the saying that one should "always comply with sentient beings" could hardly avoid rousing questions. In this article the origin of this saying and its basic meaning will first be introduced briefly, and then the difficulties that this saying will possibly run into are discussed in depth, and finally the profound Dharma teaching therein will be pointed out.

### **A. Putting Vows into Practice According to Bodhisattva Samantabhadra**

In volume forty of the "Bodhisattva Samantabhadra's Bodhi Activities Section of the Avatamsaka Sutra," Bodhisattva Samantabhadra teaches that, in order to accomplish the superb wondrous merits of Buddhas, one should practice ten kinds of great Bodhi activities: 1. Paying homage to Buddhas, 2. Praising Tathagatas, 3. Extensively making offerings, 4. Repenting karmic hindrances, 5. Joining in the meritorious deeds of others, 6. Pleading for Dharma

teachings, 7. Pleading for Buddhas to stay in the world, 8. Constantly learning from Buddhas through attendance, 9. Always complying with sentient beings, 10. Dedicating merits universally to all beings.

As to the practice of all these kinds of Bodhi activities, one should visualize the activities as fulfilling the whole Dharmadhatu, transcending the limitations of time, and continuing from thought to thought, and lasting endlessly. For details, see the Sutra text.

## **B. Oneness of Dharmadhatu**

In the Dharmadhatu all are phenomena arising due to causation, and hence all mutually interact and coexist in oneness. This totality of Dharmadhatu, born of conditions, is a boundless continuum in space and time. As the truth of conditional arising is comprehended, then there is no tiny "self" of body or mind to be grasped, while the intimate connection among all in this limitless-oneness totality of the Dharmadhatu is realized. Therefore, the state of human existence transcends a short existence of an individual's physical presence and the sorrows of all sufferings due to birth, senility, illness and death, and becomes a demonstration of the limitless wisdom and compassion of the great function of the Dharmadhatu totality through limited activities.

Of the ten kinds of great Bodhi activities as taught by Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, the practices are all in view of the fact that the Dharmadhatu is a continuum that is boundless in space and time, and their ultimate goal of Buddha fruit and its merits is to attain mergence into this limitless-oneness of the Dharmadhatu.

Thus it is clear that the ten kinds of great Bodhi activities are all based on the view of the boundlessness of the Dharmadhatu, and aim at guiding practitioners to merge into the oneness of Dharmadhatu. Therefore, "always complying with sentient beings" should be understood and practiced in light of this Dharmadhatu View to be concurrent with the original essence of the Sutra.

### **C. Key Points of the Sutra**

Regarding the teachings on "always complying with sentient beings," according to the order given in the Sutra, there are the following eight key points:

1. Attending and making offerings—complying with all kinds of sentient beings, and make all sorts of offerings and provide various services, just the same as when one is showing respect to one's parents, attending to teachers, Arhats, and even Tathagatas.

2. Benefiting all equally—to those suffering in illness, be a

good physician; to those lost their way, show them the correct path; in the darkness of night, provide light; to those poor and needy, let them found hidden treasures. Thus one should benefit all sentient beings equally.

3. Pleasing to Buddhas—if one can comply with sentient beings, then it amounts to complying with and making offerings to all Buddhas; if one respectfully attends to sentient beings, then it amounts to serving all Tathagatas respectfully; if one can please sentient beings, then it will please all Tathagatas.

4. Great Compassion as the body—all Buddhas and Tathagatas take the mind of Great Compassion as their body. Because of sentient beings, the great compassion arises; because of great compassion, Bodhicitta arises; and because of Bodhicitta, full and right enlightenment accomplished.

5. Tree root, flowers and fruits—all sentient beings as root of a tree, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are the flowers and fruits; apply the water of great compassion to benefit all sentient beings, then the wisdom flowers and fruits of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas will be accomplished.

6. Attainment through cultivation of compassion—if Bodhisattvas apply the water of great compassion to benefit all sentient beings, then they will accomplish the unsurpassable full and right enlightenment. Hence, Bodhi

belongs to sentient beings; without sentient beings, no Bodhisattva can ever attain the unsurpassable right enlightenment.

7. Perfectly accomplishing great compassion—as one's mind treats all sentient beings equally, therefore great compassion can be perfectly accomplished. Comply with all sentient beings with great compassion in mind, and then one can accomplish making offerings to all Tathagatas.

8. Endless diligence—a Bodhisattva complies with all sentient beings in the above ways without ending; from thought to thought, without breaks; and never feels tired or displeased in body and in mind.

Based on the eight key points above, it can be concluded that:

1. The way to comply with sentient beings is through attending, making offerings to, and benefiting all sentient beings. A practitioner's attitude should be respectful as if to elders and even to Tathagatas. And this kind of practice should be sustained diligently in body, speech and mind without ending.

2. Because of sentient beings, great compassion arises; because of great compassion, Bodhicitta ensues; based on Bodhicitta to cultivate benefiting all sentient beings equally,

only then can full enlightenment be perfectly accomplished. It is analogous to root, flowers and fruits of a tree. Therefore, a Dharma practitioner should practice always complying with sentient beings.

3. All Buddhas take Great Compassion as their body. Hence, if a practitioner respectfully attends to and make offerings to sentient beings, it will amount to attending and making offerings to all Buddhas.

#### **D. Clarification on Essential Points**

Here in light of the Dharmadhatu View the eight key points listed above will be expounded one by one.

1. Attending and making offerings—in the Dharmadhatu View all are in oneness and cannot be divided. Therefore, a practitioner's caring for and services to sentient beings are born of Bodhicitta that arises from awakening to the truth of all being in oneness. A practitioner comprehends the reasons for non-self, and hence there is nothing to be proud of, and consequently in all his services and offerings there is naturally sincerity and respect.

2. Benefiting all equally—to the sufferings and delusions of all sentient beings one applies all sorts of skillful means to help relieve their burdens and sorrows, and then gradually lead them onto the path of cultivation of Bodhi so as to

thoroughly release them from their sufferings and provide them with ultimate peace and happiness. In light of oneness of the Dharmadhatu, their sufferings are one's own, and are also the worries of all Buddhas. As long as there is one sentient being that has not yet attained ultimate peace and happiness, it amounts to my own suffering has not ceased, and it causes the compassionate minds of all Buddhas to be too much agitated to rest in peace. Therefore, equally benefiting all sentient beings is always done naturally according to situations and born of original purity.

3. Pleasing to Buddhas—Buddha has already become liberated from the rotation of joy and suffering in transmigration, and hence his only worry is about the fact that sentient beings are still trapped in the ocean of sufferings. If a practitioner can comply with all sorts of habitual tendencies of sentient beings to make them happy and satisfied through making offerings and attending to their needs, it amounts to sharing the worries of all Buddhas and slightly relieving the compassionate minds of Buddhas, and then an atmosphere of peace and happiness in the Dharmadhatu will be enhanced—this is the joy of all Buddhas.

4. Great Compassion as the body—the Dharmakaya of Buddha has no definite shape for us to grasp on, and yet it is inseparable from all shapes and colors. The Dharmadhatu is of Blank Essence, and hence it has no handles for anyone to

grasp onto; the feeling of compassion due to all-in-oneness naturally arises as situations demand. Hence, the great compassion that never fails to rise up due to situations may be taken as the body of this all-in-oneness totality. Since sentient beings are suffering, the great compassion of all-in-oneness is aroused vigorously. From the desire born of great compassion to impart ultimate peace and happiness to all sentient beings, Bodhicitta, the will to realize ultimate liberation for all beings, is born. Only through cultivation of wishes and activities born of great compassion can Bodhicitta attain perfection, and then one will realize one is inseparable from all others, and all will attain ultimate liberation simultaneously.

5. Tree root, flowers and fruits—"Buddha" and "Bodhisattva" are names artificially created to indicate that the harmonization of wisdom and compassion achieved in the attainment of Dharmadhatu in limitless-oneness varies in depth with sentient beings. Apart from Bodhi services rendered to all sentient beings, a practitioner's wisdom and compassion can hardly grow, mature and become fully integrated. Therefore, this suitable analogy is employed to illustrate how one should cultivate the fruits of Buddhahood.

6. Attainment through cultivation of compassion—wisdom and compassion are two aspects of one totality and the "fruit of Buddhahood" refers to perfect integration of wisdom and compassion; therefore, attainment of Buddhahood can be

achieved through cultivation of wisdom and that of compassion, and this is certainly the case. As stated in the "Heart Sutra," "Buddhas of the past, present and future attain the Unsurpassable Right and Full Enlightenment by sublimation through Transcendent Wisdom." This passage is familiar and well-known to all Buddhists. Therefore, we have no doubt at all that liberation may be achieved through cultivation of wisdom. Here in this Sutra it is pronounced that "if Bodhisattvas benefit sentient beings through irrigation of great compassion water, then the Unsurpassable Right and Full Enlightenment will be attained." It clearly indicates that cultivation of compassion can also attain ultimate liberation. In my book "Wisdom and Compassion in Limitless-Oneness" there are two articles: "The Heart of Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion Sastra" and "The Unification of Wisdom and Compassion." They expound in details the path to attain full realization through cultivation of compassion and reasons for integration of wisdom and compassion. Interested readers may want to study them.

7. Perfectly accomplishing great compassion—equally caring for all sentient beings, only then can one become genuinely free from partiality, and thereby merge into the oneness of Dharmadhatu that is originally pure. Hence, in order to perfectly attain the great compassion of the whole Dharmadhatu in oneness, it must go through universally equal aspiration and universally equal practices to finally

arrive at the accomplishment. Tathagatas have neither needs nor preferences, and hence the only genuine way to serve Tathagatas is to lead sentient beings away from delusions and to help them attain enlightenment. If one can comply with sentient beings' habitual tendencies and thereby display tolerance and patience, so as to reveal to them the open world of boundless tolerance and perpetual patience, and thereby lead them to return to the original clarity of mind that is no different from Tathagatas, it will be genuinely making offerings to Tathagatas—on the one hand, one makes offerings to the Tathagatas who are sentient beings returning to their original purity; and on the other hand, one makes offerings to Tathagatas, who has long since returned to their original purity, through accomplishing their compassionate vows.

8. Endless diligence—in the Dharmadhatu both time and space are boundless, consequently a Dharma practitioner's practices should not be self-confined to any particular period, location or special causal conditions; instead he should sustain Bodhi vows incessantly, and apply visualizations of ever expanding space and time on any situation and opportunity to benefit all those beings in contact through Dharma teachings and services so that all will be nourished in Dharma and move toward full enlightenment. In case it is impossible to benefit both oneself and others, then consider others' situations as one's own and put others' benefits as priority without taking

oneself into considerations. Only when one can forget about oneself can one devote oneself to the Bodhi mission endlessly without ever feeling tired.

## **E. Difficulties in Actual Practice**

In the previous section the essential points of "always complying with sentient beings" in the light of the Dharmadhatu View has been expounded. Nevertheless, even though in words it is full of grand ideals that may dazzle one's mind, and yet when it comes to actual practice there are all sorts of difficulties and doubtful points. These difficulties are seldom discussed in the literature, and yet they constitute the turning points that render our daily activities into a case of "saying in one way and doing in another way." If these problems are evaded in discussions, or discussed without touching the real solutions, then Dharma will simply deteriorate into empty talks; therefore, we need to face them squarely, take them seriously, discuss them in details, and offer real solutions to resolve them.

### **1. Difficult to be respectful to all**

According to the Sutra, if one intends to accomplish the supreme merits of Tathagata, then one should practice and learn how to always comply with sentient beings, and therefore universally respect all sentient beings, make offerings to them and attend to their needs and resolve their

dissatisfactions. On the surface of wording, what could be the difficulty in being respectful to all beings? Nevertheless, as long as there is a conceptual distinction between "sentient being" and "Bodhisattva," a Dharma practitioner will often inadvertently assume that he himself is a "Bodhisattva," consequently, while practicing universal respect it is rather difficult to avoid a hidden pride. As to regarding other sentient beings as merely "sentient beings" it could be suspected as being contemptuous to Nirmanakayas of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who appear as ordinary beings in order to help some beings attain liberation from sufferings. This kind of discussion may seem over critical of trivial matters; nevertheless, in actual Dharma practices any tiny intention of a practitioner need to be thoroughly examined and reflected in the light of Dharma, and only then can actual advancement toward enlightenment be expected, and hence we could not avoid mentioning it.

If we read the Sutra texts carefully, then it states that when we make offerings and attend to sentient beings we should act like we are doing these to our parents, teachers, elders, and even to Buddhas. Accordingly a practitioner should regard all sentient beings as transformations of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and respect them in the most revered manner, so as to conform to the teaching. In fact, if there are mice, roaches, mosquitoes, flies, fleas or ants at home or in the monastery or nunnery, everybody will feel hard to put up with them, how could one then practice regarding them as

## Buddhas and Bodhisattvas?

Dharma practitioners can hardly avoid the habitual tendency of "human-centeredness," and hence they often look down on sentient beings other than humans as of less importance; therefore, they not only cannot be respectful universally to all beings, but indeed often view other species of beings only from the point of view of how to make use of them so as to serve human interests. To escape from the bondage of this kind of prejudice and its ensuing cruel and numb mentality is easier said than done.

### 2. Difficult to benefit all equally

Sentient beings are of all sorts and varieties; how to make offerings to them and attend to their needs could be counted as benefiting them equally? Some beings are good and helpful while others are evil and harmful; why wouldn't a practitioner help the good ones and disassociate with the evil ones but benefit them equally? A practitioner's capacity is rather limited, as he looks after some beings he cannot take care of others; how can he realize benefiting all equally? Other sentient beings and a practitioner are causally connected by various conditions and at different depths; why does he need to benefit all equally? Among sentient beings there are complicated entanglements of favors and complaints that are difficult to resolve and separate, and these are causal consequences of many lifetimes; how to

benefit them equally? (When I wrote to this point, suddenly I received a phone call from a Dharma friend in Taipei. He mentioned that in his family so far there are four generations that have not changed their last name back to the real lineage as promised so long ago, and consequently the family is still besieged by troubles related to this matter again and again. Therefore, he requested that I perform Powa to pacify his ancestors and bring peace to the family. This matter happens to serve as an example to the above question; inspirational incidents in Dharma can be as inconceivably coincidental as in this case.) Demands and needs of sentient beings are of all sorts, and their greed is insatiable; how can a practitioner benefit all equally and satisfy all of them? The deluded manners and illusive dreams of sentient beings are of all strange and odd varieties; how can a practitioner convert and teach all of them so as to liberate them ultimately?

If the reply says that a practitioner only need to sustain a mind of universal equality, or only need to practice visualizations instead of actual deeds, then this kind of "benefiting all equally" could hardly avoid being criticized as merely being theoretical, idealistic, imaginative and even ridiculed as deluded.

### 3. Difficult to remain free from tiredness and boredom

A practitioner's time, energy and lifetime are all very limited,

and any kind of service is also restricted by all sorts of conditions in the world, and yet the objects of Dharma services are of all kinds of variations, and hence one may encounter misunderstanding, suspicion, ridicules, rejections—all sorts of adversary situations; how can one remain tireless and not feeling bored? If one is young and vigorous, with plenty of resources, then it is still easy to sustain one's Bodhi aspiration and continue to exert efforts. In case one is senile and weak, suffering in sickness, poor and helpless, then one can hardly look after oneself well. Under such circumstances, even though one has practiced Bodhi services for long years, in the face of the reality that not many are responsive to the calls of Dharma, how can one not feel tired and not lose interest?

## **F. Transcending the Difficulties**

The kinds of difficulties mentioned above are in reality almost impossible to resolve. Nevertheless, what Dharma teaches is not to stay away from the facts of life in order to build a utopia, but to face reality squarely so as to transcend it. All the questions raised above will be replied one by one in the following.

### **1. Practicing being respectful to all**

If a practitioner regards himself as a "Bodhisattva" or takes other sentient beings as merely "sentient beings," then he

should realize that this is a mentality of "grasping to appearances." One should observe the causal conditions and see that indeed there is no "self" that is immutable despite changes in causal conditions. Instead, there is only the grasping to "self" that is the habitual result of grasping to appearances. Furthermore, one should apprehend that grasping to such conceptual distinction constitutes hindrance to thorough liberation, and hence one should renounce it. A practitioner had better study biographies of ancient sages and Bodhi vows of great Bodhisattvas as recorded in the Sutras so as to realize that one's little bitty aspiration and deeds, that one is so proud of, are indeed insignificantly minute. When one opens one's sight to the boundless Bodhi mission in the boundless space and time, then one can only advance step by step in a solid manner to make one's tiny contributions; what is there to be proud of?

If a practitioner, due to observation on sentient beings' bad habitual tendencies, such as ignorance, greed, hatred and viciousness, and their arbitrary and improper behaviors, cannot have sincere respect for them, then he should reflect on himself and think that, if he had not received the Dharma teachings and were in their shoes, wouldn't he also have the same kind of mentality and behaviors, and even could be worse than them? If one fails to comprehend thoroughly that the evil nature and harmful behaviors of sentient beings are also due to the meeting of causal conditions and hence it is possible to change them for the better, then liberation cannot

be attained. We can attain liberation in accordance with the Dharma; and it all depends on the truth that "everything is the result of meeting of causal conditions and hence it is possible to evolve and change." If a practitioner is self-confined by grasping to what sentient beings have been doing, then his mind will be bound by "grasping to appearances," and hence he cannot attain liberation. Therefore, if one notices that there is any trace of hesitation in being sincerely respectful to any sentient being, that means one's practice on selflessness is not thorough yet, and hence one should exert efforts on letting go of grasping.

If a practitioner finds it difficult to respectfully make offerings to and attend to sentient beings because of considerations on gains and losses, then he should realize that this is a turning point in the trial of genuine practices and then carry out a choice according to Dharma. One should know that the liberation intended as the goal of Dharma practices is the original purity that transcends transmigration in the six realms of endless cycling, and that, considerations on gains and losses in this life form a ring in the chain of karmic retributions in such transmigration. If one wishes to open up one's mind so that boundless space and time can be embraced within, then one must go through the trial of rather giving up one's considerations on temporary gains and losses. For example, Jesus knowingly walked toward crucifixion; he renounced considerations on temporary life and death so as to accomplish perpetual

salvation mission. Even though his teachings did not reach the depth of ultimate liberation of Dharma, and yet his deeds can well serve as an epitome for genuine practices. Practicing in accordance with the Dharma does not mean that everyone should follow the example of Sakyamuni Buddha in one of his past lives to offer his body to feed a hungry tiger because that was done by great Bodhisattva under special circumstances to demonstrate that even difficult tasks can be accomplished. For ordinary people normal and solid practices that will gradually advance one on the enlightenment path are reasonable and acceptable ways for one to grow and mature in a stable fashion. It is improper to deteriorate into the fallacy of conducting odd and particular practices so as to attract others' attentions. Therefore, the choice according to Dharma as mentioned above means that, when a practitioner faces the juncture of gains and losses, he should still exert all his efforts to sustain the integrity of universally and equally caring for all beings in his endeavors, even to the extent of sacrificing his own well-being. As to practicing "being selfless to benefit others" to what extent, it varies with each practitioner's level and exertion of efforts, and it cannot be compelled.

In order to become liberated from being cold-hearted and numb to beings other than humans that ensued from the prejudice of "human-centeredness" a practitioner may practice non-killing, releasing of lives in danger, and protecting beings from danger. Through learning and

practicing expansion of one's concerns and cares for other beings the compassion born of natural purity will gradually be restored and emerge; and then one will naturally treat all lives and sentient beings as being equal.

## 2. Practicing to benefit all equally

According to the Dharma benefitting sentient beings should have as its ultimate goal the ultimate liberation and full development of wisdom and compassion of beings. Therefore, the fundamental essential point in benefitting all beings equally is to serve any being with this kind of Bodhicitta. As to how to achieve this supreme ideal, one needs to act skillfully according to causal conditions, at the right time and according to each sentient being's capacity so as to be helpful. Consequently, the methods and approaches employed are of all varieties, and yet they do not constitute unequal treatments, but instead demonstrate the style of lively applying wisdom through selfless observation on causal conditions.

Sentient beings' habitual tendencies and behaviors are good or bad; of course, one should help nourish their goodness, and help reduce their badness; nevertheless, one should not regard their habitual inclinations as definitely fixed and cannot be changed, and hence one treats them with antagonistic attitudes and methods. If antagonistic, judgmental and rewarding/retributive attitudes and methods

are adopted, then how should one decide on what is right or wrong? Consequently, the practitioner himself can hardly avoid being trapped into the karmic retribution cycling of transmigration. The judgments and rewarding/retributive actions of a practitioner may also lack perfect harmony of wisdom and compassion!

Even though a practitioner has already comprehended the compassion of Buddhas, and aspires to be universally fair to all beyond selfish considerations and deeds, nevertheless, as confined by causal conditions, his relation with sentient beings naturally varies in degrees of familiarity, trust and preferences, etc. Therefore, even though it is based on the Bodhicitta to benefit all equally, conditions for his conversion of others to Dharma varies in degrees of readiness and attention given. We should not thereby mistake him as having lost the Bodhicitta to benefit all equally; instead we should have pity for sentient beings' lack of sufficient causal conditions to cultivate merits and wisdom. Furthermore, we should exert more efforts into propagation of Dharma teachings and practices so that they will all gradually know to learn and practice Dharma, and thereby their stocks of merits and wisdom will gradually increase and they will keep advancing on the enlightenment path. Even though temporarily a practitioner cannot achieve equally benefiting all sentient beings; however, through devoting one's life to the salvation mission of Dharma one may help render the mission to pass on from generation to

generation, and spread the teachings everywhere, then in the boundless space and time all personal efforts of any period and any location will merge into helpful conditions for all sentient beings to eventually attain ultimate liberation. Therefore, through all practitioners' incessant contributions accumulated throughout generations the ideal of benefitting all sentient beings equally will eventually be realized.

Among sentient beings there are all sorts of favors and grudges, and these are entangled from generation to generation; furthermore, it is often the case that deep hatred involving bloodshed is included, and hence no one can readily provide a fair sorting out and just retribution. Only through helping all of them to transcend the ocean of suffering in cycling and transmigrating in karmic retributions can genuine and ultimate benefits be equally provided.

Needs and desires of sentient beings are endless; worldly charity can never satisfy all of them. Therefore, one must follow the teachings of Dharma to ultimately help them dissipate their insatiable greed so as to genuinely benefit them. A practitioner should guide others in the light of this kind of awareness; only then can all be really benefitted equally.

Delusions of sentient beings are of all kinds of oddity and extremity. The emphasis of a practitioner's guidance to them

according to the Dharma does not lie in being antagonistic to them so as to set them right, but depends on setting an epitome through personal speeches and activities that are in accordance with Bodhi and thereby inspire and transform them in subtle ways over a long period. Thus there is no need to attempt to catch the ever evasive appearances, and consequently feeling exhausted in trying to rectify the ever-changing habitual tendencies of a myriad sentient beings. Instead, one only needs to propagate the teachings of Dharma and to emphasize on keeping up Dharma practices and activities. Gradually, in the long run, one will be able to convert a multitude through beings that have the opportunity to come into contact with one, and could even become an epitome for generations to come.

"Always complying with sentient beings" means to apply wisdom in observing the conditions of sentient beings so as to provide them proper guidance in Dharma. This matches perfectly the saying in Dharma that "heavy knock yields large resonance; light knock yields small resonance; and no knock yields no resonance." It explains that the teachings given to sentient beings by Buddha are completely in accordance with each being's propensity and readiness. Thus it does not constitute inequality in benefiting beings; rather it is only because under certain causal conditions some beings are capable of receiving only certain teachings, therefore, Buddha can only offer them those suitable teachings instead of wasting on them teachings too profound.

This kind of propagation of Dharma could also be misunderstood as being not active enough, as if one only passively waits for beings to come seek guidance. In fact, whether appreciative beings are few or many, one remains diligent in practicing Dharma in daytime as well as at night; this kind of voluntary and lasting endurance, how could it be passive? Furthermore, capable of providing beings, those having the fortunate opportunity to meet Buddha, with proper guidance that matches the causal conditions and timing so as to nourish them on the enlightenment path, just as a timely rain that moisturizes all living things on earth, demonstrates fully the perfection and inconceivability of Buddha's wisdom and compassion.

Benefits gleaned from Dharma services to sentient beings are often difficult to comprehend by people who have not practiced Dharma in depth. A practitioner can only exert all his efforts on making contributions based on Bodhicitta; and through undergoing worldly peoples' misunderstandings to polish his own sincerity. Through practicing selflessness in this way, only then one will, in the long run, be capable of benefitting oneself as well as others, and convert others through personal attainments in Dharma.

As to generating Bodhicitta toward all sentient beings equally and practicing visualization to equally benefit all beings, e.g., to absorb the sins, sufferings from illnesses, and karmic retributions of all beings into one's body, and to

universally spread Buddha's wisdom and compassion to all beings, this kind of visualizations amounts to only an ideal and imagination for novices. Nevertheless, if one can sustain the practices constantly over many years through regular daily sessions, and sustain one's speeches and activities in accordance with Bodhicitta, then after long years the accumulated effects will become very profound, and often inconceivable effects will emerge from time to time. For example, based on this kind of Bodhicitta I have devoted myself fully into Dharma practices and services for fourteen years now, even though I still lack attainments in Dharma, and yet I have often received compassionate blessings from Buddhas, and those rendered my prayers for sentient beings to become instantaneously effective. Therefore, even though I have no worldly skills for making a living, and yet I have often helped people having faith in my prayers to gain relief from their suffering or to gain increases in their meritorious stocks. This kind of examples is not limited to my case but includes inspirational results common to many sincere practitioners who have done solid Dharma practices for long time. Thus we can see that this kind of aspirations and practices is not just imaginations, and is also not playing on abstracts and illusions, but is like people diving and only those having dived into deep ocean may gather the treasures lying on the ocean floor.

### 3. Practicing to become free from tiredness and boredom

As a Dharma practitioner comprehends impermanence thoroughly he will not have the leisure to be entangled in complaints and comparisons; he does not expect anything in return for his services to sentient beings; it is only out of the great compassion born of realizing that all are in oneness that he offers sincere services, and through expressions in behaviors, speeches and thoughts to demonstrate the boundless compassion and mercy of Bodhicitta. A practitioner understands that all matters are limited by causal and temporal conditions—"blessings from Buddha's supernatural powers are indeed incomprehensible, and yet retributions resulting from sentient beings' karmas are also incomprehensible"; therefore, he can remain at ease in the face of all sorts of hindrances and under adverse circumstances, and instead using these to cultivate and nurture his Bodhicitta and capacity to carry out Bodhi missions. Even though in Dharma practices and Bodhi services no immediate effects can be noticed, practitioners who can still carry on with determination and endurance will definitely sense over time the growth, opening up and maturity of their minds. Furthermore, they will gradually inspire help from comrades with same aspirations, the support of Dharma protectors, and even some virtuous and accomplished Guru's acceptance to grant guidance. Hence, a practitioner only needs to practice sincerely in solid deeds, and then he will naturally and gradually advance into better realms; how could he become tired and bored by the loneliness that is seen in eyes of worldlings? On the contrary,

he will treasure the sincerity that is born of trials through besieged circumstances, and therefore wouldn't want to get lost in the vanity born of worldly companionships. Furthermore, since he has long since stayed away from chasing after and keeping up with temporary commotions and short-lived passions, and hence he can abide firmly in Bodhicitta that transcends worldly fames and profits, and based on it to expand the Bodhi career that will benefit all generations to come.

### **G. The Faults of Compelling**

Once it is comprehended that all phenomena are results of combination of causal conditions, then one can only exert efforts on cultivation of proper causes and conditions so as to expect gleaning of fruits at time of their maturity, and there is nothing that can be compelled or will ensue merely by fortune. Within limitations set by karmic retributive causal conditions a practitioner can only sublimate actual situations into causal conditions for the Bodhi path so as to move toward transcendence of transmigration in the suffering realms. Therefore, whatever happens one should not fall into the entanglements of antagonistic attitudes such as complaining and comparing, instead one should comply with situations by open-minded manners such as tolerance and compliance.

Based on the understanding stated above one can see the

faults of not complying with sentient beings but wishing to compel them into conformity as follows:

1. Not in accordance with causal conditions—anything that is not in accordance with the laws of causal conditions cannot be established. Suffering long in transmigration is the result of many lifetimes' entanglements in favors and complaints; therefore, it takes whole-hearted devotion and diligent practices to expect attainment of joy of liberation from transmigration. Thus one knows that it is impossible to make all sentient beings, those are so diverse in propensity and habitual tendencies, to accept certain method suddenly and thereby attain liberation at once. This does not mean that it is impossible to apply one method, such as repetition of Buddha name, to guide all kinds of beings; it only means that no one method can help all to attain liberation at once. As to concentrating on one practice, and advance along only one path, and then as one's accumulated spiritual strength develops gradually, one gradually reaches liberation; this is a stable way in accordance with the laws of causation. Be it for personal practice or propagation of teachings, a practitioner should keep this point firmly in mind, and hence not hastily work on temporary appearances, but only exerting efforts on solid and long-lasting practices.

2. Limited by grasping—if a practitioner grasps to how one should propagate the teachings or whom one must convert to Dharma, even though these are Bodhi wishes and

activities, nevertheless, unless these are done according to causal conditions and proper timing, these wishes and activities will become confinements set by one's subjective grasping which ignores the objective causal conditions, and consequently the efforts spent will yield no intended fruits. If one's Bodhicitta is pure and right, then it must be open and equal to all sentient beings; as regards time and space, it will also not be confined to any particular period and location. Consequently, it will not be confined by any grasping, but will become lively and naturally in building Dharma connections with beings according to causal conditions, and remain in keeping with the great compassion of Buddhas, as being the source of our Bodhicittas, at any place and time.

3. Trapped in entanglements—great compassion of Buddhas is boundless, and its "not leaving any sentient being uncared for" also seems like a kind of blind love; however, Buddhas' wisdom contains no grasping, therefore, Buddhas' conversion of beings is not propelled by will but carried on according to causal conditions, with universally equal mercy to provide suitable guidance and help to beings according to their individual qualifications and situations. Unless "always complying with sentient beings" is done in such a fashion, then it will be no different from worldly parental partiality for their offspring or some everlasting bond between lovers, and hence cannot escape from entanglements, and also cannot become the Bodhicitta that transcends bondages and

withstands setbacks. If a practitioner is trapped in entanglements, then he can hardly look after his own mess, and then how could he help others to attain liberation?

## **H. Diligently Opening up**

"Always complying with sentient beings" sounds very passive, as if a Dharma practitioner due to lack of capacity to convert sentient beings or ardent fervor, and hence remains passively active, and consequently he could do nothing but to practice the patience in complying with beings. However, after the critical analysis done in the previous section on "the faults of compelling" one knows that this kind of compliance is indeed a careful approach chosen by people who are mature in wisdom. In this section I will further point out that "always complying with sentient beings" has indeed an aspect of diligently opening up.

1. Giving teachings according to propensities—capable of recognizing the potentials and propensities of sentient beings, thoroughly comprehended the teachings of Dharma, and has experiences in actual practices and attainments, only then can one provide proper and effective guidance to individual sentient being according to their qualifications and situations. Unless one has great wisdom and great compassion, how could "always complying with sentient beings" be accomplished? Ordinary person sometimes cannot even control himself, and his bringing up of his

offspring can hardly avoid loopholes; how could "always complying with sentient beings" be expected to be realizable so as to benefit and guide all beings?

2. Renouncing one's self-preferences to benefit others—in order to benefit beings through "always complying with sentient beings" it is impossible for a practitioner to grasp to personal views, habits and even profits. Therefore, during the course of practicing "always complying with sentient beings" a practitioner couldn't help but to renounce personal preferences, displeasures, views and grasping to all sorts of matters and things from time to time and layer after layer. Only when one has become completely selfless can "always complying with sentient beings" be perfectly accomplished. Only after one has completely escaped from personal partialities can one attain genuinely open state of mind and sight to see clearly each and every sentient being as they are, to appreciate and care for them, and then suitably benefit them and bring them, hand in hand, up onto the Bodhi path.

3. Great mercy universally equal to all—to practice "always complying with sentient beings" one need to follow causal conditions without pre-determined attitudes, and that means to accept and guide all beings, that one has opportunity to run into, equally with compassion, and exert efforts to build Dharma connections with all of them. Therefore, not only one does not insist on serving any particular individual or group, but also one should not confine one's attention only

to human beings or living beings. To deceased ones and to all sorts of beings other than humans a practitioner should treat them all equally, pray to Buddhas for all of them equally, dedicate merits to all of them equally, and wishing all of them to escape from transmigration and attain full enlightenment soon. Bodhi aspirations and activities like these are not merely empty and intangible ideals. Dharma practitioners may, from time to time, learn of past causal connections and matters of deities and ghosts through their experiences in Dharma practices. The evolution of all matters in the worldly realm, at an unconceivable level is also affected, and even with results decided, by causal conditions related to these factors which are usually undetectable.

In light of the points discussed above, "always complying with sentient beings" is indeed skillful means ensued from great compassion and great mercy; it is not only active and open, but indeed Bodhisattvas' Bodhi aspirations and activities with inconceivable merits in conversion of all beings.

## **I. Discriminating Right and Wrong**

The goal of Dharma practices aims at transcending grasping to "self" so as to realize the limitless oneness in Dharmadhatu. And yet the fundamental difficulty of Dharma practices lies in how to recognize clearly where the

self-grasping is, and then change one's habitual tendencies, and eventually break away from them. Whether one has made advancement on the enlightenment path or not also needs to be evaluated by considering if a practitioner is capable of reducing, weakening and renouncing his own partiality of all sorts. What will be mentioned below are partialities that one might run into in the course of practicing "always complying with sentient beings." These are brought up here with the hope that they will help practitioners to distinguish right practices from wrong ones, and thereby put an end to counterfeit practices.

1. Whether it is confined by concepts or not—the practice of "always complying with sentient beings" is simple and straightforward in theory, and yet in real life it is not easy to put into actual practices. The most basic difficulty lies in how to decide who a "sentient being" is and who the practitioner of "always complying with sentient beings" is? A practitioner may consider himself as practicing "always complying with sentient beings" whereas the others or other kinds of sentient beings are merely "sentient beings." Nevertheless, other sentient beings could all be transformations of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas who appear in order to accept and guide the practitioner because it is stated in the Sutras that, in order to benefit countless sentient beings, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas issue countless transformations, and even appear as inanimate objects such as wood, stone, buildings, bridges, etc., to benefit sentient

beings. Hence, the first layer of distinguishing right and wrong lies in not to be confined by concepts, and hence a practitioner should not grasp to formality and mistakenly sustain concepts of "sentient beings," "practitioners," "Bodhisattvas," etc. A Dharma practitioner should not sustain the slightest trace of contempt or indifference in his mind, attitudes and behaviors to any sentient being he makes offerings to or attends to.

2. Whether it is helpful to enlightenment or not—a Dharma practitioner intends to benefit or guide sentient beings through Dharma teachings, and yet others would not mind it but, on the contrary, ridicule him, who has no job in the worldly realm, as a parasite to the society; under such circumstances, how should he conduct himself? Benefits gleaned from services provided by a Dharma practitioner are not easily recognized by others, and are even questioned or slandered; how should he face these situations? A Dharma practitioner aspires to benefit universally all sentient beings, but in the case of facing humans in persistent vegetative state, in shock or coma, or with mental or physical disabilities, how should he conduct himself? A Dharma practitioner would like to save all beings in the six realms of transmigration; nevertheless, he cannot communicate with beings of various species in other realms; how then to perform the salvation activities? "Always complying with sentient beings" is indeed easier said than done! Only the great wisdom, great mercy, great

compassion, great vows and great powers of Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas can actually realize the practice of "always complying with sentient beings." Dharma practitioners are only learning how to accomplish perfectly the practice of "always complying with sentient beings"; therefore, the key to one's Dharma practices and activities lies in comprehending that, whatever the difficulties one runs into, one should not thereby become discouraged or even fall into antagonistic fighting. If one turns around chasing after adverse conditions, then one will be creating personal karmas and thereby inadvertently adding causal conditions for transmigration to continue. A Dharma practitioner should be able to face squarely any conducive or adverse response or circumstance; and with Bodhicitta to transform all of them into pedagogical conditions for his practice of letting go of grasping and opening up his mind and vision. If one can handle matters in life and states of one's mind in this way, then action and inaction are all practices, and conducive or adverse conditions are all beneficial.

3. Whether it is in accordance with Bodhi or not—matters in worldly realms are often arguable from either of the two opposite sides because each side sees matters and conducts himself only from his personal point of view, stand and benefits. For example, when a Buddhist group breaks up due to evolution of matters, one side will claim to "dispel the deteriorated members" while the other side will accuse

their opponents as "damaging the harmony." If we put aside the reality of the matters, obviously this kind of divergence was born of each insisting on his partial view. And yet one cannot handle matters without a stand and resolution; how should we practice "always complying"? In case of arguments and fighting between two opposing sides, which side should one comply with? And how to decide whether one's judgment is fair and reasonable, and whether it is not the result of being misled or enwrapped in considerations of personal gains and losses? To become liberated from this kind of real-life antagonism one can only, based on Bodhicitta, consider how to adopt the path that is most in accordance with the Oneness of Dharmadhatu and will sustain the trial of time, and then advance along it with determination and despite all adversary conditions. Especially due to the fact that actions, behaviors and aspirations are mostly in the sphere of personal and voluntary matters, while the sphere of matters that others can persuade are limited, in actual matters one runs into, it is often the case that one cannot even try to persuade others but can only make efforts on one's own practices. Nevertheless, this is not a passive approach to matters because in sphere incomprehensible to us there are indeed deities, ghosts, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas who are working in accordance with causal laws. Causes and their consequences are matching exactly; each one will reap the fruits of his karma in time.

4. Whether it is accommodating or not—the aim of "always complying with sentient beings" lies in leading them onto the great path of Bodhi so as to bring them ultimate peace and joy. As to the methods and fashions of complying with beings, of course, they may vary drastically according to situations; therefore, we should not become attached to formality in insisting with partiality that only certain way is correct. Although it is so, when we evaluate according to ordinary cases, using which kind of attitude to lead beings would be more in accord with the teaching to "always comply with sentient beings"? My personal realization is that, it is a warmer attitude in treating and living among people to be constantly patient, tolerant, not renouncing, not changing and not haggling, and hence I prefer it. Life is impermanent; anyone may suddenly encounter all sorts of hardship or sufferings from illnesses, and even the sufferings of departing from relatives and loved ones due to changes in life or death. At such junctures, if a practitioner sustains constantly a way of tolerance, not renouncing and not haggling, then to he himself as well as to others there will be no regrets. On the contrary, if one adopts cold-blooded ways of disengagement to treat others and live among people, even though one's approach is based on Bodhicitta with the intention to awaken ignorant and deluded beings, nevertheless, in case the goal of awakening others is not realized, then it could induce permanent scars on one's own mind as well as onto those of others, and consequently it will become a life-long regret that can never

be healed. Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Guan Yin), Bodhisattva Earth Treasure, Medicine Guru Buddha and Amitabha Buddha are naturally worshiped and praised by many sentient beings everywhere; all because what they demonstrate is universal caring for sentient beings without ever renouncing anyone and without ignoring any minute details of beings' suffering and inconveniences. Among the "four-conversion" practices of a Bodhisattva there is "conversion through participation"; it means to participate in what sentient beings are doing so as to become familiar with them, and then one may gradually guide them to enlightenment, and it has the same rationale.

Nevertheless, in the biographies of ancient sages, there are records of some Gurus using hardships beyond ordinary people's tolerance to polish and train their disciples so as to eradicate the disciples' karmic hindrances to enlightenment. Such epitomes as set by Vajrayana patriarchs, in India there was Tilopa's training of Naropa, and in Tibet Marpa's polishing of Milarepa. How splendid and superb were the Bodhi causal conditions among those Gurus and disciples such that the spiritual offspring could have withstood extraordinary torments and eventually accomplished immortal spiritual attainments. If a Dharma practitioner still sustains even a slightest trace of worldly considerations, then it will become impossible for him to accept trials on the Bodhi path without ever regressing. In front of this kind of Bodhi trials of absolute purity, we can only worship through

full prostration; how could we be justified in mistaking them as improper?

5. Whether it is universally inclusive or not—in order to practice "always complying with sentient beings" some Buddhist organizations conduct charity and educational activities on large scales in many places. This demonstrates exactly how to base on compassion to apply wisdom and through activities beneficial to beings to lead them to practice Dharma. We don't have enough time to praise their great merits; how could we instead criticize them? Nevertheless, in order to clarify what would be the correct approach to "always complying with sentient beings" so as not to mislead beings into wrong paths or make them stop at illusive aims, we need to emphasize that, if one propagates "worldly Dharma" and stops at "human-centered" caring only for the present life, then the genuine significance and correct path of "always complying with sentient beings" has been lost. The way to amend such mistakes lies in teaching the view of "Oneness of Dharmadhatu." We may only regard the limited services among humans as a few drops of realizing the ideal but should not confine our Dharma services to only among humans. On the contrary, we should all the time at any place dedicate the merits accrued to all sentient beings in the whole Dharmadhatu, including the six realms of transmigration which contains animals and ghosts. A Dharma practitioner's sensations and feelings, speeches and behaviors, should all be absorbed into the Dharmadhatu

View; rooted in the recognition that all in the Dharmadhatu are in oneness, a practitioner vows to spread and expand services among humans to all beings in the Dharmadhatu and to continue such efforts without ending. In practicing "always complying with sentient beings" one should often visualize layers over layers of boundlessness according to the Sutras so as to expand one's mind and vision. On the other hand, one certainly should not emphasize partially only on practices of rituals, and using the excuse of "being not ultimate" intentionally ignores cultivation of merits and engaging in Bodhi services to the public. Whenever the opportunities arise, one should bit by bit put into deeds the teaching on serving sentient beings with full respect; do not ignore good deeds which are deemed small matters!

## **J. Cultivating Universal Compassion**

The main goal of this essay is to expound on the correct meaning and practice of "always complying with sentient beings" in the Dharmadhatu View. However, as far as the distinction between practice of wisdom and that of compassion is concerned, just as it is stated in the Sutra, "always complying with sentient beings" is born of great compassion. Therefore, in this section we will try to comprehend "always complying with sentient beings" from the aspect of practicing great compassion. Hope that, through such investigation and discussion, all will be able to realize the deeper significances of "always complying with

sentient beings."

## 1. Tolerance and always complying

Wisdom and compassion as taught in Dharma are two aspects of one attainment, and it takes cultivation of both merits and wisdom to achieve their harmonization in oneness so as to attain full enlightenment. Cultivation of compassion also has two aspects of one totality. On the aspect of controlling oneself, the emphasis is on tolerance; on the aspect of benefiting others, one must always practice compliance. Tolerance and compliance are two aspects of one totality; and they mutually complement each other. The juncture for their union is the boundless openness of oneness of the whole Dharmadhatu. Based on the Dharmadhatu View, there is no need to compel the practice of tolerance, and it will only be a natural expression of the openness of one's mind and vision. Recognizing clearly the laws of causal conditions as applying to all phenomena, then always complying is not an unwilling accommodation but only a necessary procedure taken to accomplish salvation through wisdom.

## 2. Truth and sincerity

The awakening as taught in Dharma is based on observation of realities in the world and in human life; and thereby it was discovered that the root source of all sufferings is the

covering up of pure original nature of beings by grasping to "self." Therefore, to attain liberation through Dharma practices one must seize onto facing reality and nurturing one's sincerity. If one does not face facts or does not behave according to genuine intentions and feelings, then no matter how grandeur and righteous the outward appearance may seem to be or how superb and profound the meditational attainments may be, there is no possibility of attaining ultimate liberation; on the contrary, it will only become personal karma created through engulfment in grasping to formality in Dharma. If one escapes from reality, and acts within self-confinement and self-set limitations under the pretext of "practicing Dharma," then one will not be able to attain the ultimate liberation of "under no circumstance there is no being-at-ease." Hence, ancient virtuous ones who attained realizations often went through trials in worldly realms to attain the state of being able to provide suitable salvation according to any given situations in a manner called "harmonious to light and compatible with dusts." These sayings are not in conflict with the teaching that practitioners should conduct Dharma practices alone in retreat and "go through a great death once." This is because going into retreat to practice meditation so as to eliminate one's delusions does not amount to escaping from reality but is only a way to concentrate on Dharma practices so that one may expect eventual realization of attainments, with the ultimate goal of spreading Dharma later to save the worldlings. Staying in retreat to practice does not mean that

one aspires to live in solitude forever. A Dharma practitioner should carefully reflect on his aspirations and capabilities so as to decide on proper activities to adopt or renounce. And during such review and self-examination one must evaluate in light of "truth and sincerity" as discussed here.

The goal of learning Dharma should be to attain great wisdom and great compassion. If one's pursue of Dharma becomes seeking for scholastic degrees or titles, engaging in group and social meetings, paying attention to buildings, offerings, public images, and all those matters of appearance related to fame or profits, and forming congregations and parties that correspond among themselves, and further sustaining social relationships with wealthy or powerful organizations so as to obtain their supports, then it has only the name of "transcending worldly ways" but actually belongs to the worldly realm. Practitioners who are sincere in attaining enlightenment so as to relieve beings from sufferings should stay far away from such practices. Rather adhere to loneliness and poverty so as to actually help a few novices who are dedicated and have the fortunate Dharma connections with one, so that Right Dharma may continue to subsist in the world.

The liberation that practicing Dharma aims at attaining is to become free from entanglements of prejudices and feelings that are expressions of greed and partiality based on self-interests, but not to become feelingless like a wood or stone.

Having escaped from selfishness, the great compassion of the whole Dharmadhatu in oneness will naturally and vigorously arise; and this kind of selfless genuine feeling is congruent to sincerity in daily life activities. If a practitioner does not cultivate sincerity in daily life and yet still thinks that compassion may be attained, then such an idea is indeed a delusion like "wishing to catch fish by climbing up a tree." Thus, daily speeches and behaviors are indeed step by step trials on the Bodhi path; one should not mistakenly take them lightly.

Whether one is facing facts and acting out of sincerity is often undetectable from outward appearances. As a Dharma practitioner reflects he should know what to choose and advance along the right path. Definitely one should not apply spotless appearances to deceive others and harm oneself!

### 3. Cultivating both merits and wisdom

In Dharma it is often mentioned that one should cultivate both merits and wisdom; and the "cultivation of merits" refers to accumulation of ethical conducts that are beneficial to others and providing services to others, in short, "do no evil, and practice all charitable deeds." It is also stated in the Sutras that full enlightenment is the result of perfect accomplishment of wondrous meritorious deeds. Hence in practicing compassion we should pay attention not only to

learning, on one's own side, tolerance with an open mind, but also to actively engaging in building Dharma connections as opportunities arise, so as to comply with sentient beings and cultivate meritorious causal conditions through paying respect, making offerings, attending to needs and converting through offering of Dharma teachings, and thus we will benefit both ourselves and others. Besides, on the life-long path of practicing "always complying with sentient beings" any trace of frustration or complaint arising in one's mind serves exactly as an opportunity for one to reflect and recognize one's own personal grasping; if one can make good use of it for one's Dharma practice, then one's ability to approach liberation will advance. A Dharma practitioner should pay attention to turning adversary conditions into "helpful adversary conditions"; and the key to such a turning-around lies in constantly abiding in Bodhicitta, and always evaluating and considering matters from the viewpoint of practicing Dharma so as to make sure that the path one will adopt is in complete accord with Bodhicitta. Through all sorts of changes in situations and circumstances which are congruent or adversary, the more one can always comply with sentient beings, the deeper one can comprehend "non-self"; and thus the wisdom of non-self will surface and develop so that one will see thoroughly the laws and relations of causal conditions. Once selflessness is attained, then all one's circumstances and situations are neither gains nor losses but only an opportunity to carry out and display the great mercy, great

compassion and great wisdom as taught in the Dharma.

#### 4. The path of cultivating compassion

##### a. Stepping into others' shoes

Through personal experiences of congruent or adversary situations and the suffering or joy one has gone through in life a practitioner learns to appreciate other sentient beings' feelings, and then applying the universal principle of extending to all sentient beings one learns about how one should aspire and aim at in life while living among beings as a person so that all beings may ultimately stay away from sufferings and attain lasting happiness. Thus, one will not lose sight of the whole situation because of temporary enjoyments, and also will blame neither circumstances nor others for one's problems. One should often think about the great sufferings of sentient beings so as to goad one's Bodhi aspiration, and exert one's efforts forcefully whenever one thinks of sentient beings' lack of security and peace.

##### b. Appreciating the opportunity through forgiving

A Bodhisattva's aspiration aims at liberating all sentient beings from transmigration; nevertheless, at a particular time and place it is often the case that sentient beings that are ready to embrace Dharma are rather limited in numbers. Hence, a practitioner should treasure any causal connection,

be it profitable or harmful, and seize it as an opportunity to spread and practice Dharma so as to benefit all involved. Do not render it into a worldly connection that is either favorable or adversary and simply adding karmic hindrances to all involved without any real significance. As to pre-existing entanglements of favors and complaints, no matter the other party is still alive or departed already, and hence it is still possible or already impossible to resolve the tangles, at least in the mind of a practitioner all such matters should be embraced and forgiven with the all-inclusive accommodation of the Dharmadhatu. If the other party is still alive, when suitable opportunity arises, one should resolve the differences with the other party in harmony, and be gentle and tolerant in accommodating to the other party. Only through cultivating one's attitudes and mind in such a manner can attainment of non-self be accomplished.

### c. Sharing sweets and hardships

Among Vajrayana practices there is a kind of "sharing sweets and hardships" visualization that can help develop one's compassion. While breathing a practitioner visualizes as follows: as one inhales visualize that the sinful karmas, sufferings due to illnesses, hindrances due to evil spirits, and karmic debts of all sentient beings have transformed in to black light and been absorbed by one; thus one undertakes the karmic retributions of all beings onto oneself. Such karmic hindrances are too heavy, profound and sharp and

hence they immediately and forcefully destroy the practitioner's grasping to "self," delusions and karmic hindrances without leaving any traces behind. As soon as one's grasping to "self" and karmic hindrances are all gone, one's consciousness transforms into Buddha's wisdom, and hence inside the practitioner's body there are only originally pure lights of wisdom and compassion left. While exhaling visualize that this pure light of wisdom and compassion and the merits accrued through having undertaken all beings' karmic retributions all transform into white light and are released from one's body so as to be offered equally to all sentient beings in the whole Dharmadhatu. Thus one's stock of merits accumulated for advancement on the enlightenment path and all one's attainments have been completely shared with all beings. If a practitioner can practice such sharing of sweets and hardships to such an extent of absolute selflessness, then his wisdom and compassion will naturally grow, mature and ripe to perfection.

Some people would not dare to adopt such practices because they worry that they may not be able to shoulder the heavy karmas of beings which are like oceans of blood. However, to practice Dharma genuinely, the first requirement is to recognize thoroughly that there is indeed no "self," and hence one aspires to sacrifice one's well-being for the enlightenment of all beings. With such Bodhicitta one starts to practice Dharma, and only then can one truly attain the

liberation in selflessness. Therefore, this kind of considerations forms the differential juncture between genuine and counterfeit (on the surface engaging in practices but deep down in mind cannot let go of self-centered considerations) Dharma practices. A Dharma practitioner should apply his efforts at this juncture and go through this pass!

#### d. Developing compassion at every opportunity

A practitioner may practice repetition of a Buddha name, a mantra, or the Mani mantra of Guan Yin—Weng Ma Ni Bei Mi Hong at any time and place so that all sentient beings in one's mind and awareness are blessed by it and become connected to one in Dharma; thus one spreads the great compassion of caring for all equally and leaving no one outside one's conversion of beings to Dharma. Guru Chen bestowed on me the tantric practice of "Three-kaya Powa"; ever since then it has been over a decade, and I have practiced Powa as voluntary public service for over one thousand times. (At the time of this translation into English, it has been over 26 years and the accumulated number of Powa services I have performed is over 3,700.) Nowadays all deceased beings that I know of, be it through personal encounters, from requests made by Dharma friends, as mentioned in news reports or personal conversations, as soon as I am aware of them I keep them in mind. When I practice Powa every other day I include all of them in the

service. (Since 2011 I have reduced the number of Powa services to twice every week.) This is also an example of "developing compassion at every opportunity." I recall in the past when I followed Guru Chen in practicing releasing of lives and feeding birds the inner transformation that I went through—when I saw birds as I walked on the road, I no longer thought of "nice looking" or "nice chirping," but instead immediately thought of: "are you full yet?" Thus it seems that caring for sentient beings may also help one to gradually attain "developing compassion at every opportunity."

e. Dedicating merits to all equally

It is clearly expounded in the Sutras that, all merits should be dedicated to all sentient beings in the whole Dharmadhatu, and only then will the aspiration and activities become perfect Bodhi deeds. However, some does question how one can dedicate a meager amount of merits to all beings; doesn't this amount to wishing to feed all humans with only a piece of bread? Why not limit the dedication to only a few so that the few may be truly benefitted? Such view is due to the observation that all causal conditions in worldly matters are always limited, and hence it is mistakenly deduced to merits in Dharma as also should be confined by such limitations. In fact, in Dharma all merits are accomplished first through liberation from self-confinement in grasping to "self," and then the Dharma

activities become rooted in oneness of Dharmadhatu which is originally limitless. Starting from the whole Dharmadhatu in oneness, only then the merits are truly of Dharma. If one grasps to appearance, then even though it is called "merits of Dharma," its causal effects stay only among human-and-heavenly realm rewards. As to how one can dedicate meager merits to all beings, one should know that, even though merits are meager, when it is based on the aspiration that is universal to all beings in the Dharmadhatu, and such aspiration is sustained up to its full dedication, then the whole deed has become an inseparable part of the great mission of the enlightenment of all beings in Dharmadhatu, and hence its merits are also inconceivable, immeasurable and illimitable. Dedicating immeasurable and illimitable merits to all sentient beings, why is this improper in any sense?

The statements above are not merely ideals. I have been conducting fire pujas and offering precious vases to the Dragon King as Dharma services at costs only, and the merits accrued are always universally dedicated to all beings for their well-being, but not limited only to the sponsors. I have been providing such services for decades, and many people have been benefitted, and yet none of the sponsors had felt that blessings are reduced due to such universal sharing. Furthermore, precisely because many are sharing the merits for free and hence the merits of the sponsors are enhanced. Attainments in Dharma are mainly due to sincere

practices and services that build Dharma connections with beings and accumulate merits without caring for worldly fames and profits. What could be unaware of by Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Dharma Protectors? And how could they be misled? A Dharma practitioner only needs to dedicate all his efforts wholeheartedly to the Bodhi mission, and then he certainly will receive Buddha's blessings so that sentient beings may escape sufferings and attain happiness through inspirational events. What other matters in life can be more satisfying and more effective in bringing peace and joy to beings?

## **Conclusion**

Above are detailed discussions on the following topics: difficulties in practicing "always complying with sentient beings," how to transcend such difficulties, faults of not always complying with beings, active aspects of always complying with beings, and the discrimination of right and wrong in practicing this teaching. Furthermore, from the point of view of cultivating universal compassion, it is expounded that "always complying with sentient beings" is practicing compassion through benefitting others, and then some ways to cultivate compassion are explained in details. One may say that discussions and analyses related to the topic of "always complying with sentient beings" have all been covered and explored in depths!

To present discussions on theories of Dharma fully and in details, it is unavoidable that there are many branches to trace through, and consequently it ends up in a long thesis. Discussions on theoretical topics may help clarify one's views and expand one's breadth of mind so that a practitioner will not lose sight of the right direction when matters arise; therefore it is also something to learn. As to deeds in actual Dharma practices and services there is no such complexity; one simply need to remain sincere in aspiration and carry on step by step in solid fashion. Here I hope that sincere practitioners, after having comprehended the reasons for "always complying with sentient beings," will put into deeds the great and expansive Bodhi activities of the Bodhisattva Path so that the brilliant lamp of Bodhi will forever shine on to look after and guide all sentient beings to full enlightenment!

Written in Chinese on the holy birthday of Sakyamuni Buddha in 1997

El Cerrito, California

Upon request from disciple Ji Hu

Translated into English in February of 2014

El Cerrito, California

# Always Yielding

*Always yielding to others' wishes but not out of indulgence;  
Guiding escape from entanglement by showing no grasping.  
Lifelong abstinence from contests so others may self-reflect;  
Wholeheartedly one aspires only to the enlightenment of all.*

Comment:

Always yielding without contests to demonstrate the peace and easy-going of no grasping. Frequent advice would seem like arguing; therefore, one instead would just retreat to help others attain their own self-awakening. Aspiring only toward the complete enlightenment of all beings, one therefore ignores the ups and downs at present.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 21, 2002  
El Cerrito, California

# In Accordance with Causal Conditions

*Practice "no self" by always remaining in accord with causal conditions.*

*Floating along the flow without attachments is easier to escape freely.*

*Sentient beings and Buddhas are all artificially created in names only,*

*Roaming free in harmonious oneness that is bright and empty all over.*

Comment:

"Always yield to sentient beings" is a saying from the Sutra that is difficult to comprehend and difficult to practice. When it is misunderstood one would just sink into sorrows with the worldlings. The distinction of sentient beings and Buddhas was established as a pedagogical convenience. When "no self" is thoroughly comprehended how could one still remain stagnant in words and names? Directly recognize causal conditions, and always remain in accord with causal conditions so as to become free of attachments and grasping. Sticky bindings would gradually peel off while wisdom and compassion would grow profound. No chasing after by-gones and staying away from expectations,

just roam freely in harmonious oneness that is bright, empty,  
serene and peaceful.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 7, 2004  
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!

# Universal Goodness Activities and Vows

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