

Let Choose

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Let Choose

Yutang Lin

*Dharma practice is up to one's choice of path;
The totality once harmonized any route works.
Forced by regulations into ever-narrower horn,
Resurrection from dead end would be difficult.*

Comment:

The goal of Buddhist teachings is for sentient beings to be no longer confined by concepts and forms but instead resume the original purity born of all in oneness. As to motivation and degree of engagement they vary with individuals and depend on personal inclination and understanding of the significance of Dharma. If the above is understood properly, then all sorts of practices may be taken as tools to facilitate one's comprehension of the harmony of all. And hence it should be up to each individual to choose the path that is more suitable to the real situation. When regulations are stipulated to set limits counter results of running into ever-narrower horn may turn up. Nevertheless, extremely desperate situations might drive people to search for paths of liberation, and then step onto practice path of awakening. Taking this possibility into consideration, even regulations and limitations might help people to become awakened, and hence need not be criticized.

Viewing the whole arena from harmony of all in oneness anything goes. In the Diamond Sutra, Tathagata says, "All things are all Buddha's things," because of this view.

Written in Chinese on April 16, 2003

Translated on April 17, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Grasping to Forms

Yutang Lin

*Luxury aroused criticism from worldly views;
Grandeur taken as measure of spiritual depths.
Ordained and yet still holds onto talks of form;
Buddha's boundless grace is uncomprehended.*

Comment:

Some monastery is luxurious, and has aroused much discussion and criticism. Unexpectedly, the reply asserts the grandeur as indicative of spiritual attainment. Talks based on grasping to forms are no different from worldly views. The Buddha compassionately taught that "one should raise intentions without abiding anywhere"; unfortunately, such teaching seems to be still beyond their reflection and comprehension.

Written in Chinese on April 16, 2003
Translated on April 17, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Continuous

Yutang Lin

*Real experiences are continuous without boundaries;
No need to waste energy on setting artificial bounds.
Great wisdom forsakes grasping to one-sided views;
All things of all times originally share co-emergence.*

Comment:

Real experiences emerge as a totality that is without artificial boundaries but continuous. All kinds of views are dependent on the viewers that emphasize distinctions and knit pieces into theories. Return to the original state that is free from biased grasping; forsake rigid views to be at ease in the absence of premeditation. All things in past, present and future are causally mutually dependent; no way to prefer or reject any when all are originally co-emergent.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 18, 2003
El Cerrito, California

A Timely Reward

Yutang Lin

*A promise made remains unforgotten for three years;
A ritual of Manjusri Sutra accomplished at midnight.
Just learned of the mailing of nice tea in the morning;
At noon the package from Xi An has arrived already.*

Comment:

Three years ago I consented to a request from Upasaka Zhao in Xi An, China to compose a ritual for the practice of recitation of the Sutra on Real Significance of Manjusri's Names. Upasaka Zhao is well versed in the recitation of this Sutra and can recite the whole Sutra from memory. Hence I agreed to do so in order to help him cultivate deeper understanding and attainment. Recently I had finished English translation of several major Sutras and my writings on them, hence I took time to work on this project. Stanley Lam helped me in this endeavor by sending me several files related to this Sutra. Using the materials provided by him as references, I was able to provide a Chinese transliteration of the mantras therein that is easier to pronounce than the ancient ones. The composition of this ritual was completed around midnight of April 18, 2003 and right away I offered it to the public via emails. The next morning I got reply from Zhao and learned then that he had mailed me a package of Tie Guan Yin tea back in March via sea mail. Unexpectedly, at noon the package arrived in the mail, just as if to give me a timely reward to thank me for the service. The wondrous coincidence is so unusually nice that I wrote it down for all to share the thrill.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 21, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Scenery on Ink Blocks

Yutang Lin

*Scenery of West Lake praised by imperial poems;
Dharma talks infused with Chan moments hidden.
Fragrant ink blocks with fine strokes carefully cut,
Preserving the fleeting shades for Buddha to enjoy.*

Comment:

Mr. & Mrs. Wang of Bei Jing sent me a set of ink blocks that depicts ten famous scenery of West Lake. The shape and size of these ten blocks are all different. On each block one side is a famous scenery carved in fine strokes, with golden color lightly touched on here and there, and the other side is the name of the scenery and a poem praising it as composed by an emperor, with the characters neatly carved in fine calligraphy. When I received such nice presents I immediately felt grateful to Yogi Chen for leading me into this life of Dharma services. So I offered them in front of his thangka. I am also grateful to the couple for their devotion and generosity, so I wrote this poem to mark the occasion.

Written in Chinese on April 24, 2003

Translated on April 25, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Mink Brush

Yutang Lin

*Arduous to copy Sutras with a deficient brush;
After having tried all brands prayed to Buddha.
Helped by Mani mantra he ran into mink brush;
Soft look and tenacious grips allow free moves.*

Comment:

Mr. & Mrs. Wang of Bei Jing mailed me a couple of brushes that are to be used for Chinese calligraphy. I asked him to tell me more details, and thus I learned of the followings: Once he vowed to copy Sutras, and yet could not find a good brush for such use. For years he tried all kinds of brushes, including many famous brands, but failed to find a suitable brush. So he prayed to Buddha for help. One day, after reciting the Mani mantra for 108 times, he ran into a peddler along a street-an old lady selling miscellaneous items, including some brushes contained in old boxes. She said those were left behind by her late husband and were mink brushes made decades ago. Upon using he found it to be soft on outlook but of tenacious quality so that he could freely move the brush in writing without having to worry about distorting the shape of the brush. Hence he treasured it and took tender loving care of it. Now they are sparing a couple of those brushes to share the pleasure with me, with the wish that the brushes would facilitate my writing of more Dharma works. In appreciation of their sincere great wish I composed this poem to commemorate the event.

Written in Chinese on April 24, 2003

Translated on April 25, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Thin Stream

Yutang Lin

*Thin stream flows continuously, not ever paused;
Relaxing in practices to sip the nectar of Dharma.
Bustling with sudden changes is of worldly types,
Unaware of self-deceit, rushing into misled paths.*

Comment:

To pursue the right and full enlightenment path one should possess the right views and a sincere dedication. Then one proceeds leisurely but goads oneself toward life-long devotion. It is like a thin stream that flows continuously; eventually the water will merge into rivers and oceans. Simple-minded, without devious views, slowly but without breaks, it will naturally linger and spread afar.

When compared with those who make temporary dashes, bustle for worldly recognition, and are good at switching, it becomes obvious that those who are unaware of their own self-deceit are rushing in the opposite direction of the right path.

Written in Chinese on April 24, 2003

Translated on April 27, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Natural

Yutang Lin

*Obeying causal conditions, things would be natural;
Giving up partial grasping no more causes to gloom.
Upon opportune juncture give indication and advice;
Running on separate courses, no need to bother with.*

Comment:

Any move made, let it be in accordance with causal conditions. In the absence of longing and expectation, at ease with letting things come naturally. When the situation and the recipient are both appropriate give guidance and advice right at the juncture. Let people rush to various paths; in the absence of comments all remain in peace.

Written in Chinese on April 24, 2003

Translated on April 28, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Renunciation

Yutang Lin

*Devoted to Bodhi path beyond worldly considerations,
Thoroughly sense impermanence, no contact with dirt,
Appreciate the whole course, have firm faith in results,
Thus combined to make even one step of renunciation.*

Comment:

Once I received an inquiry that, based on all sorts of worldly considerations, questioned the appropriateness of renunciation as taught in Buddhist teachings.

On stages of paths renunciation is only a basic step. However, it requires the practitioner to be devoted, beyond worldly considerations, to the Bodhi path as a life-long endeavor, to be profoundly sensitive to the urgency of impermanence so that worldly matters are out of mind, to be fully appreciative of the whole course of awakening and its right direction, and to be firmly convinced of the virtues of enlightenment and its attainability. Only then could a proper step of renunciation be made on the right path. Therefore, even just one step of renunciation is not an easy pace to render.

The person who raised the questions was incapable of seeing the possibilities of many kinds of lives, could not sense the urgency of impermanence, nor comprehend the significance of dedication to Bodhi path, therefore he was puzzled by the considerations within his sight.

Written in Chinese on April 24, 2003

Translated on April 28, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Mantra Sheet Guan Yin

Yutang Lin

*Wei Tuo taught us to use Mani Mantra sheet;
To burn it with devotion to ask for protection.
Image of Guan Yin appeared on the ash sheet,
With merciful face, nectar vase and long robe.*

Comment:

Bodhisattva Wei Tuo once revealed the teaching to me on how to make use of the Mani Mantra sheet written in my calligraphy; whoever burns it with devotion would be blessed by the Bodhisattva's help.

Upasaka Wang of Bei Jing has great faith in this teaching. A week ago he first made earnest prayer and visualization, and rolled the mantra sheet loosely into a cylinder, then burned it to receive the blessing. Unexpectedly, on the ash sheet there appeared an image of Guan Yin in long robe, with a merciful countenance and a nectar vase. He immediately prayed for the face to become more conspicuous so that he could take a photo to spread the inspiration to others. Only a few minutes later the face did become more recognizable. Among the photo files he sent me there was one that is easier to recognize the image, so I wrote this record down and attached the photo with it, with the hope that some people may have the opportunity to witness this miraculous inspiration.

Written in Chinese on April 26, 2003

Translated on April 27, 2003

El Cerrito, California



Refine Oneself

Yutang Lin

*Rather than making demands on others,
'Tis better to reflect and adjust oneself.
Controlling others often uses constrain;
Self-cultivation is a more realistic way.*

Comment:

Who would be willing to listen to demands? Wasting energy and worrying just in vain. When matters arise pay more attention to reflecting on oneself; it is easier to control and cultivate oneself. Coercion could not last for long; voluntary deeds would be enjoyable. Diligently cultivate Bodhi intentions and activities; as plowing goes deeper fruits gradually become ripe.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 29, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Takes Time

Yutang Lin

*No matter how sincere well-wishing is,
Maturity comes not until season's right.
Thanks to experience randomly gained,
Realizing lost of childishness in review.*

Comment:

Maturity of causal conditions could not be hurried;
Just leave things alone, up and down on their own.
So fortunately, through hardship one remains alive,
Looking back at past worries dissipated like smoke.

Written in Chinese on April 29, 2003

Translated on April 30, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Variation

Yutang Lin

*Another farce staged in the stream of transmigration;
Even if awakened near the end that could be too late.
In limitless-oneness compassion pray for all equally;
Dharma connection for beings varies to such extent!*

Comment:

For those who could not reflect and realize that their doings are merely adding another staging of a farce in the endless cycle of transmigration through life and death, even if they could suddenly awake to the real situation near the end of their lives, it could be too late for them to make amends or remedies. A Buddhist practitioner based on the compassion born of limitless-oneness would constantly pray for and dedicate merits toward the enlightenment of all sentient beings equally. What a pity that the connection with the Dharma for each sentient being varies to such extreme extents that it is impossible for all to be equally helped at once.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 30, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Open Clarity

Yutang Lin

*All sorts of precaution would still be incomplete;
Accidents would turn up, that's kind of a routine.
Recognize bugging worries as self-inflicted woe;
Settle mind in non-abiding to enjoy open clarity.*

Comment:

Who could predict how events would wind?
Trapped in anxious worrying is even worse.
Recognize self-inflicted woe as just useless,
Cease scattered thoughts to spread harmony.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 1, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Conditions for Salvation

Yutang Lin

*Both ends of conversion are indefinite;
Salvation rests on matching conditions.
Wayward encounters couldn't be fixed;
Life based on Bodhi is naturally at ease.*

Comment:

Dharma teaches that all are selfless; in other words, all are phenomena resulting from gathering of conditions, and hence there is no independently dominant factor. All things in the Dharmadhatu are mutually affecting and being affected by one another; any one causal factor has its effects, be it huge or trivial, inconspicuous or apparent.

Conversion and salvation through Dharma activities cannot go beyond the universal truth mentioned above but depend on the meeting and matching of all sorts of causal conditions. Once this is understood, those that will be converted and liberated will have their opportunity and readiness in time but could not be hurried. Therefore, practitioners have no preconditions in mind, will not be limited or affected by the evolution of situations, but remain at ease and at peace in a life of Bodhi endeavors.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 2, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Escaped from under Thoughts

Yutang Lin

*Disentangling is a long-term constant endeavor;
As thoughts arise see through them to overpass.
Mind ensnared could hardly reflect and awaken;
Swift escape from under thoughts upon maturity.*

Comment:

Fruitful results of endeavors toward liberation could not be attained just by transient enthusiasm, but require sustained cultivation of the ability to reflect in accordance with Dharma teachings as thoughts arise. Only then could one gradually experience the peeling off of many layers of entanglements. Right under the confinement and restriction of thoughts and views it would be extremely difficult to appreciate the real situation of such a predicament, not to mention to escape from its snare. Through long-term practices one gradually matures to the point that swift escape from under thoughts would happen naturally.

Written in Chinese on May 3, 2003

Translated on May 6, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Practice Everywhere

Yutang Lin

*Whatever encountered could be an occasion for awakening;
How could we limit our training to certain forms and paths?
Grasping to forms one will judge wrong and misunderstand;
All that help awakening and opening up are useful practices.*

Comment:

Dharma practices center on releasing grasping, not attaching to forms, and cultivating wisdom and compassion. Although there are stages of the path arranged and formal institutions of various schools established, once a practitioner is deep into practices he or she should not be confined by formal considerations and sectarian views, rather he or she need to practice applying Dharma in daily life encounters, and thereby gradually harmonize and penetrate through all situations.

People that are grasping to forms could hardly become aware of their own wrong footing, but would readily rush into judging who's right and who's wrong according to appearances. They could hardly appreciate the subtle significance in what Tathagata said in the Diamond Sutra, that "all things are all Buddha's things" and some ancient virtuous one's saying, as recorded in Chan koans, that "there is no one place that is not medicine."

Written in Chinese and translated on May 6, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Incomparable

Yutang Lin

*Paths for practice are multiple in theory;
Real attainments are beyond conception.
Basic principles are mutually congruent;
Setting of stations varies with ingenuity.*

Comment:

Of the many paths of practices in Buddhism their basic principles need to be mutually congruent to qualify as Buddhist teachings. To those with harmonious attainment or right views there is no such path that one could not follow. One simply chooses a path in accordance with one's propensity and opportunity. As to the arrangement of stages and stations on each path it is up to the ingenuity of the patriarchs. It is not necessarily possible to make comparisons or find proper correspondences. A practitioner need not spend time and energy on attempting to match those stations and stages of various paths. Especially in the case of Chan comprehension that is beyond any speeches or means, where could the comparison even start?

Written in Chinese and translated on May 6, 2003
El Cerrito, California

No Waiting Until

Yutang Lin

*No waiting until matters arise to pray for others;
Stay in Bodhi without pauses in sleep or dreams;
With good will see through compassionate eyes;
Free from intentional efforts, just purely natural.*

Comment:

Cultivate good will without waiting till matters arise. Abide in Bodhi without intermission in sleep or dream. Whatever comes into sight is equally prayed for. Not enacting, but a natural response.

Written in Chinese on May 11, 2003

Translated on May 12, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Demands Vanished

Yutang Lin

*As demands vanished mind is calm and clear;
As grudges disappear people no longer guilty.
Although sin and evil still linger in the world,
Here, in return to innocence, is dusty no more.*

Comment:

As soon as inner demands cease, matters that were bothering disappear. In natural peace and harmony, mind is free from worldly bothers.

Written in Chinese on May 11, 2003

Translated on May 12, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Dharma Practice and Human Affairs

Yutang Lin

*Dharma practice is not limited to outside human affairs;
Mature and skillful practitioners give guidance at times.
In view of the pursuit of perfect liberation for all beings,
How could one be bothered by transient smoke or cloud?*

Comment:

The goal of Buddhist practices is for the practitioners to become liberated from suffering of transmigration within the six realms, and to realize the originally pure and limitless oneness of all. In order to attain this goal practitioners follow the principles of No Grasping, No Attachment to Forms, Open-mindedness, Compassion, etc. in their daily activities, and thereby gradually experience disengagement from blind entanglements.

With the exception of extremely few practitioners who remain in complete solitude beyond the reach of other human beings, to most followers of the Buddhist path the sphere of their Dharma practices naturally encompasses experiences in human affairs. Since Dharma practice is their chosen devotion, in handling human affairs they need to follow Buddhist principles and rules of conduct in order to obtain the benefits of training and to make progress on the path. Out of genuine concerns and considerations for Dharma practice and propagation naturally they may also hold certain positions and adopt certain activities in human affairs.

Walking under the name of Dharma practice and yet deeply involved in human affairs, or based on worldly considerations and motivations to engage in or manipulate Dharma activities or organizations, such unhealthy practices are often seen in the world. A sincere practitioner would naturally stay away from such causes of downfall.

Human affairs are mostly transient and illusive, while Dharma practice is connected to the endless salvation of all sentient beings from suffering to enlightenment. Therefore, in general, practitioners that are

sincerely dedicated to the eternal quest would regard human affairs as too insignificant to get involved with. Even for matters that would affect many beings, they would just get involved temporarily and stay only within the sphere of Dharma activities so that there could be no endless entanglements, lest, instead of saving others, they would be pulled into ruins.

For novices their right views are often not fully comprehended and their determination to be dedicated to the Dharma may not be sufficiently well-developed, therefore, it is advisable for them to stay away from human affairs and to decline worldly bothers. As to seasoned practitioners, even though they are capable of staying in mud without getting dusty, since their goal is the ultimate liberation for all but not a transient up or down on the societal scale, they would at most give some guidance to human affairs, but not to linger therein.

Recently some Buddhist inquired about politics and religion, and that person's view seemed to regard the two spheres as incommunicable. This is far from sound reasoning. Hence, I offered briefly my view on the relation between Dharma practice and human affairs above to help clarify the matter.

Written in Chinese on May 15, 2003

Translated on May 16, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Awakening through SARS

Yutang Lin

*Raiding from SARS startled worldly dreams;
Blocking its diffusing is hard to be complete.
Beyond human endeavors, karma takes over.
Beware of impermanence, work inner peace.*

Comment:

Raiding from SARS is powerful. With its spreading unpredictable, people are fearful. Some recovered and yet some succumbed; it is a matter beyond human control. Where human endeavors reach their limits outcomes of matters are decided by karmas. Beware of impermanence early, and not to linger in worldly routines. The fundamental matter for our lives is to cultivate inner peace.

Written in Chinese on May 16, 2003

Translated on May 17, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Willing to Compromise

Yutang Lin

*As grasping dissipated unnoticeably, demands lost;
Kindness imbued into willingness to render service.
Not only no competition but also humbly abstained,
Rejoice in having contributed to others' satisfaction.*

Comment:

Emphasizing on one's intentions would bring about much suffering of fighting and complaining. After long-term practice of letting go of grasping one's mind would become much more open to the extent that nothing is a must. Furthermore, one would then instead take pleasure in humble abstention and helping others to reach their goals.

Written in Chinese on May 16, 2003

Translated on May 17, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Doubting

Yutang Lin

*Originally no problem to enjoy reliance.
Once doubts arose hindrance developed.
Even cast off the shadow still looms big.
Need time for mind to clear the dust out.*

Comment:

When doubts arise it is difficult for people to realize their own bias. As doubts evolve with thoughts all kinds of mental hindrance flourish. The real situation is beyond those worries and considerations; it is simply a reflection of the concurrent conditions. Only when the mind is tranquil could one realize the original state free of worries; one had better begin the cultivation of mental peace and clarity early.

Written in Chinese on May 16, 2003

Translated on May 17, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Nothing to Compete for

Yutang Lin

*Wishing sentient beings all become enlightened,
Whatever help I can offer has been given freely.
Which path to what extent is for each to choose;
Nothing to compete for in pursuit of awakening.*

Comment:

Sincerely dedicated to the path of enlightenment, only wish sentient beings all attain enlightenment. As much as I can, all are written down and freely offered to the public. Which path to follow and to what extent would one engage are up to each one's view and choice. All would be appropriate when in accordance with situation and conditions; in Dharma practices there is nothing to compete for.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 21, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Relaxation in the Absence of Thoughts

Yutang Lin

*Suddenly freed from all thoughts in quietude,
Clear awareness without any mental activity.
Subtle tensions became apparent and noticed,
Then loosened without effort until relaxation.*

Comment:

All of a sudden mind freed from thinking, and only clear awareness remained. Subtle tensions in various parts of the body that were not noticeable, one by one became apparent and noticed. Upon being noticed they began to loosen on their own until the tension is no more.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 24, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Let It Be

Yutang Lin

*Encompassing past, present and future concurrently without edge,
All Buddhas and sentient beings are in limitless oneness together.
Abide in letting it be as it is, without reflecting on one's situation.
Merging into Dharmakaya relies on complete absence of artifacts.*

Comment:

In order to merge into Dharmakaya we need to practice completely letting it be. All things and all phenomena of any time, past, present or future, are concurrently in this limitless oneness. Only need to let self get lost, and Dharmakaya will become apparent naturally. In complete absence of self is the full realization of Dharmakaya.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 24, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Grasping to Self

Yutang Lin

*One tiny bit yet totally covered mind's eye,
Following intentions to create much karma.
Even though Dharmadhatu is unfathomable;
Surely it works despite personal disposition.*

Comment:

It is usually the case that people's mind's eye is totally covered by grasping to self. Placing priority to one's intentions, one creates karma accordingly, and floats up and down with happy feelings and worries. If such a deluded grasping could be put to rest for a while, and one attempts to take a glimpse of the expanse of Dharmadhatu, then one might come to realize that, in reality, the tiny self is insignificant to the operation of the whole Dharmadhatu. Why would one allow the clarity of mind be disturbed at the mercy of grasping to self?

Written in Chinese on May 25, 2003

Translated on May 26, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Suffering from Insisting

Yutang Lin

*Self-centered competition aiming at personal satisfaction,
What could one hold over in the flux of beings and things?
Following Buddhist teachings to practice uprooting of self,
Washing away selfish maneuvers to abide in Dharmakaya.*

Comment:

Centered around one's self, running and chasing at will; upon careful reflection, what has one gained?

Beings and things distinctly noticed, paying attention to one means ignoring the rest; gains and losses at one time, in a blink all disappeared like mirage.

Following Buddha's guidance to practice letting go of grasping; in no fighting with anything there is natural peace and harmony.

With mind's eye wide and open, one transcends gains and losses; all in the Dharmadhatu are in oneness, and constantly providing universal salvation.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 28, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Common Karma

Yutang Lin

*Common karma too complicated to penetrate;
Ever changing and compelling to besiege all.
Rather than complaining to enhance suffering,
Better be appreciative to aim at joint harmony.*

Comment:

Besieged by common karma, none is without hardship. Complaining and holding grudge add to mental burden and increase tension. Remember others' kindness and be appreciative of fruits at hand, mind would be open and free from entangling in haggling thoughts. All should be appreciative of the opportunity to meet and gather, and work together toward peace and harmony.

Written in Chinese on May 29, 2003

Translated on May 30, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Wind Channel Opened

Yutang Lin

*A pair of clay dragon mating in union to open wind channels,
Air puffed straight up from body then they turned into bronze.
Rejoicing in their miraculous achievement I chanted mantras,
Comprehended Great Perfection to be the practice at pinnacle.*

Comment:

Recently I have been reviewing books on Great Perfection, Dzogchen; this morning I received some related teachings in a dream. I saw a pair of clay dragon mating in union. Suddenly a column of air puffed straight up from their bodies, and this straight up puffing of a column of air from their bodies continued for a few times. Then their body turned into bronze and their features appeared to be more majestic. Seeing such a miraculous transformation toward the better, I sincerely rejoiced for them and chanted mantras along their side. Right then in the dream I comprehended immediately that the teaching intended to be conveyed through this dream was: the Great Perfection practice as transmitted through Longchen Nyingtik should be built on the basis of attainment gained through mastery over Wind, Channels and Wisdom Drops. Here it is carefully recorded so that the grace of this teaching may spread far and wide.

Written in Chinese on May 29, 2003

Translated on May 30, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Vision of SARS

Yutang Lin

*Shaped like a capsule with roots like orchid-root,
Green leaves, white blossom, and shooting seeds;
SARS showed up to convey warnings in a dream;
Half of them withered, the menace's not over yet.*

Comment:

About ten days ago, right before I woke up in the morning I saw in a dream two bunches of SARS inside a closed space. (In the dream I knew that they are the appearance of SARS.) They shaped like indoor plants (but without pots and dirt). Each one is about as tall as one and half a person's height. The outward shape is like a cylindrical capsule standing up. The roots are like orchid-root but thicker and bigger; they spread around the lower end, grow downwards halfway then turn upwards and outwards the rest of the way. Small green leaves grow along small branches. At the upper end, among those leafy branches, there are branches of small white flowers. I felt that those flowers could shoot out seeds. These two bunches of SARS are different only in that the roots of one bunch are all dried up, while those of the other bunch are alive. The two bunches are of about equal sizes.

This kind of inspirational dream was not prayed for, and unexpectedly and naturally occurred. Here I recorded it as it was so that people interested in spiritual practices may share the experience.

Written in Chinese on May 30, 2003

Translated on May 31, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Threshold

Yutang Lin

*Not only the source of suffering is the grasping to self,
But also the threshold blocking liberation grew therein.
Tiny bits of personal predisposition would not let loose,
Eventually one will be led away from Dharma practice.*

Comment:

Buddha teaches that the grasping to self is the root of transmigration within the cycles of life and death. As to attainment of liberation it is also often hindered by self-centered considerations. Dharma practices deteriorated into superficial perfunctory activities or are deserted halfway, mostly because of unwillingness to renounce personal preferences. Transmigration in the six realms of suffering is like a snaring net that covers heaven and earth; when it is seen through it is only the multi-facet variegated transformation of attachment to self.

Written in Chinese on May 30, 2003

Translated on May 31, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Direction

Yutang Lin

*In chaotic worldly ways one easily gets lost;
Competing for self-interests brings no peace.
Even for charity insufficient ways and means;
Only pursuits of awakening everlasting good.*

Comment:

Worldly affairs are chaotic and uncontrollable; hence not few people get lost and could not find meaningful directions in life. Some would set as their goals the pursuit of self-interests, and got into unceasing entanglements and fighting that condemned their peace and harmony of body and mind. Some would consider helping others and promoting public welfare; nevertheless, due to insufficient ways and means or complicated situations, they became exhausted and saw only scanty and transient improvements. Only Buddhist teachings expound on original purity of all phenomena and provide practices that could lead to ultimate liberation from suffering. If one could follow the teachings by engaging in solid practices, then in the long run, one would not only attain peace and harmony of body and mind but also become capable of guiding others on the path of awakening to share the harmonic joys.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 31, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Voluntary Refuge

Yutang Lin

*Where to place one's refuge is voluntary;
Protector of liberation never coerces any.
Compassionate concern spreads over all;
Takes lots of wisdom and merit to follow.*

Comment:

The awakening path to liberation does not request people to have faith or follow, and will never resort to any compelling means. Compassion is universally equal to all sentient beings, and hence none that approaches voluntarily would be turned down. As to the choice of where to go and whom to follow, it all depends on each one's meritorious connections and degree of maturity of wisdom. It is not an easy matter to accumulate merits and cultivate wisdom; people who are dedicated to the right path should exert efforts on such developments.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 1, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Absence of Intentions

Yutang Lin

*Originally pure beyond birth and death,
No form to grasp; don't chase illusions.
Keeping intentions just add confusions;
Liberation attained by resuming reality.*

Comment:

Buddhist teachings expound on liberation through three aspects. Blank Essence (Sunyata) that is originally pure has no special characteristics, and hence originally there is no distinction of birth and death. All forms (appearances, phenomena) are in reality impossible to grasp. If one is deluded into grasping to forms and chasing after them, then there will be incessant birth and deaths carrying with them much suffering. Due to distinctions made out of grasping to forms there will be preferences and dislikes, expectations and longings, and these would amount to spreading delusive veils over evanescent phenomena.

Therefore, in order to attain ultimate liberation, one need to comprehend the significance of no form in original purity (Sunyata; Blank Essence without characteristics), one should not be deluded by forms into attempting to grasp them (No Grasping to Form), and one should see through the illusive nature of intentions and predisposition (Absence of Intentions). In other words, in complete oneness with reality is the attainment of originally natural liberation.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 1, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Could Not Be Helped

Yutang Lin

*Sudden thunder in sunny day, frost on top of snow,
Piteous situations in the world could not be helped.
Artificial maneuvers are limited, rely on mind pure;
Beyond human power all depend on Buddha's help.*

Comment:

Daily I pray for many sentient beings. Hence I have learned deeply the pain and suffering in the world. Sudden changes in life are often unpredictable. All kinds of maneuvers and planning are just creating inconveniences without real effects. Situations as they are, are mostly could not be helped, and people could only swallow them even though they are painful. Where human endeavors could not reach, on our own part, we can rely only on our purity of mind, and in addition, we can only pray to Buddhas and gods for compassionate help.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 2, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Beneficial to Practice Solidly

Yutang Lin

*Experiences gained are eventually limited;
Chasing after pleasures would add tension.
Seems lonely to practice solidly in solitude,
Mind purified to merge into Dharmadhatu.*

Comment:

Chasing after outward experiences and objects would gain and benefit to only certain extent. As preferences grow and expand they turn into chains and shackles. Practice in accordance with the Buddhist teachings; remain in solitude for long years. Grasping and hindrances would stealthily reduce, and mind stays clear and open. When aspiration and inspiration correspond in unison universal salvation activities permeate everywhere.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 3, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Experiences in Suffering

Yutang Lin

*During illness a physician applies treatments;
In hardship a practitioner trains on liberation.
Experiences in suffering are tender reference
For universal compassion to shoot and grow.*

Comment:

Just as a physician would practice diagnosis and treatment during his or her own illness, a Dharma practitioner would render hardship and suffering in life into opportunities for gaining insights into sentient beings' suffering and figuring out how to free the mind beyond such predicaments. Universal compassion stemming from personal experiences of suffering is indeed precious and rare.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 4, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Understanding Worldly Suffering

Yutang Lin

*Bitter tastes of worldly affairs learned only through involvement;
Clouds of worries and sorrows engulf people into deep confusion.
Fortunately following Buddha's words to engage only in services,
Staying away from arguments and competitions to foster sincerity.*

Comment:

As people step ever deeper into worldly matters none has been spared some bitter tastes. How many sentient beings are there, who are besieged in fortresses of worries? It is fortunate for one to have encountered the Buddhist teachings and to practice accordingly. Simply cultivate making offerings and contributions, and stay away from arguing and competing. In cultivation of sincerity there is natural peace, while propagation of the Dharma will gradually and ultimately benefit the world.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 4, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Unification with the Grand Aspiration

Yutang Lin

*Sentient beings, past, present and future, are in need of salvation;
Right awakening, clear and open, the ultimate refuge and savior.
Courses and operations in Dharmadhatu are causally determined;
Renounce self-considerations to merge into the Grand Aspiration.*

Comment:

Sentient beings are undergoing much suffering; it is the same in the past, present and future. The Dharmadhatu operates strictly according to causal laws. Ultimate refuge and savior rests in right awakening. In order to save all beings, including oneself, whole-heartedly devoted to Bodhi. This is not an easy step to take and sustain; each one must make his or her own decision.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 4, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Merits Well Accumulated

Yutang Lin

*Merits well accumulated, worldly connections exhausted,
A vow to recite the Diamond Sutra still needs fulfillment.
Requested a friend to tell wife to resume the daily session;
Such inspiration enhances faith all over the neighborhood.*

Comment:

A few years ago I performed a fire puja to Green Tara in Xin Ying, Taiwan with much help and permission to use the front yard from Mr. Jun Yu Yang. At that time I also performed consecration for the Guan Yin image and the Earth God statue worshipped on their family altar. Afterwards both Mr. and Mrs. Yang dreamed of the Earth God expressing thanks.

One day in early January of this year Mr. Yang saw in a dream an old man came to say to him, "You have been a very good person, and have completed your accumulation of merits." He was very surprised at this when he woke up. That afternoon suddenly he passed away due to heart failure. Afterwards he communicated to a friend who has psychic abilities that he had vowed to recite the Diamond Sutra daily for three years, and had not fulfilled this vow yet. He asked his friend to tell Mrs. Yang to continue this daily practice on his behalf until fulfillment of the vow. Mrs. Yang agreed to fulfill this vow for him, and has been conducting daily session of recitation of this Sutra and chanting of Amitabha.

The good deeds and Dharma practices of Mr. Yang won praises from deities and he was favored with a notification of completion of mission. He further communicated supernaturally to ask his wife to continue his Dharma practice so as to help the family make progress on the spiritual path. Such a human life could well serve as a model for others to follow. Hence I recorded it here to spread his influence to the public toward spiritual cultivation.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 6, 2003
El Cerrito, California

This Impermanent Moment

Yutang Lin

*At any instant one might die, why need to fight?
Causal matters are beyond control; don't worry!
Constantly care for universal suffering of beings;
Guidance of clarity would ultimately be helpful!*

Comment:

Usually people's awareness of impermanence does not include a keen sense that at any instant one might pass away. If one could maintain such a sharp awareness of impermanence, then one would not have the leisure or interest to engage in meaningless fighting or arguing. It is difficult to renounce completely cares about oneself; that is because one could not see clearly that sentient beings have no control over the evolution of their situations. In reality, such self-centered worries are inconsequential.

Once the above views are comprehended, and one escapes from under the dominance of self-centeredness, then one should reflect constantly on all sufferings of all sentient beings. From the resulting clarity of mind one would naturally and spontaneously issue speeches and activities that are in accordance with awakening and liberation. Only such deeds would ultimately be beneficial to all beings.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 8, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Renouncing Grudge for Peace

Yutang Lin

*When would retaliation in cycles come to an end?
How could violence be stopped by more violence?
No peace here today, tomorrow may never arrive.
In mutual tolerance discard grudge to share living.*

Comment:

Treat each other with violent actions, and retaliate in endless cycles; such life has no day of peace, and upon death has no tomorrow. In peace benefits may be shared; in war all will be hurt. Since we are all sentient beings, we should endeavor for a way to living. In mutual tolerance discard grudges; renounce use of force to share peace and security. This transient human life is full of predicament and suffering; may all realize this soon to stop adding infliction.

Written in Chinese on June 13, 2003

Translated on June 15, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Opportunity for Changes

Yutang Lin

*Economic depression yields unemployment everywhere;
Take it as a vacation from heaven for calibration of mind.
Carefully reflect on life to ascertain definite significance;
What should be given priority might be rearranged anew!*

Comment:

As economics takes a downward trend there are more unemployment than usual. Too much leisure is rather dull; don't waste such days away. Regard it as a vacation for recuperation from exhaustion and calibration of mind. Reflect on past courses and review human lives. Reconsider your priorities and reassign their order. Take the opportunity to study Buddhist teachings, practice repetition of Buddha names or mantras to purify your mind, and make prostration to Buddha daily to improve your health. Thus you will survive the hard time and stay in good shape.

Written in Chinese on June 13, 2003

Translated on June 15, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Transmission over Thousand Miles

Yutang Lin

"Transmitting sounds over thousand miles" is not an empty phrase; In oneness of the Dharmadhatu it is easy to communicate far away. Propagation of Buddha's teachings involves no partial preferences; Mind's voice was transmitted overseas by inspiration into a dream.

Comment:

An Upasika in Tainan, Taiwan was practicing to convert text files of my Chinese works into nice-looking document files according to the format as established by Upasaka Hung Kwok Sing. Day before yesterday the two files she sent me for review were imperfect, indicating that she had not mastered the process. So I sent her an email to let her know about it. She was wondering about how to fix the problem that resulted from incompatibility of our computers. Unexpectedly, yesterday in her dream she at first saw halfway in the air a well-formatted blue page with a poem I wrote and then heard my voice saying, "This time it is well done; there is no more mistakes." Thereupon, she dared not stay idle but jumped off the bed to continue to work on two files, and immediately sent them via email to me for review. She deeply believed in the authenticity of this transmission through the dream. Later she received my email and got the confirmation that the files were indeed well done this time. Thus the message received in her dream was indeed an inspirational case of "transmitting sounds over thousand miles.". (In Chinese martial art novels there are mentions of a special Gong Fu called "Transmitting Sounds over Thousand Miles." Usually it is taken only as a fanciful invention by those authors; unexpectedly it has realized through Buddhist practices.)

Upasika Xu in St. Louis, Missouri was practicing similar conversion for my English works. After she started doing this work one night she had the following dream: she showed printout of my poems that she had worked out to me, and said that she did it. I replied, "Yes. Keep trying. Don't give up." After I reviewed the work, with a smiling face I said to her, "That's right."

These inspirational events bear witness to the truth of the teaching that the whole Dharmadhatu is in limitless oneness. When we are selflessly devoted to the propagation of the Dharma for the benefit of all sentient beings, communication born of such oneness may occur naturally and easily beyond efforts or intentions.

Written in Chinese on June 14, 2003

Translated on June 15, 2003

El Cerrito, California

The Ritual of Releasing Lives to Freedom

Following the oral transmission of the Buddhist Yogi C. M. Chen

Under the supervision of Dr. Yutang Lin

Written by Dr. Juan Bulnes

The practitioner sends animals back to their natural state. They can be any animals which were in captivity, or condemned to death to provide food, etc. Among the auspicious animals are turtles to pray for longevity and fish to pray for Enlightenment. (The individual loses the ego and becomes one with the universe just as the fish, upon being released, become one with the ocean.)

1. TAKING REFUGE

On behalf of the animals, repeat three times the tantric formula of the four refuges:

NAMO GURUBEI
NAMO BUDDHAYA
NAMO DHARMAYA
NAMO SANGHAYA

2. DEVELOPING THE BODHICITTA

In order to free the animals from the six realms of transmigration, repeat 108 times the mantra (in Pin Yin) of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva who is representative of Compassion:

Weng Ma Ni Bei Mi Hong

3. PRAYING FOR REBIRTH IN THE PURELAND

Repeat three times the Mantra of Rebirth-in-the-Pureland (in Pin Yin):

Na Mo O Mi Duo Po Ye

Duo Tuo Qie Duo Ye
Duo Di Ye Tuo
O Mi Li Duo Po Pi
O Mi Li Duo Xi Dan Po Pi
O Mi Li Duo Pi Jia Lan Di
O Mi Li Duo Pi Jia Lan Duo
Qia Mi Ni
Qia Qia Nuo
Zhi Dan Qie Li
Suo Po Huo

4 DEDICATING THE MERIT

a) Repeat the Stanza of Releasing Lives to Freedom (written by Yogi Chen):

Send you from Samsara and Nirvana
To the original state of Tathata.
When one is sent, all beings are sent, too;
Born from non-born, same as the Buddha.

b) After dedicating the merit of this Puja to all sentient beings, the practitioner may then pray for any specific good intentions, such as long life, good health, accomplishment in meditation, etc.

Part II A Brief Commentary by Dr. Lin

Releasing lives to freedom is a traditional Buddhist practice which is very popular in Asian Buddhist communities. The main purpose of this practice is to save lives that are in danger and to pray for their ultimate Enlightenment as well as for that of all sentient beings. The ritual presented above was used by my late teacher Yogi Chen whenever he conducted such a practice. He released more than 350,000 lives during his lifetime.

The tantric formula of four refuges affirms our reliance on the guidance of our gurus, all Buddhas, the teachings of Buddhas, and the holy

assembly of Buddhist elders. The beings that we release usually have no chance to be connected with the Buddhist teachings; by taking refuge on their behalf, we are placing them under the protection of Buddhism.

The six-syllable mantra of Avalokitesvara signifies the compassionate salvation of all sentient beings in the six realms of transmigration, viz., heaven, asura, human, animal, hungry-ghost and hell realms; each syllable of the mantra stands for the salvation of the corresponding realm in the given order. Although the beings we release are limited in number, the intention of our compassionate act encompasses all sentient beings.

Life is impermanent; the lives we save will eventually end. We chant the Mantra of Rebirth-in-the-Pureland to pray for their liberation from the sufferings of endless transmigrations; through Amitabha Buddha's grace they will gain rebirth in His Pureland.

The Stanza of Releasing Lives to Freedom entails the essence of this practice:

Send you from Samsara and Nirvana

We release these beings with the intention of freeing them from not only the suffering of transmigration but also the bondage of attachment to Nirvana. Full Enlightenment is beyond conceptualization, hence eventually one should not be limited by even Buddhist concepts--how thorough is the liberating spirit of Buddha's teachings!

To the original state of Tathata.

Liberation is simply returning to the original state of things as they are, free from artificial distinctions and valuations, and emotional entanglements and attachments; it is natural purity and innocence; it is all things in limitless oneness.

When one is sent, all beings are sent, too;

Our intention is to free all sentient beings even when only one life is set

free to nature. A being will be ultimately set free only upon realization of Enlightenment, i.e., when he becomes one with all; thus, when one is truly free so are all.

Born from non-born, same as the Buddha.

Final liberation is like a new life but it is just one's returning to being pure and natural.

As soon as some lives have been released the merit is there, therefore, in urgent cases such as severe sickness, tragic accidents and fatal operations the practice of releasing lives is often conducted to generate merits for those in need, and thereby obtain effective results due to dedication of such merits.

Since our lives are just as fragile as the lives we are saving, when we engage ourselves in saving them we are practicing benefitting others despite ourselves. In the process of acquiring them, we are practicing alms-giving of material wealth and fearlessness. The care taken in their transportation and the choice of an appropriate spot for their release help develop our compassion and wisdom.

The number of sentient beings slaughtered for human consumption far exceeds the number that Buddhists have been releasing. Nevertheless, it is not a futile endeavor because the Buddhist ideal of universal compassion, which frees our minds from human-centeredness and opens our eyes to see the unity of the whole universe, materializes through such a practice. Besides, the onlookers would have a chance to learn about the philosophy of this practice and reflect on themselves. Gradually the community will be affected for the better.

The Buddhist teaching of universal compassion and the Buddhist practice of releasing lives are forerunners of the modern awareness of global ecology and environmental preservation. Nowadays the practice of releasing lives often faces conflict with local ecology preservation because the animals purchased from the market may originate from far-off places or even overseas. In Asian countries where such practices are abundant some merchants would follow the footsteps of the Buddhist

practitioners in order to capture the animals released for resale. We should be aware of these problems and be prudent in conducting the practice of releasing lives. Participation in non-profit efforts to preserve the global environment and ecology may be considered a modern approach to the traditional way of releasing lives.

Refuge in Dharma

Yutang Lin

*Worldly worries piling without solution,
Dharma remarks suddenly clear the sky.
Ups and downs come and go, unreliable;
Sincere dedication forms basis of peace.*

Comment:

Upasaka Wong phoned me to say that, today the arrival of my poem "Sui He" (According to Harmony) suddenly swept away the depressive mood he was in for days due to worldly worries. This demonstrates how beneficial pure Dharma words could be to peoples' minds. Upasaka Wong has been replenishing my Buddhist books for free distribution at several locations in New York City for many years. In our discussion on our experiences in Dharma services we shared the view that, in this world where ups and downs and gathering and dispersing are all transient, engaging in Dharma services that are pure offering and dedication for many years would naturally form a foundation for our inner peace.

Written in Chinese on June 18, 2003

Translated on June 19, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Purify the Mind First

Yutang Lin

*Impure thoughts always cause self-infliction,
Taking shape in behavior and speech, it hurts!
Locked up in prejudices, how to see through?
Chances to receive guidance, hard to come by.*

Comment:

Dubious thoughts arose in one's mind; it is difficult to see through one's prejudices. In cages without physical form one locked oneself; it is difficult to find a way out. Drew boundaries on the ground to limit oneself; it is difficult to stop haggling and complaints. Even at opportunities to receive guidance, it is too obtrusive to hear and swallow.

Written in Chinese on June 18, 2003
Translated on June 19, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Viewing the Stars

Yutang Lin

*Confusing worldly affairs force sufferings to accumulate,
Squeezing people's minds into tiny bits as mustard seeds.
Viewing the starry space to appreciate such vast expanse,
Merging into Dharmadhatu is even more without bounds.*

Comment:

Our minds are clustered by worldly trifles into habitual accounting of pennies and nickels, and so much so that we often lose sight of causal considerations that are of matters of life and death, transmigration in suffering or liberation in tranquility. Thus, the boundless openness of Dharmadhatu is certainly inconceivable. Fortunately we have astronomical knowledge, even though qualified by our sensory limitations and artificial theories, that could help us to open our mind's eyes and enlarge the scope of our concerns to extremely enormous extent. Such comprehension could help Buddhist practitioners to advance further in their comprehension of the limitlessness of the Dharmadhatu.

Written in Chinese on June 20, 2003

Translated on June 21, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Complete Renunciation

Yutang Lin

*The path of awakening is free of dusty pollution;
Any tiny bit of attachment can delay and divide.
Usually people could not renounce worldly way,
Because they don't see that all need be given up.*

Comment:

How could the salvation of all beings in the Dharmadhatu be limited by any personal reasons? It is necessary to renounce all personal considerations completely in order to step truly on the path of awakening. Usually it is not easy for people to renounce worldly ways in order to engage completely in Dharma pursuits; it is only because people lack the understanding that one needs to pay no attention to worldly considerations completely and make up one's mind to face even life and death as it comes in order to take the step of complete renunciation for Dharma. In fact, any matter in the world could not be completely controlled, not to mention the circumstances and manner of how one will live or die.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 25, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Holy Epithets Heard

Yutang Lin

*"Four Seas Guan Yin" and "Iron-Arm Guan Yin" heard,
With great might to conduct salvation all over the world.
Holy epithets revealed to bless aspiration to compassion;
Attempting to match the ideal I exhaust my scanty offer.*

Comment:

This morning while sleeping I heard: "Si Hai Guan Yin," followed by "Tie Bei Guan Yin." (Epithets of Avalokitesvara in Chinese meaning, respectively, Four Seas Guan Yin and Iron-Arm Guan Yin.) Since these are epithets unheard of to me I figure that they signify respectively two aspects of Guan Yin's thirty-two kinds of salvation responses to sentient beings' pleading for help, namely, it is spreading all over the world, and it is conducted with great might. As a humble practitioner, even though I am blessed to learn of the holy epithets so that I may aspire to match such ideals, due to my poor qualities and merits all I could do is to exhaust my efforts in Dharma services.

Written in Chinese on June 28, 2003

Translated on June 30, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Heavenly Guidance

Yutang Lin

*Spontaneous expressions have become a bit talkative;
Heavenly guidance heard, to restrain writing abusive.
One's blind spot could hardly be found and reviewed;
If not due to such kind reminder, I would still be lost.*

Comment:

The other day during my sleep I was blessed with heavenly guidance; a voice said in Chinese: "Ni You Xie Hua Tai Duo Le" (You have become a bit too verbose.) Therefore I reflected on my situation and realized that, since my writings are all spontaneous, I might have spent too much energy and time on writing poems of Dharma. In addition, with the intention to benefit all people in the world, whenever I have some work written in Chinese, I would right away translate it into English myself, and consequently the amount of my efforts would more than double. Since I received this guidance I have reduced my writing of poems. This piece is composed, not because of inability to change old habits resulting in action contrary to the teaching, but only because such guidance is most precious for pointing out one's blind spot. Therefore, I made the effort to record it so that such grace may spread and be appreciated far and wide.

Written in Chinese on June 28, 2003

Translated on June 30, 2003

El Cerrito, California

In Praise of Patriarch's Autobiography

Yutang Lin

*Common in the world is self-praising with others-blaming;
Great patriarch's autobiography transcends worldly vogue.
Attainments and writings so deep and wide to inspire awe;
Truthful accounts of imperfections set model forever more.*

Comment:

Ordinary autobiographies or memoirs could hardly avoid deterioration into self-praising and others-blaming. Consequently, people would not care to read such writings. Recently I have been reading the English translation by Richard Barron of "The Autobiography of Jamgon Kongtrul." This Tibetan patriarch (1813-1900) was a great master. Through his autobiography we could gain some appreciation of the profound and extensive scope of his attainments and writings. In addition, to me the most venerable characteristic of this autobiography is its truthful presentation of various problems and faults. The model thus set by a sincere practitioner will shine the path of enlightenment forever!

Written in Chinese and translated on July 1, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Let It Flow

Yutang Lin

*Passing like a flowing stream without pauses,
Worldly events are moving along like a river.
Just let thoughts flow with the waves of time;
Matters bygone are, as currents wouldn't stay.*

Comment:

River flows nonstop; worldly scene similar. Let thoughts go, as if merging into the stream of time. As time moves on, all things evolve; build no barriers in mind to hinder the flow. A skillful way to maintain liberation, let mind and events flow together. When mind is constantly open to flows there will naturally arise fresh perspectives.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 2, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Hungry Ghosts Begging for Food

Yutang Lin

*Blessed Nectar from Buddhas is in turn given to ghosts;
Nightly practiced this Dharma service for twenty years.
Tormented by hunger and chills they begged for foods;
Without exception, allow them to eat and to join Powa.*

Comment:

A nightly fixed session of mine is to gather rice offered to Buddhas on the altar into a plate, and with the understanding that these rice had been blessed by the Buddhas into nectar they are in turn given to ghosts. Thus I have continued this practice and service for twenty years now. Recently an Upasika that can communicate with beings in the spiritual realm informed me that there are some ghosts tormented constantly by hunger and chills. Since they are still incapable of understanding the benefits of receiving blessing through Powa, they simply asked her to request me to allow them to receive my nightly nectar offerings. Based on the Buddhist teaching of universal compassion I always agreed to such requests immediately without paying attention to their propensities. Furthermore, after they had taken the nectar and were no longer hungry or cold, I also included them in the Powa service to help them gain better rebirths.

Written in Chinese on July 3, 2003

Translated on July 6, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Three-Kaya Dharma Seals

Yutang Lin

*Gracious teacher's fine works would be presented as offerings.
Dharmakaya as if ignorant, Nirmanakaya as magical as dragon,
Sambhogakaya, boundless life, has neither beginning nor death.
May all sentient beings attain such enlightenment with my help!*

Comment:

Upasaka Wang of Bei Jing presented a hand scroll of a series of seals, that were carved by his gracious teacher, Mr. Yang, in such fine art, as offering to the Bodhisattva, the Dragon King of the Great Ocean (Pacific Ocean). Furthermore, he expressed the generous willingness to send all those seals to me as offerings so as to pray for all sentient beings' earlier enlightenment. In my reply I expressed my view that one should not gather too many good things so that others may share good things, and that, when one has in possession some good things, one should share them with those who could appreciate them so that those good things are put to better uses. Therefore, from among the twelve seals on the scroll I chose three and provided the following interpretation:

"Ruo Chi" (As if ignorant) represents Dharmakaya because it seems to be knowledgeable and yet indeed it is omniscient.

"Wu Liang Shou" (Immeasurable Longevity) represents Sambhogakaya that transcends time and has neither beginning nor ending.

"Long" (Image of a dragon) represents Nirmanakaya because it displays inconceivable transformations, this is similar to dragons, to provide opportune conversions.

In addition, I prayed with the well-wishing: May the right cause for your future perfect attainment of the three kayas of Buddha be established through this offering of the Three-Kaya Dharma seals!

Written in Chinese on July 4, 2003
South Lake Tahoe, California

Translated on July 7, 2003

El Cerrito, California



三身法印林鈺堂
恩師佳作願貢獻
法身若痴化如龍
報得壽量無始終
願同眾生咸証覺
二〇〇三年七月四日
養和齋於太浩湖

金文刻石 王居士
拓文 林鈺堂



Amendment:

Upasaka Wang and his wife wholeheartedly contrived and prepared through much efforts to have collected a big box of treasures for a Chinese literate study (brushes, ink, inkstone, seals, etc.), and mailed it to me. It arrived safely today. Thus the Three-Kaya Dharma Seals had arrived together. Upasaka Wang had further researched the ancient character style known as Jin Wen, Gold Script, to express his sense of preciousness, and used the style to engraved my Chinese poem "San Shen Fa Yin" (Three-Kaya Dharma Seals) on one side of the seal "Wu Liang Shou" (Immeasurable Longevity). His solemn and profound feelings are deeply felt by me, and I believe that he and his wife will certainly receive Buddha's blessings through such devotion.

Using the sheet with these three seals stamped by him I obtained a scanned file, and it is attached after this article so that all may share the enjoyment of their artistic flavor. May all who comes to see or hear about these seals attain Buddha's three kayas, and thereby universally save sentient beings!

Written in Chinese and translated on October 21, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Illusive Nets Mutually Extinguish

Yutang Lin

*Original purity could never be polluted;
Illusive nets artificially knit pain people.
Replace illusion by illusion to get peace;
See through all illusions to regain clarity.*

Comment:

Dharmakaya is originally pure and has never ever been polluted. Human minds knit wildly to cover the world with illusive nets that trap and tighten ever deeper. Using illusion to counter illusion, Dharma practices purify our minds. As all illusions extinguish one another our original clarity will appear by itself.

Written in Chinese on July 4, 2003
South Lake Tahoe, California
Translated on July 7, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Aiming at Common Interests

Yutang Lin

*In the job market all join in competition for a position;
As Buddhists with good will to others, shall we resign?
Suitable persons rightly placed will be beneficial to all.
Praying for such results one stays away from partiality.*

Comment:

For livelihood one looks for a job; few openings for a multitude of applicants. If we pray for our own gains, we could not care for others' losses. If we wish others well and success, what would happen to ourselves? As Buddhists that advocate selflessness and altruism, is resign the only way for us to proceed? Following this line of reasoning we find both advance and retreat perplexing. Aiming at common interests we pray for all equally. May suitable persons be rightly placed; such a wish is free from partiality. May the world be peaceful and prosperous so that each will find a suitable position! As to renouncing worldly engagements so as to devote oneself solely to Dharma practices and services, the goal is also aimed at common interests.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 9, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Common Nature

Yutang Lin

*Reflecting on all sorts of situations and sufferings of sentient beings,
One might comprehend that all sentient beings have common nature.
It has nothing to do with forms and shapes, but simply immeasurable.
Having entered this reality it is plain to see that self is an illusive idea.*

Comment:

Reflecting on all sorts of situations that sentient beings go through, and thereby appreciate the similarity of basic nature of all sentient beings. Mind of sentient beings cannot be confined by shapes, nor measured. As one comprehends its boundlessness it is only natural for one to simultaneously see through the illusive nature of the notion of a self.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 10, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Dharmadhatu as Guru

Yutang Lin

*The goal of Dharma practices is to attain enlightenment;
Whoever could facilitate this goal should be attended to.
Not only companions could we learn from and reflect on,
All phenomena in Dharmadhatu could inspire awakening.*

Comment:

Ultimately there is no self; such is the real situation in the Dharmadhatu. In order to attain oneness of all, one needs to release all attachments and remove whatever bondage. Whoever could help us attain emancipation should be approached and learned from. Do not stay within self-set boundaries and remain hindered from complete enlightenment.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 11, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Liberation through Pure Goodness

Yutang Lin

*Practice pure goodness according to Buddha's compassion;
Any harm done would render our supplications groundless.
Decades of accumulation of merits result in peaceful purity;
Equal salvation of all beings will benefit many on this basis.*

Comment:

The other day a Buddhist inquired about what to do in case his superior at work is asking him to engage in some business practices that amount to cheating for profits. I advised that he should leave such a company at once, so that later he won't be complicated in the consequences. For us Buddhists to obtain Buddhas' blessings we could only do good diligently to be in accord with Buddhas' compassion. If we do harm to sentient beings, how could we face Buddhas to supplicate for blessings? After I had replied thus to him I became aware of my mind's full of pure goodness, and realized that it is the result of practicing pure goodness ever since I began to learn Buddha's teachings. It is a natural result of diligent Dharma practices for twenty-seven years. Since it is difficult for novices to comprehend the long-term benefits of Dharma practices, so I was thinking of writing it down and making it known to the public so as to encourage beginners to devote themselves to practicing pure goodness. This morning while I was still thinking about this topic, with my eyes closed I saw a bird's-eye view of a large ship with its flat deck crowded with sentient beings (so many that they all appeared tiny). This is Buddha's teaching that practicing pure goodness would not only bring about liberation for the practitioners but also provide a compassionate vehicle of equal salvation to benefit many sentient beings. May all practitioners who aim at Bodhi for all beings share this encouragement!

Written in Chinese and translated on July 13, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Dissipation

Yutang Lin

*Entanglements of hindrances are led by karma;
Endeavor to dissipate woe to achieve harmony.
Even pray for foes to gain wisdom and fortune,
With spiritual maturity to enjoy peaceful living.*

Comment:

Living in this world one could hardly avoid entanglements of hindrances. One should realize that such unpleasant circumstances are caused by past karmas, and hence one's efforts should aim at dissipation so as to achieve harmony. If an antagonistic approach is adopted instead, then one would only become more perplexed, and the result would be deeper suffering for all involved. As a Buddhist one should even pray for opponents or foes to grow in wisdom and merits, and wish them to enjoy peace and good health, so that the knot of mutual entanglement would gradually disentangle from the root through expansion of perspectives and growth in tolerance.

Written in Chinese on July 14, 2003
Translated on July 15, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Single-minded

Yutang Lin

*Single-mindedly repeat "Amitabha"; who could be so advised?
People's minds filled with pursuit of vanity; who would listen?
Now that the predicament renders other endeavors unattainable,
Make it the right opportunity for diligent chanting of Amitabha.*

Comment:

Worldly life is full of distractions; people could hardly appreciate the profound serenity of single-mindedly repeating "Amitabha," the holy name of Buddha Amitabha. Sometimes people would find themselves in predicament with nothing significant attainable; if they know about the practice of repeating "Amitabha," then they might as well make use of the opportunity to engage in this spiritual practice. Perhaps, with diligence, they could gradually experience the profound serenity therein.

Written in Chinese on July 14, 2003

Translated on July 15, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Sila as Guru

Yutang Lin

*Sila as Guru means to practice according to causal laws;
Let Bodhi guide our intentions to channel all to Dharma.
Diligent practitioners would stay away from controversy,
Not falling into grasping to forms lest became entangled.*

Comment:

A Buddhist came to visit. He asked me to write an article on the importance of upholding Sila (i.e., observing the rules of conducts as set down by Buddha and maintained in the Buddhist traditions) because he found that it is a topic that I have seldom expanded on.

Sila set in details how practitioners should regulate their intentions, speeches and actions so that they would stay away from harmful deeds, accumulate good deeds, benefit other sentient beings, and move toward ultimate enlightenment. Thus they are certainly of great importance and are beneficial to uphold. Among the Six Paramitas, Sixfold Sublimation, Sila Observance is listed as the second main item. I have written articles in Chinese and English on the Six Paramitas; readers might want to look into them.

"Sila as Guru" was the final teaching of Buddha before he entered Nirvana. Basically the essence of this teaching indicates that a Buddhist should cultivate views, motivations, speeches and actions that are in accord with enlightenment. As to the details of those rules that were set as remedy to some events in the distant past, as times and circumstances have drastically changed, they might have lost the significance that was originally intended. Therefore, even at the early time when those rules were compiled into canons there were proposals from some elders to omit all minor rules.

Once norms were set up, due to worldly custom of grasping to forms, it could hardly be avoided that controversies and pretentious activities would ensue. For diligent practitioners, how could they have the leisure to argue or haggle with others, or to become attached to

formalities? To follow the path of solid practice they could only reflect on themselves in the face of each and every event by asking the following questions: Do my intentions stem from Bodhicitta? Are my approaches in accord with ultimate enlightenment? Will the results be conducive to propagation of the Dharma? Thereby, throughout the course of their lifetime of practices, they would gradually amend and improve toward enlightenment. Therefore, in my works I seldom touched upon details of Sila; instead, my emphases are on expounding basic views and correct motivations, and on illustrating how to apply Buddhist principles in real-life situations.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 20, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Naturally Formed Holy Statue

Yutang Lin

*A Guan Yin statue born of past forest fire,
With three faces, holding a baby, so alive!
It took five hundred fire pujas to usher in;
Blessing to all six realms will last forever!*

Comment:

The mountain area where Adi Buddha Mandala is situated went through a huge forest fire in 1978. In 1986 Yogi Chen, while facing the ocean and kneeling on a slope on this land, recited Dragon King Sutra Stanzas to supplicate to the Dragon King for his blessing to this Dharma ground. Therefore, since then every time we went up to the land we would offer incense at this spot to commemorate the event. And the spot is called Dragon King Hill.

On Christmas Day of year 2000, after the 500th fire puja we went there to offer incense. As I was raising my upper body after bowing down toward the ocean suddenly I noticed in the lower left corner at a distance, among the trees and branches, there was a burnt wood in the shape of a standing Guan Yin. Gradually we went down there several times to take closer looks, and slowly we recognized various features that naturally constitute a close resemblance to the famous image of Song Zi Guan Yin, the Guan Yin that brings baby. This statue is at the center of a few surrounding trees that enclose to shape like a pavilion. Its bottom shoots out horizontally from a trunk, and hence the statue seems to stand in midair. Outside the surrounding trees there are two burnt-wood owls and a large turtle. By the right foot of the statue there is a large bear. From the front of the statue one could easily recognize topknot, outline of face, two eyes, nose and mouth. Its left arm holding a baby, near the tip there is a small face. To the left and right of the front face there is a side view of a face on each side; this is just like on the statue of the 11-face Guan Yin, there are three faces on each of the three lower levels.

Now we also offer incense in front of this naturally formed holy statue. Each time we offer six sticks of incense to signify our praying for all sentient beings in the six realms. And we call the slope leading to the statue, Guan Yin slope. Recently, with the help of digital cameras, Buddhists around the world may have a chance to view this statue when they see photos of our Dharma activities on-line. Therefore, I wrote all these down to help people understand the causal connections that led to this extraordinary display of miraculous transformation and conversion.

Written in Chinese on July 23, 2003

Translated on July 24, 2003

El Cerrito, California



Help All toward Enlightenment

Yutang Lin

*Life and death are separated by only one breath;
Use one's breath to practice according to Bodhi.
"Help all toward enlightenment" abides in mind,
Continues all one's life to escape transmigration.*

Comment:

The boundary of life and death is set by the existence or absence of one breath. At this instant all one could do does not go beyond this one breath and one thought. To practice according to Bodhi, just maintain the thought to "help all toward enlightenment." Thus transcending the problems among one and others, as long as the thought is maintained continuously one would escape falling into transmigration in the six realms of suffering.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 24, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Original Purity

Yutang Lin

*Reality on the whole has no boundaries.
Don't let one's view stir up controversy.
No need to dance with others' prejudice.
Satisfy with what's present and live easy.*

Comment:

Original purity makes no distinctions.
Don't stir up matters by raising ideas.
Deluded views not worth responding.
Leisurely just let all illusions flow by.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 25, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Connection with Things

Yutang Lin

*For beings as well as things,
Gathering and dispersing are equally unpredictable.
Understanding causal laws,
Simply accept and accommodate changes in scenes.
While things are still useful,
Employ them wisely to convey empathetic feelings.
Once they are beyond reach,
Why should we be bothered by unavoidable losses?*

Comment:

Uncertainty in gathering and dispersing is not limited to sentient beings. Among sentient beings and things there are also causal connections. Once this is understood thoroughly, one no longer hovers expectations or demands. What is said as owning, means only temporary possibility to use. It might be lost in a blink, leaving only inconsequential memory and regrets behind. Appreciate one's current connection with things, and employ them wisely to convey compassion and sympathy. Ultimately there is no ownership of things; mind should be free from considerations of gains and losses.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 26, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Release Grasping

Yutang Lin

*Reality is boundless, indivisible;
Barriers born of grasping divide.
Gradually practices help one see,
As views evaporated, all is clear.*

Comment:

From the ultimate original ground nothing has ever departed;
Due to grasping to a tree the whole forest has been forgotten.
Incessant Dharma practices unnoticeably send illusions away;
As all hindrances of mind disappear, clear awareness remains.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 29, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Slipped through the Net

Yutang Lin

*Sentient beings are like fish swimming in oceans;
God of Death ceaselessly casts net at any second.
Staying alive now is like slipping through the net;
Remaining breaths are only for awakening others.*

Comment:

A Buddhist friend informed me that their company just went through a wave of layoff. Only a minority survived, and all became gloomy. In my response I mentioned my usual practice of being mindful of impermanence. Realizing that death strikes constantly and incessantly, I think of my survival at this moment as a fish that has just slipped through the net of the God of Death. Remaining breaths are so precious that they should not be squandered away. May they be fully used for awakening deluded beings.

Written in Chinese and translated on July 29, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Repetitious yet Not Repetitions

Yutang Lin

*Climbing up a mountain, similar praises made at various scenes;
Although similar phrases are used, views are at different heights.
My poems on insights and practices may seem all too repetitious;
Arising spontaneously from within, they are by nature diversified.*

Comment:

Just as people climbing up a mountain would exclaim admiration at various sceneries, even though the phrases used are very similar, the views are at different heights. My poems on Dharma insights and practices all arose naturally from within. The phrases and topics in general may seem repetitious; nevertheless, they arose from different depths of comprehension. People reading them would gain some points or insights according to their understanding of the topic and of the Dharma. May such propagation of the teachings spread without ending!

Written in Chinese and translated on July 30, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Averting All Hindrances Mantra

Translated from Chinese by Dr. Yutang Lin

Fearless, fear-free Pacify all fears Give fearlessness Transcend through awakening

Nothing to disturb Pacify all disturbances Nothing to argue

Refrain from disputing No anger hovered Nothing to die for

Pure awe-inspiring Awe-inspiring tracks Great awe-inspiring

Eternal tranquillity

Approach Compassion Remove flaws Reveal truths Neither fall short nor over

The common meaning The auspicious meaning Nectar statements Seeing the essentials

To guide and control With open mind The sequence of activities Never reach end

Brightness un-born Born of purity Fresh, clean and light-shinning statements

Equality in accordance with equal mind Reach the unsurpassable

Silas set up by Buddha are pure No transgression No disobeying

Conquer devil's arena Victorious over other paths Shinning the

clarity of Dharma Convert through giving teachings Open up

Dharma treasures

Comment:

This awe-inspiring mantra was bestowed by Sakyamuni Buddha as recorded in Section 20 of the Buddha Expounding on the Ocean Dragon King Sutra (Fo Shuo Hai Long Wang Jing). Not long ago some Polish Buddhists were inquiring about this mantra; therefore, Stanley Lam searched for it and copied it for me. This mantra consists of meaningful expressions, and hence I am interested in translating it into English so that more Buddhists could practice it and benefit from such a practice. The original mantra is continuous without breaking into sections. In

order to facilitate understanding and memorization, I have rendered the text into 10 consecutive lines.

Earlier today I mailed one box of books to a Buddhist library in Romania, and in the afternoon I mailed two boxes of books to a Buddhist library in Arizona. After that the muscle in my left upper leg felt some pain. However, this evening as soon as I started preparing for this translation the uneasy feeling just vanished. Thanks to Buddha's blessing through this mantra.

Yutang Lin

Prepared for translation and translated from the Chinese version on August 1, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Key to Liberation

Yutang Lin

*Helping through charity will soon run into limits;
As inner knots remain tied, one could not be free.
Recognize "self" as delusive, work to go beyond;
This is the key to one's clarity and peace of mind.*

Comment:

Charitable helps to others, as practices of generosity, are certainly conducive to enlightenment, and should be whole-heartedly praised and rejoiced in.

Upon careful investigation into its reality one realizes that such help could hardly assure long-lasting security. Donors as well as recipients alike, all have inexhaustible worries.

Therefore, one realizes to be appreciative of the key to attaining liberation. It is to recognize clearly that "self" is a delusive concept, and to endeavor to live beyond its illusive and detrimental nets.

Original clarity and purity is free from thoughts, open and tranquil. As soon as all selfish ideas vanish it will naturally reveal itself.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 3, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Live without Anticipation

Yutang Lin

*Although wishful plans repeatedly got cut short,
Habitual lingering in daydreaming remains alive.
Rather than grasping to illusion and worry much,
Why not live without anticipation to face reality?*

Comment:

Most worldly people hold on to certain anticipations. Even though facts of life are such that sweet dreams are mostly cut short, many people still would not change such habitual lingering and longing. Consequently, they could not free themselves from the sorrow of worrying about gains and losses. Whatever comes to one in life are known only upon facing; without anticipations such encounters would still remain no more and no less. If we could see things in this light and live accordingly, then there would be less worries and more joy born of spontaneity.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 3, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Accommodating

Yutang Lin

*Absence of welcoming and resisting is called "As It Comes."
To attain "As It Comes" practice accommodating to reality.
In accordance with Dharma follow the example of Buddha;
Accepting things as they are will gradually imbue oneness.*

Comment:

The Chinese translation for "Tathagata" is literally equivalent to "As It Comes."

In oneness without duality welcoming and resisting naturally vanished. In accordance with Dharma teachings, constantly follow the examples set by Buddha. Whatever has passed no longer to stir up; phenomena are by nature illusive. Whatever has happened just accommodate to it; thus one will gradually attain "As It Comes."

Written in Chinese and translated on August 4, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Close to Reality

Yutang Lin

*High ideals could easily move people upon hearing;
Under careful scrutiny they're deemed inapplicable.
One-sided wishful reasoning might sound plausible,
In oblivion of difficulty involved in each step taken.*

Comment:

Propagation of ideals often readily moves people. Nevertheless, in the reality of the world each step taken always involves some degree of difficulty. Not in touch with reality, such vain words lack real benefits. Unfortunately, some speakers and their audiences all seem to be unaware of the inapplicability. "Embrace your enemy" shows more than just tolerance; if the opponent would not accept it, then what to do? "Forgive everything" is easily said; unless one has practiced it for a very long time, who could actually achieve it? "Let grudges and gratitude be bygones" might be expected wholeheartedly; when causal chains are still connected, how could their consequences be nullified? Only practitioners that are used to taking solid steps could sense the cracks upon hearing such sayings. Real benefits will be gained only when one puts more into practice and less into boasting. A few reminders are offered above with the hope that we would all refrain from making such mistakes.

Written in Chinese on August 8, 2003

Translated on August 9, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Seeing through Worldly Matters

Yutang Lin

*Warm or cold reception could suddenly change drastically;
Illustrating worldly considerations to be indeed superfluous.
Single-mindedly proceed according to one's Bodhi intention;
No need to dance along and circle around in worldly games.*

Comment:

Worldly people make their moves based on self-interests considerations. Change of attitude in their reception could suddenly happen, even from morning to evening. Consequently, particular considerations for others often turn out to be superfluous. One had better just treat all equally, and aim only at promotion of Bodhi goals. When this point is comprehended, one's mind would clear up right away.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 9, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Safe Passage

Yutang Lin

*None could constantly control the course of life;
Each grasps to some prejudice and dashes blind.
All matters of consequences will be faced alone;
Only by relying on a pure mind will one survive.*

Comment:

The enormous flux of worldly affairs has in reality no definitive control. And yet there is no lacking of blind blunders stemming from self-assurance or self-righteousness. Matters of real consequences would fall on one alone, without possibility of substitution. To go through the suffering of aging, disability, illness, and death, only a pure mind could remain peaceful. Realize this essential point early, and choose paths that are conducive to peace of mind.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 9, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Spots Uncared-for

Yutang Lin

*The nature of all our experiences is illusive;
Grasping of mind adds highlight and shade.
As clarity resumed, nothing indeed matters.
Spots uncared-for are worth contemplating.*

Comment:

All our experiences are transient and illusory; nothing would stand out in this light. Individuals have diverse grasping and propensities; with emphases and touches added, things are played up. As mind quieted down originally there is nothing to fuss about. Areas where one used to be uncared-for remained neutral as things originally were; observe such tranquility and absence of mental agitation. Stay afar from preference and abhorrence to experience and appreciate clarity and tranquility.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 10, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Dharma Joy

Yutang Lin

*Expounding profound Buddhist teachings in plain language,
Reveal experiences and inspirations gained through practice.
Such accounts have won appreciative and congruent support;
Voluntary helps come forth to share and spread Dharma joy.*

Comment:

Fortunately through the teachings of Gurus, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas I have learned the Buddhist presentation of truths and practices, and thereby gained experiences of Dharma joy through dedication and devotion. Furthermore, I have recorded my insights and inspirational experiences in writings, and printed them for free distribution to whomever interested so as to share Dharma joy with the public. Thus, gradually some Buddhists have become appreciative of my works and services, and they voluntarily offer their support and service in promoting such Dharma activities. We join together in a pure service, and consequently, we constantly sense the inspiration born of a natural flowing of Dharma joy.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 10, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Ritual of Giving Food

Summarized and translated from Chinese "Meng Shan"
The Buddhist Yogi C. M. Chen

Refuge

Repeat each line three times:

Namo Ever-Abiding Buddhas of the Ten Directions.

Namo Ever-Abiding Dharma of the Ten Directions.

Namo Ever-Abiding Sangha of the Ten Directions.

Namo Guru.

Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.

Namo Earth-Treasury Bodhisattva.

Confession and Repentance

Recite one time:

May all sins done by others and by me,

Resulting from the poisons three,

Involving Body, Mouth, and Mind,

All be cleansed, no sin to find.

Purification

Repeat the Mantra of Purification three times:

OM AROLA CHI SOHA

Prepare the Food: Take a cup of pure water into which is put at least seven grains of rice.

Transformation

Recite the Mantra of Transformation at least three times:

NAMO SARVA TATHAGATA WALO SUTI OM

SAMBALA SAMBALA HUM.

To change food to nectar, causing the ghosts' throats to become smooth. Recite the mantra:

NAMO SURUPAYA TATHAGATAYA DAGITA
OM SURU SURU PAYA SURU PAYA SURU
SOHA

Recite the Mantra of Milk-Ocean one time:

MNAMO SAMANTA PANTALIN OM POM

Offer to Buddhas

Call their names:

Namo Lantala Buddha
Namo Victory Buddha
Namo Mystic Body Buddha
Namo Vast Body Buddha
Namo Fearless Buddha
Namo King of Nectar Buddha
Namo Amitabha Buddha

Recite stanzas of Praise

This Mantra-blessed food is given
To those numberless sentient beings.
May all be satisfied without lust.
Be quickly freed from hell
And get good rebirth in the Pure Land.
While repeating Buddha's Name
Take refuge in the three Gems and develop Bodhicitta,
Finally attain the Supreme Path and get the Endless
Merit.

May every sentient being share the Dharma food.

Place the food on a pure place. (Do not put on a peach or pomegranate tree).

Turn the merit to all beings

To you, all sentient beings
This food I give in offering.

May it fill the universe,
Each being received a share.
May this little merit be turned to all sentient beings.
May all who take it attain Buddha's full
Enlightenment.

Aug. 14, 2003

One is All

Yutang Lin

*One is all; concentrate on one to master it.
All are one; Dharma connections widened.
Whoever comes is the opportune recipient,
Having in mind all sentient beings equally.*

Comment:

All things are in oneness; one and many are identical in this limitless oneness. One is all; concentrating on practices in one path is easier to master it. All are one; under whatever circumstances one remains at ease. Responding to whoever is present as to all sentient beings. While one's encounters are limited all beings are equally cared for and thought about in the mind without exception nor omission.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 14, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Three Wise Monkeys

Yutang Lin

*Eyes grasp no form, free away from prejudices.
Ears make no distinction, spared futile chasing.
Mouth keeps silent, no contending pro and con.
Three monkeys set model of profound wisdom.*

Comment:

Dharma friends brought three wise monkeys,
Each not seeing, not hearing or not speaking.
Natural sense organs rather put to no misuse;
Wise ones react dully to attain emancipation.

The Ko family offered me a set of three wood-sculpture monkeys. Each one covers eyes, ears or mouth with both hands. I recognized the deeper significance of these gestures, and hence wrote this poem to expound on them.

Years ago while I was visiting Buddhists in Malaysia a Buddhist there offered me a small clay statue of "Covering-face Buddha." It was a blessing amulet made by an "Emperor of Monks" in Thailand. Its gesture of covering the face with both hands signifies the covering of all hindrances.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 15, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Universal Flow

Yutang Lin

*All are constantly changing and interacting in universal flow;
Conceptual delineation and definition are bound to mismatch.
Confined by conformity to stereotype thinking is living death;
To attain enlightenment first break grasping to fixed concepts.*

Comment:

The fundamental principle of Buddhist teachings is that all are without self. In other words, all things are constantly changing and evolving. Therefore, in the flow of all things the interactions are constantly moving on and there is no way to set any definite boundary of any kind to any part. Any conceptual stipulation and delineation is an artificial and partial grasping that could not match the reality of a universal flow of all. If one could not realize the limitation and infidelity to truth of concepts, and settled down with familiar views, then one would be self-confined in a net of prejudices, and live a life of ever-stiffening ways. Such living is like dead already.

The ultimate goal of Buddhist practices is the attainment of perfect enlightenment. Unfortunately, practitioners are often influenced by habitual tendencies so that their practices and activities remain stagnant within the shadow of dualistic and antagonistic concepts. If the basic view of a practitioner does not include a thorough and clear understanding of the illusive nature of fixed concepts and views, then it would not be possible for the practitioner to break through the illusive net of views and concepts. The state of no-thoughts could not be realized or sustained by novices. Therefore, this article is written in the hope that through the propagation of an understanding of the universal flow people could be helped to walk out from fixed concepts and prejudices that they are used to living with.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 17, 2003
El Cerrito, California



Praying for All Involved

Yutang Lin

*Karmic entanglements are unfathomable;
Prayers could easily fall for self-interests.
Guiding toward awakening has to be fair;
All sides are equally prayed for openness.*

Comment:

Worldly affairs are winding and knotted; human realm has much suffering. Those who came for help through prayer often leaned on self-interests. Giving guidance on the path of awakening, all are viewed equally as in oneness. Without consideration of relationship or sides, provide compassionate help in empathy. Only wish that matters will end up satisfactorily to all sides, and all involved will learn to live with an open mind.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 18, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Drips of Dharma Nectar

Yutang Lin

*Drips of Dharma nectar gradually imbue mind;
Inconspicuous conversion relies on familiarity.
In appreciation of opportunity I reply carefully,
With deep wishes that all inquirers will mature.*

Comment:

Dharma connections are uncertain; no way to force it in any way. Drips of Dharma teachings gradually imbue and gradually permeate into minds. When inquiries come I respond carefully in appreciation of the opportunity for a Dharma connection. Significant conversion will emerge only through long-term familiarity with the Dharma way. With deep concern I sincerely pray and wish that through such connections Bodhi would eventually mature in all of them.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 22, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Powa over Internet

Yutang Lin

*Lacked proper tools to request blessings for the dead;
Digital imaging help spread compassionate salvation.
Passing a cemetery, all aspects are captured in photos;
Then displayed on a webpage to gain benefit of Powa.*

Comment:

In the past while Dr. Juan Bulnes was travelling he often thought of sending photos of cemeteries he encountered to me for Powa service. However, often it was not very easy to carry such things out. Now with the availability of digital cameras and Internet services it has become rather easy to do this wherever he goes. He would bring a digital camera along, take photos of all major aspects of a cemetery that he runs into, post them at a website that provides photo services, and then send me an invitation to visit and view those photos. While I watched slide show of such photos I would chant the Mani mantra or the mantra of Green Tara for the deceased in the cemetery. Then I would write down the name of the cemetery and the city and state of its location, and include those deceased in the next Powa service. It has been one month since we started this practice, and I have already done such "Virtual Cemetery Visits" for 57 times. This includes photos of cemeteries that are posted at some websites that Juan discovered.

If other Buddhists would like to follow Juan's approach to build bridges for Powa services over Internet, please post the photos at some website and then send me an invitation for me to do my virtual visit. In this way we can save me the download time that I cannot afford with my low-speed connection.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 27, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Scales ad infinitum

Yutang Lin

*Gradually looking down from beyond Milky Way,
Magnifying ever tinier particle within a single leaf,
Harmonize broad and narrow to remove prejudices,
From heaven down to quark there is no trace of self.*

Comment:

My brother forwarded a webpage from the website of his alma mater. It presents a special technological feast that shows successively, at the rate of powers of ten, views looking down ever higher into space from above a leaf at the top of an oak tree, or magnifying ever tinier particles inside the leaf. It goes as far above as reaching beyond the Milky Way, and as deep within as arriving at the realm of quarks. Having gone through this sequence of forty layers of ever magnifying views one could not help but to comprehend intuitively the meaning of "no self."

We are accustomed to our normal physical senses and views without a keen awareness of our being limited by them. If one could comprehend the fact that views of varying scopes ad infinitum are originally in harmonious oneness, then one would transcend the ordinary views stemming from the assumption of a self, and reach the truth with certainty that there is no self that one could hold onto.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 27, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Torch of Certainty

Dr. Juan Bulnes

I met Yogi Chen in 1974 and our friendship grew by and by. It is not easy to say exactly when I committed myself to being Buddhist and declaring so: it happened by and by. I often drove with him to the Pujas. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to help my revered friend (Yogi Chen) with a university computer in a project. I published a paper as a result. He helped me to get unstuck in the quagmire of writing a Ph.D. thesis -- I don't believe I would have made it without his help. In 1977 I took his advice to put a Buddha image over my bed and to pray to it daily. A couple of years later I took his advice to take refuge from H.H. the 16th Karmapa. Each of these steps deepened my experience of the benefits of Buddhism.

President Reagan used to say that he began to live when he married Nancy. I can say that I began to live when I began following Buddhism!! It unlocked the floodgates of life! Before, my life had been a sorry case of stanching water that does not flow anywhere; one is just trying to protect the misery and does not know anything else, like the frog at the bottom of the pond who thinks that is the ocean. From the moment I started praying to Buddha, it started flowing more and more - - very rapidly -- to a very surprising extent.

At about that time, perhaps around 1979-1981, I cannot be sure, Yogi Chen told me something very important. He told me about his own experience: how, from the moment he became Buddhist and started following his guru, every important event in his life was inspired by Buddha. The teaching was clear: when we sincerely tread this path, there are no accidental events any more! He told me to have faith that whatever difficulties I encountered -- no matter how awful they seemed -- were in fact not troubles but a divine plan of Buddha. He explicitly told me so! Without that certainty, I don't know how I would have been able to bear the troubles that I soon encountered. But with this certainty, they were not troubles; I was just following a plan towards a better

future. Sometimes I had to wait long for resolution of very undesirable situations: to wait many months, even years in some cases. And the final results were always most unexpected, surprising, and in the end much better than what I could have wished for myself. So in retrospect I had it very easy!! Everything was resolved for me by the Dharma protectors!!

August 28, 2003
Mountain View, California

Dr. Yutang Lin's comment:

Juan told me the above reflection many times in the past. Recently, due to worldwide economic downturn, many Buddhist friends are experiencing hardships. So I asked him to write down his experience of following the Buddhist path for over twenty years, in order to share it with other Buddhists and thereby help them to cultivate their faith and overcome the hard times.

Boundless Awareness

Yutang Lin

*View all sensations equally without discrimination;
Neither attached nor lingering, realize blank nature.
Clear awareness originally is completely boundless.
Deluded grasping blindly woven into jail cells deep.*

Comment:

Sensation in its totality is originally without preference and abomination. Individual minds draw their own limits; close or distant are distinctly separated. Viewing all equally in oneness, to return to reality. Any grasping or attachment forms some hindrance. Not being confined by form or sensation, the nature of awareness is blank, i.e., it could not be grasped. Let whatever comes flows by, clear awareness is completely boundless. Without understanding of this basic truth, suffering in delusion is ever compounded. Practicing in its light one could attain liberation readily.

Written in Chinese and translated on August 29, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Maintaining Purity

Yutang Lin

*Pure mind without thoughts is close to original state.
One's thought of first priority leads the course of life.
Going through worldly affairs, don't chase after them.
Maintaining purity would cultivate open-mindedness.*

Comment:

Any thought held to be of the first priority
Would yield karma to set the course of life.
To gain experiences without sowing regret,
Keep a pure mind under all circumstances.

Written in Chinese and translated on September 2, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Golden Wei Tuo

Blessed Disciple Yutang Lin

*Gold-body Wei Tuo granted fearlessness.
Wisdom Sun of Middle Way paves stairs.
Sunyata Joy added splendor under guide.
Graceful merits shine forth to bless us all.*

Comment:

About nine years ago I was blessed with a vision of the solid gold body of Bodhisattva Wei Tuo. And through the inspirational experience I was taught to distribute the photo of the Giving of Fearlessness to benefit sentient beings. Soon afterwards Upasaka Zong Xin Wu learned about the inspirational event and offered me a statue made of boxwood that was finely carved by an old expert craftsman in Fu Jian, China. Upon my supplication the Bodhisattva graced us with an indication of his willingness to stay at my Taipei residence so as to help promote Dharma activities in Taiwan. Over the years, now and then, I thought of gilding this statue as a token of gratitude and devotion; unfortunately the opportune conditions had remained insufficient. Luckily this year Detong (Sunyata Joy), a devoted practitioner well-versed in the art of gilding holy statues, voluntarily pledged to undertake this project as an offering. With help from many Buddhists who donated gold leaves made in China, Japan or Taiwan, she skillfully repaired, polished the statue and finally gilded it all over its surface in very fine details.

Detong had gilded over thousand Buddhist statues in the past. This time the experience was very unique and supreme. Unexpectedly, the work was accomplished under the tactful guidance of Bodhisattva Wei Tuo; when the part done was not satisfactory to the Bodhisattva it would become unacceptable and need to be redone. Sources of the gold were from China, Japan and Taiwan. In Chinese the characters representing these three places are Zhong (middle), Ri (Sun), and Tai (platform). That happened to match a proper description of Wei Tuo's Dharma activities: Born of the wisdom Sun of the Middle Way

(Complete and Bright Wisdom) to pave stairways (series of platforms) for the advancement of all sorts of serious practitioners.

The holy statue happened to be fully and satisfactorily gilded on the eve of the Mid-Autumn Festival, and returned to its original seat that evening. Thus, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the altar had their reunion on the Festival, just as Chinese people are accustomed to do so on this festive day. May this glorification of Bodhisattva Wei Tuo's wondrous merits and blessings help promote the daily maturation of meritorious and wisdom conditions for all sentient beings to advance on the path toward enlightenment!

Written in Chinese on September 11, 2003, Mid-Autumn Festival, and translated on September 16, 2003 at Taipei.



Between Same and Equal

Yutang Lin

*Viewing everything the same ignores the distinctions.
Viewing all things equally by releasing presumptions.
Distinction of same and equal rests on understanding.
Uses of words reveal polar degrees of comprehension.*

Comment:

Some would say that it is the same to say "viewing everything the same" or "viewing everything equally." In viewing everything the same all sorts of obvious distinctions are intentionally ignored. While in viewing everything equally the mind resumes original purity in the absence of mental activities that are dualistic and making distinctions. Viewing everything the same is still within the cage of cognitive awareness, hence relying on it will not free one from transmigrations. Practicing viewing everything equally would gradually release and eliminate fixed views so that one would gradually attain liberation. The distinction in using one word or the other reveals the polar distance between worldly and transcendental comprehensions. A popular saying goes: as an expert puts his hands into the matter, he would instantly find out whether it is genuine or not." The saying certainly applies here!

Written in Chinese on September 12, 2003 in Taipei

Translated on September 17, 2003 in Taipei

Complete Dedication

Yutang Lin

*Only through complete dedication can the wondrous be experienced;
Setting self-made limits for shallow tasting could never comprehend.
Even one thread of grasping to certain view could delay and stumble;
Stairways and ladders on the path originated from ignorant grasping.*

Comment:

Swimming or ice-skating requires oneness of body and mind to move around gracefully. Novices that still hold on to the idea of grasping to some support are hindered precisely by such attachments. By the same token, engaging in Dharma practices would gradually yield wondrous fruits only after complete dedication has taken shape. Any slight trace of grasping to views that pulls back or stumbles would block real progress on the path. In light of this understanding, stairways and ladders on the path could be recognized as established in response to various degrees of ignorance.

Written in Chinese on September 30, 2003

Translated on October 1, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Grasping to Nothingness

Yutang Lin

*Originally free and alive, no traces of grasping.
Lack of full comprehension, fallen to vainness.
Avoid using prayer beads or Buddha's epithets;
Still amid sea of suffering, to abandon the ship!*

Comment:

"No grasping" means not to grasp to anything so as to merge into the original state of pure innocence and liveliness. Nevertheless, to some people that lacked thorough understanding of the Buddhist principles, the saying was misunderstood as "grasping to nothingness"; and they accordingly "taught" others to renounce using prayer beads or Buddha's epithets, and called the resulting state as "Mindful of Buddha without Form." In fact, this is to remain stagnant in the still water of grasping to "no form." Real and thorough comprehension of "no form" amounts to non-abiding by any form and not to be bound by forms; consequently, such a being would be well-versed in making good uses of all forms. Why would there be any need to avoid using prayer beads or Buddha's epithets? Leading purblind persons by a purblind person in such a manner had harmed the followers, causing them to jump off the lifeboat of Buddha's epithets or prayer beads amid the ocean of suffering before reaching the shore of liberation and enlightenment. "Preaching Dharma" before having gained a thorough comprehension and harming people's wisdom life without self-awareness, there are even such stray persons in this period of decay of Dharma.

Written in Chinese on September 30, 2003

Translated on October 1, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Black Sandalwood Balls

Yutang Lin

*Black sandalwood balls are light and ready to turn around;
In either direction, circling on my palms via silent gliding.
Cultivating potential abilities in this way for over a decade,
An ingenious approach of using wood has been discovered.*

Comment:

I have practiced health balls often for more than a decade, and am quite familiar with the exercise. I had even written about it in Chinese and English, and printed the articles for free distribution in order to spread its benefits. To ease the burden of carrying them during trips I asked a Buddhist in Taipei to order two pairs of wooden balls with diameter 6 cm each for me. Fortunate for me that Upasaka Xian Rong Lan agreed to undertake the hand making of these balls. He used black sandalwood and toiled on it for days. He ran back and forth several times to the factory to use the machines there, and then lacquered the balls for over ten times until he was satisfied with the results. Using wooden balls is lighter and swifter than using my original marble balls; that enables the fingers to move about more widely while the gliding is much quieter. The gentle noise is less likely to disturb beings nearby. Originally my intention aimed only at ease of transportation; unexpectedly, wooden balls turned out to be of much more benefits. Usually health balls are not made of wood; hence, this endeavor may be deemed a new contribution to this way of doing exercises.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 1, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Sea Burial

Yutang Lin

*A final departure made people feel closer;
Suddenly our common fate dawned on us.
Memories welled up, tears filled our eyes;
Not much to say, let flowers say good bye!*

Written on October 2, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Applying Rituals to Daily Life

Yutang Lin

*Principles of Dharma gathered into a unified ritual;
Diligent practices familiarize one into full mastery.
Applying its implication in all aspects of daily life,
Soon realize full attainment to help sentient beings.*

Comment:

Buddhist rituals gather fundamental principles into a sequence of unified practices so that practitioners may attain full comprehension and mastery of the essences of Dharma through familiarization with such a model process. If emphasis is placed only on practice sessions of such rituals (Sadhanas) and application of such fundamental principles in daily activities is overlooked, then it would be difficult to achieve a total conversion and full attainment. If the implications of such principles are extended to activities in-between the sessions, then action and comprehension will gradually become unified and harmonized, and Dharma practices and daily activities will be in concordance, and consequently full realization will be attained sooner.

Citing the Amitabha (or White Chenrezi) Unification Sadhana that I compiled as an example, a practitioner can proceed as follows: In daily life reflect on one's "motivation" prior to taking actions so as to make sure that it is in agreement with impermanence and Bodhicitta. Be mindful of "original purity" so as to reduce the bondage and pollution of worldly considerations that are rooted in ignorance. In choosing actions or inaction one should rely on the insight and considerations of "totality." Whenever there are conflicts of worldly and Dharma ways, one should remain steadfast with attitudes and approaches that are in line with "taking refuge" in the Dharma. Constantly think of "offering" all one's enjoyments and belongings to the Triple Gems (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) or of engaging in charitable almsgiving. Upon seeing or hearing about good deeds one should readily "praise" and take delight in them, and offer help. Constantly guide and encourage one's

endeavors by the view that a practitioner of "accomplishment" should or would do so; constantly pray for all beings to be free from suffering, full of enjoyment, and enlightened soon, and upon any occasion try to use it as an opportunity for building Dharma connections. One's verbal expressions should resemble "spinning" of mantras in that the intention is only to benefit all beings and the words used are all gentle, kind and harmonious. Understood that all sentient beings share "one breath" and therefore, often think of taking in others' suffering during inhaling and spreading happiness during exhaling. Comprehended the original "identification" of all holy beings and sentient beings in the limitless-ness of the Dharmadhatu, that is without division nor separation, and without beginning nor ending, and therefore, whole-heartedly devote one's life to the practice, service and propagation of Dharma.

If a practitioner can apply the implications of the rituals that he has adopted for regular practice into all aspects of daily life as described above, and further, can reflect carefully on how to improve attitude, manners and approaches in such a light so as to become more in accordance with Dharma teachings and the propensities and needs of particular sentient beings, then the day of full enlightenment would not be far away.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 3, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Open or Close

Yutang Lin

*Transient life is like duckweed floating on a stream;
Entanglements eventually are torn apart by currents.
More grasping renders even narrower, just tasteless;
Once open and flow is learned, enjoy it as a fun ride.*

Comment:

How could a tiny self control the whole situation?
Lacking this insight, one remains vainly annoyed.
Seeing that only openness will yield smooth flow,
One lives without conflicts to enjoy a way of ease.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 4, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Harmonious Unification

Yutang Lin

*Daily life in complete accord with Dharma teachings;
Thoughts and views no longer within worldly stereotypes.
Oneness of harmonious unification is not readily achieved;
Practitioners' views should, in the first place, be non-dual.*

Comment:

The ideal process of approaching Enlightenment is to gradually transform habitual views, activities and way of life that are self-centered into a life of comprehending causal conditions and relations, openness, and compassionate universal salvation. Due to all sorts of entanglements and hindrances that are rooted in individual or public karmas, this transformation is very difficult to achieve perfectly and fully. Wholeheartedly and completely exerting one's efforts into this quest might realize this goal in this life. For Buddhists in general, at least they need to be able to comprehend the Buddhist principles thoroughly in the first place, so that they no longer draw an artificial boundary between worldly sphere and Dharma realm, but to view all things universally from the Dharma point of view, only then could they reach the ultimate goal through devoted practices.

Written in Chinese on October 6, 2003

Translated on October 7, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Wake up

Yutang Lin

*What could be retained for a sun approaching the western hills?
How much longer will the glorious sunset add colors to the sky?
Silver hairs and wrinkled face still could not ring in awakening;
Continuing with the worldly way, busily preoccupied by trifles.*

Comment:

Ran into an old acquaintance at the market place; the whole face carved deeply by worldly entanglements. Situations of elderly persons as seen or heard, many are unbearably painful to learn. Impermanence not comprehended earlier enough, in mind only dead-end routes. Worldly snares and nooses are ever tighter, but eventually of no benefits. Soon engage in Buddhist practices to achieve peace of mind; definitely should not postpone again for a second!

Written in Chinese and translated on October 8, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Vision of the Three Holinesses

Yutang Lin

*As "Hi, Pei" called, suddenly the Three Holinesses have arrived.
Amitabha Buddha had a plump face and built, standing on lotus.
High up in space the whole set of Holinesses and seats was gold,
Moving forward slowly across the sky to lead beings to Pureland.*

Comment:

This morning right before I woke up, at around 7:20 a.m., I saw in a dream that I was standing on one side of a wide street in Taipei. Since there were passersby, I practiced Powa silently by calling "Hi, Pei" inaudibly. Suddenly, high up in the sky, there appeared the three Holinesses of the Western Pureland, Amitabha Buddha accompanied on either side by Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Bodhisattva Mahasthanaprapta. They were of equal height, standing close to one another in a row, but on individual lotus seats. They wore only monk's robes without additional ornaments. Their bodies as well as the lotus seats were all of deep golden color. Amitabha Buddha standing at the center had a slightly chubby face and built. The two accompanying Bodhisattvas appeared as handsome men of solid built. I immediately knelt down, with folded palms I looked up to them in admiration, and repeated audibly "Namo Amitabha Buddha" in Chinese. The set of the Three Holinesses on their seats moved slowly and smoothly forward in a straight line, crossing the high sky from one end to the other end, and then disappeared.

Years ago when I visited Melaka, Malaysia, at the conclusion of a Dharma talk I performed Powa service for deceased friends and relatives of the audience. After the Powa service a Upasaka came up to tell me that he had just witnessed the arrival of the Three Holinesses of the Western Pureland during my performance of Powa, and that his deceased father, together with many other deceased beings, had come to receive the blessings.

It seems to me that this morning's arrival of the Three Holinesses signifies their blessing and teaching that, whenever I am performing the

Powa service, they would arrive to help lead deceased beings to the Western Pureland. I performed Powa to help deceased beings every two or three days. Up to now I have accumulated 2,174 Powa services. Now that this special and superior honor and blessing has been bestowed on me, I would be more diligent to sustain the efforts without fail so as to express my deeply felt gratitude.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 10, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Postponing

Yutang Lin

*Taking care of worldly affairs first, postponing on Dharma matters,
Thus merits could hardly accumulate while karma remains twining.
When will people reflect and understand the correct order of things?
In order to overcome hindrances one needs to cultivate merits' field.*

Comment:

Usually people are entangled by worldly affairs to the point that it is difficult to set Dharma practices as of first priority. Consequently, people are used to treat Dharma matters as of secondary urgency, and repeatedly postponing consideration or action on such matters. Under such circumstances personal karma continues to evolve and become ever more entangled, without a possibility to gain some beneficial help from Dharma-related activities. If one could review the main outlines of the situation from the point of view of causal laws, only then could one realize that, in order to escape the stagnant trap of karmic nets one needs to first cultivate the field of merits, so as to compensate and repent for past misdeeds and to invoke new possibilities of solutions. A Buddhist practitioner had better learn to reflect on his or her own activities in the light of causal consequences; only then can one advance on the path because of having taken solid steps. A habit of postponing on Dharma matters will definitely result in late harvest of the fruits along Dharma path.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 15, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Accommodating

Yutang Lin

*Amid strong currents of flooding mixtures of karmas,
Causal conditions could abruptly change in a moment.
Bound by views, unable to accommodate to situations,
Even when running into a Buddha would just pass by!*

Comment:

As sentient beings' karmas intertwine causal conditions and opportunities are instantaneously moving and changing. The slightest grasping and preference would lead to one point at the expense of other points. Confined by personal views and considerations, one could be incomprehensive of the need to make accommodations in order to achieve better results. Even when the opportunity to receive Buddha's blessings arise such people would still continue in their routine and miss it by passing over.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 16, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Binding

Yutang Lin

*One binding rope is tied on both ends;
What seems controlling is self-limited.
In mutual strangling, precautions vain.
At ease in pure mind and bother none.*

Comment:

In one instance of binding both ends are tied. Karmic foes met, attacks and precautions could hardly cease. Squeezing each other's throat, why need to suffer so much? Precautions are limited and futile; ingenious ways to escape are ever more. Put aside deluded plans early, just cultivate a pure mind. Karmic debts and knots would gradually dissipate, resulting in less troubles and more peace and harmony among people.

Written in Chinese on October 17, 2003

Translated on October 18, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Practice Offering

Yutang Lin

*Bits and pieces all offered for all sentient beings,
Mind gradually turns while karmic debts waning.
Grasping is milled away, all hindrances dissipate.
Actions rooted in Dharmadhatu are of Bodhicitta.*

Comment:

Worldly views block original purity;
Partiality rooted in grasping to a self.
Practice offering to attain boundless;
Motivation born of wise compassion.

Pure motivation that harmonizes wisdom and compassion is very subtle and difficult to attain.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 19, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Dust

Yutang Lin

*Dust so inconspicuous, seems non-existent;
Without regular dusting a layer takes shape.
Variegated worldly pollution are all similar;
Diligently practice Dharma to avoid smears.*

Comment:

Free from smears amid dust, easier said than done! Nets of worldly entanglements block the sky and cover the ground. Not yet noticed or being aware of, already intruded deep down within. To stay away from pollution an ingenious way is a must. Practice Dharma and stay away from worldly matters, only then could original purity be gradually resurrected.

Written in Chinese on October 19, 2003
Translated on October 20, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Years Enjoyed

Yutang Lin

*Years enjoyed are limited; one had better realize this early.
Do not make life miserable for yourself for days remaining.
Worldly miseries have no solution; give it up from its root.
Practice Dharma to purify mind and rescue sentient beings.*

Comment:

Whenever I saw in Chinese obituaries the phrase "so many years enjoyed" (meaning so many years lived), I would think of the real situation that people in the world often had no opportunity to enjoy life in peace, having so much suffering but scanty enjoyment. If one could realize that days remaining are not many, and hence would stop making life miserable for oneself and others, and in addition, through engaging in Dharma practices would aim at purification of one's mind, cultivation of harmony, and expansion of merciful compassion, then one might gradually attain a better lot so as to be able to enjoy the remaining years in peace.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 20, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Even-minded

Yutang Lin

*Favors, grudges, love and hatred a heavy curtain rolled down;
Clarity in even-mindedness became the clear sky outside fog.
'Tis already rare that someone would not be trapped in haggle,
Even more so to avail encounters to train in even-mindedness.*

Comment:

Favors and grudges are complicatedly mixed; love and hatred are deep and persistent. Under such circumstances, how many could remain free from prejudices? To haggle with and entangle one another is clearly comprehended as of no benefits, and hence left alone; this is already the situation of only a few. Disregard grudges but remember favors instead, and practice virtuous deeds to amend harmony to the extent that one benefits others in selfless ways; this is really hard to achieve. In even-mindedness of oneness beyond duality, all are seen fair and equal; as occasions arise teachings are given and conversions promoted, thus Bodhi flows and reveals through Dharma activities.

Written in Chinese on October 23, 2003

Translated on October 25, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Mixture

Yutang Lin

*No permanence and no self are views difficult to see thoroughly.
For all beings and for Dharma are intentions difficult to be pure.
Causal application and choices are uses difficult to be wondrous.
Awakening oneself as well as others are fruits difficult to obtain.*

Comment:

Right views are difficult to comprehend thoroughly. Intentions are difficult to remain pure. Applications are difficult to be wondrous. Awakening is difficult to merge into. Why are these so difficult? Worldly views still linger. Preferences and prejudices are unaware of. Considerations and cares are a basket full. Clarity is still on the other side of the mountain.

Written in Chinese on October 23, 2003

Translated on October 25, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Need Self-awakening

Yutang Lin

*Unable to recognize the whole picture, play smart at a corner.
Inflexibly abide by established rules to miss rare opportunity.
Emotional tidal waves disrupt uniform practice now and then.
Limitations of predisposition need to wait for self-awakening.*

Comment:

Wisdom eye is yet to open; the whole picture remains elusive. Clever at minor points only creates extra hindrances. Faithfully abide by established rules without the comprehension to make adjustments to real situations, even when opportune opportunities are missed still insist on one's self-righteousness. Due to emotional ups and downs waves are stirred up even when there is no real matters; uniform operation is thus disrupted and energies wasted. Limitations that are rooted in each one's predisposition could hardly be affected by verbal teachings. Wait for their self-awakening with best wishes for their complete and thorough enlightenment.

Written in Chinese on October 24, 2003

Translated on October 25, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Let Flow

Yutang Lin

*Original purity prevails all over Dharmadhatu;
Opportunities for awakening are present even.
Kind intention under restriction wouldn't work.
In light of Great Perfection wisdom, let it flow.*

Comment:

Awakening awaits the opportune meeting of suitable conditions and a practitioner's turning mature. Helping hands extended out of kind intentions, under insufficient conditions, could hardly meet the right juncture. If the matter were viewed in the light of the universal prevalence and constant continuity of original purity, then it would be harmless to let people flow up and down in the stream of life. This is because those who aspire to attain liberation would eventually come across the opportune opportunity for awakening. Nevertheless, compassionate mercy being so profound and intimate, salvational responses poured forth in the form of thousand hands with thousand eyes of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.

Written in Chinese on October 24, 2003

Translated on October 25, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Mutually Implied

Yutang Lin

*Reality is in harmony beyond comprehension;
While verbal presentation seems of dual ends.
Empathy comes from appreciation of oneness.
Teaching non-self as compassionate salvation.*

Comment:

Wisdom and compassion may be regarded as two aspects of one. They seem distinguishable in discussions. Their realization is beyond thoughts and comprehension. At the level of intellectual comprehension one should correctly understand the reasons why they are mutually implied and inseparable. Wisdom sees no self, then all things are in oneness; consequently, there naturally arises a feeling of merciful kindness to all sentient beings. Compassion is not only ordinary sympathy but also empathy for sentient beings' suffering in transmigration and attempting to achieve their ultimate emancipation; therefore, it involves all sorts of attempts to teach the wisdom of comprehending non-self. Only when wisdom and compassion are thus comprehended can it be regarded as the right view.

Written in Chinese and translated on November 1, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Lightly Light

Yutang Lin

*Temporary enthusiasm would eventually turn light and fade.
Endeavors sustained for long years could seem taken lightly.
No means to reveal profound feelings and aspirations lightly,
They just flow around all over daily activities and responses.*

Comment:

Temporary enthusiasm would fade away after a while. Long-term endeavors become lightly ordinary. In the absence of greetings and chatting, busy with all sorts of Dharma services. High ideals were long forgotten, while services have become regular and constant.

Written in Chinese and translated on November 1, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Great Perfection

Yutang Lin

*No doors, no roads, and no handles;
Only hindrance is grasping to a self.
Solid ice is melted, then evaporated,
Naturally merged into Dharmadhatu.*

Comment:

Original purity remains forever perfect. No ways to distinguish view, practice, activity and fruit in it. As a silkworm that spins a cocoon around itself, self-centered activities confine one from expansion. Following Buddhist teachings to practice and behave, the self-imposed boundaries and hindrances would gradually diminish and melt away through sublimation in selfless activities. Once reunited with Dharmadhatu, the limitless oneness of all, open channels will be readily available as occasions arise. Compassionate activities will be generated like clouds gathering to sprinkle nectar rains so that sentient beings in all directions would be benefited toward awakening.

Written in Chinese on November 3, 2003

Translated on November 4, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Karma Bound

Yutang Lin

*Situations of sentient beings couldn't be helped,
Only due to karma bound they could move not.
Past causes and recent deeds wove nets around;
Practice no insistence sooner to reduce tangles.*

Comment:

Sentient beings are in much suffering; such mires are difficult to get out. How did we get to this point, that we just could not make a move freely? Observe calmly and ponder over such matters carefully, one would realize that we are bound by karma. Past deeds and recent activities wove nets that ever tighten. Practice accommodating to situations sooner so as to reduce the pulling of tangles. The only sure way out of this mess is to devote oneself to the cultivation of Bodhi.

Written in Chinese on November 3, 2003

Translated on November 4, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Beyond Fighting Back

Yutang Lin

*Realizing that fighting back is born of grasping to self,
No longer interested in repeating the failed path of old.
All manners of sentient beings in a boundless universe
Are roaming freely like clouds in mind of compassion.*

Comment:

Worldly situations are often like gatherings of hostile creditors;
Fighting back to each other in endless turns, all sunk in misery.
Practice Dharma to reduce grasping so one gradually wakes up.
Let others act as they wish in the openness of limitless oneness.

Written in Chinese on November 3, 2003

Translated on November 4, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Family of Karmic Creditors

Yutang Lin

*Fighting over insistence is called "karmic creditors" in Taiwanese.
Minding only the knot of grudges to forget they are of one family.
In this world the spread of such epidemic is of such a great extent,
Whenever a deviation in recognition rises there is a split of family.*

Comment:

Outsiders see them as of one family; inside the walls and barricades are profound. Where could no partisans be found? Those engaging in mutual attacks are often immediate neighbors. Brief and transient lives are wasted in vain affairs; seeing through such matters one realizes that people are just making their own lives miserable. Wise ones would renounce hatred and grudges all together; in yielding and accommodating a close and warm family may emerge.

Written in Chinese on November 3, 2003

Translated on November 4, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Inspirational Connection

Yutang Lin

*Sincere prayers so minute, they seem hardly noticeable.
People far away witnessed the real situations in dreams.
Oneness of all in Dharmadhatu is originally just as this;
As soon as purity and clarity resumed, channel through.*

Comment:

Recently some Buddhists in Bei Jing and Maryland informed me that in dreams they respectively witnessed my scattering blessing nectars on them or praying for their wellbeing. A sincere prayer conducted in a tiny room unexpectedly could have channeled through to far away persons to incite inspirational dreams. Oneness of all in the Dharmadhatu is originally just like this. Mind is purified through long years of Dharma practices, and then intentions would channel through beyond the limitation of distances.

Written in Chinese on November 3, 2003

Translated on November 4, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Running Errands

Yutang Lin

*Just as having children one simply runs for all sorts of errands,
Serving the Both-Complete Reverend keeps one busy running.
Unceasingly taking care of Dharma matters, one after another,
As mileage accumulated counted toward upgrade in Pureland.*

Comment:

A Chinese proverb says, "Having children one is satisfied with everything." The Chinese word used for satisfaction has another meaning of foot. Hence I used to joke about this proverb by interpreting it as saying: having children one becomes feet for everything, because once there is a baby in the house then one will have to keep running errands to maintain the necessary supplies.

Since a Buddha possesses both wisdom and compassion to their completion (satisfaction), a Buddha is also called as "Both-Complete Reverend." In Chinese the title is literally "Two Satisfaction (Feet) Reverend." Because Buddha regards all sentient beings as dearly as biological children, when we serve Buddha and learn to become Buddha we need to run all sorts of errands in order to provide Dharma services to sentient beings. Thus there is another type of "Having children one becomes feet for everything."

Running errands for Dharma services is a wonderful way for practitioners to accumulate merits toward progress on the path. The reason is that such activities help form a Bodhi channel for communication between sentient beings and Buddhas. Citing modern practices of airline industries as an analogy, the mileage thus accumulated would help us gain upgrade of our lotus seats for rebirth in Pureland.

Written in Chinese and translated on November 7, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Solving Problems

Yutang Lin

*While theories not yet grasped, questions abundant;
Look into the basics for clear and adequate answers.
Confusing situations in life seem torturously painful;
To attain emancipation one learns to work out a way.*

Comment:

Questions on Buddhist philosophy or theories mostly stem from lack of thorough comprehension of fundamental principles, such as original purity, limitless oneness, mutual implication of wisdom and compassion, etc. Therefore, to look for answers to such questions, one should ponder on the implication of those fundamental principles. Difficult situations encountered on the path in real life, when viewed from the goal of attaining ultimate liberation, would become trials that need to be passed in order to attain the fruit of Buddhahood. Therefore, a practitioner should regard all difficult situations as opportunities to practice transcendence, and make good uses of them to learn to become skillful and resourceful.

Written in Chinese on November 7, 2003

Translated on November 8, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Main Direction

Yutang Lin

*Remainder of life is long or short, hard to foretell;
Don't spend energy on learning to be all knowing.
Main thing is to become free from transmigration.
Pure mind and action are conducive to awakening.*

Comment:

The goal of Buddhist practices is to transcend transmigration in suffering realms and to attain enlightenment for all sentient beings. The length of the remainder of this life is hard to estimate, while learning to become knowledgeable on many subjects would spend much energy without helping solid practices and attainments. Therefore, a practitioner should recognize the main direction and devote efforts toward purification of mind, speeches and actions. In this way it would be more conducive to the attainment of transcendence and awakening.

Written in Chinese on November 7, 2003

Translated on November 8, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Knowledge Bound

Yutang Lin

*Human knowledge is ultimately very limited;
Beyond senses we don't have a way to probe.
Having swept ego away, original purity rises;
Transcending time and space is just effortless.*

Comment:

Modern developments in scientific technology are truly amazing. Nevertheless, human knowledge cannot go beyond the sphere of inferences based on data that are verifiable by our senses. Therefore, human knowledge cannot be expected to reach the true situation of original purity that is recovered only after all cognitive activities are abandoned and grasping to self is extinguished.

There are many levels of different spheres that are coextensive with our sensual sphere. Such other levels may be channeled only after mind has been purified to transcend the bondage of senses. The time and space coordinates do not even exist in such spheres.

Written in Chinese on November 7, 2003

Translated on November 8, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Grateful for Blessings

Yutang Lin

*Dharma teachings and worldly matters take maturity to harmonize;
Facing choosing and forgoing one easily gets lost along the vogue.
Fortunately inspirational blessings have repeatedly been bestowed;
Single-mindedly following the Dharma without occasion for doubt.*

Comment:

Dharma is subtle and not easy to comprehend thoroughly. Upon full and thorough comprehension of the right views, actions in accordance with the Dharma could easily run counter to worldly ways. Therefore, when it comes to choosing and forgoing many are often lost in the flow of vogue. Fortunately we have been continuously blessed by Buddhas and patriarchs throughout the generations so that even nowadays all sorts of inspirational events are still happening constantly to practitioners and devotees. Consequently, both for advancement on the Buddhist path and for propagation of the teachings there is a common foundation of solid faith to build on. Thus appreciated, inspirational events are not only revered but also received with gratitude.

Written in Chinese on November 16, 2003

Translated on November 17, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Sunny Mind

Yutang Lin

*Weather of mind occasionally reveals some indicators
At all very subtle variations of postures and responses.
Severe storms and heavy clouds kept overcast for long,
A sudden smile, fleeting as lightening, sets mind sunny.*

Comment:

With much suffering in the world, rare are sunny minds. Only through practicing universal altruism could selfish tendencies be truly eradicated. As all delusive ideas have been swept away Dharmadhatu turns sunny and clear. May all suffering sentient beings soon move toward solid Dharma practices so that all would be blessed by Buddhist teachings together and enjoy sunny minds together.

Written in Chinese on November 16, 2003

Translated on November 17, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Presence of Heavenly Lord

Yutang Lin

*Alone at the center of Heavenly Altar I stood steadfast.
Three words carved along the rim became conspicuous.
One by one I discerned them as: heavenly lord present.
Dynasty after dynasty worshipped for obvious reasons.*

Comment:

A few days ago in a dream I stood steadfast at the center of a round platform inside Tian Tan, Heavenly Altar, that is the traditional place for emperors of China to make offerings to the Lord of Heaven. I have never visited this place, so I don't know the real situation there. Directly in front of me, near the rim there were three Chinese characters carved on the platform that suddenly became conspicuous while the rest of carvings on the platform turned dim. The characters were heading in the clockwise direction and hence the sequential order to read them is from my right to my left, in other words, they were arranged in counter-clockwise direction. One by one I recognized them to be: Tian Gong Zai, Heavenly Lord present. Throughout the history of China dynasty after dynasty had built altars to worship and make offerings to heaven (Lord of Heaven); based on this experience it seems to me that there are good reasons for such traditional practices.

In the future if I have the opportunity to visit this place, I would make prostration to Lord of Heaven there to supplicate for lessening of natural disasters, regular and helpful weather, and peace in the world.

Written in Chinese on November 16, 2003

Translated on November 17, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Universal Rules

Yutang Lin

*Dharma teachings and rules are universal;
As advice to others and reflection for self.
When not listened to, practice renouncing.
Return to natural state for self-awakening.*

Comment:

Dharma teachings are universal principles and rules for all sentient beings to escape delusion and attain awakening. While expounding the teachings, it is not only an occasion to benefit others but also an opportunity to reflect on oneself. When advices based on Dharma are not listened to, a practitioner should make use of the situation to practice forgoing of attachments and insistence, so that all would return to just a matter of the causal development in the universe. While sentient beings are floating up and down among life and death there is still the possibility of their gradual self-awakening to the universal truth.

Written in Chinese on November 16, 2003

Translated on November 17, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Power of Good Deeds

Yutang Lin

*A lifetime's entanglements to be untied at once;
No wonder dying is such a painful undergoing.
Learn to rejuvenate early; open wind channels;
Good deeds accumulated help one to be at ease.*

Comment:

Ordinary people have countless mental and physical knots. When one dies the consciousness goes through a process of separation from the body. Thus the consciousness needs to go through all sorts of channels that are already blocked, stiffened and/or twisted, and thereby experiences tremendous amounts of pain and suffering during the undergoing. Only those who are fortunate enough to have realized the importance of practicing Dharma and have devoted their efforts to this endeavor could gradually untie those knots and entanglements while they are still alive, and gradually return to the original state of having open and supple channels and enjoying harmony of body and mind.

According to my own experiences, good deeds accumulated in life, especially those that are deeds of tolerance or yielding to help others achieve their goals, (this kind of deeds are in accordance with the practice of renouncing one's attachments), would form a power or strength that naturally sustains a state of ease and harmony for both body and mind. And this power helps greatly in rejuvenation of wind channels.

From this we could infer that bad deeds would certainly cast restraints on body and mind. Furthermore, affects of good or bad deeds on the body and mind of the performer must be immediate and inescapable, like shadows to shapes. Ordinary people could not detect such subtle and immediate affects that take place at deep levels, but can only observe evolution of events on a superficial level; therefore, some would mistakenly regard causal retributions as being difficult to verify.

Written in Chinese and translated on November 18, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Revere Teachings

Yutang Lin

*Ease of propagation renders some references as information;
Being picked up or discarded as casually as daily newspaper.
Dharma was diligently preserved from patriarch to patriarch;
In heartfelt appreciation Buddhists dare not hover disrespect.*

Comment:

In modern age propagation of information has become rather easy and speedy. As a result Buddhist works are often readily available. Consequently, some would call them as information. If those works were for sale or worldly profits, then it would be understandable why they are treated on the same footing as newspapers and magazines. As to Dharma works that are born of Buddha's compassion and distributed for free it would not be appropriate to call them so, so that no misunderstanding of contempt would ensue. That right Dharma is still available today is the result of generations of virtuous patriarchs, practitioners and protectors working diligently to preserve and propagate the teachings at the expense of their lifetime efforts. Buddhists upon remembering the sources and in heartfelt appreciation of the sacrificial blessings should employ respectful terminology such as "teachings", "revelations" to express their reverence for Dharma works.

Written in Chinese on November 19, 2003

Translated on November 21, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Outside the Cage

Yutang Lin

*Inside the cell of self always found it so confined,
No chances to glance at open sky outside the cage.
Serving Buddha and beings for over twenty years,
Realized that compassion is without set boundary.*

Comment:

Indulged in self-centeredness, difficult to see beyond one's perspectives. Even though talked about limitlessness, personal comprehension is without a basis. Serving Buddhas and receiving beings without being delinquent, year after year and month over month ground self and relinquished grasping. Depth and width of compassion has not yet fathomed; fortunately have realized that it has nothing to do with individual limitations.

Written in Chinese on November 19, 2003

Translated on November 21, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Channel

Yutang Lin

*No self is hard to comprehend because of possessing a body;
Observe how things evolve to diminish sense of permanence.
In tranquil observation all things are ultimately just passersby.
Even if form and content were grasped, they are just channels.*

Comment:

Dharma teaches about the truth of no self. In general people could not forget that they do possess bodies. Instead of focusing on the body to argue if there is or there is not a self, how about following the flow of things to recognize impermanence. Breathing, drinking and eating continue to take place; evolution of body's constituents constantly moves on. All utensils and objects are only for temporary uses; the stream of phenomena never stopped at any spot. Even though it is difficult to renounce grasping to form and content, one should realize that they are merely channels for things to pass by. Whole life is just a medium for flowing by; ultimately there is nothing that could be retained.

Written in Chinese on November 28, 2003

Translated on November 29, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Abide by Compassion

Yutang Lin

*Grasping to self once tamed, whatever comes will be overcome.
Clarity and tranquillity prevail as compassionate feelings abound.
How situations will turn around depends on how people respond;
Single-mindedly altruistic in building more Dharma connections.*

Comment:

As grasping to self diminishes matters could hardly be aroused. Accommodating well to situations as they come; without preferences the flow is smooth and through. Clear and tranquil mind with merciful feelings abound abides naturally. Adjusting and administering situations depends on how people respond to a given situation. Always make use of the opportunity and situation to widely cultivate Dharma connections through Dharma-related offerings.

Written in Chinese on November 28, 2003

Translated on November 29, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Universal Solution

Yutang Lin

*Karmic Hindrances vary with individuals and propagate;
Taking care of each and everyone of them could not end.
Understanding general rules, cultivate universal solution,
One case representing all others, all led to enlightenment.*

Comment:

A Buddhist asked me, since learning and practicing the Dharma she had often been preoccupied with trying to reduce the karmic sufferings of people around her to the extent that she could not do much else; how then could she concentrate on Dharma practice per se?

Karmic hindrances of sentient beings are usually deep rooted and complicated. If we tried to take care of them one by one, in view of the limited life-span and energies we have, a significant result would be hard to achieve, and any ultimate resolution would be rather unlikely. Reasonable salvation must base on a clear understanding of the law of causes and effects. One abides by such an awareness and try to promote the idea to others so that society may gradually be purified. During this process, irrespective of varieties or distances of relationship, the salvation of any sentient being is to be looked upon as one case of the salvation of all sentient beings; and hence all are treated equally and in accordance only with the Buddhist principles. Thus, no matter how deep or shallow, enduring or fleeting connection there is between a practitioner and the beings in contact, the responses and initiatives are all born of concerns for the salvation of all sentient beings and are completely free from hindrances rooted in all kinds of entanglements.

Written in Chinese on November 28, 2003

Translated on December 1, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Single-mindedly

Yutang Lin

*Stepping into devious path one gradually turned far off.
Within the maze of life be cautious with the beginnings.
Attaining awakening is not easy, track single-mindedly,
Lest opportunities for comprehension slip through one.*

Comment:

Slightly contaminated, gradually became lost. Life is like a maze; be cautious so as not to step astray. The important matter of attaining enlightenment should be pursued single-mindedly, lest opportunities for comprehension slip away.

Written in Chinese on November 28, 2003

Translated on December 1, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Seal of Sunyata Pleasure

Yutang Lin

*Yang unified with Sunyata is well received by Yin with pleasure.
Harmoniously united in secrecy and mutually fulfilling to the rim.
The folded palms atop signify union of wisdom and compassion.
Received with empathetic tolerance to provide profound comforts.*

Comments:

In October of 2003 senior Upasaka Zhuang of Taipei, Taiwan granted me a small cylindrical sandalwood seal. The top of the seal is carved in the shape of folded palms that are slightly apart. In Tantra folded palms signify the cooperative union of wisdom and compassion, and the thin space in between signifies the emptiness of its substance. Soon thereafter I asked Upasaka Tan Seong Yeow to carve it into Kong (Sunyata) Le (Pleasure) seal with the following suggestion: Kong above in line strokes and Le below in blank strokes, thus to signify the union of Sunyata and Pleasure in Tantric Love practices. And the two characters are to fulfill the round surface to signify that Sunyata pleasures are full and harmonious. The side of the folded palms atop that is fully open is to face the user of the seal so as to signify reception by Sunyata pleasure. Yesterday I received a fax telling me that Seong Yeow had accomplished the creative work. The upper part of the Kong character he carved made use of the circumference, and its lower part forms part of the Le character below and is therefore inseparable therefrom, and thus fully displays the subtle meaning of secret union in harmony. Here I carefully recorded these wondrous Dharma activities and attached a stamp of this seal below for all to share in appreciation of its artistry.

Written in Chinese on November 28, 2003
Translated on July 22, 2006
El Cerrito, California



Looking ahead

Yutang Lin

*Focusing on minor points to fight over differences,
Tense stalemate sustained but couldn't turn around.
Looking ahead as to what should be the just course,
One realizes to relax and no need to fuss in a hurry.*

Comment:

In worldly life people tend to haggle over trivial points, wasting attention and energy in tense standoff without extra room for turning around or truce. If one could look ahead at the long term situation to choose or renounce how one should conduct oneself or treat others, then one would realize that there is no need to be preoccupied with temporary results, and come close to a relaxed and sustainable approach.

Written in Chinese and translated on December 1, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Urge to Practice

Yutang Lin

*Karmic hindrances suddenly arise, rarely anticipated.
Confused and lost as crisis fell on people; 'tis normal.
Practice Dharma in time to settle karmic debts of old.
Merits of Bodhi deeds would help all sentient beings.*

Comment:

When would past karma bring retributions,
'Tis hardly predictable for ordinary people.
Suddenly faced crisis, all became deranged;
Powerless to change fate, mind lost in pain.
To amend or improve just abide by Dharma,
One will find peace and help beings around.
Now, still able, one should start practice soon;
Don't wait till facing the pit and cry helplessly.

Written in Chinese and translated on December 4, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Abiding by Dharma

Yutang Lin

*Facing choices in life one should abide by Dharma;
Thus naturally transcending worldly considerations.
Unfamiliar with impermanence, still grasping a self,
Try to expel others from the Dharma learning circle.*

Comment:

A practitioner's actions or inaction should be in accordance with the principles of Dharma so as to avoid miserable worldly entanglements and mistakes born of ignorance. Some Buddhists, due to their lack of thorough comprehension of the significance of impermanence and selflessness, were still delusively grasping to personal preferences and antagonism to others, and consequently had fallen victim to the mentality and actions of rivalry and jealousy, and thereby had deviated from the right path of awakening and liberation. May all Buddhists upon facing choices in life have sufficient wisdom to abide firmly by the Dharma!

Written in Chinese and translated on December 4, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Turbulent Flows

Yutang Lin

*Opinions and arguments so variegated like turbulent flows;
Muddily mixed, mutually agitating, bar clarity or evenness.
Delusive thoughts all pacified, outside the arena of arguing,
Only then could the blue sky beyond dusty mess be noticed.*

Comment:

Muddy views form turbulent flows; swirling around to carry all into abyss of whirlpool. Worldly life is full of suffering rooted in karmic hindrances; only when delusions have ceased could one realize the benefits of renunciation. Abide steadfastly in the sky beyond dusts; Dharma rains would moisture the field of mind. Wash off the mud of worldly worries, then clarity would naturally prevail by itself.

Written in Chinese and translated on December 4, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Natural Rhythm

Yutang Lin

*Practice to cease thinking, deluded mind turns clear and quiet.
Deep tranquility resembles death, yet allow no doubts to arise.
As tendons of grasping to self withered and its limbs scattered,
Rhythms of the Dharmadhatu are pulsing lively at every corner.*

Comment:

Demands and expectations wove a cage of self;
With incessant self-disturbing, no peace to stay.
Practice to let go, gradually delusions dissipate.
Prevalence of natural rhythms becomes obvious.

Written in Chinese and translated on December 4, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Calculation

Yutang Lin

*Exhausting calculations still could not fulfill wishes
Only because self-centered planning is full of biases.
See through net of views; walk according to Dharma.
Rest assured in taking refuge; let Buddha take charge.*

Comment:

In worldly life it is often seen that actions born of exhaustive calculations yield only sorrows of mutual incessant entanglement. Based on limited knowledge and view to attempt to carry through partial and preferential intentions would certainly more likely to run into obstacles and less likely to succeed by rare chances. If one could be unbound from net of views, pay attention only to Dharma practices, and give one's fate completely into the hands of Buddha, only then could Buddha arrange the itinerary and opportunities for such a practitioner.

Written in Chinese on December 6, 2003

Translated on December 9, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Realizing Guru's Grace

Yutang Lin

*Guru entered Nirvana but has never ceased teaching;
His absence in the flesh rendered real intentions seen.
While strenuously upholding heavy load of salvation
Real appreciation of the grace of lineage arose in me.*

Comment:

Guru had entered Nirvana, but his teaching did not stop with it. Whenever important juncture arose he would appear to me to give instructions. Once Guru's fleshy body disappeared, people around him started to reveal their true behaviors. Had Guru still remained in the flesh there would be no way to find out such real intentions. Therefore, entering Nirvana is also a skillful way for the Guru to continue his teachings. While endeavoring to sustain the lamp for the path I realized the circumstances and difficulties that Guru encountered, and thereby truly appreciated the grace of the Guru.

Written in Chinese on December 6, 2003

Translated on December 10, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Profound Intention to Sustain Tantra

Yutang Lin

*Transforming cognition into wisdom to sublimate five poisons,
Applying compassion wisely amidst lust, anger plus ignorance,
Merits of attainment harmonized to enable freedom anywhere,
Walking on ridge to sustain fortunate connections in the world.*

Comment:

People that have not thoroughly grasped the essential principles of Buddhist theories would tend to stay trapped in antagonistic mentality without self-awareness of the dualistic nature of such limitations. Buddhist tantra not only harmonizes theories and real situations but also applies practice to real-life situations; hence it transcends ordinary limitations by transforming the five poisons of lust, anger, ignorance, arrogance and doubt into means for liberation, and ultimately enables one to attain liberation amid sorrows of life. Of course, such practices are definitely not easy, nor are they within the reach of novices. Furthermore, due to the great distance between tantric practices and ordinary behaviors, and to the rare height of tantric attainments, for tantra it is not only very difficult to win the belief and respect of ordinary folks but even readily easy to attract misunderstanding and criticism. Practicing such an impenetrable path is certainly arduous; nevertheless, in order to sustain this fortunate connection for the world so that some beings would receive the special blessing of tantra I would not look any other way but, out of real Bodhicitta, to walk step by step forward on the thin ridge of mountain tops.

Written in Chinese on December 6, 2003

Translated on December 10, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Repaying Buddha's Kindness

Yutang Lin

*Having put this life into the hands of Buddha,
The profound care received gradually learned.
No way to repay but through Dharma service;
Compassionate salvation of beings as a token.*

Comment:

Buddha cares for fully devoted practitioners in all details. However, at the outset such profound grace could not be appreciated at once because the process of awakening is a gradual growth that takes decades and adequate blessing can be ministered only at certain junctures of spiritual maturity. For those who have realized such grace there is no real way to repay the kindness except by wholeheartedly engaging in Dharma services. Through salvation activities that are in accordance with Buddha's compassionate care for all sentient beings one might please Buddha and use it as a token of gratitude.

Written in Chinese on December 6, 2003

Translated on December 11, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Away from Entanglement

Yutang Lin

*Always provide teachings adequate to recipient and situation.
Compassionate guidance aims at finally leading to liberation.
Aspiration and responses are all solely based on Bodhi intent;
Transcending worldly considerations marks genuine practice.*

Comment:

Some claimed that, since Buddhists should always get along with sentient beings, and benefit beings with a compassionate attitude, they should endeavor to fully satisfy others' requests or demands. If their wishes were not met, then they would blame Buddhists as being "not compassionate enough."

The real meaning of being compassionate is to endeavor to ultimately save sentient beings from transmigration in the cycles of life and death. The real meaning of getting along with sentient beings is to provide adequate teachings and guidance toward enlightenment in accordance with the situation and propensity of sentient beings. If the meaning were simply to go along with sentient beings' ignorant delusions, then the result could be nothing but being trapped together in sorrowful entanglements. Thus, how could there be any advancement on the path toward awakening? A practitioner should uphold Bodhi intentions and actions steadfastly, without being swayed off the right course by worldly considerations. Only then could a practitioner truly benefit sentient beings in the long run, and could a practitioner truly cultivate compassion.

Written in Chinese on December 9, 2003

Translated on December 11, 2003

El Cerrito, California

Always Yield

Yutang Lin

*Worldlings fight with one another over profits in sight;
Even when acquired what could one truly hold for sure?
Who knows which step taken could last in the long run?
Seeing unpredictability rules one always yields to others.*

Comment:

Competing as if it really matters; when acquired what would ultimately be the case? Winning or losing at one time; situations change in a blink. Who knows the consequences of this step? Why need to thrust forward to make sure of getting there? Future is unpredictable to you and me; comprehending uncertainty of results one would always yield to others.

Written in Chinese and translated on December 11, 2003
El Cerrito, California

Unification of the Twelve Yanas

Yutang Lin

Origination

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

Foreword

Recent development of scientific technology is moving on a large scale at a rapid pace; it certainly inspires admiration and a sense of wonder in people. Nevertheless, hardship and suffering of sentient beings have not been universally reduced; in some areas the difficult situations have even become worsen or more enhanced due to technological developments. Thus it is clear that happiness and technological development are not necessarily synchronized. Human knowledge is confined within the sphere of deduction based on data that are verifiable through sensual experiences, and hence it could not probe into spheres that are beyond sensual experiences. Therefore, in order to comprehend thoroughly the real situation of the universe and to possess the wisdom to handle suitably various problems of human life we need to look for approaches that are outside human cognition.

Dharma is the teaching of beings that have attained oneness with the reality of the universe. Only through practicing in accordance with the Dharma could one thoroughly comprehend reality, and furthermore, possess the wisdom and ability to ease sentient beings' predicaments. Dharma has gone through evolution in time and propagation over vast

and distant areas, and thus has taken shape of multi-layer teachings. All these teachings are pedagogical devices to suit beings of various propensities in variegated situations, and they all share the same goal of guiding beings toward the right and full enlightenment. Consequently, all sorts of Buddhist teachings should not be regarded as the same as ordinary human knowledge, nor should they be subjugated to the evaluation or interpretation of current scientific views. In order to attain enlightenment we need to rely only on the Dharma and practice accordingly, without engaging in cognitive study and discussions. Only in this way can one thoroughly appreciate the real benefits of the Dharma.

Main Text

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

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

Original purity is not something that ordinary worldlings, who are drown in deviated views and deluded activities, could comprehend, not to mention to realize it. In enlightenment all are in limitless oneness; from the great compassion that arises automatically from this oneness there arises intolerance to the deluded state and its consequent sufferings of sentient beings, and hence naturally all sorts of salvation activities will come forth. In responses to various propensities of sentient beings and variegated situations there naturally arose and developed pedagogical devices of multiple levels so that suitable but gradual guidance and propagation on the path toward original state could be achieved. Therefore, Dharma having gone through long-term

evolution and widespread propagation consists now of many lineage branches with multi-layer teachings and practices.

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

In this essay, based on the traditional classification, I will first mention briefly the main teachings and practices of these twelve yantras. Next, I will explain the graded evolution from lower yantras to higher yantras. Then I will bring out the fundamental philosophical principle that runs through all twelve yantras, and explain how it is applied and adjusted in the various yantras. Thus it would become transparent that the twelve yantras indeed form a unified and congruent system of teachings. Based on such a unified and harmonious comprehension a practitioner would know clearly as to which right view and appropriate practices to choose as he or she advances on the path to enlightenment.

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

I. Classification of the Twelve Yantras

1. Sravakayana
2. Pratyekabuddhayana
3. Bodhisattvayana
4. Kriyayoga

5. Charyayoga, or Upayoga
6. Yogatantra
7. Mahayoga
8. Anuyoga
9. Atiyoga, or Mahasandhiyoga; in Tibetan, Dzogpa Chenpo
10. Semde
11. Longde
12. Mengagde

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

II. Brief Indication of Main Contents of Each Yana

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

1. Sravakayana

It teaches the insight that persons are intrinsically selfless. (Note: I am using intrinsic selflessness instead of the usual terminology of "no self" or "non-self." This new terminology seems to be more in line with the view and expression of original purity.) It aims at the tranquility of Nirvana. It abides by the silas of individual liberation. It trains in concentration stability and the contemplation of the Four Noble Truths. Its attainment consists of

four levels with Arhat as the ultimate one.

2.Pratyekabuddhayana

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

3.Bodhisattvayana

It teaches that all things are intrinsically selfless. It aims at trains mainly in the Six Paramitas. It contemplates the intrinsic selfless nature of persons as well as of things. It goes through training in the Thirty-seven Bodhi Branches to complete the sequential course of views, training, practices and fruition. Its attainment is Buddhahood with complete Dharmakaya (Formless-body) and Form-bodies.

4.Kriyayoga

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

5.Charyayoga or Upayoga

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

6.Yogatantra

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

7.Mahayoga (Development Stage)

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

8.Anuyoga (Perfection Stage)

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

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

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

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

10.Semde

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

11.Longde

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

12.Mengagde

Wisdom light of original awareness is naturally omnipresent and eternal, transcending the framework of time and space and all dualistic distinctions, and therefrom all sorts of Buddha bodies and salvation activities naturally and unceasingly arise. Through practicing Thregchod, Cutting Through, realize all are originally pure in the unification of original awareness and Sunyata, and ultimately attain Rainbow Body that is invisible. In addition, through practicing Thodgal, Direct Approach, realize the unification of Sunyata and Form as self-arising and self-appearing, and ultimately attain Light Body that is invisible or visible to other beings at will. The starting point for practices in this yana is already the experience of self-arising of original awareness as Sunyata Light.

III. Graded Sequential Order of the Yantras

From the point of view of the twelve yantras classification as a system,

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

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

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

categories. In fact, there is a need and necessity to harmonize these two yantras.

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

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

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

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

The Anuttarayoga Tantra of Vajrayana was uniquely sustained in Tibetan Buddhism. It begins with Mahayoga of the Development Stage that trains in visualization of gradual development of mandala and Yidam. It also trains in the practice of wind (breathing) and channels in a Yidam's body. It is followed by Anuyoga of the Perfection Stage that trains in visualization of instant appearance of mandala and Yidam. It trains in the practice of wind (breathing), channels, essence drops, Tummo, blazing and dripping, and sexual union. For advanced practitioners there are also practices of Powa (transference of consciousness), Dream State, Sleep Light, etc.

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

Great Perfection is not just a mental comprehension of the truth of original purity of all things. It is rooted in the direct experience of Clear Light of original awareness that is inseparable from Sunyata Light and is omnipresent and eternal. Through practicing Thregchod, Cutting Through, the practitioner realizes that all are originally pure in the unification of original awareness and Sunyata, and ultimately attain

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

IV. The Unifying Philosophic Principle

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

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

In the remaining lower yantras this principle is expressed through the

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

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

V. Unification of the Twelve Yanas

Once it is understood that the construction of the twelve yanas are all based on experiences of the same reality, that there is an unifying principle that runs through the whole system as its fundamental philosophy, and that the various diversities that existed among the yanas are merely due to pedagogical considerations so as to suitably guide sentient beings of various propensities under diverse situations onto the path of enlightenment, then the so-called twelve yanas are indeed no different from a single and only Buddhayana. Just as in worldly education system, from kindergarten to graduate school the degree of differences may be likened to heaven and earth, and yet they all form a unified and orderly graded sequence of learning. Similarly, the twelve yanas of Dharma also constitute a complete system of conversion and salvation to guide Buddha's sons and daughters all the way until they all become Buddhas.

Dedication of Merits

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

Written in Chinese on December 19, 2003

English translation completed on Christmas Eve of 2003

El Cerrito, California

Adjusting and Training

Yutang Lin

*Accommodating to situations, learn to adjust to harmonize.
Developing full potentials, train all parts of body and mind.
Comprehending causes and consequences, act accordingly.
Gradually grasping harmony of phenomena, benefit beings.*

Comment:

During transoceanic long flights one should pay attention to the amount and kind of food and drink that one takes, and to doing gentle exercises of limbs and other parts of body. One also had better avoid wasting energies on reading or watching monitor screens. Thus one could maintain a comfortable state of body and mind. Applying this observation to life, it becomes clear that one could gradually attain harmony through adjusting and training, and then could spread the knowledge and skill to others so as to benefit all that comes into contact with one.

Written in Chinese on December 26, 2003

In the air above the Pacific Ocean

Translated on January 15, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Learning through Experiences

Yutang Lin

*Confined by fixed views, one worries about success or failure;
Adjusting and training for harmony, experiences accumulated.
Reviewing after each attempt just to make new improvements;
With open mind and solid practice one learns as years gone by.*

Comment:

Mind grasped to certain views, then everything runs through evaluations of success or failure; consequently, one is besieged by the ups and downs of triumph or despair. Not being confined by views, then all situations become opportunities for learning how to accommodate and train one's body and mind. Thus accumulating experiences so as to improve and grow, one would naturally and gradually master the art of harmony. A Chinese proverb runs, "As one grows old, one keeps learning"; could it mean as I said above?

Written in Chinese on December 27, 2003

In the air above the Pacific Ocean

Translated on January 15, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Asked for Forgiveness

Yutang Lin

*Refusing requests for forgiveness renders compassion to wane;
Karmic nets cast, it can hardly be removed for lack of wisdom.
Long since I had attained the absence of any intention to reject;
In view of my poor ability to rescue, I pray to Buddha for help.*

Comment:

Someone mailed me a letter, saying that now she realized that she could not serve as a Guru, and asking for my forgiveness. According to the Silas of Bodhisattvas, one should accept requests for forgiveness. Nevertheless, this person has pretentiously carried on as a Guru for many years; all the while she just acted as she willed with complete indifference to my repeated advice. Furthermore, she fell into one group with those pirates who made false claims to good names to cheat others and sold Dharma works for self-interests, and consequently had made fool of and hurt numerous people that did not know the real situations. Therefore, the sins committed in such devious ways are beyond any person's ability to redeem. As a Dharma practitioner I have long since been used to engaging in practices that would diminish karmic hindrances or increase merits and wisdom for all sentient beings, and hence I have no intention of rejecting her request; therefore, I would not violate the Silas of Bodhisattvas on this account. As to rescuing others based on one's strength, I fully realize that I am incapable of redeeming such a karmic net; in addition, I am afraid that my reply could be misused again by them for their selfish propaganda purposes, hence I dare not respond. I could only pray to Buddhas for them during dedication of merits of my Dharma activities, with the hope that, through Buddha's blessing, she would eventually reveal and repent her sinful activities to the world so that she could be spared the suffering of falling into Vajra Hells.

Written in Chinese on December 30, 2003
Taipei, Taiwan

Translated on January 15, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Surgical Knife

Yutang Lin

*A Vajra with sharp blades yet of merciful mind,
Simultaneous triple thrust cut three poisons off.
Awe-inspiring Phurba with great mighty power,
Rejoice in eradicating roots of miserable illness.*

Comment:

The awe-inspiring Vajra Phurba employs a triple-blade dagger that is also called "Phurba." With one thrust of the Phurba all three poisons of Greed, Anger and Ignorance are simultaneously destroyed, just as a surgical knife removes tumors. With the compassionate intention to remove suffering and bring happiness a sharp instrument of wisdom is employed; the consequence of wisdom and compassion working in harmony is that Buddhas and sentient beings are rejoicing together!

As I am wearing a small Phurba that I just got offered, the above thoughts came up, so I put them down on paper.

Written in Chinese on December 30, 2003

Taipei, Taiwan

Translated on January 15, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Knowing Others' Minds

Yutang Lin

*Supernatural ability to comprehend others' intentions
Would arise only in a mind as clear as a clean mirror.
When well versed in compassionate care in daily life,
Attending to others' needs in details is more superior.*

Comment:

"Knowing others' minds" refers to the supernatural ability to comprehend sentient beings' intentions and inclinations. It arises naturally when a practitioner has achieved clarity of mind through concentration practices. Practicing applying compassionate intention to daily life activities, when well versed to the point of constant empathy and sincere caring into details of others' needs, would be not much different from possessing the ability to know others' minds, but would be even superior to that by its altruistic aspect of benefiting others.

Written in Chinese on December 31, 2003

After eldest son Howard's wedding

Dragons-surrounded Pavilion, The Kowloon Hotel, Hong Kong

Translated on January 16, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Relying on Buddha

Yutang Lin

*Changing faces, come and go, with ever-new attitudes;
What the style for tomorrow will be, one never knows.
No need to look hither and thither for prudent response.
Simply rely on Buddha's teaching and blessing to go on.*

Comment:

Situations in the world are constantly changing, like streams and whirlpools. Having seen enough of odd matters, one no longer feels curious about such matters. What are customary would become normal. New styles are hard to anticipate while Dharma routes are ready to be followed. Whole-heartedly relying on Buddha to live the remainder of this life in peace.

Written in Chinese on January 1, 2004
The Kowloon Hotel, Hong Kong
Translated on January 16, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Interested

Yutang Lin

*Interested or not is natural; it could not be forced.
Arising of inclination is beyond intentional move.
Each pursues personal preference, and it will last.
Flow along changes, be it sustained long or short.*

Comment:

Where interests lie, it varies with individuals. Applying efforts to pursues of interest, it will naturally last long. Moving of inclinations has nothing to do with intentional calculations. Just refrain from attachments; remain at ease and enjoy.

Written in Chinese on January 1, 2004
The Kowloon Hotel, Hong Kong
Translated on January 16, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Meaningless

Yutang Lin

*Meaningless characters seldom realize how they are;
Bustling about trifling but lack wisdom to seek exit.
Getting old and die, in a hurry, without relish of life,
Yet still keep stirring the dye pot to compete in woe.*

Comment:

Confusing black and white to inflame the multitude, creating troubles out of no matters, and yet addicted to such practices without tiring. Such meaningless life, besieged by worldly prejudices, had long since lost any zest of life but moves on mechanically. To be able to comprehend the truth of suffering as the prevalent scene in life, it is a matter that awaits awakening. With compassion for their sinking in delusions I remain tranquil in leisure.

Written in Chinese on January 1, 2004

In the air above the Taiwan Strait

Translated on January 16, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Seeking Safe Passage

Yutang Lin

*Facing juncture of life and death is like confronting tsunami;
Worldly views instantaneously become insubstantial bubbles.
Practice early to gain solid strength and plan for safe passage;
Don't chase after people's idle talks and waste this trip of life.*

Comment:

At the juncture of life and death one's situation is like consumed under a huge wave; worldly views and considerations all evaporated away like bubbles perished. Recognize this matter which is unavoidable, and seek safe passage early; just practice according to Dharma, and pay no attention to idle talks.

Written in Chinese on January 3, 2004

Taipei, Taiwan

Translated on January 17, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Living According to Dharma

Yutang Lin

*Thoughts bound with safety and dangers of sentient beings,
Course of life follows Buddha's guidance and arrangement,
Acting in union of mercy, sympathy, zest and renunciation,
Rejoice in giving guidance suitable to beings and situations.*

Comment:

Mind fixed on sentient beings, life left to Buddha's arrangement, actions congruent to Dharma and guidance suitable to whatever comes across, then worries and expectations are left behind.

Written in Chinese on January 5, 2004

Taipei, Taiwan

Translated on January 17, 2004

El Cerrito, California

No Need to Hurry

Yutang Lin

*Mind abiding in Bodhi, stay naturally at ease;
Beyond individual's control, no need to hurry.
All matters evaporate during passage to death;
As things are, worries are indeed self-inflicted.*

Comment:

A few days ago Kwok Sing and I met in Hong Kong. He told me that years ago when he returned home from attending funeral service of a relative he suddenly realized that all things do not really matter one way or the other, and hence no need to hurry.

As one is facing the juncture of life and death, all matters would naturally evaporate from the sphere of one's concerns, consequently one could recognize clearly that, whether something would constitute a matter of concern or not, and to what degree a matter of concern would weigh are all results of grasping to views or feelings.

As to seeing through that the evolution of any causal condition is beyond any individual's control, and hence no longer interested in putting efforts toward selfish aims, and furthermore, dedicating oneself to the propagation of Dharma and guidance toward awakening for all sentient beings, such a person would naturally be at ease in body and mind, and have no causes to become hurried.

Written in Chinese on January 11, 2004

Translated on January 17, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Practicing Selflessness

Yutang Lin

*Alms giving, Silas abiding and patient tolerance,
Each practice made with efforts that leave traces.
Skillful untying lies in losing views and clinging;
Already diminished before an issue could rise up.*

Comment:

Buddhist practices aim at attaining the original state of selflessness. Nevertheless, efforts made in Dharma practices tend to leave traces, and hence thoughts involving self-awareness could hardly cease to arise. If one could comprehend that grasping is rooted in views or feelings, and release grasping and open up to possibilities as soon as thoughts or inclinations arise, then nothing would become a matter of attached concern nor a bother to worry about, and one would abide in selflessness.

Written in Chinese on January 11, 2004

Translated on January 17, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Nothing to Be Proud of

Yutang Lin

*What one knows too scanty, and life fragile;
High or low, right or wrong, really matters?
Nothing to be proud of, yet one couldn't see.
Ignorant attitude still awaits self-awakening.*

Comment:

Knowing one's ignorance, and comprehending life's fragility, then there is nothing to be proud of, but only humble and harmonious attitude remains. Delusively grasping to rigid views, and haggling over trifling variations, when view expanded to the Dharmadhatu, how much difference is there? Arrogant behaviors or ignorant attitudes had better be tolerated and yielded to so as to wait for their self-awakening. The critical juncture of senility, sickness or death would soon arrive; when barbaric inconsideration could no longer prevail, that would be the opportunity for awakening.

Written in Chinese on January 13, 2004
Translated on January 19, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Opportunity for Enlightenment

Yutang Lin

*Opportunity for enlightenment matters to the totality;
It has nothing to do with self or self-related concepts.
Wishing others' to obtain conditions for Buddhahood,
Without considerations of preference or relationships.*

Comment:

Any sentient being's attaining full and right enlightenment is an important matter that affects the rising or sinking, awakening or lost of all beings in the whole Dharmadhatu. This matter has nothing to do with any personal preferences or social relationships. Therefore, when we pray sincerely for all sentient beings to attain full enlightenment soon we should throw away all social and personal considerations, and simply pray equally for all.

Written in Chinese on January 13, 2004

Translated on January 21, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Pure Dharma Connection

Yutang Lin

*A Dharma friend of many years had just realized today
That pure Dharma connection is luckily preserved here.
Bit by bit I diligently worked for Dharma day after day;
Yearly report of statistics of my activities awoke a man.*

Comment:

Magura, a Polish Dharma friend, have been in contact with me for over a decade. A few years ago he translated my English book, "Crossing the Threshold of Liberation", into Polish, and arranged for 1,000 copies of it to be printed in Poland for free distribution. Today he emailed me in reply to the 2003 Dharma Activities report that I sent out a few days ago. He stated that only now did he realize how deep his Dharma connection with Yogi Chen and me was. He used to worry that his Dharma connection with Karmapa had been affected by the disputes, but today he realized that there is still pure Dharma connection preserved here, and also other important Dharma connections are also preserved here.

The importance of pure Dharma connection could be appreciated only by practitioners who had actually gone deep onto the path. Year after year I sent out a report with statistics to review my Dharma services in the passing year. This time, unexpectedly, it awoke a person. So I specially recorded it here.

Written in Chinese on January 14, 2004

Translated on January 23, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Passing by

Yutang Lin

*White-hair couple, hand in hand, walked slowly in small steps;
Closely leaning on each other, shared fate bound by loving care.
In contrast I thought of many grudging pairs that I've prayed for;
How many lives of good deeds yielded them such nice marriage?*

Comment:

While driving I noticed in passing an old couple walking on the sidewalk; hand in hand and closely leaning on each other, in small steps they walked slowly side by side. Naturally a sense of "shared fate born of mutual dependence" arose from such a sight. In contrast I thought of the various kinds of relationships existing between grudging or fighting couples that I have prayed for harmonious resolution; I couldn't help admiring their good fortune to have such a nice marriage that they can get old together with love for each other, and wondering how many lives of accumulated good deeds have yielded them such wonderful result.

Written in Chinese on January 14, 2004

Translated on January 23, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Conditional Origination

Yutang Lin

All phenomena, apparent or invisible, are mutually dependent conditions. One works on transforming given conditions so as to affect improvement. Worldly matters are so variegated and complicated; who could dominate? Accommodating in accordance with situations, let's adapt to get harmony.

Eventual salvation could be expected as suitable conditions are worked on. Even though it's as scanty as a thin layer of cotton, one exerts full strength. Compassionate feelings for sentient beings' suffering gush up like a spring. Fortunately under Buddhas' blessings spiritual guidance remains incessant.

Comment:

To comprehend the absence of inherent existence one should observe conditional origination. Mutually dependent as causal conditions, all phenomena are apparent or invisible. Working on improvements one should gather favorable conditions. Variegated and complicated are situations and conditions; none could dominate the flow of events. Accommodating to given situations to achieve temporary harmony.

Feeling pitiful for sentient beings' severe sufferings, compassion gushes up like a fountain. Comprehending conditional origination of all phenomena, eventual salvation could be expected. Doing one's best even though it is scanty. Fortunately, under Buddhas' blessings, salvation service to all beings will never cease.

Written in Chinese on January 14, 2004

Translated on January 25, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Encouraging Friends

Yutang Lin

*In predicament one's mind could hardly light up;
Fortunately there are Dharma practices to adopt.
Thinking of the big trial at the juncture of death,
Now be the good opportunity to exert diligently.*

Comment:

When Buddhist friends found themselves in predicament they often felt that it was very difficult to light up their minds. Fortunately we have come to appreciate the value and importance of Dharma practices and have learned about how to do some of them. To dispel our mental miseries we should adopt and keep up with the Dharma practices that we are capable of. At the juncture of life and death that is of big difficulty its steeply danger should be more worrisome. Adverse circumstances provide opportunities for training and polishing; exerting efforts to diligent practices should take place while one is still healthy and strong.

Written in Chinese on January 23, 2004
Translated on January 25, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Boundlessly Deep Silence

Yutang Lin

*Depth of silence boundless, beyond sounds,
Not following rising or fading to quit peace.
Harmonize any voice, mute shade and noise,
Dharma drum tapped incessantly in response.*

Comment:

How much is the depth of silence? What would boundless be like? Beyond sounds and shapes, not falling among the five elements (of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth). No matter sounds rising or fading, tranquility prevails without ripples. All sounds are of one flavor; feelings muted into harmony. Silence has sunken to absence of noisy dust, yet no hindrance to the flow of Dharma sounds. Tapping Dharma drums in responses, silence so deep that it awakens all in the ten directions. Not dead but capable of lively uses, it makes noises incessantly from past through now into future.

Written in Chinese and translated on January 26, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Bound by Grasping

Yutang Lin

*Hands grasping to something could hardly apply.
Mind holding preconceptions would react stiffly.
People choosing fixed views run into arguments.
Only by letting go could things stream smoothly.*

Comment:

With things on one's hands it is difficult to do other things. With matters in one's mind one becomes slow and dull in reacting. With fixed views in one's head one readily runs into confrontations. Only need to understand to let go and things would flow smoothly and harmoniously.

Written in Chinese and translated on January 26, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Seal of Ji

Yutang Lin

*Seeing a seal of word Ji in a dream, what be the omen?
Shower Dharma nectar equally on all beings to benefit.
After the irrigation clouds vanish and smokes disperse;
All in the world share the sunny sky after rain stopped.*

Comment:

Upasaka Wang in Beijing once saw a seal of the Chinese word Ji in a dream, so he asked me to explain it to him. The Chinese word Ji consists of the word Yu (rain) on top and the word Qi (even) below. Hence, the dream should be conveying the meaning of showering equal benefit. Therefore, I interpreted the dream to signify showering Dharma nectar equally on all sentient beings so as to benefit them. One original meaning of the word Ji refers to the sunny sky after rain just stopped. Hence, there is also an additional meaning of, after the clouds dispersed and smokes vanished (after having renounced worldly concerns), all in the world will share the cloudless sunny sky (signifying the attainment of Dharmakaya). Since he had received this dream omen of such an auspicious Dharma seal, I acted in accordance with the dream by asking him to carve such a stone seal in leisure. Thereby this teaching through a dream would be pronounced.

Written in Chinese and translated on January 26, 2004
El Cerrito, California



Praise to Door Gods

Yutang Lin

*With name marked in history, how many are there?
Continue to give blessing incessantly, even scantier.
Conspicuous merits accumulated in protecting King;
As tides turn democratic, safeguard ordinary people.*

Comment:

To the front and back doors of my house and the door to my Study for the Cultivation of Harmony are attached images of a pair of door gods, General Wei Chi Gong and General Qin Shu Bao. One stick of incense is offered in the morning and one in the evening as a token of my gratitude to their blessing of safeguard. It is already not an easy matter to leave one's mark in history; and being able to give incessant blessing to generation after generation of posterity is even rarer for people to achieve. Therefore, I wrote the gatha to praise them in respect and to illuminate their merits of guarding against evil spirits and protecting homes for people in the world.

Written in Chinese on January 30, 2004
Translated on February 2, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Maintaining Respect

Yutang Lin

*Mutually dependent origination forms a continuous chain;
Bits and pieces, limbs and branches, all are interconnected.
Thoroughly understanding this truth, all prejudices are lost.
One had better practice often to maintain respect for beings.*

Comment:

All phenomena arise as interconnected conditions to one another; hence, chain reactions propagate incessantly in cyclic flows. Once this is comprehended, then it is readily seen that any bit or piece, tiny limb or twig, has its function related to the flow of all as a totality. From the point of view of the universal totality any distinction of high and low, heavy and light, is based on some prejudice that could not be sustained for long. Therefore, one has not only nothing to be proud of (see my recent poem with this title) but also had better practice often to maintain a respectful attitude toward all beings. Only thus could one merge into truth.

Written in Chinese on January 30, 2004
Translated on February 2, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Dragon Teapot

Yutang Lin

*Artistic pot of purple sand contains a hidden Dragon.
Drinking tea from it, one seems to smell Dragon drip.
Rejoicing beyond expectations, we looked for clues.
Only then did we realize the depth of Dragon grace.*

Comment:

A few months ago a Buddhist friend during his trip to China asked his acquaintances there to look for a fine teapot made of purple sand for me to enjoy tea. Unexpectedly, on the bottom inside the pot there is a carved Dragon. We were all overjoyed beyond expectations then, and exclaimed that it was truly a rare and auspicious sign. Recently this friend visited China again, and only then learned that the artist that made the pot had had a dream, in the dream the Dragon King asked him to do so, and that was why there was such a Dragon teapot. As a humble practitioner I have never sustained any expectation that the Dragon King would be so diligent and thoughtful in prompting and arranging for such an extraordinary offering. It is not only profound connections with Dragons (once I wrote a poem on this) but also bathing in layer over layer of heavy Dragon grace.

Written in Chinese on January 31, 2004

Translated on February 2, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Embracing Not Knowing

Yutang Lin

*Knowledge is far too limited;
Not knowing remains infinite.
Why always look for answers?
Just settle with what is present.*

Comment:

How could understanding ever exhaust
Layer over layer of secrets in universe?
Life and energy so scanty and transient;
Why keep looking for more knowledge?
Seeing beyond vanity, no need to bother.
Accommodate to settle with the present.
To merge into union with Dharmadhatu
First stop seeking tangible explanations.

Written in Chinese and translated on February 2, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Accumulating Merits

Yutang Lin

*Not yet managed, already left alone.
Even prearranged, still ends in vain.
Accumulate merits in daily practice.
Don't wait till regrets unamendable.*

Comment:

I have seen older generation passed away. Often they did not get to handle matters that they used to say they would like to. Or even though they had made prearrangements their descendants, having their own minds, would render those prearrangements useless. Buddhists that have realized the importance of accumulating merits for sustenance on the Dharma path or meritorious conditions for gaining rebirth in Pureland should apply their efforts diligently in daily practices, lest upon the sudden arrival of departure from this life one could hardly expect the accumulation to be amended by others to full sufficiency.

Written in Chinese and translated on February 8, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Universal Enlightenment

Yutang Lin

Idea of self vanished, totality in harmonious congruence.

No longer in duality, hindrance would not establish.

Merely conditions flowing, apparent or hidden, changing and evolving.

Confinements do not stay, open fully, going through completely.

All form one, totality concurrently fused.

Originally pure, unrelated to clean and dirty.

In the absence of artificiality, returned to no fuss.

Written in Chinese and translated on February 13, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Responding upon Supplication

Yutang Lin

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas would respond automatically to sentient beings' supplications; is it true?

Some people said, "If what I prayed for would realize, then I will believe in Buddhas." This is not supplication to Buddhas but bargaining for results. This kind of people do not understand that they themselves are ordinary beings bound by karmic hindrances, and that as such they need to beseech help with humble attitude so as to become suitable for receiving blessings. They seem to assume that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are on the same level with them, or even need to try to win over their faith. This kind of mistaken recognition at the level of fundamental attitude prevented them from really seeking help from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Some people even though temporarily appeared to be humble in beseeching help from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and yet as soon as the result prayed for turned out to be less than their expectation they would immediately declare with self-righteousness that their supplication to Buddhas did not work. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas grant blessings to sentient beings and patiently guide them step by step so that sentient beings would gradually advance on the Dharma path and eventually attain right and full enlightenment. Furthermore, the result of such help and guidance is also affected by the degree of karmic hindrance of the sentient beings helped, and also determined by the degree of efforts made by the sentient beings in approaching the Dharma and having faith in Buddhas. Therefore, what we prayed for may not soon realize to our expectations. However, in sphere beyond our ordinary perception Buddhas' power had indeed helped turn the results to move in the direction of approaching enlightenment and becoming more favorable for Dharma practices.

"Responding upon supplication," means that, if sentient beings could ardently supplicate to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for blessing, then Buddhas and Bodhisattvas out of their great compassion and mercy that left none out would certainly respond, instead of just ignoring the

supplications. Nevertheless, in case the supplication of sentient beings is born of selfishness and ignorance, and right then no guidance or persuasion would be feasible, then Buddhas and Bodhisattvas might temporarily refrain from responding, while waiting patiently for suitable juncture and situation to awaken those sentient beings. Thus, even when they seemed to ignore the supplications and leave sentient beings to feel lost in bewilderment; that is a response born of boundless compassion.

Epilogue

The green jade necklace offered today onto mandala plate has a rectangular pendant. The front of the pendant is a carved image of Guan Yin; on its back is the Chinese phrase of four characters: You Qiu Bi Ying (responding upon supplication). Upon seeing this phrase thoughts arose, and hence I wrote this article.

Written in Chinese on February 14, 2004

Translated on February 16, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Universal Valentine

Yutang Lin

*Great mercy born of oneness cares for all beings equally;
Unconditional compassion neglects none.
Variegated guidance given to meet recipients' conditions,
Completely different from worldly partial preferences.*

Comment:

Buddha's mercy extends equally to each and every being;
Buddha's compassion encompasses all without exception.
Personal feelings tie and bound into too narrow a sphere;
Thousand eyes and hands of Guan Yin render endless help.

Written in Chinese and translated on Valentine's Day of 2004
El Cerrito, California

Clearly Seen

Yutang Lin

*Each one has certain limitations; hence matters could not be forced.
When this truth is thoroughly comprehended, one becomes relaxed.
Of real help and benefits is diligent cultivation of meritorious deeds.
Always praying for all sentient beings would gradually attain peace.*

Comment:

Each one has different conditions and opportunities, and those are pretty difficult to change. Any efforts beyond pointing and reminding could be just a waste of energy and concern. This truth once clearly seen, one would go along with given conditions and become relaxed. Of real help and benefits are only meritorious deeds. Mind abiding in all sentient beings will gradually transcend worldly suffering and sorrows.

Written in Chinese on February 29, 2004

Translated on March 1, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Single-minded Refuge

Yutang Lin

*Human life becomes impermanent in seconds or minutes.
Refuge in Buddha's haven is neither vacuous nor illusive.
Ultimate goal is full enlightenment and salvation of beings.
Key to transcendence is to keep thoughts only on Buddha.*

Comment:

When one has learned that protection and salvation from Buddha is real and dependable, and has comprehended that human life could end at any instant, and as such its ending is unpredictable and unavoidable, then even though one continues to apply efforts toward the ultimate goal of reaching full enlightenment and saving all sentient beings from sufferings, one should walk on solid ground by first trying to reach the state of constantly having only the thought of Buddha's name in mind. If one could maintain only Buddha's name in thought after thought, then it will become possible to transcend the suffering of transmigration in the six realms. In order to reach this state of having thoughts only of Buddha's name, one should practice repetition of Buddha's name regularly and often in daily life, and constantly remind oneself of impermanence of life.

Written in Chinese on March 14, 2004

Translated on March 15, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Universal Approach

Yutang Lin

*Recognize matters through discerning reasoning and follow carefully,
Without falling into criticisms that would only add confusions in vain.
As to sincerity and degree of involvement, each one has a certain share,
Causal consequences would naturally follow, no need to be worrisome.*

Comment:

When matters arose one should contemplate on various reasoning behind and following them, and then prudently act in accordance with the universal way. Guiding others is also mainly a matter of clarifying the reasoning behind things. Thus it involves no personal evaluation or criticism, and thereby avoids inconsequential arguing. As to the degree of sincerity and involvement of each individual in a given matter, how could those be judged or forced? Certain causal conditions would naturally yield certain consequences. Once this is understood, no need to be worrisome, one simply dedicates wholeheartedly all one's efforts toward wholesome paths.

Written in Chinese and translated on March 18, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Abiding by Sincerity

Yutang Lin

*Tides of winning and losing continue and show their eventual illusiveness.
Difficult and serious situations could help build up one's will and integrity.
Grasping to delusion could bring one's downfall through manipulative wile.
Abiding by sincerity and solid practices yields safe passage through turmoil.*

Comment:

Winning or losing for the time being would turn out to be illusive in a blink. Through the trial of besieging situations one's will and integrity turn even more solid. Grasping to delusion leads to one's downfall in playing with tricks. Abiding by sincerity and solid practices would ensure safe passage even through rapids.

Written in Chinese and translated on March 25, 2004
El Cerrito, California

In Boiling Cauldron

Yutang Lin

*Pattern of waves complicated causing the multitude to worry and irritate.
Sharp division and confrontation bring disasters for all involved to share.
Mind abides on Buddha's name to roam beyond such confusing situation.
In clear, even, compassionate and harmonious state, pray for peace stable.*

Comment:

Current situation in such turmoil, people's minds could hardly be at ease. Trapped vainly in confrontations, only to enhance worries and irritations. Open one's eyes to look far and wide, and turn thoughts to move toward clarity and evenness. In compassionate and harmonious state pray for all universally, may each and every one transcend entanglements for all eternity.

Written in Chinese and translated on March 29, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Not to Follow Downfall

Yutang Lin

*Cunning dealings could hardly win universal approval, and even
Caused simple folks to feel like withdrawing from participation.
Consequences of such downfall would yield unbearable suffering.
Don't follow entanglements thereof and depart from the right path.*

Comment:

In the name of high ideals cunning dealings were carried out; such practices not only stirred up indignations but also caused simple and good folks to want to withdraw from engagement. Such dealings of downfall could only be dressed up by vain words for temporary self-deceit, but eventually could hardly escape from facing fair scrutiny and its consequence of eating the sour fruits. Practitioners of good deeds should not let their thoughts follow such entanglements and become trapped in nonsense. Instead, they should dedicate their efforts without lapses toward the right path that is even and harmonious in the long run.

Written in Chinese and translated on March 29, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Indivisible

Yutang Lin

*Die a great death to await its resurrection;
Spending days doing nothing is laborious.
Instead, one recognizes limitless oneness,
And simply reduces artificiality in living.*

Comment:

First make the distinction of original wisdom and acquired wisdom, and then, in order to attain original wisdom one practices "dying a great death" while renouncing all endeavors. This is a very laborious and tiring approach; rarely could there be someone who had advanced far and deep into this path.

If one could see through the indivisibility of original wisdom and acquired wisdom, and comprehend the beyond-amendment nature of original wisdom, and hence spends days without personal goals but practices reduction of artificiality upon occasions, then it would be close to "practice of non-practice, practice without practicing." One needs only to adhere constantly to this approach, in the long run one's mind will naturally and gradually open up.

Written in Chinese on April 2, 2004

Translated on April 3, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Self-determined Significance

Yutang Lin

*What's the meaning of one's life-long dedication?
Such intention cannot be disturbed by criticisms.
On right path hard to recognize, one walks alone,
Always at ease in absence of attention and glory.*

Comment:

The significance of one's life-long dedication to a chosen path should be self-determined. Outsiders' views and criticisms fall short of the essence. As one's conscience stays clear upon reflections, one naturally remains at ease constantly. Single-mindedly and wholeheartedly from beginning till end, one stays far away from worries and sorrows.

Written in Chinese on April 2, 2004
Translated on April 3, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Sincere and Trustworthy

Yutang Lin

*Sincere and trustworthy, ready to communicate;
Bases once collapsed, only antagonism remains.
When will people awake to say farewell to arms?
Worldly matters would soon all expire in a blink.*

Comment:

Human communication is based on sincerity and trust. When the bases collapsed, suspicion and fighting prevail. With or without good reasons, in a blink all would become naught. Wake up right away, not to be trapped in confusing commotions. A clear and even mind is still to be cultivated; peaceful and harmonious daily life needs to be much appreciated.

Written in Chinese on April 2, 2004

Translated on April 3, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Lost of Purity

Yutang Lin

*Fought for public justice, despite life or death.
To preserve authority, adopt devious practices.
Image of devotion is still fresh in our memory.
Alas, success in life has become lost of purity!*

Comment:

Responding to injustice, started revolution even without arms. Success of revolution means to work instead for the preservation of authority. The cycling of worldly affairs is mostly like this. What a pity that ardent sincerity is buried dead and deep beneath worldly considerations! In full swing of worldly success who would mourn for the lost of purity?

Written in Chinese and translated on April 3, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Outside the Arena

Yutang Lin

The Buddhist path employs practices and activities that are free from worldly considerations to carry out salvation of people from within worldly circles at a profound and fundamental level. Worldly problems of a certain time and place, once one gets involved, could pull one into a whirlpool of endless entanglements. Each individual has only very limited time and energy. Hence, while upholding the intention to conduct salvation of the world through Buddhist ways one should avoid getting involved in worldly tangles. This is not escaping from the world for self-preservation; rather, in order to dedicate one's efforts single-mindedly to a long-term great goal, one need to remain steadfast in the face of flirting current waves. Once this is understood, one could only advocate and abide by it but should not criticize others based on it, lest one would stir up arguments and entanglements. As to the case of reaching the juncture of life and death due to circumstantial oppressions, if struggle could bring about relief, according to some Sutra it would be permissible to get involved. Nevertheless, worldly phenomena flow and evolve unpredictably, and there is no side that is absolutely good or absolutely bad, rather, in abundance are partial and prejudicial arguments that are knitted together by each side with self-interests in mind. Once one got involved, it is hardly avoidable for one to become trapped inside the snare of chasing after superficial formality and vacuous names. Thus, even if the appearance of Dharma might be preserved, there would be no assurance of not losing its essence. Not to mention that there are worldly tricky adepts that would promote selfish interests under the guise of Dharma endeavors; why would a sincere and dedicated practitioner waste time on arguing with such morons? When one expands view to the panorama of all worlds the duration and depth of Dharma connections and conditions are also a matter beyond compelling. Therefore, instead of getting involved without knowing how the consequences would turn out, a practitioner would rather remain constant and consistent from beginning till end to stay peacefully outside the worldly arena. Thus one's sincerity and dedication is preserved without reservation nor worries while one's

situation remains concurrent with the flow of the whole Dharmadhatu. In this way, in case some sincere and actively participating Buddhist needs guidance, there would be leisure for pointing the direction and clarifying the subtleties.

Written in Chinese on April 3, 2004

Translated on April 5, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Meeting and Departing

Yutang Lin

*Beyond ability to keep up, leak out here and there.
Lacking interest to retain, let it fall off on its own.
Conditions of meeting and departing are so varied.
Eventually matters would all evolve only naturally.*

Comment:

With intention and within ability, meet temporarily. Lack of interest or beyond means, instantly departed. Conditions for meeting or departing are of thousand kinds and myriad varieties. Evolving and flowing, none could decree their courses.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 5, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Leisure Rare

Yutang Lin

*Worldly matters complicated to form a firm grip often.
Coming one after another, not ready to let loose easily.
Rare are moments of no hassle; one feels a bit relaxed.
All of a sudden complaints left; that was more tranquil.*

Comment:

Trifles multiple and variegated, toilsome hustle hardly pauses. Free from hassles only briefly, such leisure need be treasured. Engage in Dharma practices to purify mind, worldly considerations will take a short break. When suddenly complaints left, there was naturally even-minded tranquility.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 9, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Transcendence

Yutang Lin

*Cycling of worldly affairs sinks ever deeper.
Transient human existence, no time to waste.
Single-mindedly wish to help enlightenment.
All actions and inaction are following Bodhi.*

Comment:

Floating along in cyclic existence, matters of enlightenment are difficult to discern. Once got involved in worldly affairs, entanglements pulled mutually ever deeper. Besides the enlightenment path there are only karmic-bound sufferings. Human existence so transient; how could one have leisure for things other than enlightenment-related endeavors? Only wish to help beings attain awakening, all actions and inaction are in accordance with Bodhi. Having pity for others' lost in delusions, how could one fall down with them together? Wait till they are sincere and ardent, only then can they be helped through pointing and turning.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 11, 2004
After the Easter fire puja to Jesus
El Cerrito, California

Monolog

Yutang Lin

Worldly affairs are evolving and flowing; as grasping arose matters ensued. Theories are proposed independently; open-minded and fair are rare. Disputes lack coherence; minds in agitating turmoil. Body and mind in complete relaxation, such a path only few came near. As delusions ceased, originally it was clear and even; nevertheless, people chased after mirages. This instant is impermanent; among humans are all dramatic acts. Worldly sphere is arena of competitive games; people sunk in addiction, not knowing tire. To attain realm of right awakening, first be keenly aware of impermanence. Renounce and stay away from worldly manners, only then could one gradually wake up to a clear mind. Constantly practice repetition of Buddha's name and make prostration to Buddhas, thus cultivate the Bodhi aspiration. Engage in Dharma practices for the sake of all sentient beings, in the long run benefits will spread far and wide. May all beings approach the Buddhist path, and sentient beings enjoy eternal peace.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 14, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Speechless

Yutang Lin

Grasping to opinions without realizing partiality, arbitrarily apply criticism and evaluation. How could such people know that at the time of death the karmic consequences could not be self-chosen? The regulation of Dharmadhatu is so exact that evasive excuses had never been weighted. Past deeds would eventually yield results; self-deceit ends in lament too late. Thoroughly comprehended the causal operation of phenomena, one became speechless but engaged in solid deeds. May all share this awakening, and stay away from the arena of disputes. Mind constantly remains peaceful and harmonious, abides in sincerity and cultivates harmony. May fighting over insistence evaporate from human realm, and all cooperate to build a paradise.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 17, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Wisdom of No Self

Yutang Lin

*Even though the original intention altruistic be,
Tinged with prejudice renders matters inactive.
No suitable solution matching from right or left,
Inferior to an open mind that accommodates all.*

Comment:

With intentions unsound, such cases not worth mentioning. Although with good intentions, whenever grasping arose, hindrances ensued. Causing others' responses to be scarcely adequate. Good will remained incommunicable; instead people became stagnant within grasping to forms and appearances. Living in the world with an open mind, always accommodate to the situation and feelings. Auspicious harmony permeates, and one gets along well with the evolution of circumstances.

Written in Chinese on April 18, 2004

Translated on April 19, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Self-imprisonment

Yutang Lin

*Stirred up antagonism, created enemies on a wide range,
To secure safety of life built up multiple layers of guards.
Even though on high throne with power over the world,
What could be the pleasure in light of self-imprisonment?*

Comment:

Stirred up multitude's emotions, intensified antagonism, thus created foes on a large scale over a wide range, and resulted in lack of peace in daily life. Even though powers in grasp, constantly worried about murder attempts, cornered within multiple layers of safeguards, isn't it imprisonment? Causal consequences of actions and intentions would not be mistaken even in minor details. Plotted for profits in disregard to justice, one could hardly expect end of such jail sentence.

Written in Chinese on April 18, 2004

Translated on April 19, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Sublimation

Yutang Lin

*Individual glory and decline in the end are all ephemeral.
Loving care limited to a few could result in much sorrow.
Turn around to see the shared predicaments of all beings.
Sublimate personal feelings into compassionate services.*

Comment:

When viewed in light of long-term consequences and evolutions it would be easier to comprehend the right way to conduct oneself in the world. Matters in this transient life are mirage-like, and yet with grasping increases one becomes self-limited to much sorrow. All sentient beings' situations are similar, like passengers on the same ferryboat; others' sinking will sooner or later becomes one's turn. Compassionate and universal salvation, it is the indispensable way to escape suffering and attain happiness.

Written in Chinese on April 19, 2004

Translated on April 20, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Sleepy

Yutang Lin

Relaxation gained through Dharma practice induces sleepiness. Thus is different from laziness and running away from diligence. Simply because lasting fatigue needs rest to restore suppleness, Such sleeps are sound and comfortable, close to light and ease.

Comment:

As one had progressed deeper into Dharma practices there would be a period of sleepiness when one constantly feels sleepy. This is because one's body and mind had long been subjected to entanglements in worldly life and had become tired, tense and stiffened, and therefore were in urgent need of rest and restoration. After one had progressed deep into Dharma practices one's body and mind gradually became relaxed and unwound. At such a juncture one's instinctive ability to rest and restore needs extensive states of sound sleep to do the repair work. When this reason is not understood such sleepiness would be wrongly taken as signs of laziness or indolence. Sleeps of this kind are very light and easy, and definitely not the kind that is full of inescapable nightmares. During this period a practitioner should act according to the natural needs of body and mind, and sleep as much and as often as one feels like. No need to care about how it looks to others or raise doubts in one's own mind.

Written in Chinese on April 19, 2004

Translated on April 20, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Sincere Intentions

Yutang Lin

Genuine loved ones could hardly stay together often, while antagonizing foes oftentimes would remain bound together. In human lives wish-fulfilled cases are scarce; looking far and wide would make it easier to traverse life safely.

Grasping to appearances would only add to sorrows; profound wisdom transcends framed situations. Propagating the ways of great compassion, one is no longer constrained by circumstances current.

High ideals are difficult to attain in practices; remain solid by adopting the simple and easy practices. Constantly try to empathize with others as if one were in their shoes, and time and again renounce one's preference to suit others' interests.

Human lives are indeed brief and transient, and yet wisdom and compassion could long spread and continue. If one could comprehend the significance of this, sincere intentions would forever prevail.

Written in Chinese on April 19, 2004

Translated on April 21, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Not to Cause Displeasure

Yutang Lin

*Intending to provide merciful help, yet such ability still lacking.
Learn, at first, not to cause displeasure in beings encountered.
Always yield, be tolerant, and humble one's voice and attitude.
As selfless outlook imbued deep, merciful feelings permeated.*

Comment:

Responding to other beings as occasions arise, try not to cause displeasure in them. Scolding is to be received as teachings, while angers absorbed in silence. Not yet time to convert and guide, practice tolerance for now. Always accommodate to others' preferences, thus one's grasping unnoticeably diminished. Being merciful as to others' entangled predicament, one feels that one's own emancipation lacks much joy. First try not to add suffering, and then endeavor to increase happiness to beings.

Written in Chinese on April 20, 2004

Translated on April 21, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Long-term

Yutang Lin

*Returning to simplicity and purity is a long-term unmaking.
Thoroughly transcending the worldly could not be hurried.
Occasional inspirations as encouragements to be thankful,
Solid practice continued will eventually yield enlightenment.*

Comment:

Practice Dharma in order to return to original purity. Accumulated worldly sorrows could hardly be cleared up at one time. Inspirational experiences, serving as encouragements from Buddha, would occasionally arise over long periods. Plain and solid practices, when sustained constantly, would yield enlightened comprehension.

Written in Chinese on April 21, 2004

Translated on April 26, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Abiding in Renunciation

Yutang Lin

*Pressure of worldly life arrives like waves surging to shore.
Emotional ups and downs ever recur like tides rise and fall.
Facing ocean, remains unmoved and steady like mountains,
Such Bodhicitta sprouts from genuine personal experiences.*

Comment:

Pressures of worldly living make renunciation for Dharma practices not easy. Some attempted such renunciation in name only, but indeed were chasing after a place for room and board. Personal feelings go up and down like waves, and are difficult to maintain balance. Even when there were no external disturbances inner confusion and turmoil would repeatedly arise. Besieged by inner and external troubles and yet remained steadfast, the only concern is the peace and safety of all sentient beings. Where is the foundation of such well-established Bodhi intention? Sincere Dharma practices and personal inspirational experiences.

Written in Chinese on April 21, 2004

Translated on April 26, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Main Concern

Yutang Lin

Experiences could not be grasped; pleasant or disagreeable, they all turn out naught. After long time one suddenly comprehended that, glory or shame are all irrelevant. Clear and bright are the original stability, and that is the peaceful homeland of sentient beings. The area of main concern for the remainder of this life, if not this, where else? Cease and cut off worldly considerations, constantly pray for the peace and safety of all sentient beings. Sole wish is the enlightenment of all beings in the ever-tranquil and boundless light.

Written in Chinese on April 21, 2004

Translated on April 26, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Ways to Verify

Yutang Lin

*Upon hearing the presence of Buddha is difficult to believe in.
Fortunately there are Dharma practices that one could try out.
Chanting holy name and prostration would yield light and ease.
After long time devotion might even inspire experience blessed.*

Comment:

For most people who just got into contact with Buddhist teachings it is inevitable that they would not know how to decide on the truth or falsity of the spiritual presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Fortunately this matter could be gradually verified through experiences gained in Dharma practices. One need only to be humble enough to adopt the practices of chanting Buddha's name and making prostrations to Buddhas, even if such practices are viewed merely as ways to train in concentration of attention and physical exercises. If such practices were sustained continuously into daily sessions and routines, then gradually one would experience the relaxation of one's mind and body. Later, after some time, one might even gain inspirational experiences to realize the authenticity of the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Written in Chinese on April 22, 2004

Translated on April 26, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Refuge in Guru

Yutang Lin

*Following orders faithfully is the tantric way to take refuge in Guru.
Relying on someone to such extent could hardly be taken seriously.
Long since one had realized Guru's attainments through inspirations,
Only then knew one to abide by teachings sincerely and accurately.*

Comment:

Vajrayana emphasizes taking refuge in Guru. Often it is strongly recommended that a disciple should follow Guru's orders in all matters. For ordinary people who are new to this kind of teachings, most of them would think that it is hardly feasible to rely on someone to such an extent. In real life only very few could take this kind of thorough refuge in Guru. Those who had actually taken such refuge in their Gurus all had had sufficient inspirational experiences to realize that their Gurus were indeed representatives of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Written in Chinese and translated on April 28, 2004

The 10th of the Lunar month, date to make offerings to Gurus

El Cerrito, California

Adi Buddha Mandala Mantra Sheet

Under the guidance of Dr. Yutang Lin
Written by Stanley Lam

This mantra sheet was passed down from Yogi C. M. Chen. It belongs to a class of blessing objects called "Liberation through Touch", meaning that one will gain liberation merely by wearing it. (In Nyingma lineage there are five types of "Self-Liberation without Practice," the other four are through sight, hearing, smell, and taste.) The central deity is Adi Buddha or Samantabhadra Buddha, with surrounding mantras representing the deities in the mandala, probably including all 100 peaceful and wrathful Yidams.

Yogi C. M. Chen often distributed this mantra sheet freely, and those who wear it as an amulet often have inspirational experiences. In order to wear it, the sheet first needs to be folded one-third horizontally and vertically into a small square, such that the image and halo at the center is completely on the square's outside surface facing the body. For use as an amulet, one could put it in a small (preferably blue) cloth bag and hang it around the neck. Position of this amulet should not be lower than that of the heart. When one needs to have a needle injection, it is necessary to hold the amulet slightly above the body, so as to indicate that it is only the Karmic body that gets the needle. The amulet could also be hanged inside a car for protection, or the entire sheet may be framed and worshipped on the altar. One can also burn it to receive blessings. When put on a deceased body, the deceased could gain rebirth in Pureland. The image of this sheet can be printed out for use in the above ways. Do not sell this sheet for profit.



Tides of Time

Yutang Lin

*Piling sand to build castles on beach of ocean,
Incessant tidal waves gradually render it ruins.
Worldly endeavors are of the same fragile sort,
Evolving in tides of time could hardly stay put.*

Written in Chinese and translated on May 2, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Unexpected

Yutang Lin

*Holding expectations, unexpected outcomes would turn out to be many.
Realizing impermanence sooner would ease acceptance of factual result.
Not to follow current events to remain in bewildering and besieging web.
All matters, upon looking back, would just end up as clouds and
smokes.*

Comment:

Opinions and expectations render scope of outlook and mentality to be self-limited. Turning and winding of worldly events often do not follow expectations. Seasoned and matured, one patches up against wind or rain in turn. Situations before eyes are complicated and entangled beyond sorting. Looking back at matters past, success and failure all ended up as cloud and smoke. Not to follow deluded grasping lest confusion could never end. Seeing beyond worldly affairs, chant Buddha's name and make prostrations to Buddhas to attain lasting peace.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 5, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Sincere Good Deeds

Yutang Lin

*Our understandings of worldly matters are mostly superficial.
Consequences of helping others could hardly be predictable.
Sincere in doing good and cultivate deeds in humble manner,
Spreading among human beings some heart-warming feelings.*

Comment:

Some said that consequences of helping others are unpredictable, and if the recipient of help would later commit wrong doings, then the helper would also share responsibility according to the law of causes and consequences, and hence one should not help others readily.

In fact, our understandings of worldly matters are mostly only superficial. If we were supposed to wait till we are familiar with each and every detail to render help, then we could not even engage in raising offspring because we would not be able to foretell how children would turn out as adults. Thus we can see that the argument above is invalid.

If one is sincere in helping the poor, the sick, the elderly or the feeble ones, and does good accordingly, then whether one knows the facts or not, or whatever the past or future deeds of the recipient of one's help were or will be, as far as one's share is concerned, there are only good causes, and hence those would lead only to good consequences. If the recipient of one's help would commit wrong doings, the punitive consequences should fall only on the wrongdoer. How could there be any bearing to the innocent and unintentional helper?

Laws of causes and consequences are not easy to grasp clearly, and instead were misunderstood and mistakenly cited as excuses for not doing good. Today a Buddhist raised this puzzling point and asked for clarification, so I wrote my replies down to spread the clarification to more people.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 13, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Key to Matching the Path

Yutang Lin

Generally speaking, Buddhists engaging in practices on the long path to enlightenment would gradually encounter situations of stagnancy, going astray or regress, while within groups of Dharma there would constantly erupt competition, conflict or division. If people could open-mindedly and carefully reflect on such problems, then they would realize that the root of the problems is that their intentions as well as activities were not purely for Bodhi, and hence they could not transcend the cell and pass of self-grasping.

If one's intentions were purely for Bodhi, i.e., purely for the attainment of ultimate and perfect awakening of all sentient beings, then at the juncture of high tides of self-centeredness one would naturally think of how to follow Dharma in getting rid of self-grasping, and use the opportunity for further cultivation of wisdom and compassion. Otherwise, in this complex and full-of-contamination world one would eventually fail to escape from setting self-imposed limitations and running into all sorts of entanglements. With pure intentions for Bodhi, no matter how worldly events would turn and twine, the practitioner's efforts would not be in vain but would naturally become spiritual stocks that would help mature one's Dharma practices; therefore, there will be no complaints and no regrets. As long as intentions and activities are in accordance with Bodhi, relationships become purely a matter of suitable conditions meeting or dispersing, and are free of sorrows arising from accounting of favors and grudges, measuring of merits and faults, and incessant entanglements. Buddhists that have comprehended all these points mentioned above and are sincere in helping sentient beings in the ultimate fashion should try to lead and convert all relationships gradually into Dharma connections and comrades.

In short, only by adopting activities that are born of Bodhi intentions would one match the great path of ultimate liberation. This is a point well known to Buddhists and yet also a high goal that most Buddhists could not actually accomplish. Even though the content of this short

essay is a frequent subject of Buddhist teachings and yet I am not bothered by repetitions in reminding Buddhists of this important point once more. May sincere Buddhists obtain this key sooner so that they may climb up and enter the shrine of Buddhas, receive personal instructions, and attain realizations of enlightenment.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 14, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Relaxing in Unknown

Yutang Lin

*Boundless width and depth could not be fathomed.
'Tis impossible to describe and beyond any control.
Both reality and one's fate are impenetrable as such.
Seeing thus, one remains relaxed in facing unknown.*

Comment:

Reality of the universe and personal fate are both incomprehensible. Views and words mold a superficial facade that indeed forms hindrance to attainment of realization. Seeing thoroughly the reality of life's unpredictable and uncontrollable nature, it becomes easier for one to live with unknown and settle for the present situation.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 14, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Beyond Reflection

Yutang Lin

*Aspiring toward Bodhi one would gradually become enlightened.
Renouncing this and preferring that are equally a kind of bondage.
Hundreds of ways of how people practice Dharma, but one style.
Imprisoning cells are self-knitted beyond their scopes of reflection.*

Comment:

The path of Dharma practices is full of deviations and delusions, regress and winding approaches. Upon careful examination of such cases one by one, one would realize that they are all due to bondage arising from self-grasping. Only when Bodhi is given priority, and grasping is immediately given up as soon as they are noticed to have arisen, could a practitioner gradually advance until full maturity. Alas! It is beyond most practitioners' scope of reflection, that they are circling within the cage of self-grasping. In order to attain fruits of enlightenment, one should practice renunciation of grasping with all one's might.

Written in Chinese on May 31, 2004

Translated on June 4, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Lights and Shadows

Yutang Lin

*Despite the turning of circumstances mind remains peaceful,
Just as lights and shadows are dancing in the boundless sky.
Single-mindedly practiced Dharma for nearly three decades,
Living in worldly environments yet without any entanglement.*

Comment:

Changes in human affairs, looked upon as gathering and dispersing of causal conditions. Being free from distinction of one and others, single-mindedly think only of all sentient beings. Whatever the dancing patters of lights and shadows, the boundless sky remains clear and even. Deeply immersed in Dharma activities, living in the world without being polluted and yet even returned to purity.

Written in Chinese on May 31, 2004

Translated on June 5, 2004

El Cerrito, California.

Before Entering the Stream

Yutang Lin

*Entering the stream of holiness only at the first fruit of Hinayana,
Usually the novices have not entered the stream of holiness yet.
Instead of attempting to renounce grasping to turn into holiness,
They enjoy sticking to personal preferences and remain worldly.*

Comment:

Before attainment of fruition position it is quite easy for a practitioner to get lost in the flow. Novice practitioners should aim at entering the stream of holiness. Constantly reminds oneself that one has not entered the stream of holiness yet so as to raise one's sense of urgency. One should make much effort in letting one's grasping flow off with the passing of time. Otherwise, one would remain stagnant in the flow of worldlings.

Written in Chinese on May 31, 2004

Translated on June 5, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Chenrezi Thangka

Yutang Lin

*Amitabha atop granting blessing, dragon and phoenix surround,
Compassionate Chenrezi with merciful features and golden hue,
Harmonized three virtues of Wisdom, Compassion and Power,
Spreading the right Dharma far and wide to save beings equally.*

Comment:

In order to receive blessings from Guan Yin during my lectures I asked some Buddhist to look for a Chenrezi (Tibetan name of the Four-arm Avalokitesvara) Thangka (painting scroll) so that I may hang it up high above the lectern. Through the help of several Buddhists we obtained a painting with refined details in golden hue, a work done by a senior Nepali painter. Above the main figure of Chenrezi Amitabha Buddha stays atop to grant blessings, and a pair of dragon and phoenix surrounds on left and right side. In front of Chenrezi there are Manjusri and Vajrapani on left and right side. Unexpectedly we received this Thangka that signifies the blessing of Compassion (Chenrezi), Wisdom (Manjusri) and Power (Vajrapani) in harmonized union; I couldn't help exclaim in awe that Buddha's grace is so profound and beyond comprehension!

Written in Chinese on June 3, 2004

Translated on June 5, 2004

El Cerrito, California



In Accordance with Causal Conditions

Yutang Lin

*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 allover.*

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 bygones 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

Harmonious Combination

Yutang Lin

Only upon harmonious combination of all conditions is accomplishment sound.

Maintaining a grateful attitude one humbly pays respects to all one encounters.

Cultivate accommodation in one's views, interpretations and action or inaction.

As tolerance permeates all matters on hand meritorious credits are cumulating.

Comment:

For any matter to be perfectly accomplished it takes all sorts of causal conditions to gather into a harmonious combination. Therefore, at any moment when we have peace and things are going smooth we should be grateful, and in daily life we had better maintain a respectful attitude toward all that we happen to encounter so as to cultivate favorable conditions. The width or narrowness of views, the stubbornness or flexibility of insistence, the choosing or renouncing of actions or inaction, and the grasping or switching of preferences could all be cultivated toward more harmonious accommodations so as to benefit universally all involved. If one could accommodate in all matters on hand, then not only could one slightly reduce suffering in the world but also might one in some cases help achieve meritorious deeds.

The view stated above stems from harmonious comprehension of matters. For a practitioner to live properly in the world such view could be carefully pondered for a beneficial insight.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 14, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Originally No Possession

Yutang Lin

*Realized that originally no possession, it no longer matters much to lose.
Eventually will be parted, why need to grasp constantly and keep along.
Worrying about gains and losses, mind could hardly take a break leisure.
Seeing through impermanence, one likes to give things out for good uses.*

Comment:

Came without anything on, did not ever possess something. Once realized that originally no possession, any moment things may as well be lost. Will leave naked, all that one has will depart completely. Fighting desperately for gains and holdings, how long could it last? Greed wrapped the mind, sorrows incessant. Even though there are some gains that would only add to the burden. In tune with impermanence, remain even-minded to gains and losses. Constantly think of benefiting beings, cultivate meritorious deeds and give freely.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 15, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Incomplete Comprehension

Yutang Lin

Not yet comprehended fully, biased grasping to exclusive self-righteousness.

Awakened to openness one sees how all teachings may be suitably adopted.

Variations in situations and in propensities demand skillful means of salvation.

As long as the practices help sublimate beings, all should be equally revered.

Comment:

When the theoretical aspects of Dharma teachings have not been thoroughly comprehended in harmony, and one's practices lack profound experiences and insights, then one would be apt to grasp partially only certain teachings as dependable to the exclusion of the rest of Dharma teachings. Once all Dharma teachings are comprehended in harmonious oneness and one has attained openness, then one would see how all sorts of teachings and practices, as skillful pedagogical devices, are capable of helping beings of various propensities under different circumstances. Thus, one should hold them all with equal reverence and rejoice impartially in their propagation. A great ocean receives hundreds of rivers and streams; while brooks and creeks are confined by their own banks.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 18, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Unifying All Aspects

Yutang Lin

*Linguistic expressions as well as scopes of view are all dualistic,
To describe boundless it takes skillful division into many aspects.
Once the key to harmonization and unification is comprehended,
One sees simultaneously in all directions and turns around lively.*

Comment:

In order to describe the state that is free from the dualism of subject-versus-object in terms of limited points of view and dualistic linguistic expressions, one could at most attempt to describe through division into many aspects while falling short of completion at the step of "scratching itches from outside the boot." In Buddhist teachings, in order to guide beings through skillful means, there are classifications of terminologies such as "the two feet of Wisdom and Compassion," "the three virtues of Wisdom, Compassion and Strength," "the four kinds of Great Compassion," and "the Five Wisdoms," etc. If a Buddhist were to grasp to such divisions and distinctions, then it would become difficult for the Buddhist to harmonize and unify the Buddhist theories. One should realize that the key to harmonization and unification of Buddhist teachings is to comprehend that all things are originally in limitless oneness that is free from duality. Once such a fundamental state of limitless oneness is comprehended one would see immediately that all particular characteristics of all aspects are naturally in harmonious unification.

Even tantric teachings of Vajrayana are not deviations from this principle. For example, without harmonization into oneness, the requirements of Yidam visualization: distinct, firm and Buddha pride could easily deteriorate into merely a conscious act of mental grasping that is constantly within the sphere of a mentality that is based on subject-versus-object duality. Consequently, the transcendence into non-duality could hardly arise. May serious Dharma practitioners carefully reflect on this point to comprehend the subtleties in this remark!

Written in Chinese on June 21, 2004
Translated on June 22, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Four Layers of Tara's Merits

Yutang Lin

*Realizing Sunyata, harmonizing teachings, and complete with attainments,
Staying by the side of each and every sentient being to protect and guide,
Merciful kindness moves many to come for refuge from lands far and wide,
Spreading pure nectar universally all over the world to nourish and moisten.*

Comment:

This morning right before I woke up I received teachings on the four layers of Tara's merits in a dream. The teachings are succinctly described below:

1. There was someone who has realized Sunyata and fulfilled the trainings that enable one to serve as a patriarch. This person is capable of taking up several kinds of glorious and important responsibilities.

Explanation: Having fulfilled the trainings that enable one to serve as a patriarch means having mastered the harmonization and unification of Buddhist theories, and possessed attainments completely. Being capable of taking up several kinds of glorious and important responsibilities means the ability to transform appropriately for conversion purposes at will, and to convert beings far and wide. These are merits of Tara that are commonly understood; hence they belong to the outer layer.

2. Nevertheless, the mind of this person was completely free from considerations of position and fame, and was solely preoccupied with the intention to stay by the side of each and every sentient being so as to protect and save all of them.

Explanation: The compassion of Tara is completely impartial and selfless. It is not only universally applicable to all sentient beings but also so profound as to accompany and safeguard each and every sentient being. Such profound compassion is usually difficult to comprehend by ordinary people; hence it belongs to the inner layer.

3. Due to complete possession of merits as described in the two layers above, this person naturally became a prominent and important patriarch.

Explanation: Even though free from such intentions, due to the attraction of this person's merits, naturally the conversion became far and wide and the fame spread to distant lands. Such is the result of matching merits of both outer and inner layers and their mutual enhancement; hence this belongs to the secret layer.

4. This person's supernatural power caused pure nectar to spring forth and cover the whole world; consequently all sentient beings obtained nourishment and became moistened with compassion

Explanation: Universal soothing of all sentient beings is the function of supernatural powers that originated spontaneously from limitless oneness that is originally pure; hence it belongs to the most secret layer.

With gratitude I have carefully and faithfully recorded the teachings here. Through this public announcement I hope to help promote understanding of Tara's merciful and compassionate merits. In addition, I hope that Buddhists who practice sadhanas on Taras would thereby gain accomplishments sooner and save all beings equally.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 22, 2004

Chinese Duan Wu Festival (lunar May 5)

El Cerrito, California

Pushing the Mill

Yutang Lin

*Success or failure, short or long, such considerations have not yet ceased,
Not realizing that all are comrades in pushing the mill of worldly sufferings.
Crowded in a large iron cage of karma, incessantly circle round and round.
Work on your escape plan sooner by focusing your mind on Dharma path.*

Comment:

In the early morning of Chinese Duan Wu Festival (lunar May 5), after I had received teachings on the four layers of Tara's merits in a dream, I also saw a huge iron cage crowded with people. They were slowly moving clockwise in rows as if pushing a mill. I sensed that this depicted the suffering situation of transmigration in worldly realms. Ordinarily people are preoccupied with prosperity or decline, gains or losses that are presently in sight, and hence they could not have the leisure to reflect on life and awake to the fact that, indeed, all are comrades in a cage of karma sharing the pushing of the mill of suffering. If one could comprehend this truth, one should renounce worldly considerations and turn one's mind toward advancement on the Dharma path so as to achieve ultimate emancipation from entanglements and settle in tranquility that is free from sufferings.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 24, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Very Subtle Distinction

Yutang Lin

*Truth, being selfless, does not impose limitations.
In tune with the right path, all practices would do.
Using Buddhist formalities to uphold one's position,
Such subtle cracks should be carefully examined.*

Comment:

The fundamental philosophy of Buddhist teachings is selflessness in all phenomena. In other words, all phenomena are results of gathering and dispersing of causal conditions; consequently, there is no particular determinant factor in all situations. In accordance with this fundamental teaching, the views, thinking, actions and inaction of a Buddhist should be in line with universal truths but not to adhere to only one particular way.

Some people also employ Buddhist teachings and formalities, and claim to have great supernatural powers that had induced many miraculous happenings. From ordinary point of view of worldly people they are readily recognized as being Buddhists. Nevertheless, their own grasping to the claim that they are the holder of the Right Dharma revealed precisely that they lacked comprehension of the fundamental teaching that truths are in selflessness, and hence they had indeed acknowledged that they are not in accordance with Buddhism. According to Buddhist teachings such people served as examples of "outsiders under the pretence of Buddhism."

This is a very subtle and difficult to discern distinction. Buddhists in general, before they have a firm comprehension of the right view, would often be confused and beguiled by such apparent formal similarities. Therefore, I hereby pointed this out with the hope that there would be less number of people being beguiled by such pretences.

Written in Chinese on July 3, 2004

Translated on July 5, 2004

El Cerrito, California

At the Toilet

Yutang Lin

*With a sudden thunderous roar in the horizon
Air of habitual worldly propensities exhausted.
Revealing well-kept inner essences of secrecy
To awaken by this odor all in the ten directions.*

Comment:

One should practice the harmonization of mind, action and Dharma everywhere all the time so as to achieve thorough and ultimate awakening. Therefore, Tantric teachings on Daily Yoga even include the periods of urination and excretion.

As foul air being expelled the practitioner would think that all one's habitual air of worldly propensities have been exhausted. During urination or excretion the practitioner would silently repeat the Nectar Mantra, "Weng, Ban Zha, An Li Ta, Gun Zha Li, Ha La Ha La, Hong, Pei, Suo Ha," so as to transform the excrement or urine into nectar to feed all hungry ghosts in the ten directions and three times (past, present and future).

I enjoy making humorous comments beyond ordinary points of views; often I would spontaneously get ideas on the spot to add creative interpretations. Sometimes before I went to the toilet I would announce to the family, "I am going to reveal my inner essence now!" As the odor spread, I would add, "I am adding flavors to your life!" As they ran away with nose covered, I would say, "This is full of awakening power." Although it was a remark made in jest, and yet awakening to non-discrimination through smell is indeed a legitimate way among the paths to liberation.

Written in Chinese on July 4, 2004

Translated on July 5, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Shower Hall

Yutang Lin

*Roomful of works on Dharma as precious as gold and jade,
Universally scattering nectars of Dharma like a shower hall,
In Dharmadhatu conditional arising's beyond comprehension,
Name happened to match the person, who would know first?*

Comment:

My parents chose the Chinese name Yu Tang for me. The character Yu consists of two characters, Jin and Yu, meaning gold and jade respectively. The character Tang means hall. The altar framework at home in Taipei, the incense holder in my altar room, etc. all happened to have the auspicious Chinese phrase "Jin Yu Man Tang," meaning roomful of gold and jade, engraved on them without being sought after during selection. Recently my works on Dharma in Chinese alone had exceeded one thousand pieces; I figure that my Dharma works amount to this life's roomful of gold and jade for me.

In high-school years one day I suddenly realized that the pronunciation of my Chinese name, Lin Yu Tang, is similar to the Chinese term for "shower hall." (Shower in Chinese is said as Lin Yu.) Therefore, in those days, to help others comprehend this funny connection, while introducing myself to others I would add, "bath room." My works are printed for free distribution to interested public; in recent years they are also posted at websites as voluntary service to the world for people to peruse and download at will. Based on this, maybe one could be regarded as a "shower hall" that scatters Dharma nectars universally and perpetually? A few years ago I saw the Sutra "Universal Gates Chapter" in a dream. The scenes in that dream also conveyed the meaning of giving people baths to clean them of karmas. Interested readers might want to check that work out. It is entitled, "Seeing the Universal Gates Chapter in a Dream."

Conditional arising in the Dharmadhatu is beyond comprehension; nevertheless, within the unknown there are meticulously unmistakable

connections as determined by causal conditions and karmas. The fact that my name and its pronunciation equivalent are both precisely matching to my life's activities could not have been foreseen by my parents, and yet they happened to have chosen it for this use; it could not have been just a matter of coincidence!

Written in Chinese on July 4, 2004

Translated on July 5, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Seeing the "Universal Gates Chapter" in a Dream

Yutang Lin

*Written on a wall in elegant calligraphy is the Sutra,
With "Universal Mind" and "Courageous Vigor" on either side.
In brilliant light there lays a white and clean bathtub
To provide cleansing as need be to wash away dirt!*

Comment:

This morning right before I woke up I saw in a dream a room full of brilliant light. On one wall it is written in Chinese calligraphy the title and partial text (and yet it is understood to signify the whole text) of the "Universal Gates Chapter" of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara; the calligraphy is elegant. On either side stood the terms "Universal Mind" and "Courageous Vigor." Below these writings, along the wall there lays a white and clean bathtub.

I figure that this scene indicates that, one should develop the great mind of universal equality, and imitate the thirty-two kinds of responses of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara with courageous vigor to engage in universal salvation of all beings. This is to be accomplished by washing away the dirt of prejudice and sorrow of various kinds of sentient beings in the bathtub full of the nectar of Buddha Dharma.

This poem was composed right afterwards to commemorate this teaching dream, and to remind myself not to become unworthy of such a graceful teaching.

Written in Chinese: April 23, 1998

Translated: August 10, 1999

El Cerrito, California

Oneness of Guru and Buddha

Pao-Yuan Chen

*Devoting to Dharma for three decades without regret or complaints,
Compassionately blessing all worldly beings as does a Bodhisattva,
Protecting sentient beings through the oneness of Guru and Buddha,
Such essence was graciously revealed via a wondrous Dharma dream.*

Comments:

Long ago when I read the Chinese book "Mu En Lu" I was very touched by a photo of Dr. Lin that was taken during his performance of a fire puja; it showed him in deep meditative concentration. So I thought about sketching his image based on this photo and presenting it to him one day. However, I doubted that my karma was good enough for me to carry out such a project well, so I told myself to postpone it until I have completed the basic one hundred thousand repetitions of the Hundred-Syllable Mantra of Vajrasattva.

On the day I finally finished the chanting up to 111,111 times, coincidentally and auspiciously I received Guru Lin's gift in the mail, a splendid copy of "the Seven Medicine Guru Buddhas Sutra." It arrived as if it was a timely encouraging present for me. I was extremely excited, yet I hadn't forgotten my wish of doing the sketch. So, one day later, I started the sketch. Many hours went by, and many times I ruined the sketch. The reason was that I just couldn't capture Guru's shining spirit. I looked outside and saw the sun setting over the top of the hill, and finally stopped amending and just let it be. Thus whatever ideas of suitable background came up to my mind were immediately put down on the sketch. I framed the sketch, then did the same to the copy of the fire puja photo, which I had previously sent to Staple's for an enlargement color copy and cut to the right size. The next day both frames got mailed out in one package, and, after a few days, out went another package of documents to Guru Lin also. However, both packages arrived at Guru Lin's house at the same time. He told me the glass of the framed sketch was broken during shipping. I felt very bad and sorry, but Guru Lin comforted me by saying that it's an auspicious

sign of liberation because the sketch was "getting out of the frame."
That night I had a dream, in which Mrs. Lin showed me her version of Guru's sketch. It was so realistic and beautiful it's just unbelievable. Then I went to their altar room to pay worship to Buddhas. All of a sudden I noticed that on the left wall of this room there was a niche about 2 meters tall and 1 meter wide, and the depth was about 1 meter, too. The five surfaces of this niche were all crimson. I could see many small and big sketches of Guru Lin filling up this niche. One of them was done by his second son Frank, and the others were from Dharma friends all over the world. However, the biggest one that was put in the middle caught my eyes. I looked carefully and found that it's a sketch of Guru Lin combined with Wei Tuo Bodhisattva. I couldn't really tell if the face was that of Guru Lin or Wei Tuo Bodhisattva, but just by the first sight I realized it's actually a non-dualistic picture of Guru Lin and Wei Tuo Bodhisattva, thus inseparable and non-differentiable. There was even some kind of power telling me that this image is also Guan Gong the Dharma Protector. So, seriously speaking, it's an image of Trinity. This image was framed in the kind of light box that doctors use to examine X-ray films, so it seemed translucent, and was glowing and making the whole niche shining.

After I woke up I pondered again on the dream, and realized that my Guru, Dr. Lin, has dedicated his life to Dharma for almost 30 years without regret or complaints, whose spirit is just like that of Wei Tuo Bodhisattvas and Dharma Protector Guan Gong. Furthermore, his endless care and help over Buddhists in general, students and all sentient beings are manifestations of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. No wonder such a miraculous image appeared in my dream! Accordingly, I also realized that I have been constantly blessed by Guru Lin ever since I started my Buddhist practices. It's very fortunate that I was shown and taught such Dharma significance in the dream, which coincides with what's expressed in Guru Lin's previous poem "Guru Buddha."

July 9th, 2004
New Jersey

Epilog

Yutang Lin

After Pao-Yuan offered the sketch she got an inspirational dream. She described it to me in an email, and I told her to write it into an essay to help the public build right faith in the Dharma.

Long years ago when I started to follow and attend Guru Chen once I saw in a dream Wei Tuo Bodhisattva was holding the hand of a five or six year old boy by his side and the boy was me. Since then I have had many blessed experiences of his presence. Among those the most outstanding ones were related to the photo of Giving of Fearlessness and the "Om Mani Padme Hong" mantra sheet that I wrote. Please read my related works on these for details. Dharma Protector Guan Gong also appeared many times to me to grant his supportive blessings.

This time a most extraordinary blessing was granted to us through the manifestation of a miraculous non-dual image of Trinity of Dharma Protectors and Practitioner to Pao Yuan, so that novices may be well guided on the path, and my dedication to the Dharma is thereby awarded with distinction to encourage more Buddhists to follow suit with the knowledge that such efforts would not be in vain eventually.

To commemorate this extraordinary blessing I offered a poem below:

Full devotion in offering the sketch won Buddha's blessings,
Let see an awe-inspiring Protector image of Guru in dream.
Non-dual and non-differentiable are Guru and Bodhisattvas,
Thus teaching that their Bodhi intentions for beings are one.

Epilog written in Chinese on July 9, 2004

Translated on July 10, 2004

El Cerrito, California





Remembering Protectors' Grace

Yutang Lin

*Smooth path ensured under the Grace of Paldan Lhamo's guidance;
Abundance in Dharma fruits owes thanks to her pulling by the hand.
Flying along to guard and protect through impenetrable surveillance,
Wide spreading of Lion's roars due to the diligence of security force.*

Comment:

Years ago I composed a praise in Chinese to pay respects to the Four-arm Mahakala. As the praise was composed I suddenly realized that the last word of each of the four sentences, when read in the sequential order as taught by Guru Chen on how to arrange the images of the Four Great Heavenly Kings into a two by two matrix, namely, by assigning East to the lower right, and then assigning South, West and North clockwise to lower left, upper left and then upper right respectively, would form the phrase: Fei Sui Shou Hu, flying along to guard and protect. Without intention for such arrangement and yet under his gracious blessing the four sentences all ended with a verb, just as the movement of his four arms, to constitute such matching significance. Hence, in January of this year I asked Seong Yeow to carve a seal of this phrase as a token of permanent remembrance of such grace.

Then I recalled that, ever since I had dedicated my life to Dharma services, whenever I encountered difficult junctures through Guru Chen's grace I would pray to Paldan Lhamo for guidance. Thanks to her compassionate and merciful guidance I would learn how to choose the auspicious path and to avoid the dangerous cliffs. As a result my Dharma path has been smooth and even. Appreciation of such grace lingers in my heart all the time. Therefore, on that same day I sent another request to Seong Yeow asking him to use a square seal-stone to carve a round shaped seal of the phrase: Yang Ci Qu Ji, relying on grace to approach auspiciousness. In addition, I requested that he would carve on the seal wall facing me when using the seal the following:

Constantly remembering the grace of Heavenly Mother in granting

merciful guidance
A disciple of Buddhist Tantra Yutang

As to the meaning of Qu Ji in the seal, it means both to approach auspiciousness and to follow Paldan Lhamo like a child holding the hand of mother because in Chinese she is called Ji Xiang Tian Mu, Auspicious Heavenly Mother.

During my recent trip home to Taiwan I received from Seong Yeow these two seals in completion. In order to work on this project as a serious matter he had entered retreat to work on the designs. The top of the Heavenly Mother's seal consists of the carving of five ripe peaches hanging from some branches; Dharma fruits are certainly products of Heavenly Mother's gracious blessings. The top of the Mahakala's seal consists of a lion king standing upright and roaring; Dharma sounds of right enlightenment have spread wide through the grace of protection!

Written in Chinese on July 14, 2004

Taipei, Taiwan

Translated on August 9, 2004

El Cerrito, California



Bracelet Mala of Taras

Yutang Lin

In early morning of July 14 I suddenly got the inspiration that I could use a specially designed bracelet mala (prayer beads) to represent the twenty-one Taras so as to maintain constant remembrance of their gracious merits and for practice of chanting Tara mantras.

Use a red bead as the father-bead to represent Red Chenrezig (Guan Yin), and a white bead as the mother-bead to represent White Chenrezig; this is the source of miraculous origination for all Taras. Use twenty-one beads as offspring beads to represent the twenty-one Taras respectively. Among the twenty-one Taras the color of their individual bodies are variegated to signify their various salvation activities and merits. Nevertheless, the main Yidam is Green Tara and the main companion Tara is White Tara. Hence the Taras are to be represented by twenty green beads and one white bead. This white bead is to be placed at the 11th place, and hence it will be on the exact opposite side of the mala circle in correspondence with the white bead that represents White Chenrezig. While the pair of ten green beads each will be on two sides forming a balanced symmetric correspondence that would look nice and neat.

Right then I drew a simple figure to express this idea and gave it to a Buddhist friend. That afternoon she came back with a bracelet mala made according to this idea. When I showed it to visiting Buddhists they all expressed approval and appreciation of its full representation of the essential significance of Taras. Hence I wrote this article to share the Dharma idea and its benefits with all Buddhists.

Written in Chinese on July 17, 2004
Before the fire puja to Red Chenrezig
Yang Ming Mountain, Taipei, Taiwan
Translated on August 8, 2004
El Cerrito, California



Ceasing Intentions

Yutang Lin

*Conditional arising is subtle and wondrous beyond conceivability;
Evolution of the totality is on courses that none could control over.
Just as the more stirring the murkier it would be in a pond of water;
Ceasing self-centered intentions would at once unite all in harmony.*

Comment:

Deluded into attempting to change phenomena of the world,
The more stirring would only bring about the more confusion.
Simply being able to cease prejudicial grasping and preference,
The totality originally remained communicable and harmonized.

To return harmoniously into the sphere of all things,
Not to grasp to forms and create issues of all sorts.
Thought after thought without adherence to any one,
Right away there is transcendence of transmigration.

Written in Chinese on July 29, 2004

Melaka, Malaysia

Translated on August 10, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Taking Refuge in Bodhicitta

A Talk Given in Mandarin by Dr. Yutang Lin on July 16, 2004 at Zhongding Bodhi Club, Taipei, Taiwan

Tape Recorded and Transcribed by L. Wang and Pao-Yuan Chen, Revised by Dr. Lin

Based on the above Chinese Transcript, Translated into English by Pao-Yuan Chen and Revised by Dr. Lin

President of the Club, Mr. Wu:

Dr. Lin, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, we're very happy to be able to invite Dr. Yutang Lin to come and give us a speech on "Taking Refuge in Bodhicitta." Dr. Lin has been here more than once before. In spite of the fact that there were not too many participants previously, Dr. Lin is so kind as not to have forsaken us but to continue to compassionately elucidate Dharma for us. Now let's welcome Dr. Lin.

Dr. Lin:

The topic today is "Taking Refuge in Bodhicitta."

Before we move on, let's talk about some basic ideas, which will make the following parts easier to unfold.

First, let's talk about practicing Buddhism. What are we practicing when we practice Buddhism? The goal of practicing Buddhism is to reach Buddhahood, to reach the ultimate enlightenment. Simply put, to reach Buddhahood is to return to the original state of purity, which is primordial. If it weren't original but obtained through efforts, sooner or later it will be lost without enough efforts or the right conditions. This time you may win the championship, but next time it could belong to someone else. Thus anything in the world that is obtained through efforts isn't ultimately secured. The original state was originally without problems. And the Original Purity is not the kind of purity that we

usually talk about in defining cleanliness and dirtiness or likes and dislikes. How things in the world are, are often judged by individual people's standards, which aren't absolute standards but are dependent on causal conditions. The reason is that the worldly standards are often formed artificially and vary according to different environments, geographical regions and cultures. The Original Purity we talk about here is not formed by differentiation. The original state of things clean or dirty has no artificial discrimination. Even though colors are different, nevertheless, before we make distinctions they are blended together in oneness that is indivisible. Take the traffic lights as an example. The red lights and the green lights don't distinguish themselves; it's only when they're functioning that they start to differ. So they are not differentiable in themselves but are pure originally, which is the state before the arising of the dual distinction of subject and object. Such purity resembles the love of a mother to her child. She loves her child so much that she simply cleans up the child's diapers whenever necessary without discrimination. Such an indiscriminate mind would consider the child's excretion as clean. Therefore, if there isn't discrimination originally, then everything is in oneness.

In Buddhism there's a teaching on "non-self." When we make distinctions, there are individual objects. However, just like the ocean or river, everything is in fact mixed, and one person is like one drop of water, one grain of sand, or one pebble in it. A drip or grain of sand seems differentiable from the ocean or river; nevertheless, before it was distinguished the whole ocean or river was a unified totality. The truth is that all were originally in oneness, until we started to make artificial distinctions. For another example, if one place on Earth suffers from some leak of poisonous gas, the people living nearby will surely be victimized. Those that live afar may not feel any impact. Nevertheless, to the Earth as a whole, everyone shares any tiny leak of poisonous gas. Therefore, all are shaped by causal conditions, and are constantly evolving. When we are able to make conscious distinctions, the distinctions stand. When we become too old or too ill, we won't even have the energy to grasp to such distinctions. Thus all sentient beings and non-sentient objects are originally, as a matter of fact, in Limitless Oneness. Any discrimination is temporary and artificial. If we observe things from atomic or even subatomic particles' point of view, the

discriminations shaped by our senses don't even exist. Hence we could understand that the discriminations we normally make are biased in the light of scientific microscopic or macroscopic views.

We often make distinctions in our worldly lives. For example, this is lawful right, obligation, or responsibility. Thus, all sorts of problems would become unsolvable, and people all suffer much. When we are healthy we may have the energy to make differentiation and to fight over it, but when we encounter sufferings like those due to traffic accidents, senility, and illness, the problems would become even more insoluble. So, when seen through, life is suffering with lots of afflictions. We could rarely smile from the bottom of our hearts.

After Sakyamuni saw the sufferings of old age, illness, and death, he gave up his power and role as a prince, reflected upon how human beings could pass their lives peacefully and overcome the sufferings of old age, illness and death, and he finally reached Buddhahood. At first, he learned from the immortals then in India, and reached attainments in the Realm of Form and the Realm of No-form. Still he found that there were problems and it was not the ultimate solution. It would be very hard for ordinary people to even reach these levels. Therefore, at his level, it was not just a breakthrough in concepts. Nowadays the numerous establishments in the society are incapable of providing thorough help. For example, if there were a flood, people would donate money to help. But that would not prevent some other natural disaster from coming. Even though the homeland had been rebuilt, but the trauma in people's minds would not be healed at once. Others could not help the victims unless they can open up their minds themselves. Sakyamuni Buddha was capable of breaking through any subtle spiritual attachment, even released attachment to fine attainments of Dhyana, and returned to Original Purity. Limitless Oneness transcends spatial and temporal limitations. When one reaches the state of Limitless Oneness, naturally there will be power that reaches to those that are in need of help. Things as such may sound like fairy tales. But if you practice in accordance with Dharma, you will have experiences that come near to the transcendence of Limitless Oneness over spatial and temporal limitations. After engaging in Dharma practices for many years, sometimes one would know about events in one's previous lives

or foresee future events. These are examples of transcending temporal limitations. For example, when I prayed on behalf of others, even though they were overseas they would feel power coming or see situations changed. These are examples of transcending spatial limitations. These are real and can be experienced, and constitute what keeps me going on my life-long Buddhist practice.

With the above understanding, we are now ready to expound on "Taking Refuge in Bodhicitta." What does it mean by "taking refuge"? Once "taking refuge" is being considered on the path of Buddhist practice, we're no longer talking about the beginning phase. Taking refuge seems to be the first step, but in real life who would suddenly believe in anyone? When we were little, our parents might have led us to take refuge in a Dharma teacher, but later when we grew up, our thoughts might have changed. So that need not be a case of taking refuge in earnest. The real one comes when we ourselves sincerely want to return to the state of Original Purity and to look for a permanent and reliable settlement. We can't achieve this by relying on our usual worldly approaches, so we need to look for something stable and secure. Hence, to have reached this step, one had more or less known some Dharma, had learned what Buddha taught us, had realized what's truly beneficial to us, and thus wanted to take refuge, and would not run away afterwards. This no longer belongs to the theoretical part of Dharma, but has exceeded the levels of "knowing" and "thinking" to reach the level of "practice." Only when one has reached the "practice" stage will there be genuine taking of refuge in the Dharma.

What then are we taking refuge in? We are taking refuge in the Original Purity. Nevertheless, this would be too far-fetched to ordinary people's experiences. Where would the "original" be? If it were originally there, then we need not do anything because it was originally there already, and we have never left it. Therefore, theoretically speaking, we need to take refuge in the Triple Gem. We take refuge in the Buddha because Buddha was a person with the experience of right awakening, and had realized Limitless Oneness. Even though physically he had entered Nirvana, but in reality even now he can still help us and communicate with us. However, ordinary people would not know how to contact sentient beings that had attained enlightenment, nor could

they recognize such beings. Therefore, we need to depend on reliable teachings that came down to us. Although there are lots of Sutras, they are basically about impermanence, non-self, and Bodhicitta. Correct teachings of this kind are what we ought to follow. Thus, when we can't find the Buddha, we simply follow these teachings. As to taking refuge in the Sangha, some people with experiences in Dharma practices would know how to practice would be in accordance with the Dharma or not. Such people are not confined to only monks or nuns, but also include lay Buddhists that have practiced long and obtained experiences of attainment. However, when it is thus understood sometimes certain problems would arise. For example, some would claim to be living Buddhas, while those of us ordinary people would not know how to distinguish the real ones from the fake ones. Furthermore, there are many schools in Buddhism, and also classifications into Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. And there are people who claimed that only certain teachings were authentic, as were originally taught by Sakyamuni. So how are we supposed to discern if the teachings were correct and if a person had real practice experiences? There is one criterion, namely, to decide by the presence or absence of Bodhicitta. If one could attain Limitless Oneness that is originally pure, that would be Bodhicitta. Nonetheless, it's almost impossible for us to reach such high position of fruition right away. Bodhicitta has another meaning, namely, as an aspiration toward this goal — may all beings soon attain Buddhahood; it aims not only at one's own liberation but also takes into equal consideration the liberation of all sentient beings. With such a goal in mind, whenever problems arise we could judge by checking to see if Bodhicitta is present or not. This is because Bodhicitta contains neither selfishness nor predilection; it not only takes our own family members into care, but also embraces all sentient beings in the past, present and future. It is an aspiration that wishes all to achieve ultimate peace and happiness, and thus solve the problems permanently. Within the sphere of our capabilities we would help them in accordance with the wish—may all beings soon attain Buddhahood so that they would leave sufferings and attain happiness. So whatever we do, in addition to wishing that they would overcome the current hardships, we also pray that through this Dharma connection they would eventually become Buddhas. Therefore, we need to practice diligently in order to help others leave sufferings and attain happiness sooner. Some Buddhists are

bothered by the fact that they could not persuade their family members to practice Dharma. If you want to wait till their conversion to start your Dharma practice, chances are you'll never obtain any significant result in practice for the rest of your life. If, however, we treat everybody equally, and can see that people have their own courses and times of maturity in practicing Buddhism, and hence we just try our best to spread and preserve Dharma in the world. Then, even if we died first, they could still have the opportunity to encounter Dharma. Such would be real salvation; otherwise, it would be just ignorance. Salvation activities that are wise would treat all equally; eventually it will reach everyone sooner or later.

So if we use Bodhicitta—may all beings soon attain Buddhahood as the criteria, there would not be deviations and mistakes. Sometimes taking refuge in a Guru could possibly turn into idol worship. Besides, some teachings would say that only certain things are permissible and other things are not. Even though Dharma is harmonious and would give different teachings to suit the propensities of different people; nevertheless, we could sometimes be unaware of our own confinement by concepts. But if we go by Bodhicitta, we will naturally know how to do. Even if sometimes we got cheated, we will have nothing to regret for or to be ashamed of because all we want is for all beings to become Buddhas. Therefore, being cheated or not becomes not an issue. In this way, we don't lose anything, but just approach ever closer to Bodhicitta time after time.

Now let's talk about taking refuge in Guru. In Tantric Buddhism Gurus are placed at the foremost place. We take refuge first of all in Guru, and then we take refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Why is it that Guru is placed first in Tantric Buddhism? The reason is that pure Bodhicitta is sustained in spirituality through Gurus from generation to generation. Buddhas transcend all spatial and temporal limitations. Some people said they could not find the real place to take refuge in. I advised them to go in front of an image or statue of Sakyamuni Buddha and repeat thrice the Triple Refuge, namely, to repeat: I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Dharma; I take refuge in the Sangha. Buddha treats all beings equally; so going to Sakyamuni is like turning to our own parents. We could say to Buddha, "I think what you taught is

right, and I am willing to follow your teachings and practice accordingly." Therefore, no one could say, "you can take refuge in Buddha only through me." All such claims are mistaken. Therefore, transcending time and space, it is permissible to take refuge directly in the Buddha. In Tantric Buddhism, the power to grant direct blessings could be transmitted from generation to generation. Since Buddha had entered Nirvana, even though he can still function, nevertheless ordinary people could not sense it. Therefore, the power to grant blessing was transmitted to some great disciple. Hence, if from generation to generation the rules of conducts are well observed and genuine Bodhicitta is sustained, then the blessing power of Dharma can be retained in the world. But if proper procedures or behaviors are not maintained, then the blessing power of the lineage cannot be preserved continuously, but will be taken back. So lineage is like embers kept continuously in the minds of those carrying on the lineage teachings. Hence, such a Guru amounts to being Buddha, and is indifferentiable from Buddha. What could serve as a Dharma teaching may be decided by him. He is one that had mastered the paths, and can tell you what to do. Even though what he said was not mentioned in any Sutra, he is actually teaching you how to practice Dharma. What are written in the Sutras are principles; as to how to apply those principles in daily life one should follow the direction of the Guru one has faith in. Thus, you will gradually learn such Dharma as Giving, Law-abiding, Tolerance, etc. through the problems you encounter in daily life and through the procedures whereby you overcome the difficulties. So, in Tantric Buddhism, if you do everything according to what Guru says, you will unknowingly realize that you have become different from others. Since you are used to being trained, many egoistic perspectives have been polished away. Therefore, Guru includes Dharma. And since he is an expert in this, Guru of course also includes Sangha. Guru is even more important than Dharma, since he is the one that actually teaches you in person. Whoever feeds you with milk is the real mother. Therefore, in Tantric Buddhism Guru is placed before Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. As to problems arising from following an incompetent Guru, this issue still needs to be decided by resorting to Bodhicitta. If your Bodhicitta were sincere, it would not become a real problem even if you followed a fake Guru. You may even learn from the experience and develop the ability to differentiate the right from the wrong. Guru is unlike the

abstract concepts of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. If one truly intends to pursue the practice path in depth, then it is rather advantageous to have a genuine Guru to follow. Ordinary people have limitations at many levels, even if they practice in accordance with Dharma principles, after groping for some time they might have gone astray and yet still could not realize the mistake. This is because they have no way of recognizing their own limitations. But if you have a Guru, you don't need to be well-versed in the Sutras, and yet through Guru's guidance, you will be able to apply Dharma in daily life. Under the guidance of Guru, you will be able to escape from the unnecessary confinement that you used to self-imprison yourself. With only one indication from Guru, you could move one step outward, and this step could be the blind spot that you would otherwise never notice. So it's very advantageous if one has a Guru to follow.

Now let's look at "The Way to Follow a Guru" on the handouts.

Pao-Yuan Chen looked up twelve poems from over one thousand of my poems in Chinese. Among the twelve, nine are directly related to the way to follow a Guru. You can tell they are arranged more or less chronologically from a few years ago up to now. I wrote only when I had inspirations or when someone asked me some questions. In the past few years, I had actually written ten works in relation to the topic on how to follow a Guru. One of the ten was entitled "Counterfeit," which is more on the negative side, and hence not included here. Two of the twelve poems are of more general ideas and broader spheres, such as we can learn from all in the Dharmadhatu and hence all can be our teachers. Another one is on the hardships we went through, if we can become liberated from within them, then such hardships may also serve as our teachers. These two works are of broader scope, so I didn't include them under this topic.

After we read these poems, we can also see the differences in my view at different times with respect to the same topic.

Let's now read them one by one.

The Way to Follow a Guru

*Hard enough to know how to choose a Guru,
Not to mention being turned off by a sour one.
Be truthful to Bodhicitta and practice solidly,
Approach gradually with eyes open, and dedicate oneself to the
Dharma!*

This poem is about how to stay near and rely on a Guru. Some people may be at first very devoted to some Guru, but later something happened, and they would become very discouraged and disappointed, and suffer deeply from it. If we don't know how to choose, we should simply examine ourselves in the light of Bodhicitta and practice solidly step by step without aspiring toward sudden awakening. If we find a Guru who doesn't covet for anything but knows what to do as matters arise, this is a genuine virtuous teacher. In this case, it would be better that we follow and practice solidly under this Guru. We shouldn't turn to one Guru when someone says this Guru is good, and then turn to another when someone else says that one is good. If we keep turning around like that, we would be like floating duckweeds without roots to grow up on.

Each poem originally was written with a comment attached, which you could read by yourselves afterwards.

Blessed Ones are Few

*Addressing as "Guru" is easy but listening to is hard;
One statement unacceptable would lead to disappearance.
Serving with diligence and learning constantly in attendance,
Only then could be blessed with Grace to turn into a dragon.*

Those who had engaged in Buddhist practice would have opportunities to encounter Gurus that they could follow and rely on. However, one could not follow a Guru the way one makes friends nowadays. Some people might politely address one as "Guru" one day, but later, when he came with much expectation while what the Guru said wasn't what he liked to hear, he would simply disappear. The real way to follow a Guru is to attend diligently and stay near the Guru for

long years, and only then can one actually learn something. You can't expect Guru to give you lectures everyday, as what you could learn from lectures are merely theories. When you stay around your Guru, you will see how he deals with problems in daily life, and learn his ways of thinking and of handling matters, you can then actually learn little by little. This is to learn through daily-life experiences. Only after long-term of such practice through imitation will one receive blessings and hopefully become a Dharma instrument capable of saving sentient beings.

Learning through Attendance

*Realization of Dharma permeates daily life;
Behavior and conversation remain just ordinary.
Attending the Guru to learn eventually the subtleties,
Refined transformation would emerge unnoticeably.*

The meaning of oneness of Dharma and life is that everything in one's daily life has become related to Dharma. There is nothing miraculous in this; just as ordinary people would do, Guru greets people when he encounters people. But if you're with your Guru over long period of time, you will see how he handles matters and how considerate he is to others. Ordinary people fall into different levels with different perspectives, so Guru even need to accommodate them in order to help them. Then you will realize that to save sentient beings is so difficult—you have to self-adjust in order to accommodate sentient beings. Otherwise, before you could reach and help them, they would have run away already. Therefore, if you are with your Guru over long period of time, and learn naturally bit by bit in daily life, you would naturally become a Dharma instrument after long-term nurturing.

Indicating

*Only humble attitude could benefit from guidance;
Empty the mind in order to contain Dharma nectar.
Learned indications revealed at opportune juncture;
One poke brings to life the freedom to turn around.*

One has to be humble in order to receive any teaching. It takes an empty mind in order to thoughtfully and carefully attend Guru and follow every bit of teaching from Guru at all times. During this period worldly matters have to be put aside. Whenever some matter arises, Guru's way of dealing with it differs from one's own thinking, then one might realize that Guru was thinking like that and hence handling like that. This is as if when you encountered a rock on the road, you don't really need to touch or move it. Instead, all you need to do is to go around it. An indication like this from Guru turns your thinking around and shows the flexibility and liveliness of Dharma. So if you learn to deal with things differently, you could gradually learn the way to attain liberation.

Guru as Buddha

*Regarding Guru as no different from Buddha,
In original oneness all distinctions fade away.
Mind without grasping accepts things as such,
Spreading Dharma to help all without waning.*

In Tantric Buddhism, it is taught that one should regard one's Guru as no different from Buddha. To realize Sunyata Guru is to help you return to the Limitless Oneness. Guru is one who whole-heartedly devoted to Buddhist practices and services of sentient beings. If you cannot regard such a Guru as no different from Buddha, you will never be able to find someone qualified enough for you to practice being in oneness with others. Guru is there for you to practice non-discrimination. There are no attachments in Guru's mind; all fixations are cast off. This makes Guru very close to Buddha. Furthermore, Guru always propagates Dharma to benefit and help sentient beings. Thus he is no different and inseparable from Buddha. Only if you could cease making differentiations, could the blessings from Guru be received by you. If you cannot sense the blessings, it is due to your own graspings. For example, some people are attached to the literal expressions of Dharma, and have too many personal interpretations with regard to actual practices, nonetheless, a real Guru would not argue with those people. He will definitely say "That's OK"; otherwise, he would be the same as those people. However, when you are self-confined, you lose

opportunities to learn from Guru. Thus, if you just listen to Guru instead of worrying too much about theories, then you can learn the real stuff.

Teachable

*Only those that humble themselves could be taught;
Apprentice begins after having attended the teacher.
Sincere and obedient one gradually masters the role.
Yet the current trend is like ordering courses in cafe.*

To be close to Guru somewhat resembles the case of Zhang Liang who learned military strategies only after having helped tie the old master's shoes three times. Same rules apply to learning worldly knowledge. If you want to become a barber, you'd have to clean up for your master for 3 years first. Then you'll start the learning from shaving winter melon. Since you had attended the master for a long time, your attitude gradually became humble, and thus you will be able to learn from scratch. Nowadays, people learn Dharma as if it takes only a prostration, an initiation, and then they're gone, just as they leave the restaurant right after the meal. You cannot attend Guru closely in this way, and cannot really learn anything well.

Voluntary Refuge

*Where to place one's refuge is voluntary;
Protector of liberation never coerces any.
Compassionate concern spreads over all;
Takes lots of wisdom and merit to follow.*

Taking refuge in a Guru is a voluntary matter. Guru, as guardian master of emancipation, does not expect anything. Guru is always helping sentient beings that come in contact with him. Those in need of help will gain benefits through his blessings. It takes accumulation of enough stock of merits and wisdom for a practitioner to encounter a genuine Guru.

Realizing Guru's Grace

*Guru entered Nirvana but has never ceased teaching;
His absence in the flesh rendered real intentions seen.
While strenuously upholding heavy load of salvation
Real appreciation of the grace of lineage arose in me.*

This poem is about receiving indications in dreams on how to handle matters from Guru Chen even though he had entered Nirvana. Although his physical body is no longer present, he has never stopped his teaching. For example, the fire puja ritual that I composed recently originated from some inspiration received in a dream; I did it only because Buddha instructed me to do so. Only thus will the ritual be truly helpful to people; it will not work simply because I think it will work. In a dream Guru Chen told me, "the third article in Zan Song Ji." (That is the collection of praises composed by him.) Then he showed me a rectangular framed picture with some leaves in it that were left blank. He told me to color them red. Upon waking up I rushed to check the third article in that book. It is a praise of the Great Compassionate Guan Yin. To paint the picture into red means to compose a Red Chenrezig ritual based on the pattern of his fire puja rituals. Thus twelve years after Guru Chen's Nirvana and only with his permission did I compose the ritual. Besides, I have composed only two fire puja rituals. The Manjusri ritual was composed only upon someone's request and after having received some inspirations. The Earth Treasure Bodhisattva ritual was requested, but I have not done it yet because so far I have not received any inspirational permission. A few days before I performed the fire puja to Guan Yin for the very first time, I dreamed of White Garment Guan Yin and her attendant lady. I wanted to make prostration, but they said no need. I did anyway. They both laughed. So I stopped. Guan Yin raised her right hand and wrote some mantra in the air. Immediately I felt some power came to me and filled up the whole body. Previously, Guru Chen's rituals were designed for one type of activity each. But nowadays there are more people asking for help through fire pujas, so I hoped to combine the three activities of pacifying, increasing, and inducing in one ritual. Guan Yin knew that this would require great spiritual strength, so she granted me the blessings. With such blessings, I was then capable of performing the first Guan Yin fire puja to yield intended results. Therefore, although Guru Chen left his physical body, he is still incessantly helping and

saving sentient beings beyond boundaries of time and space. For example, although some people had never met Guru Chen, and yet they could still dream of him and receive teachings from him. Besides, people acted one way when Guru Chen was alive. Once he left us, most people showed different thoughts. If he were still with us, I wouldn't have comprehended this. Thus we have to diligently continue Guru's Dharma services in order to realize Guru's grace of not abandoning us. Now when I am sustaining the Dharma activities, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Protectors would gather to help and change situations. So when matters arise, if we uphold Bodhicitta, they would evolve themselves, and we don't need to worry.

Refuge in Guru

*Following orders faithfully is the tantric way to take refuge in Guru.
Relying on someone to such extent could hardly be taken seriously.
Long since one had realized Guru's attainments through inspirations,
Only then knew one to abide by teachings sincerely and accurately.*

In Tantric Buddhism it is taught that Guru's orders have to be followed. However, it is very difficult to rely on a Guru to that extent and taking it seriously. In the biographies of ancient sages, some disciple would jump when the Guru said so. This would seem insane to ordinary people. But the disciple was willing to do so because at his level he was capable of realizing that his Guru is genuinely no different from Buddha. With such faith in Guru, the disciple was then able to receive Dharma transmission from the Guru, and was therefore willing to follow all orders from the Guru. So when you follow a Guru, you should be able to comprehend that your Guru is genuine Buddha and is the representative of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Many of those who can follow a Guru like this have had real inspirational experiences, which led them to realize the kindness, compassion and wisdom of Guru, and thus enable them to follow his teachings and guidance.

May all have ever-increasing Dharma opportunities and hence become attendants of virtuous Gurus!

Revision of translation completed on Christmas Eve of 2004

El Cerrito, California

Ports

Yutang Lin

*Dharma is much more profound than the depths of oceans and seas;
Websites introduce and lead people to Buddhist teachings like ports.
Each one follows particular conditions to transport minds to and fro;
Concurrently help extend practice voyages to far-reaching expeditions.*

Comment:

Since Stanley Lam established the website hosting Buddhist Yogi C. M. Chen's Homepage to help propagate his teachings suddenly seven years have passed. Recently my disciples Pao-Yuan Chen and Yuan Qi Zhuang had respectively expressed to me the wish to establish a website to host my works on the Dharma in ways that seem appropriate to them individually. It seems to me that such websites would serve as ports to bring and guide the public into the ocean of Dharma so that interested persons may extend their practice voyages to far-reaching expeditions. Each such websites may vary in their appearances and approaches, but they all share the common goal of propagation of Dharma to benefit all beings and hence are in unsurpassed concurrence. Therefore, I have given each one my blessings and guidance, and prayed that each one will prosper incessantly to spread the teachings all over the world, so that we may repay the grace of Buddha in a small way.

Written in Chinese on August 10, 2004

Translated on August 11, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Aspects of Impermanence

A Talk Given in Mandarin by Dr. Yutang Lin

on July 25, 2004 at Malin Buddhist Studies Center, Melaka, Malaysia

Tape Recorded and Transcribed by Upasaka Jyh Ching How, Revised by Dr. Lin

Based on the above Chinese Transcript, Written in English by Dr. Lin

The topic is "Aspects of Impermanence"; that means we are going to investigate the various aspects of the concept of Impermanence as taught in Buddhism. Impermanence is a fundamental concept in Buddhist teachings. There was a Tibetan patriarch by the name of Milarepa, and he used to say that Impermanence is the gate through which to enter Dharma. His meaning in saying so should have been that, in order to understand Buddhist teachings thoroughly, one needs to have, first of all, a profound appreciation of the significance of Impermanence, and only then could one significantly engage in the practice of Dharma. We will discuss this topic in the sequential order of "Views, Practices, Activities, and then Fruits."

First, let's consider Impermanence as views. When we talk about this concept of Impermanence I want to bring up first another even more fundamental concept, namely, Dharma basically is teaching us to see what the real situations are. Basically, Dharma is teaching us that, in order to solve problems, one needs to first recognize what the real situations are. This point is essentially different from authoritarian teachings that demand submissive conformity. In cases of authoritarian doctrines, when the theories are invalid or submission is forced upon, all sorts of problems would ensue. The truthful nature of Dharma is such that, it emphasizes that, for something to be correct, we need to let all examine what the real situations are. Therefore, in Buddhism, even though on the one hand we emphasize following the footsteps of Buddha, and yet on the other hand it also teaches that one should rely on the universal teachings instead of relying on persons. In other words, it is a matter of truth. When people have different views what do we rely on? We rely on recognizing the real situation, and this is the goal for us to follow.

Once the above principle is understood, then when we talk about Impermanence the basic meaning is not to urge you that you always need to look at things from the point of view of Impermanence. For example, right now things are fine in your life but Buddhism purposely wants you to think ahead of the sufferings of birth, senility, illness and death. Basically it is not like this at all. The real significance is only to point out to all what the reality of life and world is. In this sense, when we talk about Impermanence, we are just reminding people that all things will change, sooner or later. What then would be the significance of pointing this out? It is to remind people that, whatever you thought of or your views are, could at any moment become not in conformity with the real situations. Hence, it is only to remind one that one needs to remain constantly alert in realizing that reality could possibly not stay the same as one thinks it to be. Therefore, one needs to think of more possibilities to adjust to the possible changes. Basically the significance of pointing out Impermanence should be only like this.

Nevertheless, when we talk about Impermanence in Buddhist discourses we tend to lean toward presenting it as an antidotal concept. For example, when someone is sick, then medications or treatments are given to help cure the illness. When someone is in poor health, then he or she is urged to do exercises or go on special diet so as to remedy the situation. Similarly, in Buddhism when we talk about Impermanence we tend to offer it as a remedial concept to help cure our problems. This is because each and every one of us has more or less sorrows, worries, prejudices, attachments, insistence, and in addition, among people there are many kinds of conflicts. How to solve all such problems? According to Buddhist teachings the root of the problems lies in each one's grasping to his or her views, and the individual views vary and are mostly based on self-centered interests. Such variations are due to different perspectives or selfish greed. Consequently, there are many problems. Aiming at curing such unhealthy states of human affairs and intending to free people from such prejudicial states, Impermanence is taught as a remedy. People are reminded that such prejudicial and selfish practices would not prevail, nor would they bring about lasting peace and prosperity. The reasons being, if you act like that and others do the same, then conflict and fighting are inevitable. As a result,

whenever something comes up, people just fight but could not solve the problems. Instead, people should open their minds to realize that the problems may be resolved in many possible ways, and the solution does not lie in how any particular one could have the lion's share, but in joint and impartial sharing of interests. People should share the common understanding that we all have similar needs, and only when we endeavor toward a harmonious solution will the result be good for all of us in the long run. Nevertheless, people are usually under the fixation of current interests to the extent that any lessening of their grasping would seem impossible. Therefore, the teachings need to point out that, whatever you thought to be graspable is in reality ungraspable. Even your dear life could not be grasped for sure. One would not even know when anything would happen! Furthermore, the important point here is that, Impermanence is taught not as a scare tactic but a matter of fact. In daily news we noticed that some events happened here and some incidents occurred there; even at the very instant right before those occurrences how could we know that things are going to turn out like that? When such matters would fall upon us, we had no ideas. Among our friends and relatives, now and then this one encountered this kind of problem and that one encountered that sort of difficulty. Indeed, the real situation is that, no matter how much you hoped or prayed for, there is no guarantee at all; at any minute things could go wrong!

The only thing that would guarantee that we all would have peace and happiness is the clear understanding that only when all are living in relationships that are mutually supportive and considerate can benefits be assured. Nevertheless, this is something in theory. In daily life changes are always slow to take place, and one would return to one's old patterns of haggling and fighting. What should we do under such circumstances? What we had discussed so far are only theoretical views. We had learned that when Dharma teaches us about Impermanence the point is for us to look at real situations, instead of to remain circling within the sphere of our wishful planning. Simply look back three years and you would realize that many forethoughts then were completely mistaken. Once we had learned the concept of Impermanence, we could use it as an antidote to release our habitual and variegated grasping. Each one of us has certain prejudices and partialities that are results of grasping, and knowing Impermanence

could help free us from prejudices and partialities. As I talked about all this in theory, it might sound easy. Later as soon as you step out this hall, you would probably forget about all this talk because in your daily life you have your interests and views that you would not relinquish. So, how could one manage for the notion of Impermanence to gradually imbue one's mind to the extent that when some things come up one would really handle it from the point of view of Impermanence? In other words, you would then be capable of handling matters in a more realistic manner. How could one cultivate this? Some would say that one need to think often about how much sentient beings are suffering, and how ephemeral human lives are, etc. Such thoughts are indeed helpful; nevertheless, people are forgetful. Even matters that caused much suffering, as soon as they are over, people would soon forget much about them. Therefore, one needs to adopt some practices to cultivate one's sense and appreciation of Impermanence.

Many years ago I designed a very good practice that I have been doing since then. It is to keep a "Record of Impermanence." Whenever we talked about Impermanence it was just a very abstract concept. Even though daily on television and in newspapers there are reports of many incidents and many sudden deaths, since we had no acquaintance with those people, to us they are merely words or images, and hence the impressions could not be profound. Now in keeping a "Record of Impermanence" I began to put down the names or descriptions of all deceased persons that I had actually met, even though it was just a brief encounter. That night, after I began to do this, as I was lying down to sleep suddenly I felt that death would come to my turn. When I did not feel that death was so real, it used to be felt like it was only others' matter and no thought ever occurred to me that death would also come my way. And then another thought arose, that all would have to be given up upon death. If one is not used to this reality, how difficult would it be for one to face it upon death, especially considering the fact that it will not be up to the dying one to decide. There was an inspirational occurrence related to this practice. That night, after I had put down as many names of deceased ones as I could remember, I placed the notebook in front of the statue of Green Tara, a transformation of Guan Yin, on my altar, and then I lit an incense stick to pray for the deceased. The next morning I found the whole incense

stick burned but unbroken, and furthermore, it wound toward the right hand of Green Tara that is in the gesture of giving salvation to sentient beings. The burned incense stick remained so for days. I wrote a report on this practice and the inspirational event with a photo attached there to show it to people, with the hope that people would realize that this is a helpful and effective practice that could enable one to realize that Impermanence is as close to one as the breathing in and out. A few years later, a Buddhist of Chinese descent in Indonesia downloaded this report from our website, www.yogichen.org, and read it on his computer screen. Right then he suddenly smelled sandalwood incense even though none was burned nearby. He was moved by this inspirational experience to have translated the report into Indonesian. This Indonesian version is also posted at our website now. I hope that this inspirational incident would also help you realize that this practice is really a significant one.

Besides the method mentioned above another way to realize Impermanence is to become acquainted with death. Strictly speaking, Impermanence does not apply only to death, but to us humans life and death is the matter of greatest concern, hence realizing death could imbue the alertness of Impermanence into our daily life. Since I live near a cemetery I used to take a walk there while chanting the holy name of Amitabha Buddha. In America cemeteries are as beautiful as parks. While strolling there I would go from tomb to tomb to take a closer look at the tombstones. What would be the benefit of so doing? Usually when I came out from the cemetery after about forty-minute stroll, I would feel much lighter inside. Why was it like this? Because usually we are constantly preoccupied with personal worries, just as the Chinese proverb goes, "Every family has a Sutra that is difficult to recite," and it is also seemingly endless. Nevertheless, when you read the tombstones, "Born on such and such a day, month and year, Died on such and such a day, month and year," you realize that so many matters in life that seemed so important, in the end would just vanish into void, and only these two lines would remain for some indefinite time. Sometimes you would see only one date on a tombstone, it could signify a stillbirth or a life lasted no more than a day. Even though there were only two lines, many stories could be inferred from them. After I strolled there daily for over four months, I wrote my reflections and

sentiments into poems and entitled them "Learning from the Dead." These poems are all related to Impermanence, and I hope that you would read them. They are also posted at our website.

Whenever you have the opportunity to visit a cemetery, on the one hand you should recite the holy name of Amitabha Buddha or Guan Yin so as to establish Dharma connection for the deceased there, and on the other hand you should read some tombstones there, and it would be helpful to you. You would realize that so many things that you used to deem as of great importance are indeed of no consequences. As one looks back at life from the juncture of life and death it would be easier to attain certain awakening; otherwise, one would tend to haggle all the time over minor matters. If all your life is spent over minor matters, what would be the significance of such a life? It does not make much sense. If you could reflect on life as if from the juncture of life and death, then it would become possible for you to try not to waste this life; how much time is still left, no one knows. The tiny bit of remaining time, if you could use it to accomplish a few things that is beneficial to others and yourself, then this life could become meaningful. Otherwise, it will be just eating and sleeping, and there would be no peace and happiness inside.

Some people would seem to be having no problems on the surface but are actually suffering from chronic depression because they could not find meaning for life and a goal for sincere efforts. If we could realize that all of us are about the same in that we all have many worries and much suffering, and then look at things with such understanding and attempt to find solutions, then the subsequent lives would be meaningful and not wasted. The greatness of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas lies in their teaching us a road to liberation from sufferings and worries. Following such a path we would be able to help sentient beings to some extent, attain peace and happiness of mind, and help others to attain the same.

Between practicing Buddhist teachings and engaging in usual charitable services there is a fundamental and distant difference. Cultivating oneself to become a good person through charitable services is of course superb; nevertheless, there is no end to such services because

new problems would keep arising. Even if one could provide for and meet all worldly needs of others, that would still be no guarantee for their happiness. No matter how hard you have tried, what could be attained would remain very limited. And yet, if you comprehended the Buddhist teachings and practiced accordingly, then you would gradually attain peace of mind, and feel the spiritual strength that naturally arises from an open mind. Furthermore, then you could teach others about the Dharma and its practices, and thereby gradually help others to find peace and spiritual strength. Even more important than these is that, after long-term devotion and sincere practice one would then realize the reality of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; it is not just a system of theories or teachings based on memorized theories. Gradually one would comprehend that Impermanence is a fundamental concept that does not mean that, since nothing can be grasped so we can act in whatever way that we like. The correct meaning is that, as one realized there is nothing that is graspable, and hence ceased grasping, then one would be liberated from the preoccupation with one's self. Ordinarily we are constantly grasping on many tiny things; when one could stop grasping one would gradually experience the purity of mind. Just as a while back before this talk started the assembly were chanting Amitabha in a state of purity, when such purity grows deep and strong it would be possible to return to limitless oneness. In other words, in our ordinary experiences what we understand through our sensual organs are full of distinctions, and so we make and are used to distinctions of countries, families and individuals. Nevertheless, when one's mind has been thoroughly purified through Dharma practices one would then realize that all such distinctions were consequences of grasping and attachment. When grasping had ceased one would experience a state that is indescribable and limitless. Such a limitless state is not a void. How do we know this? For advanced practitioners now and then it is possible to know about matters that happened in distant past or will happen in the future. This shows transcendence over Time, as we usually understood it. Sometimes when people encountered difficulties of all sorts they would ask advanced practitioners to help through prayers, granting of blessings, and other Dharma activities to generate merits. Such blessings would work even though the recipients were total strangers in distant places. This shows transcendence over Space, as we usually understood it. In life there are many matters that have no

satisfactory solutions. Illness in the hands of physicians need not be cured, and could turn worse. When one is at the juncture of, as a Chinese proverb goes, "Calling Heaven without response and calling Earth without effects" prayers could help. For example, when people encounter the presence of ghosts, how could one solve such a problem? The fundamental solution to such problems is to deliver such beings from Samsara to Buddha's Pureland through Dharma practices. Then the problem would be no more. Ghosts are also in suffering, and as long as such suffering found no relief they tried to get human beings to help; that is why they bother people. Why is it that such problems will be resolved only when merits are accumulated on their behalves? That is because only what Dharma taught can ultimately solve such fundamental problems that we had no idea of how to handle. Do not think that what Dharma could help is only limited to problems of ghosts. Some people were in intensive care units, and their friends or relatives who knew me would contact me and asked me to pray for them. Even though they were total strangers to me, all I needed were their names and a brief description of their problems, and then the prayers would yield immediate help that they could sense on their side, even though they were on another continent. Thus, they would spread the information to their friends and relatives, and then when they had other problems, they would call me for help through prayers again. This demonstrated that when Dharma practice is well done the limitless oneness realized is not an ineffectual void, but instead a state of complete freedom from artificial concepts such that the strength of prayer would render help, beyond spatial and temporal limits, to others. Such help is not due to the power of any individual human being but expressions of transcendental powers of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. When praying for the benefit of others with a pure mind such a function would arise. Any one could do this; Dharma is truth, and hence no one could have monopoly over it. One just needs to engage in Dharma practices for long time with pure mind, free from any considerations and regardless of human relationships, but just pray for all equally, then gradually the effects will become obvious.

Next we will talk about Activities, i.e., after we had trained ourselves in the practices mentioned above how to apply Impermanence in daily life activities so that the actions and inaction are in congruence with the

teachings on Impermanence. For example, before I came to give this talk, I did not prepare a transcript. A few months earlier they asked me to offer a few topics for my coming talks in Malaysia, so I thought about it and offered a few. Do you think that I could still remember what I wanted to say then? But then, for such an important matter, why didn't I prepare a lecture in writing? This is because I am practicing Impermanence in all my activities. Any moment I am ready to go and face the situation as I am, without carrying a backpack. To let go of grasping, one need to let go of theories as well. I just tell you what is in my mind, no need to arrange some kind of sayings. This is how I live. The words you are listening to are pouring out naturally from my mind; besides these there is no other thoughts or planning. The framework of "Views, Practices, Activities, and then Fruits" for this talk came to my mind after dinner tonight while I was in the restroom of the restaurant. For one who is really living in accordance with Dharma a Dharma talk is just an outpouring of what one really knows and actually does. This is applying Impermanence in daily life. Of course, it is not true that everyone can do like this at once. Nevertheless, you could dwell on this and consider how to apply Impermanence in your daily life. For example, before you left home you were thinking about bring this and bring that with you, but once you were outside you then realized that you had forgotten to bring this or that. Similarly, when you die it could very well like this. Hence, you need to be ready to be without anything. When nothing could indeed be brought along, what are you preparing?

To prepare for the juncture of life and death the only things that are helpful are Dharma practices such as chanting Buddha's name and Dharma services done in our daily life now. When you had done these things in your life then at the time of death you would feel much relaxed. Key to Dharma practices is purity of mind. Bodhicitta is most important. Bodhicitta, in a few words, is to wish all sentient beings to attain full enlightenment sooner. To advance on the path to enlightenment one's intentions should stem from Bodhicitta at all times. One should not constantly limit one's intentions around a small circle of matters such as, I wish my son to be so and so, I wish my daughter to be such and such, etc. When you think of all sentient beings, all these relatives or friends are naturally included, and even you yourself is included. You should realize that all sentient beings include those you

dislike, or harmed by you, or imperceptible to your senses, and are of all varieties. You regard them with the understanding that all are basically the same, as sentient beings with sorrows and in suffering, and that all wish to escape suffering and attain lasting happiness. From such a perspective you wish them full enlightenment and ultimate liberation from suffering. Such a wish goes beyond worldly wishes that might aim at the resolution of certain problems but could not prevent them from recurring or other problems from forthcoming. Furthermore, we wish all to attain full enlightenment sooner. "Sooner" is where our efforts in Dharma practices and services apply to. We do not stop at merely wishing full enlightenment to all beings; instead we make all efforts with the hope that thereby sentient beings would reach full enlightenment sooner. Therefore, whatever helps sentient beings need in making progress in Dharma we would try to provide at our best. Consequently, with Bodhicitta we have a goal in life to live for. If you can persevere in Dharma practices and services with a pure mind and solid activities, gradually you will experience the benefits. You would no longer be bothered by trivial matters and unable to escape from sorrowful worries. You would gradually realize that, as life goes on, sooner or later each and every one would run into some difficulties. When someone encounters problems, the only ones that could really help out are those that did not in the first place contribute to those entanglements in worldly haggling. Only those that had transcended worldly entanglements could give guidance and inspire the suffering ones, and render substantial help through prayers. Therefore, when you devote yourself to Dharma practices and services you are on the path of true love for all beings that would have the opportunity to run into contact with you.

Finally, what would be the Fruits of Impermanence? Phenomena indeed are constantly evolving and could not be grasped as absolutely substantial. Seeing this, there are no real problems. Comprehending Impermanence thoroughly, life and death are also very natural. Just as a river is constantly flowing, which drop are you going to grasp? Each one of us is like a drip or a grain of sand in the river flow, what do you want to grasp? It is just a flowing; where are the problems? Conforming to Impermanence thoroughly in mind and action, the fruit attained is liberation. Right now you are grasping to this, grasping to that, grasping

to something in all matters, and hence you encounter problems in all matters. This is unsatisfactory, that is also unsatisfactory; this I dislike, that I could not be satisfied. But if you could enlarge your views and open your mind, then you would feel that this is fine and that is also fine. To others there are all sorts of problems, but to one that finds them not objectionable, there are simply no problems.

Written in Chinese on September 9, 2004

Translated on October 6, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Paper Ship

Yutang Lin

*Burning holy mantra sheets in order to repay kindness of friendship,
Repeating Rebirth in Pureland Mantra to help returning to the west,
In dream aboard a large ship that suddenly turned into paper-made,
It could not set sail, the mantra not having been transmitted by Guru.*

Comment:

Near end of July while in Taipei, Taiwan I received a phone call from Upasaka Min in San Francisco. He said that the day before he had burned the "Namo Amitabha Buddha" mantra sheets and other mantra sheets while repeating the Rebirth in Pureland Mantra so as to help two young friends who recently passed away in separate car accidents. That night in a dream he saw himself and many people aboard a large ship, and the front, middle and rear section of the ship had poles hanging Chinese couplets. All of a sudden the ship turned into paper-made, and a heavenly voice said, "This mantra had not been transmitted by the Guru, and hence the ship could not set sail." He had accumulated repetition of the mantra for several hundred thousand times; now through this experience he realized that in order to have enough blessing power to help deceased to gain rebirth in Pureland the mantra needs to be transmitted by the Guru to carry the blessing of the lineage. So I promised him that I would transmit the mantra in person to him when I return to US, and that I would include his friends in my Powa service. That was a teaching dream. His sincerity in wanting to help his friends gain rebirth in Pureland had inspired Buddha's blessing in giving him such teachings so that his Bodhi wish may truly realize.

At about the same period I gave refuge to Upasaka Cai in Taipei, and transmitted the mantra of Padmasambhava to him. A disciple besides us mentioned that Cai had already accumulated repetition of this mantra for over several hundred thousand times. Fortunately, Cai still humbly received this transmission. A few days later Cai came to the airport to see me off. Then he said that although he had practiced Tantric teachings for more than a decade he had always felt that he could not

touch the real thing, and his visualization was never clear. Nevertheless, right after he took refuge and received the transmission of the mantra from me, all of a sudden everything became clear and his visualization became vivid. This demonstrated that the blessing from authentic lineage is not on a par with ordinary practices.

Mantras are Tantric teachings, and as such they should be transmitted by Gurus and their pronunciation should be based on oral presentation of the Guru. Only then can mantras carry the spiritual powers. As to mantra texts and pronunciations that are formulated based on scholastic researches, in terms of experiences of practitioners they lack obvious and immediate effects.

Written in Chinese on August 28, 2004

Translated on August 31, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Receiving All

Yutang Lin

*Not striving toward simplicity and purity of how one lives,
Accommodating to situations to indicate no grasping at all.
Receive and guide universally to help all kinds of requests,
On the Bodhisattva path one acts harmonious communion.*

Comment:

Some said that a practitioner should have no worldly intentions and hence it is enough to remain simple and pure in one's way of life. Nevertheless, on the path of learning to become a Bodhisattva the emphasis is on benefiting all sentient beings; furthermore, precisely because of the realization of non-self such a practitioner would accommodate to situations to the point of not refusing to receive and guide anyone. Superficially it would appear to be busy in corresponding and entertaining, yet in reality it is merely compassionate responding to requests that came from all directions, without the operation of any personal intentions. To train non-self and no grasping in real life, one would not mind complications and tediousness, nor care to distinguish between busy and leisure, but would only stay steadfast with Bodhicitta and live harmoniously in the world.

Written in Chinese on August 28, 2004

Translated on September 1, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Tokens of Gratitude

Yutang Lin

*Not striving toward simplicity and purity of how one lives,
Accommodating to situations to indicate no grasping at all.
Receive and guide universally to help all kinds of requests,
On the Bodhisattva path one acts harmonious communion.*

Comment:

During my recent hemorrhoids ordeals I was fortunate to be helped by the compassionate retired surgeon Dr. Williams at the surgery department of Oakland Kaiser Hospital. As tokens of my gratitude I offered him jokes that came to me on the spot.

On August 19 after he helped push the hemorrhoids back in for the second time in two days, I said, "Dr. Williams, you are playing ping-pong with nature." He replied, "Not really."

On August 26 after he reviewed the situation and found much improvement, I said, "Dr. Williams, you know your patients so well, you know them inside out." With a smile he replied, "That is very good, Mr. Lin. Inside out, um."

In addition I also offered him my booklet "Playing with Health Balls" and a wallet-size card of Chenrezig Thangka with yogichen.org's website on its back.

These jokes are put down here so more hemorrhoids patients and doctors would have a moment of relief from their ordeals.

August 27, 2004
El Cerrito, California

Understanding Causal Conditions

Yutang Lin

*Stuck with rigid views, incongruities are bound to be plenty.
Mind as open as space, nothing would become a hindrance.
Matters being causally conditioned, resolve them rationally.
Why add extra burdens by sinking in worries and anxieties?*

Comment:

As soon as views are fixed there would be much incongruity and hindrance. Constantly maintain an open mind, and then one would experience less irritation as matters arise and evolve. Matters being causally conditioned, they should be resolved through understanding of those causal conditions. Worries and anxieties would not help but are only self-disturbances.

Written in Chinese on September 1, 2004

Translated on September 2, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Downward Two Winds

Yutang Lin

*Top of tuft and tip of Vajra are connected by two channels;
Subtle and straight, they run close and parallel all the way.
While applying wind to urinate I noticed the subtle paths;
Sometimes right, sometimes left, but always just one-side.*

Comment:

Years ago all of a sudden for a brief moment I sensed that in the center of my body there were two subtle channels that ran straight and parallel from top of tuft to tip of Vajra (penis). Recently I sensed that the downward wind applied during urination sometimes took the right path and sometimes took the left path, and there was no way to tell which path it was going to take. Nevertheless, it always went only one-side at a time. For people who had not had wind practices they would think that urine comes out only through one central path. This is recorded here and publicized so that other practitioners of Tantric wind practices who shared similar experiences could obtain corroboration.

Written in Chinese on September 1, 2004

Translated on September 2, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Additional Comments:

Nowadays I can further sense that, during bowel movement the downward wind also goes alternately, usually first left and then right, but occasionally first right and then left, and finally straight down from center.

Written in Chinese and translated on October 24, 2009

El Cerrito, California

Scout Ants

Yutang Lin

*At times scout ants one or two roamed over kitchen counters;
To find food for the multitude, they often sacrificed their lives.
Leftovers that had attracted many ants once moved outdoors
Would induce them to leave on their own without our genocide.*

Comment:

At times there were one or two ants roaming over kitchen counters in search of food. We were afraid that many ants would gradually gather, and hence we would immediately move them outside or destroy them. Fortunately, my wife had discovered that the ants indeed just came for food, and hence, even when they had already gathered around some leftover we only needed to move the leftover outdoors, and then soon afterwards the ants would disperse on their own. We did not have to do anything else for them to leave. Although this was just a minor discovery, and yet when it was learned and adopted, we were spared from killing many ants. Therefore, I put it down in writing with the hope that this would help reduce killing a bit and help promote harmony a little.

Written in Chinese on September 2, 2004

Translated on September 3, 2004

El Cerrito, California

More Practice, More Rigid

Yutang Lin

*Cognitive views and interpretations could not be forgotten;
From frames and cages of thoughts there would be no exit.
More practice yet led to more rigid mind full of prejudices;
Incomprehensible of essentials, only fell victim to grasping.*

Comment:

A practitioner should comprehend the essentials of Dharma without becoming limited by itemized systematic thinking. Otherwise, one would be completely confined within the sphere of conscious thinking and become a stereotype as tied up by layers over layers of grasping to formality of Dharma. Thus one would deviate from the great path of liberation that is natural and lively, not to mention to become in tune with returning to the original purity. How to cease the mentality of a scattered thinking mind should be given priority on a practitioner's agenda.

Written in Chinese on September 2, 2004
Translated on September 3, 2004
El Cerrito, California

No Unreasonable Demands

Yutang Lin

*Releasing of lives had attracted those with nets and traps;
Hence, isn't this contributing to bad karmas in the world?
Billions and millions had been killed; who could stop that?
Doing good could hardly be perfect; why harsh demands?*

Comment:

Some raised the question that, as a result of some Buddhists' frequent and regular releasing of lives, others might be attracted to follow with nets and traps so as to catch those lives for profits, or the merchants might stock up more lives in anticipation, hence, were the Buddhists not creating causes for bad karmas? All kinds of sentient beings in the worldly realms are creating all sorts of karmas. Nevertheless, causes and consequences would match exactly, and hence each would receive retributions according to individual karma. Those who performed good deeds had no intention to commit evil, so how could they be held responsible for others' wrongdoings? In worldly realms karmas of killing are heavy and deep, and who could stop or prevent that? Similarly, how could those who released lives to freedom prevent or stop others from catching lives with nets or traps or stocking up lives? Only very few people are actually engaging in the releasing of lives activities, and the number of lives released is negligible in comparison with the number of lives slaughtered; under such circumstances we could only try our best to participate in or give approval to the good deeds, how could we add unreasonable demands for impossible perfection?

Written in Chinese on September 4, 2004

Translated on September 10, 2004

El Cerrito, California

Amitabha Unification Sadhana

Yutang Lin

Preliminaries

Arrange offerings as usual.

Do prostration three times.

Regular Practice

Ascend the seat and practice in accordance with the sadhana as follows:

1. Motivation

Fold palms together and sincerely recite:

*In a blink the swift changes of impermanence may arrive,
Sentient beings are drifting in the ocean of suffering,
This altruistic session born of sober clarity is all too precious,
For all beings this sadhana is practiced to realize Amitabha.*

2. Original Purity

Rest the hands in Dhyana mudra, and silently recite three times:

*All things are conditional phenomena,
Mutually dependent and coexistent;
Renouncing antagonistic discriminations,
All appear as original purity in oneness.*

Visualize the whole Dharmadhatu return to original purity, and appear as boundless sky-blue light.

3. Totality

Visualize that all the four classes of saints and the six realms of sentient beings appear from this blue light.

Visualize that one's father and mother are to the right and left side, all beings related to one through past karma to the front, and the rest of the sentient beings behind. Among the six realms of sentient beings behind one, those in hells who need salvation most are closest to one, then are the other beings in

the order of hungry ghosts, animals, humans, asuras, and finally the heavenly beings. All sentient beings are facing the same direction as the practitioner.

Visualize that in the space in front of the practitioner are all the holy beings: Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arahats, Pratyeka-Buddhas, Dharma Protectors, etc. At the center is Amitabha Buddha (red), with Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (white) and Bodhisattva Mahasthanaprapta (blue) to his right and left. These three holy beings are surrounded by all holy beings of the Western Pureland of Utmost Joy. These are in turn surrounded by layers after layers of all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and holy beings of all other purelands. With great compassion all holy beings look attentively at all the sentient beings below.

4. Taking Refuge

Fold palms together and sincerely recite three times the following refuge formula while visualizing that all sentient beings are gazing with admiration at Amitabha Buddha in the sky and recite together in unison:

I take refuge in the Vajra Guru.

I take refuge in Amitabha Buddha.

I take refuge in thorough Buddha Dharma.

I take refuge in holy beings of Bodhi.

Visualize that all holy beings are rejoicing over sentient beings ability to recognize and choose the path toward liberation. Amitabha Buddha, on behalf of all holy beings, grants refuge to all sentient beings. From the heart chakra of Amitabha Buddha rays of blue light radiates forth to each and every sentient being. In this way each sentient beings bad karma is eradicated, merits increased, and Bodhicitta nurtured. This ray of blue light then stays, like a candle flame, in the heart of the sentient being, shines forth the light of Bodhi, and sheds light on the right path of Bodhi forever.

5. Offering

Visualize that all sentient beings take delight in participating the making of extensive and long-term offerings and donations, and that they join the practitioner in reciting in unison the following stanza:

*Filling the whole Dharmadhatu with treasures,
Pouring all attainments of the wisdom path,
Offered without reluctance nor omission;
Beg to accept out of compassion and empathy,
Exhibit skillful display of the wondrous Dharma,
Salvage without neglect nor omission.*

Visualize that all holy beings are delighted by the Bodhicitta which is the pure motivation underlying these offerings, and therefore gladly accept and enjoy the offerings. Each and every holy being obtains complete enjoyment of all sorts. All holy beings emit lights in blue, white, yellow, red and green color that enlighten the whole Dharmadhatu and give blessings to all sentient beings. Then all holy beings other than Amitabha Buddha transform into lights and merge into Amitabha Buddha.

6. Praise

Recite with ardent devotion and may use accompanying Dharma instruments such as bell, drum, inverted bell (Yin Qing) and wooden fish; visualize that all sentient beings join the practitioner in ardently reciting in unison the following praise:

*Amitabha Buddha emits pure lights,
Spiritual nature of sentient beings in all directions are revealed!
Amitabha Buddha enunciates clear sounds,
Sorrows of sentient beings at all times are eradicated!
Amitabha Buddha always remembered,
Even trapped in the mire of sorrows one is still spotless!*

*Amitabha Buddha is the mentor,
Rebirth in Pureland and full enlightenment are at hand!*

Visualize that Amitabha Buddha, upon hearing this praise, sentient beings. Amitabha Buddha emits bright red lights from his heart chakra shining through the whole Dharmadhatu and giving blessings to all sentient beings. Then Amitabha Buddha sprinkles showers of nectar from his bowl upon sentient beings to purify their karma of body, speech and mind. The nectar is also granted for sentient beings to drink in order to nourish their wisdom and expand their life span.

7. Accomplishment

Visualize that, through the nectar blessing of Amitabha Buddha, all sentient beings in the whole Dharmadhatu have returned to the original purity; they all transform and merge into a boundless sky-blue light. Amitabha Buddha, having thus purified all sentient beings, also transforms and merges into this light of original purity. The whole Dharmadhatu becomes a limitless and indiscriminative Oneness.

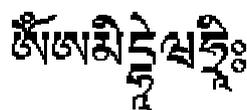
In this vast expanse of blue brilliance, suddenly there appears a karma vajra. Above the karma vajra, there appears a magnificent Dharma seat supported by eight lions.

Then above the seat there appears, one after the other and one above the other, a lotus, a moon cushion and a sun cushion. At the center of the sun cushion there appears a red seed word "Hsri"  standing upright. Hsri transforms into Amitabha Buddha with red brilliant rainbow body, sitting in lotus posture, and holding at his lap with both hands a bowl full of nectar. In the heart chakra of Amitabha Buddha there is a lotus, above which is a moon cushion, and a sun cushion atop. Standing upright at the center of this sun cushion is a red seed word "Hsri." Evenly distributed around and above the circumference of the sun cushion are the six words constituting the Heart Mantra of Amitabha Buddha. All six

words of this mantra wheel are red in color and are arranged counterclockwise in their regular order.

The Heart Mantra of Amitabha Buddha

Om A Mi Da Wa Hsri



8. Spinning

Recite the Heart Mantra and simultaneously visualize that the mantra wheel in the heart chakra is spinning. The word Hsri at the center remains still. The mantra wheel spins clockwise with ever increasing speed. After a long while of spinning, the mantra wheel gradually slows down until it comes to a complete stop.

As the mantra wheel spins, it simultaneously emits waves of red light spreading in all directions throughout the whole Dharmadhatu. With each wave of red light countless numbers of Amitabha Buddhas are sent forth. These Amitabha Buddhas surf the waves of light to all corners of the Dharmadhatu in order to salvage all sorts of sentient beings.

9. One Breath

With mouth closed and tongue touching the upper front palate, practice deep breathing through the nostrils. While inhaling visualize that the ignorance, sinful karma, sickness, suffering, sorrows, karmic hindrances, etc., of all sentient beings are transforming into foul and black air, and yet are inhaled by Amitabha Buddha out of great compassion. While holding the breath visualize that all such foul and black air has been purified by the profound wisdom and countless merits of Amitabha Buddha into clean and fresh air of wisdom which will nourish the wisdom life of each and every sentient being. While exhaling visualize that this clean and fresh air of wisdom permeates the whole Dharmadhatu, nourishing and

maturing all sentient beings so that they would open and expand their minds and attain full enlightenment soon.

10. Identification

Having merged through the communion in one breath of Amitabha Buddha and all sentient beings, the Buddha and sentient beings transform into light and become one in the brilliant blue light of original purity. The nominal distinction between "Buddha" and "sentient being" gradually fades away. The whole Dharmadhatu again appears as limitless blue brilliance.

From this brightness of original purity Amitabha Buddha appears in human form as the practitioner to facilitate teaching and salvaging sentient beings in this world in accordance with their various aptitudes and conditions. Then Amitabha Buddha descends from the seat. Afterwards Amitabha Buddha employs the form, speeches and activities of the practitioner to expand ingenious contrivances in limitless fashions toward the compassionate salvation of all sentient beings.

January 11, 1999

A Study for the Cultivation of Harmony

El Cerrito, California, USA

(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!

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