

# **Fundamental Essentials**

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(Chenian Memorial Series No. 22)

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Dharma Friends of Dr. Lin

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# **Fundamental Essentials of the Dharma**

Yutang Lin

In this essay a systematic outline of the fundamental essentials of the Dharma, Buddhist teachings, will be presented. It is hoped that through this brief and plain exposition ordinary people may gain some understanding of Buddhist teachings; furthermore, dedicated practitioners might grasp the essence of the Dharma through this concise work. In addition to illuminating the common features of the teachings, reasons for tantric teachings in Buddhism and special features of tantric Buddhism will also be sketched.

## **I. General Teachings**

The basic characteristic of Buddhist teachings is its emphasis on facing reality, engaging in practice and attaining realization. It does not require blind following of doctrines. Instead, it

points out the real situation to awaken suffering beings that are lost in delusions; furthermore, it reveals the path toward emancipation from suffering through analyses of causes and consequences. Thus, whoever would aspire to liberation from worldly sufferings could tread the guided steps and eventually attain enlightened realization.

### **A. Observation of Reality**

1. Impermanence: All things are continuously evolving.
2. Suffering: Human lives are full of all sorts of problems and hardships, especially obvious among them are the sufferings related to birth, aging, sickness and death. Although there are pleasures of life, alas, none could last long. Therefore, from an extended point of view, human existence would seem to be just a gradual approach to decay and decease.
3. Transmigration: Based on some cases of reincarnation and records of profound religious experiences it could be inferred that death does not amount to becoming naught. Rather there is a spiritual continuity that goes through birth and death from life to next life, and usually

such continuity remains within the sphere of transmigration that consists of six realms: heavenly beings, asuras, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts and hell beings.

## **B. Explanation of Reality**

4. Conditional Arising: All phenomena arise as the result of combination of all sorts of conditions. All things are related as mutual causes or conditions for their interdependent co-emergence.
5. Causal Relation: Under all sorts of situations causal relations among events could be discerned. Even though it is impossible to comprehend all causal relations and their underlying principles, through accumulation of experiences we have had enough confidence in the existence of causal relations and their effective operation among phenomena.
6. Self: Ordinarily people identify with body, blood relation, locality, society, culture, race, country, etc., as the center of importance at various levels and associate them with the notion of "self." Consequently, whatever outside this "self" becomes "others," and a barrier or even antagonism ensues.

7. Karma: Based on attachments to various kinds of "self" thoughts, speeches and activities arise to affect people and their surroundings. The collection of all traces of such thoughts, speeches and activities is called "karma."

Using the seven fundamental concepts explained above, the Dharma teaches the following:

As results of conditional arising all things are impermanent. The world is full of sufferings. Based on attachments to "self" people create karmas. Tied down by causal relations it is difficult to escape from transmigration.

### **C. In-depth Scrutiny**

8. Indeed No Self: Since all things are results of combinations of causes and conditions, as causes and conditions change things will evolve accordingly. After careful and in-depth scrutiny in the light of this understanding we will reach the conclusion that there could not be something that exists absolutely independently. In other words, there is nothing that the notion "self" could refer to, if the meaning of "self" is strictly observed. The self

that is ordinarily grasped by people in their daily lives is the result of a combination of views, habitual tendencies, emotions, wills, cultures, etc., without a concrete and independent existence. Under ordinary circumstances it functions as a dominant factor as if it had a real existence. However, under extreme pressures it could transform utterly or even dissolve into non-existence.

9. Limitless Oneness: All references to phenomena are based on artificial distinctions. Even though they are practically convenient practices, nevertheless, they also brought about prejudices and antagonism. If we could return to the original state when there were no artificial concepts, then there would be neither distinction nor antagonism of "self" and "non-self." Similarly, the problems of born/deceased (existence or non-existence), dirty/clean (matters of quality), and increasing/decreasing (matters of quantity) would disappear, and even the framework of time and space would become meaningless. It would be the limitless oneness that is readily so and encompasses all things that are in any time and space, any state, and any sphere.

10. Original Purity: Limitless oneness is originally so, but not imagined to be so. Within limitless oneness there are no artificial distinctions of right/wrong, good/evil, pure/impure. Such state of transcending distinctions is called "original purity" to indicate the absence of man-made prejudices and preferences.

In terms of the ten fundamental concepts described above the Dharma teaches the following:

Having thoroughly understood impermanence one would know that there is indeed no self. Conditional arising and no self are two sides of the same coin of truth: Arising as a result of conditions gathered, there could not be an absolutely independent self; no self, then any thing is merely the result of combination of conditions. Delusive grasping of "self" yields karma that binds one within transmigration to suffer repeatedly without end. Only by recognizing clearly that there is no self and practicing to exterminate grasping to self could one gradually regain the clarity of mind that understands phenomena exactly as they are. Thereby attainment of limitless oneness in original purity would be reached. Out of this realization that all things are in limitless oneness there will be a natural outpouring of deep concern and caring

for all that is without preferences and reservation. Consequently, attempting to awaken all beings to the same enlightened realization would become the central goal in life, and one would diligently dedicate all one's efforts toward this endless salvation service.

## **II. Principles of Practice**

Buddhist practices are activities for one to engage in so that one may gradually learn about how to reduce attachments and entanglements from amidst worldly tangles that are based on all sorts of grasping. Thus one may eventually approach limitless oneness in original purity. Basic principles underlying all Buddhist practices may be described as follows:

### **A. From the standpoint of a practitioner:**

#### **Opening Up and No Attachment**

The fundamental principle for all Dharma practices consists of Opening Up and No Attachment as two sides of a coin. No Attachment means to learn to let go of all kinds of attachments. Opening Up means to practice enlarging scope of

view and breadth of mind. Without letting go of grasping there could be no complete opening up. Only after renunciation of established views and insistence on particulars could one attempt to understand all kinds of possibilities and choices, and thereby enlarge the field of knowledge and the extent of concerns. Only through practicing to observe and consider matters from many angles and on the whole would it become easier for one to realize the defects in one's views and attitude so that one could improve on them and become free from partiality and narrow-mindedness. Therefore, Opening Up and No Attachment are mutually dependent to form two sides of a useful tool.

The function of any Dharma practice could be appreciated through these two aspects. For example, repentance rituals seem to emphasize No Attachment, and yet the extent of repentance encompassed are boundlessly open. The Four Boundless Minds seem to emphasize on Opening Up; nevertheless, they are all based on no attachment to self and could be perfectly accomplished only through the great renunciation of equanimity. In all kinds of almsgiving there is naturally the simultaneous practice of Opening Up and No Attachment.

The practice of No Attachment should not be confused with attaching to nothingness, or grasping to no position. Similarly, No Form means no attachment to formality and appearances but not attaching to no formality and no appearances. This point needs to be carefully discerned lest one would fall into delusive grasping to barren vacuum.

**B. From the viewpoint of realization:  
Encompassing Everything**

The ultimate goal of Buddhist practices is to attain limitless oneness that is originally pure. Therefore, all Dharma practices and activities should not remain within artificial boundaries, but need to be universalized through the totality viewpoint of limitless oneness. From this point of view Encompassing Everything is the fundamental principle. In Encompassing Everything Opening Up and No Attachment are simultaneously harmonized.

**C. From the depth of involvement: Unification  
without Inconsistency**

The degree of involvement of a practitioner consequently affects the depth of realization. Genuine endeavor toward enlightenment takes nothing less than complete involvement. Complete involvement consists of consistency of mental, bodily and speech activities, consistency of way of life and practices, unification of the interaction between body and mind, and unification of the correlation between mental and inner-air activities. Based on this point the fundamental principle is Unification without Inconsistency.

### **III. Types of Practices**

Buddhist practices and activities are of variegated varieties. Nevertheless, according to their basic styles two main types can be distinguished: Antidotal and Harmonizing.

Buddhist teachings are basically propagated through a system of theories. Therefore, the distinctions of suffering/joy, delusion/enlightenment, right/wrong, good/evil are made to guide people. Buddhist teachings aim at showing people how to walk on the good and right path toward enlightenment so that they may gradually become free from suffering rooted in

evil and wrong doings, and finally to enjoy pure joy that is free from suffering. Furthermore, most practitioners are learning to disentangle themselves from within deep traps of entanglement; therefore, the practices and activities they rely on could not help but be antidotal. For example, ordinary people are accustomed to worldly thinking and ways; therefore, they need to practice impermanence, renunciation and almsgiving to remedy their prejudices, bad habits and stinginess.

The aim of Dharma practices is to attain limitless oneness. If one continually practices only antidotal methods and activities, would it then render the practitioner to become unable to go beyond dualistic attitudes and in the end even create a barrier to merging into limitless oneness? Indeed some practitioners would become attached to the wordings or formality of Buddhist teachings, and become entrapped in a cage of the other kind. For example, grasping to the idea of renunciation and pure silas (rules of conduct) a practitioner would assume high self-esteem to the extent that he or she could not be humble and treat others equally; consequently, he or she could not mingle with ordinary people in order to guide them toward the liberation path. However, if the

real meaning of the Buddhist teachings were understood, then antidotal practices and activities would gradually become pure with the fading away of habits and propensities of grasping. Consequently, both the antidote and the object of antidotal treatment would gradually and synchronously merge into non-duality.

In order to avoid grasping to an antidotal attitude or to enable more mature practitioners to practice directly the approximation into limitless oneness there is another main type of Buddhist practices and activities that demonstrates harmonizing views and ways. For example, the enlightening endeavors of Chan (Zen) Schools that goes without resorting to theories, the Ten Mystic Gates of Hua Yan (Avatamsaka) as viewed from the totality of the Dharmadhatu, and the Six Similes of the Diamond Sutra as based on the wondrous play of Sunyata that is established by syllogisms.

Harmonizing practices understands the limitation of dualistic approaches and therefore transcends it. Furthermore, they aim at encompassing everything with the mind that is originally limitless, and hence are no longer hindered by piecemeal calculations. This does not amount to falling into the company of wrongdoers

but rather devotion to salvation services out of a sense of care born of a feeling of being in oneness. Consequently, the devotion is free from complains and the service is endless and equal to all.

Higher practices in Buddhist Tantras are sometimes described as "using poison to fight poison"; hence, it would seem that they belong to antidotal practices. However, upon careful examination they are indeed training in "liberation on the spot within mire." Furthermore, sublimation and transformation achieved through tantric visualizations must be based on harmonizing views. Therefore, they should be considered as harmonizing practices.

#### **IV. Main Items of Practices**

Buddhist practices as adopted by ordinary Buddhists may be classified and described briefly as follows:

##### **A. Recitation**

Repeating holy names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and their mantras, reciting Sutras,

Sastras and praises, and chanting and singing holy melodies.

## **B. Paying Homage**

Bowing with folded palms, doing prostration, doing full-length prostration, and doing prostration for repentance.

## **C. Almsgiving**

Making offerings to and sustaining Buddhas, Buddhist teachings, and Buddhist teachers and practitioners, printing Buddhist works for free distribution, expounding the meaning of Buddhist teachings, advocating genuine practices, engaging in charitable services to help the poor and needy, helping senile, weak or disabled persons, releasing of lives, providing food, engaging in all kinds of charitable donations and services, etc.

## **D. Observance of Rules of Conducts**

In accordance with one's role and situation trying to observe as much as possible the rules of conducts that one has vowed to follow. Ordinarily, the five basic rules to be observed are as follows:

no killing, no stealing, no illicit sex, no lying and no drinking of alcohol.

### **E. Tolerance**

Treasuring harmony, remaining humble, patient and yielding, putting up with opposition, remaining tolerant and forgiving, treating all beings equally with respect.

### **F. Meditation**

Practicing concentration, observation and visualization, i.e., all kinds of meditations.

### **G. Pilgrimage**

Visiting Buddhist holy sites or masters.

### **H. Retreat**

Short-term observance of special diet and rules of conduct, weekend solitary practices, or long-term solitary retreats. No speech, no going out of a preset boundary, and no communication with the outside world, only Dharma practices.

All practices mentioned above are often alluded to in my works. More detailed discussions may be found in the following works of mine:

1. Paths to the Lotus Pond
2. The Buddhist Practice of Chanting "Amitabha"
3. A Golden Ring
4. The Sixfold Sublimation in Limitless-Oneness
5. The Foundational Practices of Vajrayana
6. Chod in Limitless-Oneness
7. A Blessed Pilgrimage

## **V. Practice under All Circumstances**

Be it regular daily practices of set routines or applications of Buddhist teachings in daily life situations the principles and directions expounded below should be carefully observed to ensure correct adherence to the teachings and maximize the beneficial effects.

### **A. Great Mind of Bodhicitta**

#### *1. Motivation*

The first thing to pay attention to in any practice and activity is the motivation. The motivation of a Buddhist should not deviate from Bodhicitta, i.e., the aspiration to attain perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. In other words, one aims at enlightenment so that one would become capable of saving all beings from suffering, and eventually help all beings to attain ultimate liberation and share the joy that will not lead to suffering.

## *2. Dedication of Merits*

At the completion of a good deed or Dharma activity one would immediately dedicate the merits thus generated toward the Bodhicitta aspiration as described above.

In this way every action and activity, from start to finish, belongs completely to the application and merits of the great mind of Bodhicitta. When every event is conducted in this way and it is kept so all the time, then purification process gradually takes roots and the practitioner would readily merge gradually into the correct path.

As to immediate needs on hand such as to pray for reduction of hindrances and hardships, and for peace and prosperity, one could also include them

in the dedication of merits. Nevertheless, they could be added only as subsidiary requests but never to take over the central role of the Bodhicitta aspiration. Otherwise, one would easily fall into the hypocrisy of sustaining selfish intention under the cover of Buddhist ideals.

## **B. Limitless in Time and Space**

All mental, bodily and speech activities should be regarded as extending to any space in the past, present and future. In the limitless expanse of time and space our activities are creating influences, just as countless rings of ever expanding ripples. All our activities are open to the awareness of all sentient beings in any time and space without the possibility of keeping privacy.

## **C. Positive and Active Practices**

All are impermanent. The moment that could be used for practice is very precious and rare. Time and energy should be completely spent on positive and attentive practices and services lest they be wasted on criticism, comparison, regret, worry, and other kinds of entanglements.

## **D. Practice Tolerance in the Face of Hindrances**

When hindrance and difficulty arise, instead of being drawn into its whirlpool, use it as an opportunity to learn to start a new approach, and thereby increase one's appreciation of the richness in possibilities in the limitless expanse of the Dharmadhatu.

## **E. Equal Propagation**

Salvation through the Dharma aims at liberation from transmigration in sufferings and attainment of ultimate awakening. Therefore, it is a career of all seasons and ages that need not be preoccupied with the result at one particular time and locality. The awakening of a sentient being may be unattainable within this lifetime. Only when suitable conditions have gathered and time of maturity reached could proper advice be given and well received to yield beneficial results. Therefore, there is no need to insist on spreading the teachings to particular sentient beings at certain time and place; instead, we should endeavor to maintain constant propagation of the teachings to people in general without partiality.

## **F. Unification of Wisdom and Compassion**

All practices and activities should not lean only toward exercises in Wisdom such as No Attachment or Widening Perspective, nor only toward exercises in Compassion such as No Discarding or Tolerant Acceptance. A practitioner should endeavor to grasp within practices and activities the original purity that unifies wisdom and compassion. In original purity there is originally neither anything to grasp nor anything to discard, and there is originally neither boundaries nor duality. For example, the tantric Chod practice uses visualization to cut down one's mental attachment to the body and simultaneously transforms it into an exercise in almsgiving. Thus, at the level of antidotal practices it simultaneously cultivates the wisdom of no attachment and the compassion of almsgiving. Furthermore, at the level of harmonizing practices it transcends the tiny circle of self to engage in salvation activities directly from the viewpoint and capacity of the Dharmadhatu as a whole.

## **VI. Deep Penetration into Reality**

The fundamental teaching of Buddhism indicates that all are originally pure, and therefore one should apply mind without abiding anywhere, i.e., to apply lively without any attachment. However, in order to guide ordinary people to gradually leave suffering and reach happiness, and to transform them from being polluted to resuming purity, teachings and rules were set up. And yet these artificial norms and regulations would often become another kind of attachment and hindrance. Not to mention the fact that, ordinary practitioners could not help but be restricted by considerations of formality and appearances. Consequently, they dare only to engage in activities that are within the sphere of public approval.

As regards the attainment of ultimate liberation and realization a practitioner should be able to remain free from delusion under any circumstances. Furthermore, he or she should endeavor to make use of all methods and approaches that could possibly help development toward enlightenment and liberation in order to realize the reality that is originally pure. In this light it is plain to see that artificial restrictions and formal considerations need to be broken through in

the course of genuine quest for realization of original purity.

In other words, the ultimate goal of all Dharma practices is to realize the reality that transcends all worldly structures of time and locality, race, culture, society, etc. Therefore, genuine Dharma practices must not be confined by worldly views. This is a fundamental axiom of the Dharma. However, some actual practices and activities are built upon the dualistic distinctions of pure/impure and good/evil; these are incomplete pedagogic devices. To attain ultimate liberation one needs to undergo all sorts of actual situations in order to master the harmonization and unification of Right View and meditation stability. There is no way that such deep and penetrating realizations could be achieved by merely understanding the theories and subtle meanings without experiences in the field.

Within Buddhist teachings there are certainly devices and ways that transcend those incomplete pedagogic devices. Transcendence of Chan lies in its complete independence from studies of Sutras and Sastras; in this way limitation and entanglement of concepts are gotten rid of. Transcendence of Pureland School lies in continuation of a pure thought that merges into the

limitless oneness of Dharmadhatu. Transcendence of Vajrayana lies in not being confined by the distinctions of good/evil and pure/impure but instead indicating how to sublimate and make use of any given situation to cultivate realization of enlightenment. Vajrayana teaches the path of liberation not only with regard to views and psychology but also including physical and sexual training practices. In this way, through mind and body interaction, mind and breathing coordination, and harmonization of sexual energies complete liberation may be achieved sooner.

Feelings of receiving direct blessings from Buddhas and all kinds of inspirational experiences occur naturally as one makes progress on the path toward enlightenment. However, in Vajrayana practices, due to thorough comprehension of Buddhist theories, penetrating contact with reality through tantric practices and the lineage blessings that is safeguarded from generation to generation, such supernatural events would continue to spring up from time to time.

## **VII. Goal of Realization**

The ultimate goal of Buddhist practices, be it called "Nirvana," "Buddhahood," "Right Awakening," etc., is none other than returning to original purity and merging into limitless oneness. Furthermore, it is not a static and inactive dead silence but a constant and automatic outpouring of great compassion in the form of endless salvation endeavors and activities. Human life is transient and impermanent; a practitioner could only seize the present moment, recognize the goal correctly, and practice diligently with utmost effort. As to the depth of actual realizations there is no way to force it because the process of cultivation develops only naturally. Although in Buddhist literature there are various levels of achievement identified and described, their significance to a practitioner's real practice is only to serve as a reminder that one should not be easily satisfied or take lesser results as higher attainments.

When our view is broadened to the whole Dharmadhatu with limitless time and space we realize immediately that this quest for enlightenment may not be definitely accomplished within the span of one life, two lives( Rather, it is a continuous endeavor that could not stop unless transmigration had been transcended, and should not stop until ultimate enlightenment had been

attained. If one had strayed from this path, then there would be nothing but transmigration in sufferings. Hence, recognizing this point, each one should know better to practice diligently with great efforts, instead of staying deluded within worldly ways.

Based on my Chinese article with the same title, *Fo Fa Gen Ben Yao Yi*, this essay is completed on July 13, 2001.  
El Cerrito, California

# Dharmadhatu

Yutang Lin

The Sanskrit word "dharma" occurs frequently in Buddhist works. In Buddhist works "dharma" basically has two kinds of meanings. The first kind means truth. Truth has no exceptions and could not be disobeyed; due to such law-like characteristics, in Chinese Buddhist works, "dharma" is translated by the Chinese character Fa that means law. (In Chinese Buddhist works there are also transliterations of "dharma" such as Da Mo.) In this light rules and norms that are in accordance with truth and teachings that illustrate truth are also called "dharma." Buddha's teachings aim at guiding sentient beings to live in accordance with truth; hence it is called "Buddha Dharma" or simply "Dharma." The second kind of meaning of "dharma" is a general noun used to denote anything. In this sense "dharma" resembles "thing" in their linguistic uses. Nevertheless, according to Buddhist teachings there is nothing that has an absolutely independent existence; consequently,

what is meant by "dharma" is not limited to objects or events that are commonly regarded as existent or real. Instead, it could refer to anything thinkable or imaginable, even including products of illusion or delusion. Furthermore, it could also refer to spiritual states that transcend senses and consciousness, and are unspeakable or unimaginable. Under this meaning of "dharma" all dharmas are mutually dependent causes and conditions of their coexistence. Whatever the ordinary worldly view may be, in this sense of "dharma," all dharmas are equal as one of the dharmas and this equality transcends considerations of their differences in being real/unreal, superior/inferior, or abundant/deficient. In this sense of "dharma" the word "dharmadhatu," literally "realm of dharmas," refers to the collection of all dharmas. "Attaining Buddhahood" means having transcended all and any limitations that are due to artificial concepts, subconscious activities, desires and feelings, will and attachment, time and space, etc., and having regained the original state of dharmadhatu in harmonious oneness. To a being that has attained Buddhahood dharmadhatu is also referred to as the Dharmakaya, literally "body of dharmas," of that being. Thus we see that understanding the notion

of dharmadhatu plays an essential role in successful quest for Buddhahood. In order to attain Buddhahood we need to comprehend correctly and thoroughly the full significance of "dharmadhatu." This essay is composed to expound the correct content of "dharmadhatu" and to point out some essential features that are commonly confused with other notions. I hope that this work will help people advance on the right path toward Buddhahood.

### **Dharmadhatu is not just the universe.**

Universe is the collection of all things in time and space. Yet dharmadhatu is neither limited by space nor by time. There are boundless sorts of states that are beyond the sphere of time and space; there are also limitless objects and events that are not within the sphere of time and space. Dharmadhatu transcends any limitation; it is much more comprehensive than the universe.

### **All of dharmadhatu coexist as a whole.**

It is commonly held to be the case that what was in the past are gone, what are at present are transient, and what will come have not yet

occurred. Consequently, even though after having accepted the Dependent Origination View that all dharmas are mutually dependent as causes and conditions for their coexistence, one still regards dharmadhatu as a flow of dharmas -- past dharmas have faded away, present dharmas are apparent but transient, and future dharmas have not arrived and are unpredictable. This view of dharmadhatu is under the limitation of the notion of time, and as such it deviates from the correct meaning of the Buddhist dharmadhatu. Dharmadhatu is neither limited by space nor by time. According to the correct view of dharmadhatu all dharmas in the past, all dharmas at present and all dharmas in the future are all together in the dharmadhatu. Ordinarily people can experience only a minute part of all dharmas at present, and therefore people sustain the view that dharmas in the past are gone and future is unpredictable. If one practices according to Buddhist teachings and thereby comes out of the bondage of the fixed view of a space-and-time framework, then it is possible to experience or witness dharmas in the past as well as dharmas in the future. According to biographies of ancient Buddhist sages, some witnessed that the ancient assemblage of Buddha, holy beings and his disciples, in which the teachings recorded in

Wondrous Dharma Lotus Sutra were given, had not dispersed yet. There are also numerous records of valid prophecies regarding important events or personages in Buddhist history. Even though for common people these matters are difficult to believe, nevertheless, among practitioners it is common experiences that knowledge of future events are revealed now and then through inspirations. On my part, I once saw in a dream the streets of San Francisco with people and carriages that seemed to be a scene at the period near the turn of 19th and 20th centuries. This experience rekindled my attention to the Buddhist sage's experience of witnessing the ancient Dharma assemblage, and helped me to have complete faith in that record.

### **Dharmadhatu transcends differentiation.**

All dharmas are mutually dependent and coexist. Distinctions of real/unreal, existent/extinct, apparent/concealed, higher/lower, etc., are based on grasping to appearances as the results of our conscious choices and attachments. Discriminations made neither increase nor decrease dharmadhatu in any way; distinction making has no significance whatsoever to

dharmadhatu. In order to attain realization of oneness of dharmadhatu we need to recognize this point clearly, and relinquish grasping to the habit of making conscious distinctions.

The three points mentioned above are essential to correct comprehension of the significance of "dharmadhatu" that would enable realization of attainment. Even though these ideas are hard to comprehend and even harder to believe, they are statements based on both studies of Buddhist teachings and experiences gained through long-term practices. I hope that Buddhists in general would pay attention to these points and thereby realize enlightenment sooner.

Based on my Chinese work  
with the same title, Fa Jie,  
Written on August 17, 2001  
El Cerrito, California

# **Mutually Dependent Origination of Dharmadhatu**

Yutang Lin

Human experiences gained through sense organs are limited to a certain sphere. Likewise, theoretical constructions are limited by linguistic tools, logic and human imagination. Therefore, even though human knowledge is reliable to certain extent, it could also be misleading at times. If we relied solely on current knowledge, then many phenomena could only be labeled as insubstantial but not understood. All sorts of problems in the world are beyond human manipulations; therefore, it would seem that human lives are just sequences of incessant and insurmountable problems, and that there is no hope of ultimate peace and joy.

The notion of Dharmadhatu as taught in Buddhism indicates directly that all are mutually dependent and are in limitless oneness. Dharmadhatu transcends boundaries of space or

time, includes any space and any time, and even includes all kinds of phenomena or spiritual states that are not within the framework of space-time coordinates. All of the past, all of the present and all of the future are concurrently in Dharmadhatu. All artificial discriminations based on grasping to appearances are meaningless to Dharmadhatu as a whole. (For more detail explanation please read my article, "*Dharmadhatu*.")

In Dharmadhatu there is nothing that exists independently. All are mutually dependent as causes and conditions, and jointly form what there is. All views are relative. According to human perceptions there are clear evidences of differences in things and matters, of causal relations in certain temporal sequences, and of various distances in time or space. From the view point of Dharmadhatu as a whole, in addition to distinctions discernable by human perceptions, there is indistinguishable oneness unifying all there is and, going beyond human understanding or imagination, including all three times (past, present and future) concurrently. The view of mutually dependent origination of Dharmadhatu does not exclude or go contrary to distinctions based on human perceptions. And yet it is not

confined by artificially made distinctions. It guides us to the spiritual state of harmonious oneness of all. Furthermore, it could help us to learn to make use of all sorts of distinctions to catalyze the attainment of oneness.

Only when we follow the Buddhist teachings on mutually dependent origination of Dharmadhatu could the limited and biased confine of human perceptions be transcended, and significant progress on the peaceful path toward liberation from human sufferings be made. Causal relations as extending over past, present and future lives, gods and ghosts, transmigration and reincarnation, all phenomena that are related to such topics are readily labeled as imaginary or incredulous. Based only on human knowledge, that is no wonder the cases; viewed from mutually dependent origination of Dharmadhatu, it would then be easy to understand the reasons for all those ups and downs. Events as causal consequences of personal or common karmas, when viewed by persons in a limited time-space sphere would seem imprecise or even dubious, and yet when examined from the view of Dharmadhatu would turn out to be exactly as due. Effects of Buddhist practices may go unnoticeable to worldly eyes;

from the view of Dharmadhatu they are immediately apparent just as setting up a pole would show its shadow. Visualization practices in Buddhism when viewed by worldly people would seem to be mere imagination or self-hypnosis, or even delusions and illusions; and yet when viewed from Dharmadhatu they could exert functions no less than reality. Based on this understanding Buddhist tantric teachings emphasize the visualization of Dharmadhatu as the Mandala of Buddhas, and thereby thoroughly transcend the bondage of limited and limiting human perceptions.

Human lives that are trapped within human perceptions have no exit from sufferings and sorrows. Once the teaching of mutually dependent origination of Dharmadhatu is comprehended, followed and put into practice until realization, such a human life becomes an opportunity to escape from suffering and to reach peace and tranquility. Human lives are transient; senility, illness and death would soon arrive, each with its ramifying sufferings. May people who are on the Buddhist path to enlightenment soon comprehend the mutually dependent origination of Dharmadhatu and realize oneness of the whole

Dharmadhatu! Consequently, they would remain peaceful and joyful in spite of the inevitable ups and downs in life, and be forever free from delusions and pains derived from grasping to sensory experiences.

Based on the Chinese article with the same title, "*Fa Jie Yuan Qi*," that was written on September 22, written on September 24, 2001  
El Cerrito, California

# **My Bodhicitta Vows**

(May be Used for Dedication of Merits)

Dr. Yutang Lin

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

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First Edition, 2003  
1,000 copies  
Printed in Taiwan