佛根地

开示日期

8.17 | 8.18 | 8.19 | 8.20 | 8.21 | 8.22 | 8.23 | 8.24

【编者的话】

1975年夏天，比尔．布莱佛决定在他位于奥立岗州芦苇港史密斯河畔的佛根地农场，举办一次户外的念佛法会。他邀请 宣公上人及金山寺的四众弟子们共襄盛举。在得到 上人的同意之后，于1975年的八月，从美国各地而来的五十几位修行人聚会在佛根地，参加为期一周的念佛法会。这是传统的佛七法会首次在户外的山上举行，当地搭起了大型帐篷来遮挡下午的烈日及阵雨，也在帐篷四周，清理出了一条走道，供与会者绕佛，沿着长满金黄色草丛及野花的河岸，大众一起念佛、参加仪式、听法。在大家用功静下心念佛后，有的人达到轻安的境界，有人则尝到了念佛的法味。

念佛的修持，使人进入了念佛三昧的境界，就像中国古代诗人苏东坡所写的：

山色无非清净身；溪声尽是广长舌。

当一周活动结束时，有十七人皈依三宝，礼 宣公上人为师。

佛七期间，上人每天开示两次：下午一次，晚间一次。上人生动地讲解净土法门，解说基本的修持方法，并开显修道之果，又用极浅显的语言来说明。不但初学者能明了，有经验的老修行更能因之体悟深妙的佛理。上人的开示，为佛根地的与会大众带来了既富启发性，而又正确的指示，这些都是未来修行者的佛法宝藏。

本刊已将 上人主持法会期间之开示整理出来，将连同英译及照片陆续刊出，冀望读者于阅读之余，遥想当年 上人领导西方人士，首次于户外打“佛七”之盛况时，不忘 上人孜孜汲汲将佛法带到西方的一片苦心，更当发起共荷如来家业，继承 上人遗志，自度度他之心。

适值 上人涅槃近三周年之际，本刊愿以此文之刊登为志，略伸怀念之意。

【本站编按】

本文由《万佛城金刚菩提海月刊》1998年5月第三三六期至 2001年6月第三七三期中录出。之后，又找出一些资料，是弟子的英文言论，但因人力不足，未及整理；待整理完毕后，再行更新。以下即是当年月刊登载全文。

1975年8月17日．星期天晚上

南无常住十方佛

南无常住十方法

南无常住十方僧

南无本师释迦牟尼佛

南无佛顶首楞严

南无观世音菩萨

南无金刚藏菩萨

How are you everybody?（大家好。）今天这个法会在这样天气下雨的时候，有这么多人到这深山里头来开荒，来种菩提种子，将来结佛果，这是很不可思议的一件事。什么叫种菩提的种子？我们到这个山里边来，这一位 Bill（比尔）居士，他给山的名字取为“佛根地”。那么佛根地必须要种菩提种子，现在下菩提种，以后才能扎下佛根，将来成就这个佛果，所以各位到这儿来，这是非常重要的一件事。为什么说它重要呢？因为你念佛就能了生死，也好像佛教化众生，我们所有的人从无始劫以来，生了死，死了又生；生生死死，不知道经过多少次轮回，也没有遇着这个念佛的法门。所以这个生死也没有了。现在遇着念佛的法门，能以到西方极乐世界去，这是非常重要的。

那么念佛法门，既然是这么重要，能令一切众生，了生死，脱轮回，离苦得乐。这样的法门，这么样子重要，我们所有来参加的人，就要拿出一个真心来念佛。

你是不是用真心念佛，这有一种试验的。你是用真心念佛，蚊子不会咬你；你要是不用真心念佛呢，那蚊子就会来咬你了。

你要用真心念佛，也不怕下雨。“下雨下得再大，它也挡不住我这个念佛的心。”你念佛念得风也吹不透，雨也打不透，这样只有一个念佛的心。你要能这样子，这个雨也不会下了；根本就没有雨下，一定天气非常好。蚊子也不咬你，雨也不下了。

你看，这就是你真心念佛的感应；要没有真心呢？那就下雨啊，蚊子也咬啊，坐在那个地方也觉得不舒服；你要真心念佛，就算蚊子咬你，你也不管它，就像没有咬我一样的。“我要忍耐蚊子咬的痛苦，我只有念佛这一个心，所以蚊子咬我也不知道了。”不要说它不会咬；就是会咬，你也不知道，那就是真心。你也不知道下雨了，那就是真心。那么你能有这一种的诚心，你一定会有特别感应的。或者你见着阿弥陀佛来给你摩顶；或者你见着阿弥陀佛放光来摄受你；或者你见着阿弥陀佛放光，来用这个衣来覆你的身体，这都是感应。“衣覆我体，手摩我头。”阿弥陀佛能这个样子。

所以你要能不怕蚊子咬，不怕下雨，来回也不怕路不好走，这都是念佛真心的表现。真心，就是蚊子咬了也不知道，所以我说蚊子不咬你。因为你不知道蚊子咬了；蚊子咬也不知道了，那就是真心了。你要是觉得：“啊！这儿有蚊子。啊！这儿又有一个。”尽打蚊子了，那念佛就忘了。这不是讲笑话，这是很重要的。

所以果逾今天对我讲，说有小蚊子来咬他。我就知道：“哦！你念佛没念好；你没有真心念佛，所以蚊子就咬你。”

一切是考验，看你怎么办；
对境若不识，须再从头炼。

连个蚊子的魔阵你都退不了，那你－－唉！真是白念佛了。

好了，今天就是这样，希望各位今天晚间，都 good sleep（睡好），没有蚊子咬你。要是你念佛也念得像睡觉那样，蚊子来咬的时候，也不知道，那就好了。你睡着的时候，蚊子咬，你也不知道；你念佛念得好，也是一

样，也是蚊子咬你，你不知道。

1975年8月18日．星期一下午

今天是念佛七的第一天。这第一天念佛，有的人念过佛就知道念佛的好处；有的人没有念过佛的，就不知道是做什么？南无、南无、南无什么呢？阿弥陀、阿弥陀，阿弥陀又是什么呢？是 Buddha；佛是 Buddha。这是做什么呢？

走着念，站着念，坐着念，说你躺着睡觉的时候，心里也念，这有什么用呢？我现在告诉你：“佛前顶礼，罪灭河沙。”你在佛前拜一拜，你的罪业消灭有恒河沙那么多。说：“那么我恒河沙那么多的罪业，我念佛念这么多，那一定都消没有了。”你要知道，你由无量劫以来，由你作人的那个时候开始到现在，不知道有多少生，多少世了。甚至于你自己也不相信，有前生，有今生，有来生。

你不相信，所以在每一生之中，都是迷迷糊糊地，无所明了。因为这个，你到现在也不知道，人在人世间所造的罪业有多少。每一生中所造的罪业，恐怕比恒河沙都更多。所以你念佛，消灭恒河沙的罪业，但是你罪业不知道有多少。我们的罪业幸亏是没有形象；要有一个形象，每一个人的罪业都会把虚空都装满了。因为它没有形象，所以虚空还没有满，你的罪业就有那么多。

所以说：“佛前顶礼，罪灭河沙。”“舍钱一文，增福无量。”你护持这个道场，有钱的就出钱，再有力量的就出力；无论你出钱，出力，这都是一样的功德，都会种你的善根。那么这是佛前顶礼，罪灭河沙。舍钱一文，增福无量。那么念佛一声呢？念佛一声，能灭九十亿劫生死重罪。所以我们现在在没有佛法的国家，我们能遇着佛法，能以有善知识来教我们念佛的法门，这是很稀有的。所以，各位把这最宝贵的时间，不要随随便便地就空过去。要很注意地，很用功地来念佛，这才是不白来参加这个佛七。

所以你看，我们在这露天念佛，学生有露营－－露营就是到外面，到山上去住，上边没有什么盖的，那叫露营。我们这现在念佛，也是露营念佛，

上边没有什么挡雨的。要不下雨的时候，就在外边绕佛念佛，这是一个很好的办法。在深山里边，能以有这么清静的地方，我们大家在这儿，不是做旁的事去，或者是去玩哪，或者游戏啊，或者打球啊，或者放火箭啊，我们现在在这儿不是做那个事情；是在这儿念佛。你看这真是微妙不可思议。在这个境界里边，什么声音也没有；不像三藩市，汽车，叭……叭……叭，那巴士也来。汽车、火车还有飞机，有那么多的声音。在这里，你看，很清静的。这是正好念佛的时候。各位应该特别注意，不要把这宝贵的时间空过去了。

在这个深山里边，空气都是新鲜的，所以一点浊气也没有。这个五浊恶世：劫浊、见浊、烦恼浊、众生浊、命浊，这就是人多的地方。现在在深山里边，这就是清净极乐世界。你能在这清净极乐世界修行，这种感应道交的力量，可就和那个闹市完全不同，容易得到三昧，容易得到定，容易得到念佛三昧。你念一声佛，就一念的清净；你声声念佛，就念念都清净。念念清净，就得到念佛三昧。所谓：

一念清净，一念佛；
念念清净，念念佛。

我们的旁边有一条小河，这小河流水的声音那么响，你听着这流水的声音，也在念佛。它那儿也在念南无阿弥陀佛。刮风的声音，也在念佛，也在演说摩诃的妙法。这个境界就和极乐世界的境界是一样的。极乐世界也就是：

水流风动演摩诃；
七珍池，花四色，涌金波。

那个七宝池，开的那个莲花：白色白光，红色红光，黄色黄光，青色赤光；青黄赤白这种光，都放光来照我们。

那么说：“我们念佛……法师，你讲这么半天了，究竟这个南无、南无是怎么回事？南无谁？”南无你自己，不要南无人家；不要南无他人，要南无自己。想一想，我自己有这么深的善根，才遇着念佛法门。

这个“南无”，就是“皈命敬投”的意思。“皈”我这个身心性“命”，来恭“敬投”到阿弥陀佛的面前去。“南无”就是这样子。你要想，以我的身心性命来皈依阿弥陀佛。说：“‘南无’是皈命敬投；那么‘阿弥陀’又是怎么讲呢？”当然有讲法啦！你不要着急，我慢慢给你讲。这一次讲不完，那么再下回分解；下一回讲不完，再下一回分解。你不要着急，我一定教你明白南无阿弥陀佛是怎么回事。

这个南无阿弥陀，这都是梵语，不是中文。昨天果真说：“中文‘南无阿弥陀佛’”。这你完全错了。这“南无阿弥陀佛”都是梵语，没有中文；中文只有那个“佛”字，是半梵语，不是完全的梵语。“阿弥陀”就是“无量寿”。你念佛，你自己能得到无量寿，因为你皈命敬投无量寿佛。所以你自己要是愿意以念佛的功德来回向。

你说：“我愿意活到九十九。”那绝对不会活到八十八，一定会活到九十九。

你说：“那我愿意活到一百岁。”

那也可以的，只要你诚心念佛，就做得到。尤其是现在，今天我们里边的人，我给你们预先授记，你们其中一定会有愿意活长命的，一定会遂心满愿的。可不能是个个，要诚心的那个；哪一个诚心念佛，哪一个就得到这种感应，能遂心满愿。

“阿弥陀”，又叫“无量光”，这无量光就是无量的智慧光明，就是开智慧。无论哪一个人，你诚心念念佛，也会开大智慧的，也会有真正的记忆力，这是一定的。所以阿弥陀又叫无量寿，又叫无量光。

“佛”，也是梵语，梵语叫“佛陀耶”；英文叫 Buddha。我给他起的解释：“佛”就是不大，所以说：

不大不小，非去非来，
微尘世界，交映莲台。

佛，他不比我们人大，和我们人是一样的；不过，他就是开大悟了，恢复本有的智慧了。我们也不比佛小，佛也不比我们小。我们就是因为心里没

有清净，没有恢复本有的智慧，没有开大智慧，所以我们现在还是凡夫。

佛是觉也，众生是迷也；觉者佛也，迷者众生。你觉悟了，就是佛；你没有觉悟，就是众生。觉悟的时候，那个佛也不比众生多什么；你迷的时候，也不比佛少什么。也没有增，也没有减。但是，就是一个迷，一个觉，这是不同的一点。

那么就好像什么呢？举一个很普通的例子来告诉你们各位。佛譬如——并不真是这样的，这是一个比喻。你不要以为我这么一比喻，就是这样的了；不是的，这完全是个假的。佛就好像一位大学教授似的，但是大学教授可不是佛。你们要清楚这一点。那么众生就好像学生似的，每一个学生都可以作大学教授；每一个大学教授又可以作学生。这是一个比喻，佛可不是像大学教授那么笨，佛比大学教授更高超。这是一个很浅的比喻，就是形容佛和我们人是一样的。

为什么我要念南无阿弥陀佛；南无阿弥陀佛为什么不念我呢？

你问得有道理。这个问题，可把我都迷糊住了。我都不知道怎么答覆了。但是我又想起来要这么样答覆：因为你没有发愿叫众生念你。阿弥陀佛在因地的时候，他作法藏比丘，他的法名叫法藏，他发了四十八大愿。每一愿，他都这么说：“我将来修行成佛的时候，我的国家是极乐的，清净的，没有像五浊恶世这么样地浑浊。我要十方所有的众生，只要有人念我的名号，我就接他来到我的国家，来成佛；如果他不成佛，我也不取正觉，我也不成佛。因为阿弥陀佛有这个愿力，所以我们现在大家异口同音，称念南无阿弥陀佛。

这是本着阿弥陀佛他往昔的愿力，就是照着他的愿力来修行；我们这一念佛，阿弥陀佛就知道了：“哎！我以前和这个众生签一个合同，他要念我的名字，我就应该叫他成佛。如果我现在不接他成佛，我这个合同是打妄语了。”所以佛赶快来接你去成佛。有的人就说：“那么远，西方极乐世界有十万亿佛土那么远。怎么去法呢？是坐飞机吗？不知机票要多少钱；坐火车又要多少钱呢？坐巴士或自己开车，能不能到呢？”这，你不要担这个心。这个一念间就到了，什么票都不要买，一念就升到极乐世界；十万亿佛土不

超出你一念。

所以我们现在念南无阿弥陀佛，再没有比这重要的事了。你看，昨天晚间下雨，现在就晴天了。等一等我们大家一起发愿，不准它下雨，要停止下雨，因为这几天我们要在这里用功修行。我是没有这个力量，你们大家要是都发愿，不准下雨。昨天我叫果童－－因为他很懒惰，一个人不 work（工作），现在大家都指定这个工作，我们念佛就不要下雨；最低限度，感应不下雨了，我们在这儿用功修行。

这几天晚间黑，路途那么泥泞，你们男界不知道，女界很辛苦的，过那个河，也不知道是渡谁，也不知道是谁渡。但是我告诉你们，迷时师度，悟时自度；觉悟了，就自己度自己，自己给自己开手电筒。

就在这个时候，果航打了一个妄想。他想跑到山上去住。对不对，果航？

果航：是的。

上人：要是闭着眼睛，就是有手电筒也没用，还是会跌倒。记得大家要发愿不准下雨，要是不下雨就证明你们大家有诚心；要是下雨，就是证明你们大家都没有诚心，与我一点关系都没有。不关我事，下雨不下雨是你们的事。

金山寺来的人，有很多都睡得入睡觉三昧，因为他们坐着睡惯了，所以坐着就可以睡，他们这些新来的人都是不行的，办不到。

1975年8月18日．星期一晚

弟子：这个故事是我在金山寺时，每一个人都在讲的，但是现在这里有许多新人，我想再讲一遍。有一位八十岁的老太太，在香港到山上的庙里，走上去要走八百步。上次我讲的时候，细节弄错了，上人纠正我，所以我现在知道究竟是怎么回事了。

这位老太太的耳朵是聋的，但是她每天上山去庙里听 上人讲经说法，听不见她也一定要去。过了一个时期，在唱诵时，她忽然听得见了。这全因为

以前有一天晚上，她做了一个梦，梦中有三个胖胖的小孩，进入她的肚子。从那以后她每个钟头都要吃东西；在听经听一半时也得出去煮点吃的，吃完再回来听经。这样过了一个礼拜，她决定要告诉 上人了。

那时 上人每天一早起身，带着材料到一个岛上造庙，晚上再回来讲经。当 上人拾级而上时，她等着 上人，告诉她这个梦。上人告诉她半夜时点一支香。她回去半夜点了香，看见韦驮菩萨来了，还带了一碗面。这三个小孩来吃面时，韦驮菩萨抓着他们的耳朵，就把他们抓出去了。上人说韦驮菩萨把他们送去坐监了。从那以后她的病就好了。

她得这个病的原因，是因为过去生中她的一个朋友得了这个病。她不相信，说她朋友捏造出来的，所以她今生受这个果报。她得这病时，也有许多人说她装出来的。那些人以后也会有这种果报。

上人：你现在讲，你们有谁要说话，我现在给你们一点机会说话。

问：我们念经诵咒的时候，还没有完全告诉他们在什么地方，念什么。他们新来不知道，所以金山寺的人，最好派人告诉他们念哪个地方，他们才可以跟着念。

上人：那好的。你们大家应该教大家什么地方，现在开始。这个不像金山寺；在金山寺，一两个人来，我们就可以叫大家知道。

上人：你们今天一早什么时候开始?

弟子：七点钟……。

上人：有没有作早课?

弟子：作了……。

今天在三点钟的时候，讲“阿弥陀佛”，这个“佛” 字还没有完全解释明白，所以现在单单讲这一个佛字。佛以前和一切众生是一样的，不但和人是一样的，和一切有生命的东西都是一样的，甚至和这个蚊虫啊、蜂子啊，都是一样的；因为他和众生是一样的，所以他以后就发菩提心；发菩提心，就行菩萨道，自利利他，自觉觉他，自益益他，自度度他。

他所行所做都是没有自私心，都是大公无私地帮助一切人。他在因地修行时，舍了他的生命来救度众生。他看见老虎要饿死了，他把他的身体布施给老虎吃。他看那个鹰吃这个鸟－－那个鹰要饿死了，他把他身上的肉布施给鹰吃；舍肉喂鹰，割截他的身体来喂鹰。

你们各位想一想，老虎是最恶的一种野兽，老鹰是最恶的一种飞禽。这个老虎是兽类最恶的；这个鹰是鸟类最恶的。这样最恶的众生，他看见它要饿死，他都把自己的生命不要了，来救它们的生命。就因为他有这样伟大的精神，所以他就成佛了。他成佛了，是不是就享成佛的快乐呢？不是。他还不忘所有的众生，所以他又来度众生，教化众生。这是佛自觉也圆满了，觉他也圆满了，令其他人也觉悟，这叫觉行圆满。修行的行门都圆满了，这叫三觉圆，万德备。他一举一动都是帮助其他人，他德行圆满了，所以就是佛。这是佛大概的意思。

不是单单佛能成佛，我们所有的人都可以成佛。我们这样信佛才没有迷信。不像其他的宗教，说只有我是个真神，其余的都是假的；你就是怎么样相信我，你只可以给我做奴隶，你不能到我这个地位。这样就有一点专制，独裁，不公平。那么在佛教，人人都可以成佛，人人都可以作佛，这个是一个最民主的一种宗教，最公平的一种宗教；完全没有自私心，完全没有自利心，是大公无私，至正不偏的。佛看一切众生和自己是一样的，所以他要度一切众生。

有的人听见这样讲，就生了一种骄傲心。为什么生骄傲心呢？他没有想佛是修行而成佛的，他说：“喔！人人都是佛，我不需要修行，我就是佛。” 这是太邪知邪见了！不错，人人都可以成佛，你要修行才能成佛，你开悟才能证得佛果；你不修行，你也没有开悟，你成什么佛？你成这个愚痴佛、迷佛；又愚痴又迷，什么都不明白。听人家讲，你也不懂得意思，你也成了佛了，这是不可以的。为什么我要这样说呢？因为在过去我遇到很多这样的人，所以我对你们各位讲一讲。

现在我们讲这个净土法门。念佛，这叫净土法门。净土就是西方极乐世界阿弥陀佛的那个国土。这个净土法门没有人明白，也没有人懂，所以在佛的弟子之中，也没有人请问这种法门。以佛的弟子，以他们那样大的智慧，都不懂这个法门。谁也不知道请问这个法门，所以《阿弥陀经》，这一部经是不问自说的。佛所说的经典都是有当机者。谁是当机，谁就请问。像《金刚经》，须菩提就是一个当机众。他请问佛说这个《金刚经》。《弥陀经》，所有佛的弟子都没有人懂这个法门，甚至于大智慧舍利弗，他也不懂，所以佛是不问自说；没有人请问这部，佛自己向舍利弗说的这个经典。

由这一点来看，佛说《阿弥陀经》这是非常重要的。这是度一些个有大智慧的人；没有智慧的人根本就不明白。所以我们现在能大家聚会一起，修这种念佛法门，这是释迦牟尼佛最高兴的一件事，也是阿弥陀佛最欢喜的一件事。

你们各位要是觉得凉，可以披上一点东西，我就有这一件东西，可以给这个小徒弟。我没有那么多，不能给所有的人，所以你们自己应该要照顾自己。

念佛法门，简简单单地来讲有四种：第一就是观想念佛。第二就是观相念佛。第三是持名念佛。第四是实相念佛。

第一观想念佛：你就要做一种观想。想什么呢？想：“阿弥陀佛身金色”：阿弥陀佛全身都是金色的。

“相好光明无等伦”：阿弥陀佛这个相好，也是没有比的；阿弥陀佛的光明那也是没有比的。阿弥陀佛也是有三十二相、八十种随行好，光明遍照一切有缘的众生。谁有缘，阿弥陀佛的光就照谁。我们现在打佛七，谁有诚心，阿弥陀佛的光就会照哪一个。要有真诚的心，拿出真心来不怕辛苦念佛，要用至诚恳切的心来念佛。

“白毫宛转五须弥”：阿弥陀佛二眉中就有个白毫。这个白毫有多大呢？有五个须弥山那么大。这个须弥山有多大呢？须弥山，是最高的；我们所有的山，须弥山是最高的。我们所看见的虚空这叫四王天；这个须弥山高过

四王天一半，透过四王天去，比四王天还高。那么阿弥陀佛这个像呢，他这个白毫比五个须弥山还大。你看这有多大！

“绀目澄清四大海”：阿弥陀佛那个眼睛，单单那个眼睛，就有四个大海那么大。你说这是不是 big eyes（大眼）？四个大海那么大的眼睛。这个绀目－－碧绿色的眼睛，有四个大海那么大。那么你说他身体有多大？这个身体，有百亿那么多的三千大千世界那么大。

“光中化佛无数亿”：这阿弥陀佛又放光；他眼睛也放光，耳朵也放光，鼻子也放光，口也放光，什么地方都是放光。每一个汗毛孔上，都现出无量无边那么多的世界，那么多的佛。你看，这是你心里想都想不到那么大了。光中化佛无数亿，化出来的佛不知多少。

“化菩萨众亦无边”：在他每一个汗毛上，化出来的菩萨也是无量无边那么多。

“四十八愿度众生”：他有四十八愿来教化众生。

“九品咸令登彼岸”：他这个莲花分成九品，九九八十一品。怎么叫九品呢？有上品，有中品，有下品。这又分出九品：有上上品、上中品、上下品，这上三品；中上品、中中品、中下品，这中三品；下上品、下中品、下下品，这下三品。在每一品里头又分出来九品，所以这有九九八十一品的莲花。

这个大的莲花有多大呢？大的莲花大约有一百个美国这么大；那么小的莲花呢？或者就有美国这么大。这举出这么一个例子，你们大家就可以知道一个大概了。那么莲花越大的呢，你成佛坐的莲花那个法身也大。莲花出得像一个美国的面积这么大的一朵莲花，那个佛的法身也就和全美国这么大的面积一个样子，所以化出来的佛也不可思议。

他有“四十八愿度众生，九品咸令登彼岸”，这是一个观想念佛。

我们这儿听经呢，有几个蚊子它们就想了。它想：“佛相怎么会这么大呢？这我不相信。”不过这是应该它不相信，因为它太小了，所以就不会相信有大的。它不但不相信佛是这么大；它也不相信人是这么大。它虽然看见

人，它也不知道人是什么？它以为人就是个须弥山。我们每一个人都有须弥山。什么是我们自己那个须弥山呢？我今天把这个最微妙的法告诉你们，就是你们那个贡高我慢。不相信？

Okay！今天就讲这么多。还有三个没讲完。你们晚间做梦，或者有人告诉你们；如果没有做这个梦，明天我再告诉你们。

1975年8月19日．星期二下午

今天念佛七是第二天了，头一天不知道南无阿弥陀佛是怎么回事？所以我跟大家解释一下。这第二天呢，每一个人就应该知道怎么样用功了；怎么样念佛了。在念佛的时候，声音也不要太大了；太大了气会受伤。但是也不能太小了；太小了就容易昏沉，容易没有精神了。你没有精神了，昏沉了，自己所念的南无阿弥陀佛，自己都听不见了；你听不见，你心里也就没有南无阿弥陀佛的存在了。所以念佛必须要口里念得声音清清楚楚的；耳朵要听这个声音清清楚楚的；心里要观想阿弥陀佛和这个念佛的声音清清楚楚的。就是一秒钟，也不要把时间空过去，时时刻刻都提起来念佛这一念，来诚心诚意地念南无阿弥陀佛。念佛的这个念头不要叫它断了，时时刻刻都继续继续来念佛。

昨天晚间讲“观想念佛”，今天就讲“观相念佛”。

第二观相念佛：因为观想，不容易把你的心量放大了来观想阿弥陀佛这么大的法身。你可以预备一个阿弥陀佛的像；你再对着阿弥陀佛像来念佛，也注意阿弥陀佛两个眉中间那个白毫相光。你观想这个佛相有白毫相，由这个白毫相又放大光明，尽虚空遍法界都得到阿弥陀佛的光明遍照。

在阿弥陀佛的光里面又现出来无量诸佛，也现出来无量的菩萨。这样做观想，观这个相，这叫观相念佛。

第三是持名念佛：这个持名念佛，就是执持六字洪名－－佛的名号，来念佛。执持名号又分出来有声念佛，与无声念佛。有声念佛，就是我们开静的时候，大家同声称念南无阿弥陀佛，是有这个声音。无声念佛，就是坐着

的时候还是专一其心，默默来称念南无阿弥陀佛的名号，这叫默念，又叫金刚念。念佛这个法门，在佛教里是最容易修的一个法门。

这个法门三根普被，利钝兼收。三根就是上根、中根、钝根。

上根就是最有智慧的人；中根就是普普通通的人；钝根就是很愚痴的人。这个法门也是老少兼收，利钝兼收。利，就是聪明有智慧的人；钝，就是愚痴的人。有智慧的人，修念佛的法门，也是很容易相应的；愚痴的人修念佛的法门也很容易相应。所以这念南无阿弥陀佛这六字洪名，是又省工，又不费钱，是最方便的法门。不但是方便，是方便中的方便，捷径中的捷径，就是近路；近路中的近路，这种法门是最妙的法门了。

你不要以为念这一句南无阿弥陀佛，这又有什么意思。这个意思可就多了，有说不完那么多的妙处，说不完那么多的好处。在佛住世的时候，叫正法时代，就是有佛说法，有证果的阿罗汉，有大菩萨，有一切的圣人在世间，这叫正法时代。

等佛入涅槃后，这叫像法时代。像法时代，修道的人比较少了，尽着相的人多了；执着造佛像，造种种的佛像，修行人就少了。

过了像法时代就是末法时代。这正法是一千年，像法一千年，共两千年。末法是一万年。

我们现在是末法时代。什么叫末法呢？就是法到末梢上，就是佛法就要没有了；佛法没有，就是没有人信佛了，所以末法时代众生信佛的心就不坚固。

在佛住世的时候，人信佛的信心－－甚至于他信佛，你想用刀杀了他，说：“你不要信佛了；你信佛，我就要用刀杀了你。”他就宁可你用刀杀了他，他也信佛。这是正法时代，人的信心就有这么坚固。

那末法时代呢，不要你说杀他；你说：“你不要信佛了。”他说：“Okay！可以。”不要说杀他，你叫他不信，他就不信；你叫他信呢？那很困难的。

你们算一算，在这世界上有多少人，在这全人类里头，能有多少人信佛？这信佛的人你天天跟他讲经说法，他也将信将疑的。你要叫他去看看电影，好不好？他即刻就去了。你叫他去听经呢，“喔！坐那两个钟头很苦的，听得也没什么味道，没有看电影那样好看。”所以这是叫末法时代。

末法时代你不要说杀他，叫他不信佛；你就不杀他，你说你信佛了，我给你叩三个头，那你可以先信了吧？“你给我叩头干什么？”这个人哪，末法时代他就不容易信佛。信信，他也就向后转。信了两天半，没有到三天呢！他就向后转了。他说：“I am very tired.”tried, tired（累了），你看！这是末法人的根性，就这样子。你耳提面命说：“Not too much talking.（别讲太多话了！）? Too much talking.（讲话太多了！）你叫他不要做什么，他一定要做；你叫他要做什么，他一定不要做，末法时代的众生就是这样。

那么末法，这个法，会灭的，会没有了。先什么灭呢？这个《楞严经》最先没有了。所以我们学佛法的人，都应该先研究《楞严经》。有人懂《楞严经》，这佛法就不会灭；有人会念（楞严咒），这个世界所有的魔王、天魔外道，就不敢来作怪，来兴风作浪。所以（楞严咒）是帮助世界人的最妙的一个咒；《楞严经》是护持正法的一部最好的经。楞严经先灭了，没有了，楞严咒更没有人会念了，因为太长了。我们这儿有人好像都有一年多了，（楞严咒）还念不出来。本来这（楞严咒）叫愣半年，那么在西方就有愣一年，愣两年，愣三年都没有楞完的。

那么（楞严咒）、《楞严经》先灭了，以后就到最后灭的是《佛说阿弥陀经》，也没有了。世界上就剩“南无阿弥陀佛”这六字洪名，在世界上再存在一百年。

在这一百年，这“南无阿弥陀佛”六字洪名度无量众生。等到一百年之后，六字洪名又减去两个字，就剩“阿弥陀佛”、“阿弥陀佛”、“阿弥陀佛”了，就剩四个字。四个字，又等了一百年，这四个字也没有了。那时候世界的人最苦了，一点福报也没有了，所吃的东西就和现在的马粪一样的，

没有营养了，吃的东西一点营养都没有了，你天然的也没有营养了。无论是什么吃的东西，比现在那个马出的那个粪，都难吃的。那时候，为什么那样子呢？就因为人没有福报了。因为在佛住世的时候，喝的这个水，都比现在喝的这个牛奶，都有营养。为什么现在的水没有那么有营养呢？就因为人没有那样大的福报了。

那时候人就像狗那么高，没有现在这么高了。等到那时苦到极点了，那么又该增劫了。现在是减劫。什么叫减劫？减劫就是每一百年，人的寿命减去一岁，高度减去一寸，等减到人寿十岁，身上的高度就像现在狗那么高。那时候人一生出来就有淫欲心，人一生出来就会杀人，就那么坏的。但是到那个时候又该增了，也是一百年增加一岁，高度增加一寸。那么增到八万四千岁，那真是 long life（长命）了。然后再减，减到八万岁那时候，当来下生弥勒尊佛出世了。谁愿意生在那时候，见到弥勒尊佛，现在就要好好用功。

那么现在打佛七，念南无阿弥陀佛这个法门，不是容易遇着的。所谓“无上甚深微妙法”，你看这念佛是很容易的；但是能遇着这念佛的法门，是很不容易的。你们各位想一想，就拿这美国来讲，能有多少人明白这念佛法门？都是说，佛教徒，想要信佛；信佛有的是参禅的，有的是学密宗的，以为这密宗真是不得了的，学密去了。真正明白念佛法门的是很少的，所以现在我们这儿，是在美国从来没有的法会。

我们现在是头一次在这深山里边，讲这个甚深的妙法。可以说是这个国家，有历史以来是第一次。尤其我们这些个人，从四面八方来的；有从洛杉矶来的，又有从 San Francisco（三藩市或旧金山）来的。可见这些人都有诚恳的心；没有诚恳的心，不会到这个地方来。他去看看电影，跳跳舞啊，或者喝喝酒啊，打打牌啊，或者去打高尔夫球啊，或者去打什么 football（足球）啊，种种的滑冰、滑雪，很多很好玩的事情，他不去。那么这就证明这些人都有很多诚心。

“百千万劫难遭遇”：不容易遇到的，现在遇到了。

“我今见闻得受持”：我现在见着这个佛法，懂得怎么样念佛。

“愿解如来真实意”：愿意明白这个净土法门真实的道理。

你们大家都很诚心的。我今天很高兴。为什么呢？就因为你们都感应得不下雨了。这两天来，昨天晚间也没有下雨，今天也没有下雨，这证明你们念佛有点诚心。明天如果又下雨，这证明你们又没有诚心了；要是不下雨呢？那就三天，乃至于这一个礼拜，也要它不下雨。那就证明你们各位都有相当的诚心了，有相当的真心来念佛了。

那么你没有这种真心呢？我也对你们说一说。我为你们的这种真心，我这几天和蚊虫签了一个合同。和这个蚊子签了什么合同呢？我说，所有参加这个念佛法门的，参加这个法会的这个人，我希望你们所有这个蚊虫，都不要咬他们；如果你们想要咬的话，先来咬我，喝我一点血没有关系。我愿意布施给它们我自己的血，不要咬这个参加念佛法门的这个人；不论是我的皈依弟子，或不是皈依弟子，都一律平等待遇，不可以给他们麻烦。所以你们以后哪一个要是被蚊子咬了的话，就告诉我一声。被一个蚊子咬了，就告诉我一个蚊子咬你；两个蚊子咬，就告诉我说有两个蚊子咬你，因为我好和它去算这个数目。因为我和它签的 lease 这个合同；它不履行它这个条约，这个我可以告诉 court（法庭），sue him（告他）！有的人就说，蚊子咬我，我也不敢讲；因为一讲了，法师你又讲我没有真心念佛了。若是你不讲，是你自己欺骗自己，不关我的事。

弟子（果真）：师父正在讲蚊子的时候，有一个蚊子就飞到我耳朵那里，而且好像还在咬我。

上人：那你可以叫他成佛去。You can say, “I vow you will go to Buddhahood first.”

1975年8月 19日．星期二晚

这个佛七，今天快圆满两天了，相信今天晚间也不会下雨。这两天每一个人都有真心。明天不知人还会不会拿出真心来，这就看下雨，不下雨就知道了。

我们念南无阿弥陀佛时候，听到打磬就要转板，就念阿弥陀佛、阿弥陀佛，我看有很多人都不知道。这个念南无阿弥陀佛走出去的时候，这叫放掌。不是这么，这叫合掌；这样叫放掌。这个掌要放下来；不是掌托到肚子下边去，这是不好看的。那么要怎么样呢？要将这个掌放到这个心口这儿－－你那个肉心；对着肉心地方，这叫放掌，这么样子。你再听，这打一下磬，这就是要转板了；转板就是要大家不念“南无阿弥陀佛”，就念“阿弥陀佛、阿弥陀佛、阿弥陀佛”，又要合起掌来。我看很多人也不知道合掌，到这念“阿弥陀佛”的时候，也不知道合掌，还是这么样子的，或者这样子的，不懂这个规矩。

这个规矩，虽然是不重要，但是也要守；你要是不守，那就不能成方圆，就不能成就我们所愿意得到的。好像方才这个果童，他四岁的时候来到庙上，旁的他什么都不问；他就问为什么要有规矩？四岁的时候他就问这种问题，“为什么要有规矩？”当时他那么小，我看他问这种问题，这一定是个不守规矩的小孩子，一定是很坏的。那么我说，就因为你不守规矩，所以要有规矩；你如果要守规矩了，那就不需要规矩了。

那么现在他来到这儿，我相信一定很讨厌规矩，因为他愿意很随便地，蹦蹦跳跳，打打闹闹。这是他的本性，就像那猴子似的，这儿跳跳，那儿钻钻地，有一点那么的性情。你看看他，这个头很活动的；那个眼睛也愿意看东西。但是他会造 story（故事），如果能继续往深的研究研究，将来他一定会成一个造 story 的专家。现在他十一岁就会造 story，等到他要大了，更会造了。你们各位要注意他，将来他 story 要满天飞的。

你们每一个人要是要 story，他都可以给你造一个。你不要忘了那一条头发的故事（编按：请看本会出版《地藏菩萨本愿经浅释》书尾）。这是秘密法，一般人都不知道。有人想要知道，现在也不要告诉他们。还有，我们每一个人站在拜佛位置的时候，先来的就往前面站，后来的就比较站在后边一点。不要先来的站到后边，后来的又站到前边去了，这是没有次序。无论到什么地方都要有次序；有次序就是有次第，有规矩。这样子才不会乱，才会有一种很好的方法，这一点每一个人都应该注意的。

修行是要天天修行；不是今天修行，明天不修行。守规矩也是一样的，天天要守规矩；你要是不守规矩，你这就是不合乎佛法的戒律的。这一点每一个人无论到什么地方都要注意的，不要马马虎虎的。

今天白天讲的持名念佛。这个念佛的法门，老年人也可以念佛；青年人也可以念佛；壮年人也可以念佛：无论任何人，都可以念佛。有病的人可以念佛；健康的人更应该念佛。为什么呢？有病的人，你病苦这么重，因为有业障，应该要念佛来消业障；没有病的人，趁着你身体健康，正好用念佛来回向身体永远的健康。那么老年人呢？这个路快要走完了，你应该走一条好路，应该念佛。青年人，正年轻，前途有无量的光明，你应该念南无阿弥陀佛，你的前途也有无量的光明。所以这个念佛法门无论任何人，都应该念佛的。这个念佛，行住坐卧都可以念佛。你行也可以念佛；住也可以念佛；坐也可以念佛；卧也可以念佛。但是，卧着念佛，不要出声念，要在心里头念；你要出声念就不恭敬了。因为你躺着念佛这是不恭敬的。这一点各位要知道。最忙的人可以念佛，最闲的人也可以念佛。

最忙的人你怎么样念呢？你要修“朝暮十念法”。怎么修“朝暮十念法”呢？就是早晨和晚间用十念。怎么叫十念法呢？每一念是一口气；念十口气这叫十念法。一早起来，把脸洗干净，把牙也都洗干净了，然后你面对着西方，要是有阿弥陀佛像更好。你们无论哪一位，如果希望请阿弥陀佛像，我有纸印的阿弥陀佛像，你们可以到金山寺来，我可以送给你一张。那么你对着佛像合起掌来恭恭敬敬地先拜三拜，然后就念“南无阿弥陀佛，念十口气。这个朝暮，早晨与晚间都这么念南无阿弥陀佛、南无阿弥陀佛、南无阿弥陀佛。这么一口气，也不要故意叫这个气长，也不要故意叫这个气短，就是很自然的。这一口气就为一念，念十口气。早晨念十口气，晚间念十口气，叫朝暮十念法。你要能以天天不间断，只用五分钟，或十分钟的时间就够了。

那么平日是不是也可以念呢？当然可以念了。你念得越多越好。这是朝暮十念法；你要是用这朝暮十念法的功夫，也可以往生到西方极乐世界去。所以这个念佛的法门是最方便的法门。

这个念佛的法门，今天曾经说过，有智慧的人也应该念佛；愚痴的人也应该念佛。有的人说：“我是很愚痴的，我念佛恐怕没有用。”这个念佛的法门是越愚痴越好，越有智慧越好。你再有智慧，也超不出去这个念佛法门；你再愚痴也会在这个念佛法门里头包括着，把你接引去。

佛的弟子里头有一个最愚痴的，愚痴到什么程度呢？你叫他念南无阿弥陀佛，他不记得这六个字；他只记得六个字都是什么？他不记得念。那么最后佛就给他一个方法，说：“好了，你念佛不记得，那么我就给你两个字。你啊！你念这个‘笤扫’两个字。”

“笤扫”两个字，他还记不住；念“笤”字，他把“扫”字忘了：“哎！什么来的？”念“扫”字，把“笤”字忘了：“哦！哦！调？喔！那个字是什么？喔！‘扫’。那个字又是什么？”“笤扫”两个字：记得“笤”字，把“扫”字给忘了；记得“扫”字，“笤”字又忘了：笨得这个样子。你们现在，我相信没有一个人笨成这个样子。就我最笨，也比他都觉得聪明一点。是不是啊？我自己相信我比他都聪明一点。那么你们各位当然都比我更聪明啰！

这个人叫什么名字？叫周利盘陀伽，翻译的意思就叫“继道”，他在道上生的。那他这样笨，他以后也开悟了。开悟知道什么呢？知道他母亲是个女人，所以佛给他印证他开悟了，开悟了也就有神通了。你看那么笨的人都可以开悟，都可以有所成就，我们这么聪明的人，一定会更有所成就了。今天就讲到这儿，因为有人打妄想说讲得太多了，所以少讲一点。

比丘尼恒贤：今天是我们念佛的第三天，你们应该有一点感应了。昨天上人谈到念佛的功德可以减轻业障因而治病。昨天我们听了一个“大猫”的故事；今天我想讲一个“小狗”的故事，这都是念佛治病的真实故事。第一个我要讲的是一只住在美国（加州）佛莱斯诺市的北京狗。北京狗产自中国，因佛经传入中国而培育出来的。《金刚经》是中国第一批木刻印刷的书。上面描绘着文殊师利菩萨骑在一头狮子上。当皇宫里的仕女们很喜欢这头狮子，所以就培育了一种新品种的狗－－北京狗，看起来像是文殊师利菩萨骑

的那头狮子。

那在加州佛莱斯诺市这一只小北京狗，它的祖父曾得世界狗赛冠军。它因为是它那一窝里最不出色的，所以没让去比赛；虽然在比赛中它没露脸，可它还是名门之后。这只狗很特别，很活泼，很好脾气的；只有一点小毛病，就是有点爱虚荣，爱挑嘴。除了这个之外，实在没有理由为什么它会遭到往后的命运，或者是因为另外一只大狗的嫉妒吧！

总之当我探望它的主人我姑祖时，这只狗的下半身已经麻痹了。因为脊椎骨的毛病，使得它整个下半身都不能动，勉勉强强地它可以拖动着自己。它也受着极大的痛楚，一看就知道它已精疲力歇，随时就要不行了。我那时已经学习了一段时间的佛法，对念咒和念佛名具很大的信心。它那时正在受着一种光治疗，但是我看得出那些治疗它的人，所感兴趣的是我姑祖的荷包，而非它的病情，这治疗也没什么效用。我坐下来拿着一本〈楞严咒〉开始念了两、三遍，然后我开始念阿弥陀佛名号。

说来奇怪，我一开始念就好像有什么东西跟这只狗接通了似的。我念的时候我让它背对着我，因为我想要将注意力集中在它那受伤了的脊椎骨上。可是它频频回首看我，又发出各种声音、手势好像它也要念佛名似的。当然我是没法确定，但可能这念诵是它前生所熟知的，勾起了它的记忆。总之，从那之后它就渐渐好起来了，几天后它差不多就复原了，除了一点点跛。最后它完全复原了，这是念诵的功德。

另外一件事是跟金山寺的果奎和果宗两位居士有关。在他们的女儿果芳出生前，他们有只狗叫露西；露西很活泼，也很聪明，是一只小猎犬。它懂得玩很多把戏，很调皮，很通人性，我觉得我跟这只狗很有缘。有一天下午我从金山寺往窗外看见露西被车撞倒了。我跑出去，它已经躺在地上受重伤了。车子可能撞上了它的头侧部和前半身。它眼睛往上翻，嘴里淌着血，两脚伸直，身子开始僵硬。那开车的人从车里出来对它大喊：“快死啦！你这狗！”

我叫那人走；他走后我开始诵〈大悲咒〉；庙上其他的人也走出来一起诵。有人跑去告诉 上人；传话过来说这狗要死了，我们应该念“南无阿弥陀佛”。我们小心翼翼地将它搬进办公室，给它洗伤口，包毯子保暖，又全力念“南无阿弥陀佛”。这样念了几小时，我们看得出露西渐渐复苏过来了；一个半小时之后，它就不愿意在毯子里了，我们得按着它才行。本来它都已经死在街上了，现在它活过来了。我们一直念佛名念到 上人要讲法时才停。上人一来就问露西怎么了，并让我们把它带到楼上去。

有的人认为露西皈依过；有人看见它让人由 上人房里带出来，或者是跟上人会过了面。不管怎么说，它学佛法的缘是挺好的。上人责备它，又告诉它早跟它讲过，如果它老往屋外跑，定准会惹上麻烦；它不听，果然出事。上人所讲的它全都乖乖地接受了。那天晚上它虽然不是很活跃，也已经能跑动了；第二天它就恢复正常，完全复原了。

有一桩事很有趣，就是露西的主人果宗那时正怀着果芳；而在果芳出生前不久露西就失踪了。没人知道它到哪儿去了，没人走丢它；它就是忽然不在了，不久果芳就出世了。你可别骤下结论，我也从来没见过果芳蹲在地上玩自己的脚丫子；我没看过她玩那把戏，所以这里边或者没有什么关系，这就是露西的故事。

因为刚才说的种种缘故，这狗今天不在这儿，不过它确实是让我们念佛治好的伤。当然，重要的是它不是一个人念佛治好的，而是很多人念佛治好的。当我给另外那只住在美国佛莱斯诺的北京狗，名叫阿丘的念诵时，它至今还是活的。我知道那是佛菩萨的力量，使得那咒语和佛名号起作用，可是我们不是经常很清楚这点。有人会念具大威神力的咒语时，会错认为是自己的力量起的作用，而不自量力地显耀出来时是会很危险的。

在中国就曾有过这样的事。有一位比丘很有修行，人称“活罗汉”。他的本事就是以〈大悲咒〉给人治病。什么病，什么人他都治得好。一次有很多法师聚集在普陀山参加传戒典礼；礼成后，许多人没法回去自己的庙上。这位“活罗汉”使出了许多惊人的本事，以〈大悲咒〉给人医病弄到许多钱

；又给每一个人，或者买车票，或者包下船，送每一个人回去，如此地炫耀。那时 上人也在法会上，看出这个“活罗汉”就快死了，所以上前跟他讲：“你叫‘活罗汉’吧！你能医别人的病；你自己的病你医好没？”

“我什么病？”那活罗汉问。

“你得这个求名的病，将来你就会得求利的病，再不久你就堕落了。”上人说。

这个罗汉也算有修行；也日中一食，夜不倒单，有点神通，知道不平常。可奇怪，他立即拜倒在地，不是求 上人不让他堕落；是求如果他堕落，则上人定必救他。上人一向满众生愿，见他意诚，所以就答应了，说：“好，你堕落时，我来救你。”

几年后，许多法师们离开大陆赴香港、台湾等地。你猜怎么了？就在香港街上 上人又碰到了那位“活罗汉”！只是他已不是比丘，而是在家装扮，还俗了。换言之，堕落了。

上人说：“你那‘活罗汉’怎么了？”

他说：“就因为你说的话太准了。你说的话太神了，就因为你说我会堕落，所以我就堕落了。”

上人说：“那我说过假如你堕落我会来救你；我来救你了，你可以回去再当比丘。”

“我现在没钱了。”在中国出家得要花很多钱的；你要是想出家又没钱，那是不成的。

上人说：“那没关系；我给你钱，你可以出家。”他就又出家了。

你以为他这次可学乖了，可是他又在香港跟一个在家人搞上了。那在家人想找个比丘作招牌，帮他弄事业。起先那人找上我们 上人，上人当然是不会跟他合作招摇撞骗，可是这个原来的“活罗汉”就跟他合伙了；合伙了，那在家人就称他为“活菩萨”，又向他顶礼，又怎么怎么的，可是不久这个“活罗汉”就不见了。所以随便拿咒语的力量，给人治病来牟利是很危险的。

一般是以念咒或念佛名的功德回向给人帮助人；回向功德是普贤菩萨十大愿之一。这十大愿是早课时必诵的。

第一愿是礼敬诸佛；不是只礼敬一尊佛，而是礼敬所有的佛。当然更不是礼敬刻成了佛像的一块木头或是石头，而是表示皈命十方三世一切诸佛。

第二愿是称赞如来。比如称赞阿弥陀佛那赞上说：

阿弥陀佛身金色，相好光明无等伦；
白毫宛转五须弥，绀目澄清四大海。
光中化佛无数亿，化菩萨众亦无边；
四十八愿度众生，九品咸令登彼岸。

这是赞佛，也是第二愿称赞如来。

第三愿是广修供养。供养有很多种，有在佛前供香，供花，也可以一瓣心香作供养，这都不一定的。

第四愿是忏悔业障，就是忏悔以前所做过的种种一切；这种种一切障碍着你使你现在修行困难，这业障让你坐不住禅，让你不能专心念佛，不能专心修你的法门。由无始来以至今生，由身语意所生的恶业，一切你都忏悔。这在皈依时特别重要；因为在皈依时，有那一 刹那能感应十方佛加被放光照你。假如在那一刹间你能很诚心忏悔的话，就可以澈底消灭你的业障，恢复清净。这全看你诚心的程度。

第五愿是随喜功德，听起来有点神秘，特别在早上四点半我们念到这个愿时。这个愿就表示凡有人做善事时你也欢喜，也参加一份；假如有法会时你不光是说：“啊！真不错，他们有法会。”你自己也要去参加。所以在洛杉矶那么远的地方，有人听到奥立岗这儿有法会，他们不只赞同；他们也赶来参加。其他地方也有人从老远赶来的。

普贤菩萨第六愿是请转法轮。我们都知道佛讲《阿弥陀经》是不问自说的，但一般是没人请法就不说法；有人请法才说法。当然讲法不光是只用语言才算讲法；讲法有很多种方式，所以第六是请法，请转法轮。

第七愿是请佛住世。当然佛成佛之后就可入涅槃了，不需要停留在这个众苦交煎的世界。佛也不会再受苦了，不过假如众生请佛留下佛也会留下来的，所以第七愿是请佛住世教化众生。

第八愿是常随佛学，也就是佛做什么，我们也就做什么。比如说佛舍身喂饿虎我们也这样修行；佛割肉喂鹰我们也这样修行：这就是常随佛学。

第九是恒顺众生。这并不表示当众生干的事有问题时，你也跟着去干，只为要顺着他们。这是说你看众生喜欢什么，你就从那儿来教化他；众生爱做什么，你就用那做基础来帮助他了生死，不是在外强加一些桎 梏在他身上。换言之，你就从众生原有的地方开始。

第十是普皆回向。这就是你把所有你依佛教修行所累积得来的功德，回向给众生，最好是所有一切众生，令他们都成就菩提。功德也可以回向给个人，助他康复。

这是普贤菩萨的十大愿。上面所提的“活罗汉”当然不是真的活罗汉；真罗汉已经了了两种生死里的一种。生死有两种：一是分段生死，就是有个身体；这身体的寿命期限虽不是绝对固定的，但差不 多是一定的；另一是变易生死，就是念念相续不断。前念死了，后念又生；后念死了，新的一念又生了，如此循环不息，永不终止。阿罗汉已经了了第一种的分段生死，所以已经没有一个身体，也没有寿者相了。那么这故事里所谓的“罗汉”自然是还没有到达这个程度，他自己的生死还没有把握，所以当他的罪业满了，就得死了。

我知道有的人疑惑，为什么我们说大部份时候 上人不很注意对个人个别的治疗呢？因为 上人是做大规模的治疗，他给众生的药是治生死的；如果众生依教奉行的话，就可以完全把握自己的命运，并且还可以转教别人。所以上人这不仅是治疗某一种的疾病，而是教人完全由生死之中解脱出来。

男众：心地中，相对世界中的事，常常要用例子来说明。我今天就想到了这么一件事。我曾和一群人住在（夏威夷）毛夷（Maui）的麦克肯尼海滩。我们一起搭了一个帐篷，而在中央的位置有一处弃置的，军用工事的加

固水泥地基，约二尺高、一尺宽，好几尺长，不管怎么说一定要清除掉它。大家都忙着搭帐篷，没人愿意去对付这个麻烦，可它正在当中，保留又不行。结果在大家忙的时候，就会有一个人拿起大锤子去敲几下，它却纹风不动，一整天都没有进展。人敲上五、十分钟，就泄气回来了。没人愿意做这件事，我也不例外，看来没希望了。

过了半天，我突然想到世上无论什么东西，只要定在一点上持续打击，时间够的时候就一定会被打破。因此我就去游泳使自己打起精神，回来再拿起大锤子干开了。我不断地从一个点向中间，向底部打击着，大约两个小时后整块水泥就被砸开了。我再叫来几个人把两大长条石头拖走了。

这个例子说明了应如何在因地修行。像我们现在的情形，人们经常持咒、念圣号。最初什么都好，可心一专业障就浮现出来了。所修的法门越深入，业障浮现得就越久。许多人不知这是么回事，就会说：“禅真是无聊透了，和几年前刚开始修时比起来，我更觉得泄气了。”因此就止了修禅。这是非常普遍的倾向，因为人要回避生活中较深入的问题。开始修一个法门时，比如念佛，念着念着好像没什么，但过一段时间后就发现执着与妄想的呈现。这一切都跟当事人的个性、执着、弱点、特征相关。经过相当长的明显的阶段，所有的不幸、忧虑都会聚成一团，让修行人非常难过。

这是我们进步的症候。如果修禅集中观照这一团，它就会放光；这是种平衡的境界。大体上是种念佛持咒的境界，要用有意识的心念来念佛，来克服下意识的妄想。

通常妄念都非常强，比有意识的心念强。当有意识的心念和下意识的妄想势均力敌时，就互相排斥消长，心中出现光明。二者均衡的时间越久，光明持续得也越久，光明终会摧毁执着业障。我，或许很多人在念佛、经行、坐禅时会总发现心中在说：“我不介意，我觉得这没有必要。”这种情形发生时，我们就应问自己：“我如果认为这不是真的，那这是谁造成的？”认真考虑一下这个问题：“我们如果没有执着这件事，那这境界是谁造成的？如果我没做错事，意识到我做错事的人又是谁？”认识到我们或许错了，别

人或许是对的，要真地认识到这一点。如果对自心的态度不能改变，那全部的修行就都不会正确，修禅也会不对。如果对禅的态度不正确，禅就会成为障碍。对这点的认识很重要，否则几年的修行就会空费。我们现在进行的念诵很好，因为我们曾在打坐上花了不少时间。

但我知道许多朋友以及我自己从未经行。经行是很好的修行，很重要，应该提倡让人认识到修禅不一定要打坐，这很重要。每天我们都有很多机会修禅，忙碌的人也不例外。我们生活中总是有需要排队或等候的情形；若能利用这些时间，就能凑出几个小时来修禅。

除了修禅，去除业障，明白自性，还有持戒。佛告诫出家弟子在他入灭后要以戒为师。出家持戒未满五年之前大体上是不应修任何禅定的，这实在是事出有因。打个比方，好比一辆想停下来的车，关掉引擎而不煞车，车最终会停下来，当然这样的时间会比较久些。可是因没煞车，再起动也较容易，连小孩子都能推得动。持戒的道理也是一样，要修禅有成就，就须长期持戒，那修行人也不易为世间法所动。如果他看到美丽女人或包装精致的大麻烟，或迷幻药，就不可能会这样想：“啊！太好了！”就一头栽进去了。另一方面，如果不顾戒律修行，则不仅会为旧习性所支配，还会养成新习性。这些习性变强大之后，修行就很困难了。

1975年8月20日．星期三下午

上人：还有没有问题？

问：佛法对我来说是新的，我想知道您教哪一宗派？

上人（问翻译者）：他叫什么名字？

答：鲍伯。

上人（问翻译者）：他是什么地方来的？

答：曼哈顿。

上人：我们金山寺是整个佛教的一个佛教，并不单属于哪一宗，哪一派；也没有宗，也没有派。

问：我记得 上人曾说，我们修行要从根本处修起，法也要从根本处修。我新来，也不懂很多，但是我可以理解生死的概念；我知道旧的死了新的又会生出来了。我希望 上人能就这点再加以解释一下，并且再告诉我们一些法是什么；我们在这末法时期该怎样弘扬法。法是不是也像其他的众生一样，在一处灭了，在他处又生起。

上人：法，就是一个方法。什么方法呢？修道的方法。修道的方法因为时间久了，人觉得这个法不新鲜了，他就不修行。本来这个法，没有正法也没有末法；法是不动的，没有正末，人呢？有勤修精进和懒惰。人精进就是正法；人懒惰就是末法。我们现在在这儿打佛七，叫精进七，这就是正法。那么过了打七，你不精进，不修行了，这就是末法。

问：可不可以请 上人讲一讲第三眼？

上人（问翻译者）：有五眼，不只三眼。他听谁说过有三眼？

问：上人昨天所讲的白毫相，是第三眼？

上人：不是的。那是白毫相光。佛不是只有三眼。佛是有百千万无量无边那么多的眼。我们众生修行也可以有无量无边那么多的眼。每一个毫毛梢上就有无量无边那么多的眼睛－－不要说这个眼，有一些外道所说的三眼，那真是太少了，太不明白佛法的道理了。佛法，你要修成佛了，那个眼睛没有数量那么多；那个手也没有数量那么多。观音菩萨都有千手千眼；不只千手千眼，万手万眼都不止。

你们被蚊虫咬的呢？一定有很多人都被蚊虫咬。

问：……。

上人：那就是你不诚心念佛，没有拿出真心来。

问：那订的合同呢？

上人：你告诉他，这个蚊子一定是没有信用的。它一定是不依照这合同来做的。这是毫无疑问的。因为它太小了，它不管这个。这蚊子也太多了，很多。我可以一个签着，另个一签着，那不少了。它们是很自由很民主，不

听旁人管的。我和这个蚊子签了合同，那个蚊子说我没有签。我不管的，所以它要来咬人。

翻译：上人只跟一只蚊子签约。

上人：签，也不是一个，也是很多，但是，另外还有很多的嘛！不是单单一个。譬如，这一个国家有民主党跟共和党。我和民主党签了，共和党说我没有签，他那个 party（党）不管的。因为蚊虫太多了，它有好几党，好几派。

蚊子有蚊子的党；蚂蚁有蚂蚁的党；蜂子有蜂子的党，各有所党，各有一派。唯独我这个佛教，也没有一个党，也没有一个派；也没有一个宗，就是全体的佛教。我所讲的佛教，不是中国的佛教，不是日本的佛教，不是暹罗、缅甸的佛教，也不是锡兰、印度的佛教。我所主张的佛教，是整个世界的佛教，是整个宇宙的佛教，是整个法界的佛教。我所主张的佛教，也不叫它做佛教；叫它做什么呢？叫它“人教” - - 你是人，就应该信佛教。因为人能成佛，所有的人都可以成佛；没有成佛之前，我们叫它“人教”。

那么“人教”还不普遍，只有人能成佛。那么“人教”又给它改个名字，叫什么呢？叫“众生教”，所有的一切众生都包括在内了。众生就是在天上飞的众生，地下走的众生，水里头的众生，和一切树木植物，这都是众生，每一个树木里头它都有众生。众生是众缘和合而生，所有的一切因缘和合成功才成众生。所以我主张佛教改个名字叫“人教”；人教又改个名字叫“众生教”：这个众生教就是佛教。

众生教又给它改个名字叫“心教”；心教不是新旧的“新”是人心的“心”。一切众生都有一个心，既然有心都可以成佛；都可以成佛就叫心教。心、佛、众生，是三无差别；佛与众生和心是一样的。我所提倡的佛教是法界为宗。我是法界宗；以法界为宗，以法界为体，以法界为用，以法界为名。又叫一个法界教 - - 名、体、宗、用、教，都是法界；名叫法界，体叫法界体，宗叫法界宗，用叫法界用：教叫法界教，以法界做它一个范围。所以，所有的众生都包括在这法界里面；无论你是什么宗教，你跑不出法界外面去。

你也不能说你不是众生；你是众生，你在这个法界里头，在这个佛教里头包括着，不论你是好人、坏人，我都把你包括在佛教里头。你信佛教，不信佛教，我也都把你包括到佛教里头来。

你说：“我不信佛教。”那是你自己的事情，就好像你自己有父亲，可是你从小就跑到外边，所以也不认识这个父亲了。等到自己父亲来见面的时候，也不认识了。所以，我这个佛教的范围是包括所有信佛，和不信佛的人；不是说信佛的人就佛教，不信佛的人就不是佛教：不是的。你信不信，我都承认你是佛教，因为佛说过一切众生皆有佛性，皆堪作佛。你跑不出去的；你没有地方跑的，所以我的皈依弟子，他愿意来就来，愿意走就走。你走到什么地方去，我怎么样也不相信你会跑出到法界外边去。你没有跑出到法界外边去，你还在法界里边，那就是我的范围。所以，我这个佛教是没有一个边际的。

我这个佛教，你信也好，不信更好；你赞叹佛教也好，你毁谤佛教也没有关系。顺逆皆精进，你就是毁谤，我也要度你成佛的。

好像是昨天那个果立说有一个蚊子咬他耳 朵，我叫他发愿先度它成佛。你要是有这种愿力，蚊子不咬你了。那么果童又说也有蚊子咬他，我说把它 put in jail，把蚊子放到监狱里去。他说 No！No！他那么小就有慈悲心。咬他一口，他也不愿意把它放到监狱里头，这个就是慈悲心。至于说和这个蚊虫签合同，有的人说还是被蚊子咬呢！虽然说签合同，我们一切一切还要反求诸己，回光返照。

我最初说那个道理，那才是真的。什么呢？我说你们要是拿出真心来念佛，就没有蚊子来咬你们了，不需要签合同，蚊子也不咬你；你要不用真心来念佛，尽打妄想，那个蚊子它也会看，说：“你呀！在这儿修行，在这儿念佛，你尽打妄想。好！你先布施给我一点血，看你怎么样？”所以它会看的。

你要是有真心呢，它就宁动千江水，莫动道人心。“这个人在这儿修道念佛，我无论如何不打他闲岔。”它会看的。你看这蚊子虽然小，它会闻味

道的。你有这个念佛的味道，有真心，它就不咬你；你要没有真心，好像我这样常打妄想，这个蚊子就常常和我化缘。我这么样子不肯布施的人，都要布施一点血给它。

你们各位也当然是一样啦！从来也不想舍一分钱布施，舍一个钱帮助人，所以这个蚊子说“好啦！软化，不如硬化；我一定要喝你的血，叫你发菩提心。”它喝你一点血，你就有点觉悟，想这个娑婆世界真是苦；不要说旁的，这个蚊虫咬一口就痛得要一、两天，肿起来。这个世界真苦啰！赶快念佛求生极乐世界。那个地方无有众苦，但受诸乐；那个地方也没有三恶道，没这么多的蚊虫、蚂蚁、蜂子，这些麻烦都没有，所以你发菩提心。这个蚊子正是你的善知识，正是帮助你修行的，你要回光返照，反求诸己；要问问自己，是不是拿出真心来念佛了。这个意思在这个地方。

昨天我说和它签合同那是假的；今天我和你们说这个才是真的。

有的人说我们打佛七，讲开示，怎么讲蚊虫呢？蚊虫虽然小，可有大文章在里头。我们修道是要从小的地方修起，不是要从大的地方修起；都是自小而大，自近而远，自卑而高。所以，我们现在要是把近的事情弄清楚了，远的事情也就明白了。如果你们各位不愿意听，我所讲的你们就把它忘记了；你要是真忘了它，那你才是真念佛的人。我绝对不相信，你们会把“今天”忘了；不是“我今天说的”，你把它忘了，而是把“今天”给忘了。有人说我会忘了，我睡着就不记得了，这是真的。

1975年8月20日．星期三晚

来参加佛七的人，每一个人都应该拿出真心来念佛，免得累其他的人受苦。你如果不拿出你的真心来念佛，那么天就会下雨，把真心念佛的人也跟着受苦了。我们真心念佛的人要多，当然就不会下雨；没有真心的人多，就会下雨，这是一定的道理。下雨，路途就不好走，尤其在晚间，所以我们这三天没下雨，这是有大感应。

还剩四天了，看看怎样。所有的人，应该用至诚恳切心来念佛，不要躲懒偷安。不要没有事情不参加念佛。我们这么远来的，如果马马虎虎好像玩

似的，那就没有意思了。所以无论哪一个来参加念佛的，来参加法会的，都要忍受一切的苦来念佛。无论如何要真心念佛，念的声音也不要太高，也不要太低。不要在念佛的时候好像要睡觉似的；在不念佛的时候来了精神了，很多话讲。不要这样，要用整个精神来念佛，来观想阿弥陀佛。

你们哪一个有什么感应，有什么瑞相？瑞相就是祥瑞的感应，或者见到阿弥陀佛来给你摩顶，或者见到阿弥陀佛用他的衣来把你遮上，这都是瑞相。或者见到佛放光，或者闻到异香扑鼻；平时没有闻到的这股香味，这也叫瑞相。或者见到莲花，或者你晚间做梦梦到念佛，这种种的瑞相，都包括在这打佛七之内。你有这种感应，就证明阿弥陀佛来爱护你，来摄受你，有种种好的吉祥的相。

明天你们每一个人要是有什么瑞相，有什么感应，可以提出来对大家来讲一讲。我也愿意知道知道。你看，我们感动得天地都不下雨了，那其余的瑞相更会有的。你们无论哪一个，见到观音菩萨或者阿弥陀佛，都可以说一说。这个果童，你在打佛七的时候有没有看见什么菩萨啊，佛啊，有什么情形，可以对大家说一说。无论哪一个－－小果芳，你要是有什么境界也可以说一说。我们这儿的人，不论大小都可以提出自己所见所闻的来说一说，因为我们这儿是公开的，是民主的，我们这所有一切，都是可以叫大家知道的。

你不要把念佛的法门看得简单，十方诸佛都是从念佛法门而产生的。现在就是观音菩萨、大势至菩萨、文殊师利菩萨、普贤菩萨，他们时时刻刻都在念佛呢！在以前有一位永明延寿禅师。这一位禅师他先是参禅的，以后就开悟了；开悟了之后，他才知道这念佛法门是最妙的，所以他就念佛，念南无阿弥陀佛。他念一声南无阿弥陀佛，就有一道光在他口里现出来；在这光里头就有一尊阿弥陀佛化出来。所以说：

一念弥陀，一念佛；
念念弥陀，念念佛。

这个念佛法门，它的妙处说不能尽，所以释迦牟尼佛才不问自说，说这个念佛法门。在经上说：

末法众生，一亿人修行，
罕一得道，唯以念佛得度。

但是你要是能念佛，那就能得度，就能了生死，脱轮回。所以这个念佛法门是最妙的一个法门，你不要当面错过，交臂失之。你不要到了宝山空着两手而去。 我们现在的念佛七，就是一个宝山；你到这个宝山里头，最低限度要得到宝贝。什么叫宝贝呢？这个宝贝也就多了：金子也是宝贝，银子也是宝贝，琉璃也是宝贝，砗磲也是宝贝，赤珠也是宝贝，玛瑙也是宝贝。那么人参也是宝贝，何首乌也是宝贝，黄精也是宝贝，看你得到，或得不到。

这个人参怎么称宝贝呢？人参，要是九个 ounce（盎斯），就是人参，要是十一个 ounce 呢，就变成宝贝了。所以你们看这个山里头很多人参，谁要能得到十一个 ounce 的人参，你回去就无灾无病，寿与天齐，寿命和天那么长；天有多长，你寿命有多长。这个何首乌要一千年才有效，要一千年才是宝贝。你们西方人尽是白头发，一出生就像老头子似的，把头发都白了；男的也头发白了，女的也头发白了。你有办法吃多一点何首乌；何首乌一吃头发就黑了，胡子也黑了，那么何首乌也是宝贝。

古来修道的人，在山上就吃黄精。他因为离得人远，不能买米买东西吃，就在这个山里吃天然的这种药材。他们离 town（城）很远的，也没有汽车，也没有飞机，也没有 motorcycle（摩托车）。黄精也是一种药材，对人是最有营养的，吃了黄精也能延年益寿。在〈本草备要〉上说，这个黄精吃了会在空中飞的。〈本草备要〉上说以前有个小姐，like Guo Fang（像果芳）；这个小姐有个母亲，是个后母，就给她气受。她就从家里跑了，跑出去到山里头，也没有油吃，也没有盐吃，就吃黄精。那么她吃吃，就会飞了。以后她在天上飞，一般人看见她在天上飞，就又拿点东西给她吃，a piece of candy（一块糖）。她一吃人的饮食，在火上煮的有油盐的东西，就不会飞了。所以这黄精也是宝。

那么我们这回发起念佛的居士，叫什么名字，我不会说。这一位居士，他提倡大家聚会到一起来念佛。他是种中药的，研究中药的，所以你们到这

儿参加念佛七，都要得到他这个宝贝。今天我听他告诉我说，给你们大家参精茶喝，不知道你们会不会喝；喝了念佛应该精神多一点，不要像睡觉似的。等一等大回向的时侯，打起精神来念佛。这一声“佛”，叫它通天彻地；叫天上的人听到念佛了，他们那里也都随着念佛；地狱里的众生，听到我们这儿念佛声音那么响亮，他们那儿也发菩提心了，那他们有大感应了。

（上人对翻译者：）黄精是一种药材，是仙人吃的东西，吃了能延年益寿，所有的人吃了就会飞的。修仙的人就吃那个东西，要九蒸九晒。蒸，把它蒸熟了，然后用太阳晒乾了它，再蒸。九蒸九晒，然后吃。

你想：“要翻译，又来了一个麻烦。”偏偏改了你翻译，我就讲这么多生的东西！我这也没有想；我要想，我不会讲这个了。

翻译者：如果我想，我就不翻译了。

上人：那你不翻译，就叫果芳翻译了嘛！果芳是很聪明的。

My hair became white. I didn't eat he- shou-wu it turned black again.（我的头发曾经变白过。我没有吃何首乌，它也黑了。）所以我这个不是何首乌，是自首乌。You work hard translating like this. Hope everybody works hard on 大回向。（你这么样努力地翻译，希望大家也一样地努力来做大回向。）果芳，不要回去睡觉。果童 too（也是）！

（编注：以上故事由本会英文版书中录出，中译后略加修饰而成。）

1975年8月21日（盂兰盆节）下午

比丘恒实：想要与大家分享如此丰富的美妙法味，就如同要一勺舀尽大海的水。这太难了，因为一次你只能得到一滴，可水又是那样地养人，品质优良，值得我们全力以付。有些修行人知道法的广大，也在为不能一下子与大家分享全部而为难。当然这是做不到的，但我认为这个星期的事件是划时代，具历史意义的。虽然有些自夸，在我看来，它很像是六祖惠能大师在讲《法宝坛经》时的法会，因缘相似，法味也相同。这是个重要的事件，不要当面错过。所谓“行住坐卧不离这个；离了这个，当面错过。”

正如 上人昨晚所说的“入宝山空手而回”，实在是不对。我们有一份法宝可以分享，这就是你们每天中午在享用 Peggy Brevoort 端置到桌上的佳肴之前所听到的偈。其中的几句是：“佛告大众，食存五观。”我想你们每一位会问，“这五观是什么？告诉我，我就会遵守。”这五观就是：

一、记功多少，量彼来处：想想为你所吃的这些斋饭而辛苦的农民及参与种植、施肥、收成、运输、分类、销售、烹饪的人，其中有许多劳苦和血汗？你在享受其成果，应该意识到在食物端上餐桌之前所经过的各个阶段。出家人与信众所应观照的第二件事是：

二、忖己德行，全缺应供：也就是你今天的做为是否配享用这一餐。中国人讲“口福”，许多福乐是在嘴巴中享用的。你今天为佛法做了些什么呢？有没有帮助别人？是不是一个懒虫？有没有精进用功？有没有念佛，好好用功？你是否在追求五欲？这都是些只有你自己才能回答的问题。这是第二观。

三、防心离过，贪等为宗。贪为三毒（贪、瞋、痴）之首。谁没有贪念？佛没有贪念，圣人也没有，其他人几乎都有，连七地菩萨还有微细的欲念。有些刚开始修道的人想：“我修得不错，已经没有贪欲了，能够不再吃第四碗面，将它留给别人。”很好，这是前进的一个开始，可是要知道贪的形式成千上万。你对付了粗的烦恼，还有同样强大、毒害人的细烦恼。这都取决于你修行时内心的品质与精细程度。

所以第三观是防心离过，贪等为宗。有人说是贪心在使世界转变；如果你能放下贪心，真的拔除贪欲之根，摧毁“有所得”的我见山，那就是真正修道。有人说：“佛教，我懂！那些书我都看过了。圣人一动不动地坐着，头上现出奇异景象的那些照片我都看过。我今早打坐来着了，对佛教，我都明白的。”不错，佛教包括所有这些；包括你所能想像到的所有的修行和思维。可是金山寺的佛法，是从非常基本的日常生活开始的。比如吃饭，在吃当中有许多可以修行的地方，每天都有许多缺乏修行的事发生。上人让弟子在吃时保持正念，他自己就为大众树立了一个完美的榜样。上人严格依照愿

力，按佛制日中一餐，过午不食。这是佛陀和其早期弟子所修的十二条苦行之一。这并不是说作佛教徒就必须每日一餐，这样的话许多人会受不了而退心。佛所要求的不是这个，而是吃的时候保持观照，观照让你多吃的贪欲。

大体上讲，美国人吃东西都相当浪费，吃得太多，一个劲地塞，所以有这么多人得心脏病、动脉病等等，就因为饮食习惯太粗劣了。因此第三观是：防心离过，贪等为宗。

第四观：正事良药，为疗形枯。如果真正能把握这一点，你就绝不会摄取超过疗饥所需的食品。想一想，这是药品我们所吃的任何东西都是某种药品。上人已经反复开示过。不要去管食物好吃不好吃。食物的味道不是要点，关键在吃饱后就不要再吃了。有人强调种种风味、品质，把握炒饭的时机，凉拌菜的调味，这都是对食物的执着，是在消耗自己福报，将自己的福报吃掉。实际上真正修行时，在心地上你应毫不介意食物是否好吃，有营养否，煮得怎么样。眼前有什么食物就吃什么；吃八分饱，不要撑饱，这样你才是视食物为良药。像头痛时，你不会吃九颗阿斯匹灵吧？就像你不会朝头上开一枪来治头痛一样，这都太过份了。食物也一样，是药品。你如果这样看，就不会吃得过量。你摄取足够疗饥的食物后就不再吃了。

这并不是说，如果比旁边的人吃得少，你的道德就高。不要执着这一点。有人饭量大，六碗饭还不饱，就应该吃到八成饱为止。另一个人饭量很小，他吃了三勺饭，但他的饭量只有一勺，那他就是贪心了。六碗饭还不饱，就应该吃到八成饱为止。这完全看你自己；你自己吃饭穿衣，你要知道自己的限度。

第五观是为成道业，应受此食：你吃饭的唯一原因就是维持生命，精进修道。身体大体上是不净的，内部有许多不净之物，九孔常流秽物。为了让身体气味好一点，你多年来一直在用防臭剂；为要保持身体有魅力的幻觉，你刷洗、梳理、拍打、锻炼，死亡之时，这虚幻的一切都终结了。你看到这个身体原来是个臭皮囊。虫子啮食我们的尸骨，使之归于大地。身体虽然不净，但得生为人，身体却是理想的修道器具。人不吃饭会死，所以你只要吃

到够修道就行了。这就是吃东西的目的。

这有一组偈颂，有助于记忆五观：

记功多少，量彼来处。
忖己德行，全缺应供。
防心离过，贪等为宗。
正事良药，为疗形枯。
为成道业，应受此食。
我今静观，正念受供。

第一“记功多少，量彼来处。”：在佛教中布施很重要，是菩萨都要修行的六波罗密中的第一条。梵文称为 dana（檀越）。出家人发不蓄财的愿。沙弥戒之一就是不捉持值钱的物品。根本上讲，僧人什么也不需要；他们只需要最起码的居住条件、食品、衣物。印度的僧人都出去乞食；中国的天气可能会很恶劣，和尚天天去乞食很困难。寺院又常常在野外，周围没有人家可乞。逐渐乞食之风就在中国中断了，和尚们靠信众的供养过活。和尚怎么能说：“你一定要给我”？他们不讲这话。出家人主要做的事就是奉献；他们护持正法，使之具有活力。如何为三宝，为众生奉献呢？他成为福田来奉献。这是个比喻。若有一块肥沃的福田，任何东西都可以在上面生长。僧人有没有修福？僧人并不刻意为自己修福，宣称“我念咒、经行、念佛，集累了许多功德。我的功德银行里已有了许多积蓄。”他可不是这么想。

他接受弟子，在家众的供养，来为他们修福。他们这样供养亡去的亲属，为别人服务。在家人可以这样自利利他地做供养，修菩萨道。

你供养三宝，服务大众，就是在三宝所代表的福田中播种。同时你也结下了法缘，将来便可以再遇到妙法，继续修行佛道。通过布施，你也就可以使这纯正古老的智慧，在世间流传得更久，所以其角色之重要是不可轻视的。佛法在美国还很年轻，如同刚出土的嫩芽，正朝着阳光茁壮成长，但它仍然是一株幼苗。大家一定要研究一下三宝、僧人与在家人的这种关系的运作。这是使这种关系发挥效力的正当途径。

僧人接受任何供养，都使他背上了沉重的业。受供时他说：“因为接受了这份供养，我就一定要证悟；否则我就造了恶业。”只有阿罗汉才真正配受供养，应供也是佛的一个名号。僧团应该清楚，一旦受人供养，他就肩负着修行证果沉重使命。在成佛的路上，佛修行布施波罗密；一次次，为法为众生，可以说他舍身的行为是种诚心的供养。上人曾说为法献身是最上的供养。据说，佛为法舍身的次数多如世界的微尘。这是从长远历史的眼光来看，他舍身的次数就是这样多。事实也是如此，更不用说他舍弃身外之财--金钱、财物、配偶、子女、家庭、房舍、车辆……

上人：（谁有什么境界，可以提出来讲一讲。有谁有什么境界没有？）

弟子：我的头脑，比来的时候已经清楚很多了。我觉得离开这里以后，我多学会了几种方便来修行，培养内心播下的种子。“南无阿弥陀佛”，我已经听过几次了。刚念时，觉得什么意思也没有。当我集中心念，对“无量光”升起信心时，心境升华了许多。我尚未见到身如须弥、紫色目光的佛。我若坚持下去好好用这些方便，或许会看到。

我有些话要对想皈依的人说。我去年皈依 上人时，并不知道自己在干什么，有人说我只是幸运地跟着信仰而来。来三藩市之前，有人送给我一首有意义的诗，我给大家读一下：

我们所行的路，宁静、金色、
却又不可见。命运播下种子时，
有多人站在后面协助。
明白的人说要放下，
种子会自己生长、发光。

永勿畏惧，守护人就在身后。
他所守护的大门，
在密切的观照之中，从不关闭。
闭上眼睛，隔绝分散心力的景象。
敞开心灵，向人宣称：

“我是佛；佛活在我心中。
他慈悲的光芒，
永远照耀着我的路。”

对真理我们已有所了知，
可仍还有未知的，
更多的真理还在前面。
再一次，我们站在守护人前，
又有一个新的大门。

上人：还有人有话要说吗？

学生：昨晚我梦见和妈妈、姐姐、三位表姐妹一起恭敬地绕佛。

另一个学生：打坐时我有些特别境界。我看见一个有钥匙孔的的金球，孔中一把金钥匙开始转动，开始转的时候，光就越来越强。另一个境界是珠宝的组合，像是磨亮了的琉璃，泛着很强的红光和金光。

上人：还有谁要讲话？

学生：现在世上有很多人没有足够的饭吃，没有适当的衣着及居住条件，而少数人却拥有远超过他们所需的东西。因为这个问题很大，我想去解决它，效果却微乎其微。我很失望。我们可以做些什么来改变现状吗？

上人：忧愁是没有用的。你尽自己的心，能做多少做多少，不要苛求。因为一个人的力量有限，这种人太多了。你先救自己。

果童：……（录音带不清楚。）

女众：几个月前，我让朋友早晨把我叫醒，……（录音带不清楚。）

上人：还有谁有什么境界，再说一说，有什么觉得好、很特别的情形，都可以说一说。

比丘尼恒贤：有时我看到光芒弥漫宇宙，偶尔又有所不同。光突然地闪现，像空中的小光点。几天前，我看到过几次，当时我在记笔记，没在打坐。在金山寺也有这种境界。我突然想到，经典上似称之为摩尼宝，但不能确定

，是银色的光。

上人：我们在这儿念佛，坐着停止的时候，这叫参禅也可以。你还在里边念佛也可以。在这个时候很容易有一种轻安的境界。什么叫轻安呢？就是一种入定的开始。入定开始的时候，或者觉得自己这个身体和太虚空合成一个了。这时候也没有人相，也没有我相，也没有众生相，也没有寿者相。这时候并不是睡觉，但是一切都停顿了，一切都停止住了。这是一种轻安的境界。谁能够把自己的妄想都停止了，真正智慧就会生出来。

方才这一位居士说：“人在世界上，衣食住都不够了。很多人没有衣服穿，很多人没有饭吃；很多人没有房子住。”这是为什么呢？就是做善的人少了，做恶的人多了。做善的人少，所以人人都没有衣服穿，没有饭吃，没有地方住；做恶的人多了，所以也是人人没有衣服穿，没有饭吃，没有地方住。就因为人，诸恶去做，众善他不奉行，所以才受这种果报。

这种果报，你想要挽回是不容易，因为做恶的人太多了，做善的人很少。那么想要天下人人好，先要从我身上做起；想要世间所有的人都没有痛苦了，也先要由我身上做起。怎么样做呢？自己“诸恶不作，众善奉行”，所有的善事都去做去，所有的恶事都不去做。这可以挽回世间的劫运，可以对世界上有一点帮助。你能做多少善事，就做多少善事，尽上自己的责任，不要忧愁太多了。

你要只想说：“哦，这么多人痛苦！”天天只想：“怎么办呢？”坐在家里常常这么忧虑，这是没有帮助的。要自己实实在在去做好事去，来令世界上好的人一天比一天多，坏的人一天比一天少。这个世界就会好了，会人人都有衣服穿，人人都有饭吃，人人都有房子住。所以你想要世界好，就必须要诸恶不作，众善奉行，那自然就好了。

所谓“种善因，就结善果；种恶因，就结恶果。”你种人参，将来就会收人参；你种何首乌将来就有何首乌收。你种什么，就会得什么，和种田是一样的道理。

头先我叫你们各位说一说，你们有什么境界。我又想起来在三藩市，有一种境界。有一次打皈依；这一次打皈依的大约有三十几个人。皈依之后，我就问他们，我说：“为什么你们这么多人都要皈依呢？”就有一些个以前是一个叫山鹿的信徒，他们那不是皈依，就是相信他。这个山鹿是我刚到三藩市的时候，他天天要来学佛法，但是我那时候，只是礼拜天给大家讲一讲法，随便讲一讲。他就每个礼拜天到我那儿去学，一学学了两年。这个人叫山鹿，就是 mountain deer，我给他取的名字。本来他的名字或者叫野鹿，我给他取名叫山鹿。

为什么有很多人相信他呢？就因为他在我那儿学了两年佛法，回去就做了教主了。每个礼拜天到我那儿学佛法，大约学了些个道理，他就自己要做祖师了，就召一些个信徒，很多人相信他。为什么相信他呢？因为他有一点钱，大约有一百多万。那么谁到他那儿去呢，相信他都有饭吃，甚至于有地方住，那么衣服更不要说了。这都是解决衣食住行的问题，因为这样子，就有很多方才所讲的，没有衣服穿，没有饭吃，没有地方住的人，就都去相信他去。他有七、八十岁了，又很有钱的，所以就有很多人去亲近他。他也很随便的，你愿意吃肉也可以，愿意喝酒也可以；喝酒他给你买酒喝，吃肉他给买肉吃，甚至于你愿意什么都可以的，没有一切的戒律，不讲戒律。

他就对人讲，他是个开悟的祖师了，很多人就人云亦云；这个说他开悟了，那个也说他证了果了，很多人去亲近他。有的一些很愚痴的人呢，就跟他学佛法；有的聪明的人呢，总想着他的钱。有一天，他有一个信徒－－因为他总也不死，跟着他这么多年了他也不死－－等他走楼梯的时候，这个信徒说：“你这个钱还不给我？”哦！一下子就把他推滚到楼梯下面去了，就什么都不知道了。这时候开悟的祖师也不会讲话了，跌得人事不省。这个徒弟就赶快说是，他的遗嘱交待，这个钱要交给谁，其他信徒都不准见，这么样子他就无声无嗅就死了。

他的一些信徒又给他出书，又提倡他是祖师。有一天，他就给这些人作梦，什么梦呢？说：“我以前和你们讲的佛法都是不究竟的。你们现在都应该去皈依三宝，去皈依某某法师，跟着他学佛法才对的。”所以他这些个信

徒，就都跑到我那儿去报名，皈依三宝，来再重学佛法。

你看，所以修行也是不容易的。真正遇着善知识是不容易的，尽冒充善知识。好像这个山鹿，自己也没有明白就去教化人。然后他还算有一点良心，知道对不起所有的弟子了，他又叫他弟子赶快去皈依三宝，免得堕地狱，这还算他不错。这是我在三藩市有这么个情形，所以他的信徒，他的弟子很多人到金山寺去皈依。这是在当时皈依我的那些三十多个人里，大约有二十个都是他的信徒。去皈依我之后，他们自己说的，说是山鹿叫他们来皈依的。有二十多个人都是这样子，所以他们就相信他们所做的梦不是假的，是真的。你们还记得那个事情，不记得？（弟子答：记得。）就是他们那么多人，都做这样的梦。

世界上，一切一切都在演说妙法。山就演山的妙法；河就演河的法；海就演海的妙法；江就演江的妙法；平地就演平地的妙法。所谓有情、无情都在说法：人就说人的法；狗就说狗的法；猫就在那儿说猫的法，所以说一切万事万物都在那儿说法。猫它要吃老鼠，它说它在往昔生中就欢喜杀生，那么今生它还愿意杀生；老虎也是在那儿演说它的妙法。你要明白它在那儿说法，你就不会学它那一种行为了。

这狗它为什么做了狗呢？狗就是很贪，它舍不得，所以狗就给人看门口。看着门口，一有人来，它就吵起来了。为什么咬人呢？这就是它那种悭贪的表现。它不喜欢生人，不认识的人，所以它就要咬。为什么它要咬呢？它就怕人偷它的财，它的宝贝，所以它总看着门口，也可以说是守财奴 - - 守财的奴才。好像人有钱，舍不得，一个仙（cent, 分）也舍不得。你叫他做布施，他是最反对的。像中国人，有钱给儿子留着，给女儿。做了一辈子马，一辈子牛，赚了一点钱就给子女，这是太愚痴的一种行为。所谓“儿孙自有儿孙福，莫为儿孙做马牛。”不要为子女做马做牛。

西方人呢？就比中国人聪明得多，他不给子女留下很多钱财；留下钱财也把它布施出来。那么这样子来生更富贵，更会有钱。说：“我不相信来生。”那我们不要讲来生，我们讲明天。你信不信有明天？你信不信有昨天？因

为你不相信那么远，那么长的时间，我可以把它缩短了，叫你明白。（翻译时，上人补充：昨天就是你的前生；今生就是你现在的生；明天就是你未来的那一生。那你不信有来生，昨天、今天、明天，你总要信。）

你不能说没有昨天，没有今天，没有明天，那么这是有的，就由这个昨天、今天、明天，就有前生、今生、来生，这是一定的道理。说：“我怎么不知道呢？”你要知道；你要知道了，你早就成佛了。你就因为糊糊涂涂地，从无量劫以来到现在就是不知道有前生，也不知道有来生，所以就做颠倒的事，所以就做守财奴的事情，就像那个狗，尽看着门口，就怕不认识的人来抢，来偷东西。

在佛住世的时候，有这么一件事。他到一个居士的家里去应供，但是这个居士家里就有一只狗。这只狗白天，晚间时时刻刻都在床底下守着。任何人不准接近这个床；谁要接近这个床，它就咬谁。或者是主人的太太、儿子，它就不咬，外边来的人，谁也不准接近这个床。甚至佛来了，它也不准佛接近这个床。家里的人故意来试一试，看看这个狗咬不咬佛。它一样咬，见着佛也一样咬。家里的人就问佛，这种是什么因缘，谁也不准接近这个床呢？佛就说了：“你知道吗？这个狗的前生就是你的父亲。你父亲他一生赚了大约有三百两黄金，他就爱这个黄金。他在生的时候，就把黄金埋在床底下。等到他有病病死了，也没有告诉你他有三百两黄金埋在床底下，所以他死后，赶快回来作狗，就趴在他埋黄金的上面。你要不信，你把土挖开，那黄金还在那。”这个家里的人果然把狗搬到别的地方，就把这个地方一刨，刨开果然有三百两黄金。

由这个公案来证明，人有悭贪心，就很容易做狗。所以狗在那儿说狗的法；猫在那儿说猫的法；我们人就演说人的法。所以世界上一切一切的，都是在那儿讲它所要讲的法，就看你认识不认识。你认识，它就是说法，叫你明白；你要不认识，在那儿就做梦，要你糊涂。

出家人在那儿演说出家人的法；在家人在那儿演说在家人的法；比丘尼就演说比丘尼的法；沙弥尼演沙弥尼的法；比丘就演比丘的法；沙弥就演沙

弥的法；男孩子在那演男孩子的法；女孩子在那演女孩子的法。你要是不认识就会迷了；你要是认识就会觉悟了。阿罗汉在那说阿罗汉的法；菩萨在那说菩萨的法；声闻在那说声闻的法；佛在那说佛的法；天人在那说天人的法；阿修罗在那说阿修罗的法；鬼就说鬼的法；畜生就说畜生的法；地狱就说地狱的法：这十法界，各演各法界的法，各说各法界的法。你要是明白这十法界都在演说妙法，那你就会开悟；开悟你就成佛了。小果童在这儿演小果童的法。

你就拿人来讲，有眼睛的演说有眼睛的法；没有眼睛的演说没有眼睛的法。这怎么讲呢？有眼睛的人说：“喔！为什么有眼睛呢？”就因为没有做太坏的事情。“为什么没有眼睛呢？”就因为看不起人。他谁都看不起，所以没有眼睛。聋子为什么是聋子？他在演聋子的法。聋子就因为他好管闲事，什么都要听；偷着去听声音，偷着去听电话，这将来就成聋子了。那哑吧为什么哑吧呢？因为他尽讲人的是非，讲多了，喔！自己不会说话了。

这个聋子、哑吧、瞎子，都在说法呢！那不会走路的人呢？就因为他尽走错路，走那不应该走的路，所以就瘫了。虽然有腿，不会走路。那个手不会拿东西。为什么他不会拿东西呢？就因为他偷东西偷得太多了，所以没手了。这都是演说妙法呢！

所以你们无论各位见到什么事情，你要明白了，这都在那说法呢；你要不明白，那就是做梦，所以这一切一切的，都有因果的。各位不要忧愁，说这世界怎么样子；说穷人太多没有饭吃，没有衣服穿，没有房子住，他都是种那种因，结那种果。

我要讲清楚了一点，恐怕人家都不高兴。那个没有腿的，就因为跳舞跳得太多；没有眼睛的人就是看跳舞，看脱衣舞，看电影，看戏，看了太多。有很多人不高兴了。所有一切都是如是因，如是果。

问：法是不是演说法的法？

上人：Dharma cannot speak the Dharma.（法不会说法。）

1975年8月22日．星期五下午

我所讲过的观想念佛、观相念佛、持名念佛，没有讲这个实相念佛。什么叫实相念佛呢？实相就是离相，不着相；离一切法，扫一切相，也就是参禅法门。真参禅的人就是真念佛，真会念佛的人也就是参禅；参禅和念佛都是叫你没有妄想，把你的私欲、杂念扫出去，现出本来的面目，所以叫实相念佛。佛说所有的法门，就是对治众生所有的毛病；众生毛病要是没有了，一切法门也都没有用了，用不着了；众生有毛病，所以法门才有用。八万四千法门是佛说的，每一个法门都是第一，没有第二的法门；八万四千法门，就有八万四千个第一。对你的机，相应的那个就是第一；不相应的，你不用的法门，也不是第二，也是第一。所以我说八万四千法门，就有八万四千个第一；我们现在修的是念佛法门。

又有修的持咒法门。咒，也有种种的咒；佛，也有很多的佛，不过所有的佛，就是这阿弥陀佛和我们众生最有缘，他和我们众生就像那个磁石吸铁似的。我们众生譬如铁，阿弥陀佛是一块磁石，把我们众生都吸到极乐世界去了。那么其他的佛呢，也好像是磁石，但是没有这么大的吸力，没有这么大的力量，所以，我们众生念阿弥陀佛，修这个净土法门。

我们这一次在美国有历史以来，第一次在深山里头大家聚在一起来念佛，相信这一次就是种了因，将来一定会开很大的花，结很大的果，这是我绝对相信的一件事。

我们打完了佛七，我再教你们念一个秘密的咒。你们回到自己的家里，愿意念咒也可以，愿意念佛也可以，看谁先修行成功。有意见没有？

学生：我们是不是还可以讲讲所发生的一些特别的事？昨天在一小时的打坐时，我觉得有很多电能。有一会儿，我觉得自己很大，我的头在云里，觉得空中好像有雨。后来我又觉得像是在云里，不过这次我是跟着一个实体走，我不愿雨下下来。

上人：他这种境界是坐禅应该有的一种境界。我头先说要教人一个咒，等着佛七完了再教。我觉得有一些个人有一种妄想，想要说一种道理，他们想要说，可以现在就说。他们想说：“我明天就要走了，或者我就没有机会

学了。”有没有人这么想?

答：有。

上人：那我现在就教你们好不好?

答：好。谢谢!

上人：这个咒，是最妙的咒。我现在教你们，是有声教你们。你们念的时候要无声念，不要说出口来。因为这是秘密的咒，你要说出口来，就不秘密了。

你行、住、坐、卧要常常念这个咒，这个咒的力量可就大了。你在山上念，这所有山上的众生，过五百年后都会成菩萨，就有这么大的功德；你在水里头念，水头所有的一切众生，过五百年后都发菩提心，将来都成菩萨；你本人念，你本人身所有的虱子、虮子、臭虫所有在你身上的这些个细菌，在你身上的这些个众生，也过五百年之后，都可以发菩提心，都可以成菩萨。你看这个力量大不大?

假如你自己不愿意作菩萨，那么你帮助其他的众生成菩萨，这也是一件善事，所以你不可以不念这个咒。You should hurry up and recite it!（你要快快念这个咒。）这个咒，我现在告诉你们各位，我传给你们，你们各位要特别注意。你们已经知道了这个咒，不要说：“喔!我已经知道了”，生一种轻慢的心；不知道的呢，更应该生一种尊重法的心。我现在来教你们这个咒，你们都注意一点!我只教三遍，你记不记得 就随你自己了。

什么咒呢?就是“嗡嘛呢叭弥吽、嗡嘛呢叭弥吽、嗡嘛呢叭弥吽。”这个咒的力量是不可思议的，你们要很注意的来修持这个法。

（编注：星期五下午，十七个人，包括念佛法会会主 Brevoort 夫妇及他们的儿子Joshua，皈依上人。皈依仪式完毕后，上人给新弟子们讲了以下短短的开示。）

我再给你们讲几句话，可以坐下。你们要记得，你们是在佛根地皈依的，所以男孩子就叫果根，因为是佛根，佛的根。

你们各位在这儿皈依，要作一个佛教里头领导的人，给所有世界上的人做一个好的榜样，做一个好的佛教徒，令佛教发扬光大到整个世界，整个法界去。要是有人不信佛的，就是你们大家没有尽到自己的责任，所以要发这种愿，令所有的人都皈依三宝，这是你们最大的功德。

你看《校量功德经》上说，有三千大千世界这么多的佛，就像稻麻竹苇那么多的佛，你以四事来供养他；佛都灭度了，你又以种种的香花饮食来供养；你又造塔造庙，这功德当然是多了。但是你要是能令自己皈依三宝，又能令其他人来皈依三宝，这个功德比你用四事供养三千大千世界如稻麻竹苇那么多的佛还大。

什么叫四事呢？就是饮食、衣服、卧具、汤药。饮食是吃的东西；衣服是穿的衣服；卧具是睡觉用的东西；汤药就是有病，供养药：供养这些东西。那么佛圆寂了又造塔造庙，又用种种的香花供养，这种功德虽然多，不如你劝一个人皈依三宝，或者你自己皈依三宝，那个功德比你以前供养诸佛那种功德更大，所以皈依三宝的功德是不可思议的。

你们每一个人都要以佛教作为自己的责任；佛教就是我，我就是佛教，不要和佛教来分门。不但佛教是我，所有的宗教，我都要教化他们来信佛教，要发这种愿，所以才说众生无边誓愿度，烦恼无尽誓愿断，法门无量誓愿学，佛道无上誓愿成。你们各位都要发大愿力，来弘扬佛法，可以不可以？（弟子：可以。）Okay，你们这里边，今天皈依的，有很多都是我很熟的人，所以也不必客气了，好好去做，Okay？（弟子：Okay!）我们现在念佛回向。

1975年8月22日．星期五晚

比丘尼恒持补充：天正下着雨，上人让果童叫天别下雨。

上人：就因为他的飞弹飞不起来，所以他哭得这个龙也管不住了。你看！原来他这么没有本事，就是哭的本事。我们不要听他的话啰！

比丘尼恒隐：今天的雨是果童带来的，因为他哭得太厉害了，所以老天也哭了。

果童：这个故事是释迦牟尼佛成佛以前，他还是忍辱仙人的时候……。

上人：有什么问题吗？

弟子：我想知道，弥勒菩萨的来到和耶稣的再来是不是同一件事？

上人：你叫什么名字？（答：果璃。）

上人：你自己觉得怎么样呢？

弟子：如果是一样的，好像很合乎逻辑学，可是我自己不知道。

上人：怎么样合逻辑学呢？要解释解释。

弟子：我不是很知道弥勒菩萨是怎么样来，可是我听说他们俩位都是来救世间的，还有他们都是很快就要来了。

上人：耶稣他什么时候来，这个我不讲。弥勒菩萨来，还早，时间还远之又远。一般人说他快来了，那是不懂事情的人那么说的。来了，不错，弥勒菩萨随时都来，因为现在都在世间上，不过他没有成佛。所谓弥勒菩萨再来，他是成佛再来，并不是就是来救人。

在人的寿命一百年减一岁，身上的高度减一寸，减到现在人的寿命平均六十到七十岁的样子，将来减到人寿命到十岁的时候再增；增到八万四千岁，再减到八万岁。人的寿命八万岁那时候弥勒菩萨才出世。你这要算起来，这时间很长很长不是现在就来；现在来的那是弥勒菩萨的化身，不是弥勒菩萨的真身，也不是来成佛来的。

信耶稣教的人知不知道耶稣有三年失了踪？谁也不知道他到什么地方去了。那三年他就是到印度去学佛法，所以他所学的佛法，是升天－－天国乐园。这就和《弥陀经》的道理是差不多的。就是耶稣，他也是佛教的一部份。他用那种方法，教化那一类的众生，究竟都要返本还原，人人都要成佛的。这个情形，有很多人不知道的。他就是佛教里头的一分子；他也是个佛教徒，不过他教那种不想承认自己是佛教的人，他就不讲佛教。

前几天，我曾经讲过，我说所有的宗教都是包括在佛教里头，也就是这个道理。因为佛教是以法界为体，其他的宗教都没有说以法界为体。这个法界，任何众生也超不出去。这十法界：佛法界、菩萨法界、声闻法界、缘觉法界、天法界、人法界、阿修罗法界、畜生法界、鬼法界、地狱法界，总起来是十个法界。这十个法界里边所有一切的宗教，都没有超出这十法界；那么没有超出这十法界，所以他们都是佛教。没有哪一个不是佛教的，不过他自己不承认是佛教。那是暂时间的事情，将来他一定要承认的。他不承认不行的，因为他跑不出法界去。佛教是以法界为体，这个道理希望各位用一点心去研究研究。

那么有很多人他不承认自己是佛教徒，这没有什么问题。为什么呢？他自己不承认他是佛教徒，是因为他没有明白他在法界里面。好像人在做梦的时候，不知道他是在做什么，认不清楚。又好像这个人发狂了；发狂的人，有时候连自己是人他都不知道的。你问他是什么？他说他什么也不是，或者他说他是一个很奇怪的什么东西。这不能以他不知道他本来是人，就做为证据；也不能因为他在十法界里边，他自己不承认在十法界里边，这就是有道理的一种事情。

在《楞严经》上有这么样一个人，他叫演若达多，有一天他发了狂了。他对着镜子照一照，看看镜子里边那个人有个头，他就发起狂来了。他说镜子里那个人有个头，我怎么没有头了呢？“我的头跑到什么地方去了？”于是乎，他就发狂奔走。到了街上，遇到人他就问人：“你看见我这个头没有？我的头到什么地方去了？”遇着人就问，遇着人就问；人也不知道他是干什么的。他这个人本来有个头，他怎么还在找头呢？有很多人都是这样子的。

还有什么问题吗？

问：除了金山寺出版的佛经以外，还有没有英文的佛经书是有价值，我们可以看的？大部分的作者都有西方的思想，所以很容易把原本的教义改掉了。

上人：有是有的。这不是有价值没有价值的问题。因为以前所翻译的人，或者是神父，或者是牧师，或者是个学者，或者是以写作来做生意的，这一类的作者来翻译的经典，他不一定懂得佛法，所以所翻译出来的，不能说它没有价值；没有价值也可以卖钱嘛，也有人买嘛。他价值是有的，不过义理是不同的。

我们现在金山寺所翻译的经典，都是比丘、比丘尼、沙弥、沙弥尼、优婆塞、优婆夷，就有一些教授学者参加这个工作，也都是站在佛教里边来翻译佛经。以前所有的人翻译的，他是站在佛教外边来翻译佛经。就是有的是佛教徒所翻译的经典，他也是一个人的见解，没有经过大家审查，没有经过大家来共同研究，所以这也是有一点问题。所以这不是价值不价值的问题，是圆满不圆满的问题。

那么所有的，以前翻译的也有，所不同就是在这一点；就是在佛教外面来看佛教和在佛教里面来看佛教。在佛教外面当然就是外行了，就是所谓的门外汉，不是真正明了的，问题是在这里。

我们金山寺和他们所翻译的不同的，就是我们经过很多人来审查，很多人来研究，看有什么问题。我们所翻译的也不能算是圆满，但是我们希望它圆满。我们不希望翻译出来的佛教，好像是讲天主教的道理；也不希望翻译的佛经，尽讲耶稣教的道理；里边所有的名词，都是用天主教、耶稣教的名词；佛教的名词根本就没有。

我们研究这么多年佛教的佛法，都还有很多不明白的，况且你根本就没有研究过的，那翻译出来的佛经，它那本来的意思，怎么还存在呢？我们金山寺绝对不敢说，只有金山寺的佛经是有价值的；不可以说这样的话，我们只是愿意往好的做，愿意往圆满的做。

我们今天晚间和你们白天皈依了的一些人，再说几句话。你们以后无论到什么地方，人家要问你，谁是你的师父？你要是愿意承认我是你的师父，你就这么样说，你说世界最笨的那个人就是我的师父，他的名字叫什么什么，再没有他那么笨的，再没有他那么不懂事的，要这样答覆他；不要说你的

师父很聪明的，又怎么样好，怎么样好。你的师父没有一样好处，你不要替你的师父来宣传，说你师父有什么好处有什么好处，有什么长处什么长处；什么长处也没有，我所有的都是短处。你们到什么佛教的地方要谦恭一点，不要很贡高的；要觉得人人都比自己好，我自己应该和所有的人来学。

譬如拜佛，不要站在中间拜佛，中间那是住持的位置。要拜佛的，要在旁边；不要叫人家一看说，“喔！你这个师父真是个愚痴的师父，什么也不会教你，连拜佛都不会拜。”那时候你就说你师父怎么样好，人家也不相信的。你要自己做得好，做得很如法，很守规矩的，人家一看你这个徒弟样样守规矩，你就不说你师父好，人家一看，“喔！他这个徒弟这么样守规矩，师父大概也没有什么大毛病。”你们各位相不相信这个道理呢？No？Okay。今天就说这么多。

1975年8月23日．星期六下午

上人：谁有要讲话的吗？

弟子：请问在极乐世界，观音菩萨成佛了，阿弥陀佛到什么地方去？

上人：到他的心里来了。还有谁有什么问题？

弟子：请问我们生到极乐世界时，是不是在那里一直到成佛？还是只在那里一段时间，然后到旁的地方去？

上人：你在那儿成佛。上品上生，生到那就成佛了；下品下生，到那里要九十个大劫。前几天果童问《弥陀经》上是不是说，两个佛一样的名字，是不是这个问题？这个佛，同名同号的不知多少。极乐世界就有三十六万亿；三十六万亿十一万九千五百同名同号阿弥陀佛，极乐世界就有这么多。当时果航答覆他的问题，答得很对。他也还不知道。那么现在我提出这个同名同号就有三十六万亿十一万九千五百同名同号接引导师阿弥陀佛，都是接引众生的阿弥陀佛，就有那么多。在昨天我讲阿弥陀佛就像一块磁石似的，一切众生就好像一块铁似的。铁遇到磁石，一定就会被这个磁石摄去。我说其他的佛也像磁石不过力量小一点。

有几个人昨天晚上睡不着觉，打这个妄想，说是都是一样的磁石，怎么又有力量大的，力量小的？佛都是一样的佛，那么力量怎么就有不同的呢？打这个妄想，研究这个问题，可是还不敢来问这个问题。我就打开这个法会 open talk（公开讨论），也没有人敢问，只是打这个妄想，不问这个问题。那现在我答覆这个问题。

因为阿弥陀佛他有四十八愿；他这四十八愿就是这磁石的力量。其他的佛也是成佛，但是他没有发这四十八愿，所以他力量就小一点。所以修道一定要发愿，有愿必成。愿，就好像在前边一盏路灯似的。你向前走路，有一盏灯在那里照着，一定路很容易走的。我们每一个人修道都要发愿。

在金山寺，每一年（阴历）十二月初八那一天，释迦牟尼佛开悟，我们想要发愿的人都在那一天发愿，所以十二月初八那天就叫“愿天”，可不要尤人；这个愿是发愿的“愿”，不是恨怨的“怨”。有的人怨天尤人：“这个天，真不会做天。你这么样不公平！”这叫怨天；尤人就是人人都有罪，有错过了：这样的人看谁都不对。这个愿天，就是发愿的那一天。我修道想要做什么事，也在那天发愿；我想要怎么修行，也在那天发愿。那么平时可不可以发愿呢？也可以的。不过那一天是释迦牟尼佛开悟的日子，我们藉着释迦牟尼佛开悟这一天来发愿，释迦牟尼佛也会很欢喜的，说：“喔！娑婆世界又有一个众生，因为我开悟他来发愿。”这个因缘也是很殊胜的。所以释迦牟尼佛也很赞叹，说：“善哉！善哉！善男子、善女人，你发这种的愿，我一定帮忙你满你的愿。”

昨天我教你们那个咒，嗡嘛呢叭弥吽，有的人又打妄想。打什么妄想呢？“喔！不知道我是不是法师身上一个虱子，或者虫子或者是什么，在四百年或三百年以前听见法师念了咒，我现在作了人了又皈依三宝了。会不会是这么回事？”自己打这个妄想；这个问题，我也不答覆你。或者小果芳是因为她愿意吃 candy（糖），大约我念那个咒就变成 candy了。

今天我还要给你们讲一讲阿弥陀佛。这个佛，不是一位佛、二位佛、三位佛，佛是有恒河沙数那么多佛。这恒河沙数佛，他住在十方。什么叫十方

呢？就是东南西北， 这四方；有东南、西南、东北、西北这四维，就八方了。再加上上、下，这合起来就是十方了。这十方，每一方都有恒河沙数那么多的佛。这个佛，就是众生成的佛；有多少众生，就有多少佛。

那么众生你数得过来、数不过来？数不过来，没有法子数得过来。就单单人类，整个世界有多少人类，你不知道。你知道这个国家有多少人类，你不知道那个国家；那个国家你知道了，那么全世界所有的国家人类，你不一定能知道它数目是多少，一定没有正确的数目。你怎么样用科学用电脑去算，也算不过来的，这是单单人类。

那么人类你能算过来了，这个蚊虫有多少，你会不会算过来？一个国家蚊虫有多少，你算不过来。所有世界的国家蚊虫有多少，你算不过来。这个蚊虫你也算不过来，蚂蚁你也算不过来，这个蜜蜂你也算不过来，这所有的虫子，甚至于这个雀鸟，所有一切一切众生，你没有法子算得过来。那么这个佛呢，也是一样的，也是有这么多。有一个众生就有一位佛，那一位佛就要度这一个众生，所以说十方三世佛。什么叫三世呢？就是过去世、现在世，未来世。前几天，我不是说有的人不相信有过去生，有现在生，有未来生，尤其有钱的人？有钱的人，他不相信有来生，所以就尽量享受，以为他生意做得赚钱了，以为他这个生命很有价值了。其实不然。

今生富贵为何因？前生斋僧济贫人。
今生贫贱是何因？前生不肯济贫人。
今生端正容貌好，香花点灯供佛前。

“今生富贵为何因？前生斋僧济贫人。”今生为什么富贵呢？因为前生做过布施，舍一得万报；布施一文，布施一个 penny（便尼），今生得到万倍那么多的利息，这叫舍一得万报。

那么“今生贫贱是何因？”今生穷，为什么呢？“前生不肯济贫人。”那么今生为什么没有钱，就因为前生有钱的时候不肯布施。为什么不愿意布施呢？就因为怕没有了。我这个钱要是布施给旁人，我自己没有了，这是太笨了，太愚痴了，有钱为什么要布施给人呢？所以他不布施。拿着一个

penny，他也攒着，攒着个 penny，把这个 penny 攒着化成水他也不放手，就这么样子悭贪。他宁可叫它变成水，这个铜攒成水了，所以他怕穷；怕穷，今生穷了，什么也没有了。所以今生贫贱是何因？前生不肯济贫人。

“今生端正容貌好”，今生相貌长得非常圆满，非常端正，人人见着都恭敬这个人，爱这个人，不讨厌。无论什么人见着都会生一种爱敬的心。为什么呢？这“香花点灯供佛前”；你在佛前上香，或者供花，或者点灯，所以今生相貌就圆满了。佛也都一样，一切一切都有因都有因果的。

不论你们是印第安人也好，美国人也好，中国人也好，日本人也好，印度人也好，暹罗、缅甸人也好，这都是互相会搬家的。好像你住在这一个房子里头，住一住就要搬家了。人的生命和这个道理是一样的，一点都不出奇。在这个世界上，善一伙，恶一群，什么人他就找什么人。信佛的人就和信佛的人在一起；信鬼的人就和信鬼的人在一起；信魔的人就和信魔的人在一起；读书的人就和读书的人在一起；做官的人就和做官的人在一起；那么做生意的人就和做生意的人在一起；做工的人就和做工的人在一起；种人参的人和种人参的人在一起。所以就叫善一伙，恶一群，什么人找什么人。

我们这都是研究佛法的人，在前生也研究佛法，发愿要弘扬佛法，今生不知不觉地又走到这条路上来了。因为在前生发的愿，要弘扬佛法，尤其要到那个没有佛法的地方，令佛法发扬光大。这都是过去发的愿，现在满我们的愿，未来成就我们的愿。所以你不要问你是什么人生到美国的；什么人，不论哪一个国家的人都是人，不需要问。懂了没有？你还不知道？那真是作梦了。

无论哪一个国家的人，都应该对每一个人都好。谁对我不好，也忘了它；我要对所有的人都好，不要记得不好的事情。我们只找人的好处，不找人的不好处；人人都这样，世界都不战争了。为什么世界战争？就因为每一个人都要找人的坏处，看人的坏处，所以这个世界就一天比一天麻烦了。

1975年8月23日．星期六晚

弟子：我差不多三、四岁的时候摔了交，那个时候感觉好像离这个地方很远，到一个很光明的地方，黄色的光明，在这个时候觉得 Everything is Okay。最近几个礼拜，一切都很好，我觉得好像回到家了。请问我小时候的那个境界，跟现在的情形有没有关系？

上人：这当然有关系，就叫你不要忘了。就像那个琉璃似的，可以看透，从这边看到那边，叫你把什么都看透了。

弟子：我从小就有很多很奇怪的病，这是为什么？

上人：不论有什么病，你也没有死，现在就应该修行了。

弟子：好，我会修行。

弟子：师父，弟子有一个问题？就是人的智慧现了，就好像大学毕业这样子。弟子的问题就是，释迦牟尼佛就修了三个大劫，这么长的时间才成佛，这个时间表是不是固定的？或是人，一生如果尽他所有的力量来修行，消灭他的业障，会不会更快地见到他的本来面目，就是证得佛的智慧？还是一定要等到万德具备？这是弟子的问题，也是一个比喻，就是需要那个修行的时间，才可以开智慧，开悟？

上人：你有没有听过高峰妙禅师那个公案？

弟子：高峰妙禅师，就是那个生人面疮的？

上人：不是。是那个在西天目倒挂莲花那儿坐着，睡着掉下去，有一个菩萨又把他托上去。

弟子：听过了。

上人：听过了。你知道那个果佑讲的，不知道他讲的是不是和我讲的一样？但是，那个大意是会一样的。那个就是答覆你这种问题。你不记得吗？

弟子：嗯！要想一想。

上人：这个韦陀菩萨说，“你这么贡高我慢，我八万大劫都不护你法了。”为什么要这么说呢？有没有这么说？（弟子：喔！说的那个。以后高峰妙禅师就忏悔，韦陀菩萨就……。）

他又掉下去了，韦陀菩萨又把他托上来。他又问：“你说八万大劫不护我的法，为什么你现在又来救我呢？”韦陀菩萨怎么说的？（弟子：韦陀菩萨说，“这么贡高我慢心的人，是有很多很多；可是如果你要是诚心地忏悔，一念的忏悔，就再护你的法。”）

不是“如果”，是“因为”。“如果”，那一种语气，那是还没有忏悔；“因为”，这是个决定词，因为你忏悔了。“如果”你忏悔，那是还没有忏悔，是不是啊？（弟子：是的。）因为你忏悔了，所以超过八万大劫了，已经超过了。他没有那么说吗？（弟子：喔！大概说了，弟子忘记了。）那么这个问题你现在懂了没有？

弟子：弟子明白了。

上人：你可以对大家讲一讲，因为你讲的是中文，他们听不懂。

弟子：好的，……。

上人：他生惭愧心，你听这儿，这个很要紧很要紧，你要说清楚。

弟子：好。

上人：韦陀菩萨不是说不护他法吗？他就哭起来了，哭得好像睡觉似地什么都忘了；忽然间又好像睡觉醒来似地，说，“喔！韦陀菩萨护我的法，以前我也不知道他护我的法，我一样修行啊；现在他不护我的法，我就不修行了吗？还是应该修行啊！”于是他还是照常在那儿打坐；坐着，时间一久了，他又睡着了。

你要说明了他睡着才掉下去；他没睡着，他掉下去干什么？他因为睡着了，又从倒挂莲花那个石头；在那个上面好像倒挂着的一朵莲花似的，上面大，底下小。那个莲花上面大，他在上面坐着，掉下去那一定死的。那不知道多深的！不止三千尺那么高，不知多少尺。那么他又在那坐着，又掉下去了，这才是事情发生的由来和理由。

那么掉下去了，韦陀菩萨又来把他托上来他说，“喔！谁来护我的法？”韦陀菩萨就说：“喔！我是韦陀。”“哦！”他说：“老韦，你简直打妄语啊？你也不守戒律；你也讲大话了。”韦陀菩萨说，“我没有讲大话；我

没有讲妄语。”“你没有打妄语？你说你八万大劫不护我的法了，现在你又来护我的法。”韦陀菩萨说，“因为你一念的忏悔，你这个真心的忏悔，超过八万大劫了，所以我再来护你的法。”

这个地方很要紧的，你看，字这么一转弯，你若说不清楚它，意思就完全没有了。如果是一定的，那变成死法了，不是活法了，变成定法了：没有定法的。说释迦牟尼佛修行三大阿僧祇劫，只不过是说这个三大阿僧祇劫不超出一念，一念就是三大阿僧祇劫。你没有听《华严经》？你知道你修几个大阿僧祇劫了？（弟子：不知道。）或者你修六个大阿僧祇劫。（弟子：或者没有修。）或着以前，也不知道是哪一个念“嗡嘛呢叭弥吽”的法师身上的一个虱子。

弟子：或者现在还是。

上人：果林，你头先要问什么问题的？你在那儿念佛的时候，不可以走出来问问题，这你是太不懂规矩了。

弟子：他问金山寺的宗旨里面有两次说“不变”，可是最后又说革命为僧事。

上人：这个不是宗旨。前面那三个才是宗旨；后面那个，就是你照着这个真理去传佛心印。怎么样？还是不懂？

弟子：他的问题是，因为我们提倡正法，怎么样可以有一个革命？

上人：就因为正法，所以就要革命。现在其他的地方都是末法了；都是末法了，你要不把他纠正过来，这是不对的。革命是革这个末法的命，不是革正法的命。

好像在中国的佛教和亚洲的佛教，你不知道，你们完全不懂的。譬如叫人上香，就拿这个来讲。这个住持上香上完了，叫居士来上香，头一个居士就要给五千块钱来这上一上香。这个居士就要给五千块钱，才可以到这儿上一枝香。不是你们觉得谁都可以来这儿上香不付钱的，是特别的出五千块钱的，甚至于五万块，才可以上一枝香。第二个人四千块钱；第三个人三千块钱，这是一定的。你到做法会时，谁出的钱最多，谁就是大护法、大居士，

你看这是对不对?

在这儿大家都是平等的。我们不是你给钱给得多，你就先走；你没给钱，你最后。你们各位想一想，在中国，给人念经，超度人要收一万块钱，或是十万块钱，都不一定的。一般说，“钱越多越好”、“你有钱你就好。”在亚洲的佛教是这样子的。这里，你给钱也好，不给钱也好；你愿意做好事也好，你不愿意做好，也 Okay（好）：Everything is Okay 一切都可以，这又叫革命为僧事。我们不像亚洲的这个佛教，就看钱看得那么重要，看其他的，像佛经、佛法、佛，看得很低的。

这是亚洲的佛教，是这样子的。那和尚敲这个木鱼当、当、当，敲磬，要给钱；你拜佛，你也要给钱；不然的话，佛看不见你。如果你给多点钱，佛的眼睛就睁大一点。就是这种的态度，让佛法走到末梢上去了。

我们金山寺不是这样子的。我们是穷的、富的，到这儿来拜佛都是平等的，没有什么分别，不是你拿钱多就是第一了。

我们金山寺也不是和谁不讲钱，是不注重钱。

这就是革命，革这个不正当的命；那个不正当的风气，不正当的习惯，都要把它取缔了，就是所有佛教不对的地方都不要了。我们要主持正法，革那个不正的法。我们把那个末法不要了它。我们再把这个正法拿回来。

他想的这个问题是很有意思的－－你正法怎还要革命？我们随缘不变。譬如这个随缘不变，我们随这个缘，但我们本来这个宗旨还不变。我们到什么地方不说人家不对，这叫随缘。他做那样子，我们也就那么样子，但是我们本来的宗旨不变的。我们不会说人家，批评人家不对，这叫随缘。我们自己一定要按对的做，这叫不变随缘。你懂吗?

今天在三点钟的时候，讲十方三世佛；十方三世佛，阿弥陀第一。

阿弥陀佛是第一个佛，因为他愿力最大，所以他力量也最大。我们只要念南无阿弥陀佛，就很快会成佛的；只要你念佛，就会成佛。这个念佛的法门，就好像母亲和儿子一样；念佛的人譬如儿子，阿弥陀佛就是大家的母亲。你谁念阿弥陀佛；谁就是阿弥陀佛的儿子，所以在《楞严经》上，〈大势至

菩萨念佛圆通章〉就说：“如母忆子。若子逃逝……”，这个儿子跑了，这个母亲找儿子是不容易找的；若是儿子想要找母亲，回来就找到了。你要是单单母亲想儿子，儿子越跑越远；要是母亲想儿子，儿子又想母亲，这样常常就能在一起了。我们所有的人都是阿弥陀佛的子女，所以我们只要想回家，谁都可以回去；我们要是不想回家呢？那父母在家里等我们，他也没什么办法。

所以说“阿弥陀第一，九品度众生。”他有九品莲花，有上上品、上中品、上下品、中上品、中中品、中下品、下上品、下中品、下下品。

这九品里头又分出来九九八十一品；每一品又分出九品。前几天也曾经说过了，他用这九九八十一品的莲花来度众生。谁念佛，西方极乐世界那个七宝池、八功德水里边就生出一朵莲花来。你这念佛，念得越多，莲花就长得越大；你念佛念得少，莲花就小一点。莲花大，你成佛也大一点；莲花小，成佛就晚一点。莲花大，你成佛就早一点；你要念念佛又不念了，那么莲花又乾了，又没有了。所以你要想你品位高，你就多念佛，诚心念佛；你要想你品位低，那么你就懒惰不念佛，那个莲花也就没有了 。

“威德无穷极”：这个阿弥陀佛大威德力，没有可比的。

如果有问题你就快点问，过一两天我们就要回金山寺去了。

弟子：有的时候小孩子有无形的朋友。我想知道他们是不是真的人。我有一个朋友，常常和一群没有形象的小朋友玩。可是有一次他自己不乖的时候，他就怪这些无形的小朋友，然后他们就都不见了。

上人：谁知道是这样的呢？

弟子：他母亲。

上人：他母亲看得见吗？

弟子：看不见，可是他每天跟他们玩好几个小时。

上人：这有时候会有，或者是鬼，或者是仙，都有的。因为他不知道这是鬼，或者是仙，以为就是朋友。这小孩子中，有的看得见的。小孩子要是

修行很容易成功的。

我常常讲，男孩子不过十六岁，女孩子不过十四岁，要是参禅打坐用功修行，再遇着真正善知识，就很容易开悟，很容易成他的道果。因为他不知道世界上那么多真真假假的事情。也不知道你欺骗我，我欺骗你，互相那么欺骗的事情；等一读书，有了cheat sheet（夹带），就不容易了。

1975年8月24日．星期日下午

上人：有没有其他的问题？

弟子：请问师父，众生有没有一个开始？一个地方？有没有什么来源？如果是从无始以来就有了众生，那么众生有没有一定的数目？如果有来源，那么是从那儿来的？

上人：来源就是从“O（零）”的那儿来的。你问他，那个“O（零）”从什么地方开始？从什么地方终了？那个就是个无始无终。那个“O”要破了，变成一个“一”，就有一个开始。中国字也是一样，就是，“一”就是从那个“O”变出来的。有了一了，就生出来个二；有了二就有三；有了三，就有四、五、六、七、八、九、十，乃至于无量无边那么多的数字。你说这个有多少的众生？

弟子：如果把这个“O（零）”扭绞一下，就变成“无量”的符号。

上人：这个就是中国那个阴阳鱼，不过西方画的和中国的不同。你修道，还要把这个“一”修成“O（零）”，那就是返本还原了。现在这个问题懂了没有？

弟子：明白了，就是一个修道的问题。

上人：你修，就是返本还原，从“一”回到“O”上。但是人人都把这个“一”忘了，不要说那个“O”了，连一都忘了，连个“一”，都不知道哪回事。“天得一以清；地得一以宁。”天得到这个“一”，是晴晴朗朗的万里无云；地得一以宁，地得到这个“一”，就不会地震了。“人得一以圣”：人要得到这个一，就是圣人。那么你要再能修成“O”，就是佛了。

弟子：请 上人讲一讲五戒。

上人：五戒就是杀、盗、淫、妄、酒，为什么要持五戒？就因为“诸恶不作；众善奉行。”不杀生、不偷盗、不邪淫、不妄语、不饮酒，受持这五戒就是不做这五种恶事，奉行善事。

为什么不杀生？因为众生都有生命，都欢喜活着，不愿意死。就是蚊虫这么小的生命，它咬你的时候你一动，它就跑了。为什么它跑呢？就因为它怕死。它喝你的血，你就要它的命。由这一点看来，所有的众生都是欢喜活，不欢喜死。尤其是人，每一个人都愿意活着，不愿意死。虽然有的时候，有自杀的人，那是有特别情形；如果没有特别情形，他也不愿意死。因为这个，我们养我们的慈悲心。我们愿意活着，所以也不杀一切的众生，这是杀戒。

“盗”，你不偷盗，来生也没有人打劫你。所以有很多人都听过这个讲法：

今生不笼鸟，来生不坐监。
今生不钓鱼，来生不讨饭。
今生不杀生，来生无灾难。
今生不偷盗，来生无抢案。
今生不邪淫，来生不婚变。
今生不妄语，来生无欺骗。
今生不饮酒，来生不狂乱。

这是说五戒大概的意思。

在五戒里边，有的人就说：“杀戒、盗戒、淫戒、妄语戒，这个都很重要的。饮酒是很平常的一件事，为什么要戒它呢？因为饮酒就容易把其它的戒都犯了，所以酒也要戒的。这个酒戒就包括抽烟，和吃种种的迷幻药，都在酒戒之内。所以有的人说，五戒没有说不许可吸烟，甚至于吸毒这是不犯戒的。不是的，酒戒就也包括抽烟、吸毒、吃迷幻药，marijuana（大麻），opium（鸦片）都在酒戒之内的。

以前有一个居士，他受了五戒之后，最初他看得很重要的，守得很清净；时间一久，他就老毛病犯了，就要喝酒，就说五戒里头这个酒戒才真多余的。这喝酒怕什么呢？于是乎，他就买了几瓶白兰地，回来就喝。正在喝酒的时候，邻居的鸡刚好走过来。“大约是我应该用它来送酒。”于是乎，他就把鸡抓住就杀了。（上人翻译时加：这是中国人，不是西方人。西方人喝酒不需要用东西来送，不需要送菜，所以这绝对不是西方人。）因为饮酒想要吃菜，所以把杀戒也犯了。那么鸡是邻居的，他没有让人知道就把它杀了，这盗戒也犯了。

那么邻居的女主人跑过来找鸡，说你看见我的鸡到你这儿来了没有？他这个时候喝着酒，也吃鸡肉也喝醉了，就说：“没有，你的鸡没有跑过来。”妄语戒也犯了。他看这个女人生得也很美貌的，于是乎把这个淫戒也犯了。就因为这个，五戒里的酒戒是很要紧的。

那么守戒不杀生，说是要“诸恶不作；众善奉行。”究竟是不是这回事呢？这个你要是有怀疑，当然它就有了问题；你要没有怀疑，一定会把你的善根越培越深。并且受持五戒，每一戒就有五个护戒善神来护持着你。你受五戒之后，能守持这五戒，你能逢凶化吉，遇难呈祥，没有一切的灾难，这是受戒的好处。

什么叫三业？我们有三种的业，心有三恶，身有三恶，口有四恶。身有三恶，就是杀盗淫，这三种恶事是由你身来犯的。心有三恶，就是贪瞋痴。贪，无论什么都贪，贪而无厌；瞋，贪不到就生瞋恨心；瞋恨心生出来就变成愚痴；愚痴了就不管天地，什么都不管了就做颠倒的事。这是由心犯出来的。

口有四恶，就是“绮语”，尽说些邪知邪见，不是正知正见的话；“妄言”，打妄语；“恶口”就是骂人，常常骂人；“两舌”，见到姓张的说：“你知道啊！姓李的说你什么什么不对。”对姓李的又说，“你知道吗？姓张的讲你什么坏话来着。”就好像昨天那个人问，说他有几个看不见的朋友，他说了他看不见的朋友的坏话，他看不见的朋友就跑了，不来了。连看不

见的朋友要跑，那看得见的更不高兴了，所以这叫两舌。

两舌不是一个口里长了两个舌头，是说两种话挑拨离间。十恶不作就是十善。所以我们学佛法的人就是停止十恶，奉行十善。十恶十善总起来就是三业，身口意三业要清净了，这三种罪业都没有了。我们念佛的人发愿同念佛的人都有一种感应现前。等我们临命终时，西方极乐世界一切的境界，很清楚地现在我们眼前。所以见着念佛的人和听见念佛的人，都要精进修行一起都生到极乐世界。这是我们念佛人应该有的思想。

上人：有没有什么问题呀？

弟子：弟子果戒有三个关于戒的问题。一、有关淫戒，请师父解释一下淫戒是不是戒所有男女的关系？是夫妇之间要守的规矩？我和我的女朋友虽然没有正式结婚，但是在我们的心里是已经结过婚，不会再和其他的男人或女人有关系。

上人：这就可以。

弟子：有关打妄语，有一个境界，就是不说话也打妄语。好像美国政府在越南打犯法的战争，可是所有美国国民没有说不要打的。政府和打仗的人认为人民没有说话就是赞成。我要问，如果你不说那些恶的行为，就是赞成。这是不是不说话而打妄语？

上人：是这样的。但比说话打妄语好一点。不说话打妄语当然是不合法；你要是说话打妄语就更不合法。希望没有这些情形。要是自己的力量做不到的呢，那不管我的事情。这是关于打妄语，因为你一个人的力量没有办法叫所有的人不打妄语。

弟子：喝酒，我查字典，酒字根本就是“毒”。在美国，大多数的人吃的饭，有很多毒在里面。很多食物有味精或其他化学物加在里头。咖啡里有咖啡因，是很厉害的药。还有人参，这也算是一种药。还有些个蘑菇，有一种叫 peyote，很多人把它当作一种修行的工具。特别是美国印第安人，把这个当做一个法门，可以令人专心，这样子。

上人：有一种蘑菇我都吃过。我守孝那时候没有东西吃，我在那附近找了一个蘑菇吃了。这个蘑菇吃了就笑，这叫笑菇。吃了，喔！很欢喜笑的。我相信这里也都有的。你把这个翻译了给他们听，然后再翻译他说的。这个国家可能也都有这种蘑菇，但是我也不记得是什么样子。那次吃下去以后我也没有再吃过，也没有再见过，就吃了那么一个蘑菇。

弟子：因为吃的饭里面很多毒，咖啡、人参也可以算是里边有毒。很多人把蘑菇当做修行的工具，也当做一个法门。师父对这个有什么意见？应该怎么样？

上人：以戒酒的原因，就因为它能令人狂乱，令人发狂，能令人做一些颠倒的事情。如果你用少少的不颠倒，这是可以的，但是就怕你由少而多。就拿喝酒来说，喝一杯，再喝一杯，他觉得还没有醉。喝酒的人他不承认自己醉；他就醉了他也说他没有醉。我就见了很多喝酒的人都是这样的，喝了还想要喝，喝了还想要喝，就因为这样子所以说要戒。如果能少少的，拿它当药来用，你有病用它来治病这是可以；如果你没有病，就不需要用这个药。

方才说到人参，人参没有毒的。人参它的性是甜的，人参味甘，大补元气；它补气，止渴生津，调容养胃。你吃了它有什么好处呢？你要很渴，吃了它不渴了。生津，能生津液，口水叫津液。它大补元气，元气就是最初生出来那一点气，气的根本那叫元气。人的丹田之气这叫中气，元气就是生中气的那个气，叫元气 - - 气的一个开始。人参补气，你气力不足，吃人参气力就够了。

所以在中国，很多法师讲经的时候都要喝人参茶，就是讲得伤气了，它又补上来，补气。人参味甘，大补元气，止渴生津：你要是很渴，吃了它不渴了。调容养胃：容就是血；胃就是气。调容就是调和血；养胃就是养气，它能养气。这是人参。

每一种药材你都要知道它有什么作用，不是乱吃的。不是说，“喔！吃点这个，吃点那个。”你没有病吃药，那反而有病的。药是治病的；要是没有病，不需要那个药。说，“我觉得很疲倦，要吃点补药就不疲倦了。”你

疲倦，你休息休息就好了，不需要吃药。

弟子：调容是不是说是血？

上人：调和血，是让血流通，不会好像沟有什么东西塞住了似地。人的血，只要它流通正常就不会有病。还有谁要问问题？

弟子：打坐的时候，好像打七，这个是不是一个合适的时候吃一点人参？会不会也算治病的原因？

上人：那是帮助你修行。或者你这个气血，这个腿，睡觉睡得多了，那么吃点人参，叫你 wake up（醒来）那也可以。

弟子：弟子要知道，请师父说明，在这里有很多人时时吃人参修行，有很多人感觉这个人参很阳的。有几个人觉得有一点不舒服，因为他们的气感到塞了，似有什么障碍，尤其在肩膀上，不习惯。他要师父说明，有没有什么应该吃的方法。或者同时可以吃两种药，吃人参又加上另外一种药品。

上人： 那太凉就不需要吃，人的身体过犹不及；你太过了，太强了，和太软弱是一样的。不要太过了，你就取中道就可以了。譬如你能拿动一百磅的力量，你吃了人参能拿动一百五十磅，这是太过了，不需要那样。好像这一杯水，满了就可以了，不要叫它流到外边；流到外边和不满是一样的。假如身体气不够不足了，说话声音也不大，很小，不能大，或者……。总而言之就是中气不足。好像走路时，咳！咳！咳！这都是中气不足，这样的时候它会补气。不是个个人没有病就吃那个；没有病吃少少的，一个月吃一次已经就不少了，不能天天吃的。好像真正的人参，一次只吃有一钱、两钱那么多，大概 half ounce（半盎斯）那么多。在冬天的时候，这三个月可以吃，其余的时候不要吃。好了，我们要送牌位了。

弟子：有另外一个问题。师父说这个第一戒，不杀生。师父讲的只有众生或者动物，没有谈到植物。果微对于植物有特别的想法。他说植物有它们的八识，高度比很多众生更高。他觉得植物能够感受到“怕”的这种感觉。这些植物也会认识人，也有感觉，是不是？它们八识或者六识好像到处都在。这是果微的感想，科学试验过。比方说一个植物，把它割了，另外一个植物

离得很远很远，也受到这个痛苦，就是同时同受。他说他觉得植物好像有情感的感觉，所以他对于杀动物和杀植物的感觉是差不多一样的。他要问人在世间应该怎么生活，这样子不杀生？

上人：有生命的生灵叫有情，这一切的植物叫无情。土、木、瓦、石，就像那石头，你看它是无情的，但是它都是活的；但是它那活的，就是少一点，不是具足的，不像人有八识。它虽然也有感觉，但是它不具足的，所以这叫顽石。虽然是顽石，但都有情感。怎么证明呢？

在中国有个道生法师，在虎丘山那个地方讲《涅槃经》。有人问那个《涅槃经》前半部说的阐提无佛性，这个道生法师就说阐提也有佛性。当时他那么讲，所有的法师都反对他，说经上明明讲阐提无佛性，你怎么可以说有佛性呢？就叫所有的人不要听他讲经。他就到山里头对着石头讲，说：“我说阐提有佛性，对不对？”这个顽石就点头。这叫顽石点头。“生公说法，顽石点头”，由这个证明，就是无情的，也有佛性。

但是在世界上怎么样生存呢？要是详细来说，你就吃植物也是杀生，不过轻一点。你如果不吃呢，你自己也不会活着。吃植物比较没有那么伤慈悲心，慈悲心不那么受伤。你要是很显明地杀生去吃生灵的肉，这个对自己的慈悲心是受伤的，就是生瞋恨心，没有慈悲心；慈悲心就轻一点，瞋恨心就重一点。他问这个问题都很难答覆的，很不容易的。是吗？

有什么证明植物也有生命呢？它没有血，没有气。就这个人参，要是人参过了一千五百年他会变成人形，变成一个小孩子各处跑的，这叫参仙。

弟子：有的人的看法是吃一碗饭，你就杀了碗里那么多粒谷的生命。你吃肉的话，比方吃一只鹿，你只杀了一个生命。

上人：一个动物的身上有百千万亿那么多的植物，没有数量那么多。这植物就是由那个动物那儿分开的。为什么它去作植物？就因为它不信佛教。这一切的畜生又是由人这儿分开的。这一个人要是变畜生的时候，可以变十几个畜生。所以它就愚痴了。人的灵分开做畜生，畜生的灵又分开，分作最小最小的时候，就作植物去了。那个植物所有的那个感觉，就是由原来那个

畜生那儿分去的。那么虽然那么多，但是集中起来也没有一个畜生那么多，也没有你吃一口肉那么多。你看着它是那么多，但是不够那一个畜生那样多。

好像就一粒米来说。这个植物的百千万粒米，也不够畜生肉的一粒米的那种性那么多。为什么这样说？你要是开了五眼的人，你看就知道了；没有开五眼，没有“眼睛”的人，怎么说你也不懂的。怎样说你也不相信，因为你没有作那个植物呢。懂了没有？他说什么？

弟子：不一定。

上人：是啊！不一定。我知道他不一定。好像蚊虫，这个蚊虫，你看它千千万万在整个山上，这么多蚊虫这只是或者一个人的灵性变得这么多。不是说是一个人的灵性就变成一个蚊虫，一个人会变无量无边那么多蚊虫，这叫性化灵残。性化灵残，化做最小最小作植物了，所以那个不同的。

并且那个植物，好像草，它也有生命。春天生，它到时候就死了。它寿命短。畜生寿命长；你如果不杀它，它可以活很久很久。至于那个米，你就杀不杀它，它是那么短短的时间，它到时候就死了。

所以这里边，你要是分析起来是有很多的道理可以研究的，科学也没有法子研究清楚。不要讲了，越讲人家越不相信。

弟子：最高的喇嘛就是西藏的达赖喇嘛。他是吃肉的，因为他们住的环境是很冷的一个地方。好像对治吃肉，他们有什么办法？

上人：他们问这么多的问题，是不是他不能停止吃肉？

弟子：果微他实在是已经二十多年来，问他自己这个问题；在他心里讨论，想这个问题。实在他说吃肉可以，不吃肉也可以，他就是要看水平高度，多大？

上人：你问他是信达赖喇嘛，还是信释迦牟尼佛？怎么不说呢？

弟子：他说信释迦牟佛。

上人：那么达赖喇嘛，他吃不吃肉我不知道。我听说达赖喇嘛是吃素的，但是他以下的喇嘛，很多是吃肉的。就算达赖喇嘛他也吃肉，那么释迦牟

尼佛是不主张吃肉的。他是要学着达赖喇嘛吃肉呢？或是跟着释迦牟尼佛不吃肉呢？

弟子：他要知道信佛教的人，有没有什么方法对治吃肉的效果？果微明白吃肉的业报，明白不应该吃肉，可是他听说有时候信佛教的人也可以吃肉。他要知道 上人对那些情形有什么看法，或者有什么方法来对治吃肉的恶业。

上人：佛也吃肉，他不主张吃肉；他吃肉不是他自己要吃，是旁人供养他的。佛吃肉不是自己杀的生，这叫三净肉。就是比丘，出家人也可以吃肉，居士也可以吃肉，可以吃三净肉。

什么叫三净肉呢？就是不见杀、不闻杀、不为我杀，这叫三净肉。我没有看见人杀生；我也没有听见畜生要死的时候，那种哭叫的声音，这叫不闻杀；不为我杀，这个畜生不是为我而杀的。这个肉，为着身体软弱可以吃。并且佛是托钵到外面去化缘去。这化缘托钵，其实有的时候人家给他什么，他就吃什么。他不是自己想要吃，是旁人供养他的，可以吃的。他方才说要找一个方法。

为什么修道人不吃肉呢？就因为吃肉会增加人的淫欲心；修道人不应该有淫欲心，所以不吃帮助淫欲的这种饮食。这是最重要的一个道理。这是要你清净，没有染污，这是不吃肉最要紧的一个原因。

Okay。可以到那边去做大回向。开始念佛，把这个牌位念往生咒时就烧了 。

【本书英译本书尾后记】

大众驱车至海边，于日落中做大回向功德，默念《十六观经》中之初观 - - 落日观，观想落日，状如悬鼓。（全文完）

Dharma Talk on Aug.17 | Aug.18 | Aug.19 | Aug.20 | Aug.21 | Aus.22 | Aug.23 | Aug.24

Editor’ s Introduction

In the summer of 1975 Bill Brevoort, owner of Buddha Root Farm on the Smith River, near Reedsport, Oregon, decided he wanted to host an outdoors Buddha Recitation Session on his land. He requested the Venerable Master Hua and the fourfold assembly of Gold Mountain Monastery to join in the session. The Venerable Master assented, and in August 1975 a group of over fifty cultivators from all over the U.S. gathered at the farm to attend a week-long session of reciting the Buddha' s name.

This was the first time that a traditional Buddha Recitation Session was held in the open air, in the mountains. A large main tent was set up to provide shelter from the hot afternoon sun and occasional downpours of rain. Beside the tent a circular path was cleared for members of the assembly to use during walking recitation. Beside the winding river, the yellow grasses, and the wild flowers the assembly recited the Buddha' s name, attended ceremonies, and listened to instructional talks.

The participants worked on quieting the mind; some attained the state of "light ease" or gained the flavor of Buddha Recitation. Ultimately, reciting the Buddha' s name can result in the Buddha Recitation Samadhi, a concentrated state where, as the classical Chinese poet Su Dong-Po wrote:

Of the colors of the mountains,
none are not his vast long tongue;
In the sparkling streams and the forests green
his compassionate song is sung...

At the end of the week 17 people took refuge with the Triple Jewel and bowed to the Venerable Master as their teacher.

During the session Venerable Master gave talks twice daily, one in the afternoon and another in the evening. He brought the Pure Land Dharma-door alive, explaining the fundamentals of practice and revealing the fruits of cultivation. He spoke so simply that even absolute beginners could comprehend the principles, and yet his words awakened more experienced cultivators to the profundities of the Buddhadharma. The Venerable Master's words provided inspiration and instruction for all assembled at Buddha Root Farm, and they serve as a wealth of Dharma for cultivators of the future.

Vajra Bodhi Sea will be printing the instructional talks given by the Venerable Master during that Recitation Session along with photographs, hoping to give our readers an idea of how the Master guided Westerners in the first outdoor Buddha Recitation Session and to remind them of the Master's painstaking toil in bringing the Buddhadharma to the West. May this inspire everyone to take up the mission of the Thus Come One and carry on the Master's wishes, thereby saving themselves as well as others.

As the third anniversary of the Master's Nirvana approaches, this series is being published as a form of commemoration.

Sunday, August 17, 1975 (evening)

Homage to the Eternally Dwelling Buddhas of the Ten Directions
Homage to the Eternally Dwelling Dharma of the Ten Directions
Homage to the Eternally Dwelling Sangha of the Ten Directions
Homage to Our Teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha
Homage to the Shurangama from the Buddha's Crown
Homage to the Bodhisattva Who Observes the World's Sounds
Homage to the Vajra Treasury Bodhisattvas

How are you? This Dharma Assembly is wonderful! Despite the rain, so many people have gathered here deep in the mountains to blaze trails through the wilderness. We are here to plant the seeds of Bodhi so that in the future we may harvest the fruit of Buddhahood.

What is meant by "planting the seeds of Bodhi"? Upasaka Bill has named this place "Buddha Root Farm." At Buddha Root Farm one should plant Bodhi seeds. First you plant a Bodhi seed, then you send down the Buddha Root, and in the future you will reap the Buddha fruit. So your coming here is an extremely important first step.

Why do I say that it is important? Because if you recite the Buddha's name you can end birth and death, and then, like the Buddha, you can teach and transform living beings. From limitless eons past till now, each one of us has been born and then died, has died and been born, passed through birth upon birth - death after death: Who knows how many times we've turned on the wheel? We have not yet encountered the Dharma-door of Buddha-recitation, and so we have not ended birth and death.

Now, having learned the method of Buddha-recitation, we can be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. This is extremely important! Buddha-recitation is a serious matter because it can cause all living beings to end birth and death, gain release from the revolving wheel, separate from suffering, and attain bliss. Since it is so important, all of us participating here should be sincere and recite with a true heart.

There's a way to determine if you are reciting with a true heart. If you are sincere, the mosquitoes will not bite you. If you are

insincere, the mosquitoes will bite you. If you recite with a true heart,you won’t be bothered by the rain. No matter how it pours, itwon’t dampen the mind which recites the Buddha’s name. Reciteuntil the wind blows, but doesn’t touch you; the rain pours, butdoesn’t fall on you.

If your only thoughts are to chant the Buddha’s name, then it won’t rain. The weather will be fine, that’s certain. The mosquitoes won’t bite you and the rain won’t fall. These are some responses that come from sincere recitation of the Buddha’s name. If you are simply pretending, then it will rain, the mosquitoes will bite, and you’ll be miserable sitting there. If you recite well, however, even when the mosquitoes bite you’ll pay no attention to them, and so it will be as if they hadn’t bitten.

You should think, “I will endure the pain of being bitten. My only thought is to recite the Buddha’s name. If the mosquitoes bite, I won’t even know it.” If you don’t feel the bugs bite and if you don’t know it’s raining, that’s being true-hearted. If your heart is sincere you will certainly have a special response. You may see Amitabha Buddha coming to rub you on the crown of your head or you may see him bathing you in light. Amitabha Buddha may appear and cover you with his sash. These are all responses:

His hand rubs my head,
His sash covers me…

Amitabha Buddha may respond in these ways.

So if you don’t fear that the mosquitoes will bite, if you are unmoved by the rain, and if you’re not afraid to walk the rugged path back and forth, then your heart is true. If your heart is true,

even when mosquitoes bite, you won’ t feel it. That’ s why I saythey won’ t bite. They won’ t bite because you won’ t know thatyou have been bitten! If, as soon as a bug flies near you, you think, “Oh no! Here comes a mosquito!” and try to brush it away, thenyou’ ve forgotten about reciting.

This is not a joke. It’ s a very serious matter. When Guo Yu said to me today that a mosquito had bitten him, I said, “You haven’ t been mindful and that’ s why the mosquito bit you.” The mosquitoes are just acting on the principle that

Everything’ s a test,
To see what you will do;
If you don’ t recognize what’ s before your eyes,
You have to start anew!

If you can’ t even deal with the demonic obstacle of a mosquito, then you’ ve really chanted the Buddha’ s name in vain.

That’ s all for today. I hope you all sleep well, and the mosquitoes don’ t bite. If you recite as if you were asleep, then if the mosquitoes bite, you won’ t know it. When you’ re asleep you don’ t feel them bite; if you recite well, it’ s the same way.

Monday, August 18, 1975 (afternoon)

Today is the first full day of the Buddha recitation Session. Those who have chanted the Buddha’ s name before know of its advantages. Those who have never recited before will not know what we are doing. “Namo, namo, namo—what?”

Amitabha!

“Well, what is Amitabha anyway?”

A Buddha!

"But what are we doing? We recite while we walk, recite while we stand, recite while we sit, and even when we lie down to sleep our minds are still reciting. What use is it?"

I will tell you:

To bow in worship before the Buddhas
Eradicates offenses like the Ganges sands.

If you just bow once before the Buddhas, you eradicate as much bad karma as there are grains of sand in the River Ganges.

You say, "As grains of sand in the River Ganges? Well, I've sung the Buddha's name so many times, certainly my offense-karma has been completely wiped away."

You should be aware that from limitless eons ago, from the time when you first became a human being until the present, your incarnations are uncountable. You yourself may not even believe that you have past, present and future lives. In each life you were confused, muddled, and unclear, and therefore, at present, you don't know how much bad karma you have amassed as a human being. There is reason to fear that the bad deeds you have committed in one single life exceed the number of sand grains in the Ganges. Although reciting the Buddha's name will eradicate offense-karma like the Ganges' sands, you don't know how much of it exists. Fortunately, our bad deeds have no material form. If they did, each individual's karma would completely fill empty space. That's the extent of your offenses! But, because karma has no material form, empty space has yet to be filled. So it says,

To bow in worship before the Buddhas
Eradicates offenses like the Ganges' sands;
To give a single penny
To increases your blessings without limit.

In supporting the Bodhimanda, those with money give money. Those with strength give strength. Whether you give money or strength, the merit and virtue are the same, and they help you to plant good roots.

To recite the Buddha's name but once eradicates the grave offenses committed during ninety million eons of birth and death. In America, where the Buddhadharma is new, you now have the rare good fortune to encounter this method. What's more, you've rare good fortune to encounter this method. What's more, you've met with a Good Advisor, one who can teach you the method of Buddha Recitation. No one should casually waste this precious time. Be very conscientious, work hard at your recitation, and you will not have attended this session in vain.

Here we are bivouacked out-of-doors under the open sky, camping in the wilds and reciting the Buddha's name. There is nothing to shelter us from the rain. When it's not raining we recite while walking on a circular track. This is truly an excellent recreation. We're not here to play ball or set off rockets, but to recite the Buddha's name. This is truly a subtle, wonderful, and inconceivable environment. There are no sounds at all. It's not like San Francisco with its cars, buses, trolleys, and planes going "vroooom! Vroooom!" --- all making a tremendous din. It's very peaceful here, and perfect for Buddha Recitation. So all of you take care not to waste this precious time.

Deep in the mountains the air is fresh and there is not the slightest trace of pollution. The evil world of the five turbidities, the turbidity of the eon, the turbidity of views, the turbidity of living beings, the turbidity of afflictions, and the turbidity of the lifespan---exists in places crowded with people. This wilderness, by contrast, is the clear, pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. If you can cultivate in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, the power of the noisy bustle of the city. Here, it is easy to enter samadhi, to gain concentration, to obtain the Buddha Recitation samadhi.

As you recite the Buddha’ s name, every sound of the Buddha’ s name is a thought of purity. When every sound is recitation, every thought is clear and pure. When every thought is clear and pure, you obtain the Buddha Recitation samadhi.

As it is said,

One pure thought is one thought of the Buddha.
When every thought is pure, every thought is of the Buddha.

Beside us runs a small river, and the flowing water recites the Buddha’ s name. As you listen to it, it says, “Namo Amitabha Buddha.” The blowing wind also recites the Buddha’ s name, proclaiming the wonderful Mahayana Dharma. This state is the same as that in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. In the Land of Ultimate Bliss:

The water flows, the wind blows
Proclaiming the Mahayana;
In the pools of seven treasures
Are flowers of four colors
And waves of solid gold.

The lotuses which bloom in the pools made of the seven treasures are green-colored of green light, yellow-colored of yellow light, red-colored of red light, white-colored of white light. Green, yellow, red, and white, the lights shine brightly.

You say, "Dharma Master, you have been explaining Buddha Recitation for quite a while now, but ultimately what is this 'namo, namo' all about? Namo what?"

"Namo" yourself! Don't "namo" anyone else. Think of it this way, "I have such good roots that I have learned to recite the Buddha's name!"

"Namo" means "to return one's life and respectfully submit." This means to return your body, mind, and life and respectfully bow before Amitabha Buddha. Say to yourself, "I take my body, mind, and life and return in refuge to Amitabha Buddha."

You ask, "Well, if 'namo' means 'to return one's life and respectfully submit,' what does 'Amitabha' mean? Can you explain that?"

Of course I can. Don't be impatient. I'll tell you in due time. If I don't finish this time, I'll continue next time. And if I don't finish next time, I'll continue later on. Don't worry. I am determined to teach you what "Namo Amitabha Buddha" is all about.

"Namo Amitabha" is Sanskrit. Yesterday Guo Zhen said it was Chinese, but that's completely wrong. "Buddha" is also Sanskrit. The Chinese character "Fo" is a partial transliteration of the word "Buddha." Amitabha's other name, "Amitayus," means "limitless life." When you recite the Buddha's name, you obtain a

limitless life span. Because you return your life and respectfullysubmit to the Buddha of Limitless Life, you may take the merit andvirtue you obtain by reciting and live as long as you please!

If you say, "I want to live to be ninety-nine years old," then you will certainly not depart at age eighty-eight. You will live to be ninety-nine.

You say, "But I want to live to be a hundred!"

You can do that, too. All you need to do is recite the Buddha's name sincerely. This includes all of us gathered here today. I will now make a prediction: Those among you who want to live to a very old age will certainly get to do so. Not everyone, mind you but only those who are sincere. Whoever recites sincerely will obtain that response and get his wish.

"Amitabha" means "limitless light." The limitless light is the light of wisdom, the opening of wisdom. Whoever recites sincerely can develop great wisdom and a faultless memory. There's no question about it. "Amitayus" means "limitless life" and "Amitabha" means "limitless light."

The word "Buddha" is also Sanskrit. I explain the word "Buddha" using the similar-sounding Chinese phrase 不大 bu da, which means "not big." So I have a verse:

Neither great nor small,
Neither come nor gone,
In numberless world systems,
Buddhas shine upon each other's lotus thrones.

The Buddha is not any bigger than we people are. Rather, he is just the same size. However, he has become enlightened and

returned to his inherent wisdom. We are no smaller than theBuddha, and the Buddha is no smaller than we are. But, because ourhearts are not pure, because we have not discovered our inherentwisdom or developed great wisdom, we are still common people.

The Buddha is one who is enlightened. Living beings are those who are confused.

When enlightened, one is a Buddha.
When confused, one is a living being.

To become enlightened is to become a Buddha. Before enlightenment, one is just a living being. When you become enlightened you gain nothing that the living being doesn't have. When confused, one hasn't anything less than the Buddha has. There is no increasing and no decreasing; it's a question of whether you are confused or enlightened. That's where the difference lies.

I will illustrate this with a very simple analogy. Mind you, this is just an analogy. Don't take it literally, because it's all hypothetical. The Buddha is like a university professor---university professors are not Buddhas---you should be clear about that point---and living beings are like students. Every student can become a professor. Every professor can become a student. The Buddha is, however, wiser than professors. He's even highter than a professor! Remember, this is a mere analogy which demonstrates that the Buddha and people are the same.

"Then why should I chant the Buddha's name? Why doesn't the Buddha recite my name?" you wonder. "Why should I recite 'Namo Amitabha Buddha'? Why doesn't the Buddha recite me? Why doesn't he recite my name?'"

That’s a good question. In fact, it’s got me stumped. I don’t know how to answer it, but I’ll think up something: Ah! I know! It’s because you never made a vow to cause living beings to recite your name. The Buddha Amitabha on the causal ground was a Bhikshu named Dharma Treasury, and he made forty-eight great vows. In every vow he said, “In the future, when my cultivation succeeds and I have become a Buddha, my country will be one of ultimate bliss and purity. The murkiness of the five turbidities will not exist within it. All living beings in the ten directions who recite my name will be led to rebirth in my land, where they may realize Buddhahood. As long as one of them has not become a Buddha, I will not accomplish the right enlightenment.”

Because of the power of the vows of Amitabha Buddha, we have gathered here to recite---with different mouths but with the same sound--- “Namo Amitabha Buddha.” We are cultivating by relying on the power of the vows of Amitabha Buddha. When we recite the Buddha’s name, Amitabha Buddha knows about it. “Hey, I signed a contract with that living being saying that if he kept my name in mind I would lead him to become a Buddha. If I don’t guide him to Buddhahood now, the contract is nothing but a lie.” And the Buddha hurries right over to guide you to Buddhahood.

Someone says, “But the Western Land of ultimate Bliss is so far away---hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddhalands---how can I go there? Can I take a plane? How much will the ticket cost? How much is the train fare? Can I take the bus or drive myself?”

Don’t worry about that. You can arrive in a single thought. You don’t have to buy any tickets at all. In a single thought you can be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Hundreds of thousands of

millions of Buddhalands are not beyond that one single thought.

We now recite "Namo Amitabha Buddha" and there is nothing more important than this work. Don't you see? Last night it was raining and today the sky is clear. In a moment you are all going to make a vow to stop the rain. The rain has got to stop because we are working hard here at our cultivation. I myself don't have the strength, but if you collectively say, "IT IS NOT ALLOWED TO RAIN!..." Yesterday I admonished Guo Tong because he was being lazy and not working hard. Now we should all do this work together. For these few days while we are cultivating her, the least response we can expect is a clear sky. Otherwise it will be pitch dark at night, and the paths are very muddy. The men don't know this, but the women are really roughing it over there. They have to cross the river, and it is never certain whether they are going to cross the water or whether the water is going to cross them. But I'll tell you:

When you're confused, the teacher takes you across.
When you're enlightened, you take yourself across.

When you become enlightened, you take yourself across; you carry your own flashlight.

At just this moment Guo Hang has struck up a false thought. He wants to run into the mountains to live. Isn't that right, Guo Hang?

Guo Hang: Yes...

Ven. Master: But you have to open your eyes. If you keep your eyes shut, even if you have a flashlight, it will be useless. You'll fall down anyway. Remember, you've all made a vow that it is not allowed to rain. If it doesn't rain, that proves you are all sincere. If it does rain, that will prove that you are not sincere. It has nothing

whatever to do with me. It’ s none of my business. The rain is yourbusiness.

Most of the people from Gold Mountain Monastery have entered the sleep samadhi, because they’ re used to sleeping sitting up, so they can sleep while they sit. The newcomers aren’ t able to do this.

August 18, 1975, Monday (evening)

Disciple: This is a story I’ ve already told everyone at Gold Mountain Monastery, but there are so many new people that I’ d like to tell it again.

There was an eighty-year old lady. When Shi Fu was in Hong Kong, he had a temple built on top of a mountain and you had to walk up eight hundred steps to get there. I wasn’ t clear about the details last time and Shi Fu had to tell me, so I know them now.

This eighty-year-old lady was deaf, yet every day she would go to Shi Fu’ s Dharma lecture. She insisted on going even though she couldn’ t hear. After a while, one day when everyone was chanting, all of a sudden she could hear them. On the night before this, she had had a dream in which three fat children ran into her stomach, and from then on she had to eat every hour. She had to go down in the middle of the Sutra lectures and cook something for herself and go back to the lecture. This went on for about a week and then she decided to tell Shi Fu.

Shi Fu would get up very early in the morning and take supplies to an island where he was building a temple, and he would return in the evening for the Sutra lecture. The elderly lady got ready to meet him as he was coming up the steps. She told him her dream. Shi Fu

told her to light a stick of incense at midnight. She went back and litincense at midnight and then she saw Weitou Bodhisattva take thechildren by the ear and drag them away. Shi Fu later told her theBodhisattva was taking them to jail. Afterwards she was cured of herhunger ailment.

The reason she had it in the first place was because in her past life her friend had had that ailment and she had not believed it. She had accused her friend of making it up. That was why she had received this retribution in this life. When she herself had the ailment, a lot of people said she was faking it. Those people will receive a similar retribution in the future.

Ven. Master: If anyone wants to say anything, I' ll give you an opportunity to speak right now.

Question: We haven' t told people on what page in the Recitation Handbook the Sutras and mantras we' ll be reciting are. The new comers won' t know, so people from Gold Mountain should tell them where we are in the book so they can follow along in the recitation.

Ven. Master: Good. You should tell everyone where we are starting. It' s not like at gold Mountain where we only have a couple of new people. Here we should announce it to everyone.

Ven. Master: What time did you start this morning?

Disciple: 7 o' clock.

Ven. Master: Did you do Morning Recitation?

Disciple: Yes.

This afternoon at the three o' clock lecture I spoke about Amitabha Buddha, but I did not finish explaining the term

"Buddha." I will do so now.

Previously, the Buddha was the same as every other living being. Not only was he the same as human beings, he was the same as all living creatures, even mosquitoes, bees, and ants. Because he shared this kinship he later brought forth the thought of enlightenment. Having brought forth the thought of enlightenment, he practiced the Bodhisattva Way, benefiting himself and benefiting others, enlightening himself and enlightening others, helping himself and helping others, saving himself and saving others. There was no selfishness in the things he did; he was open and unselfish. He helped everyone. When he cultivated in the causal ground, he gave up his very life to rescue living beings.

The Buddha saw a tiger about to starve to death, and he offered his body to the tiger as food. When he saw a hawk on the brink of death, he fed his own flesh to it, slicing the meat from his bones in order to feed it. Think it over: The tiger is the most ferocious of beasts and the hawk is one of the fiercest of birds, but when the Buddha saw that these evil creatures were starving, he gave up his life to save them. Because he had such a great, magnanimous spirit, he became a Buddha.

After he became a Buddha, did he then sit back and enjoy the bliss of Buddhahood? No. He did not forget all living beings. He saved them; he taught and transformed them.

The Buddha has three kinds of enlightenment,

1) self-enlightenment;
2) the enlightenment of others; and
3) the perfection of enlightenment and conduct.

He enlightens himself; and he enlightens all living beings, and he has perfected the practices of his cultivation.

Perfect in the triple enlightenment,
Replete with the myriad virtues,
He is called "Buddha."

As to the myriad virtues, in every move the Buddha makes, he benefits others, thus perfecting his virtuous conduct. That is why we call him "Buddha." This has been a general explanation of the term.

Not just a Buddha can realize Buddhahood. Everyone can become a Buddha. That is why our faith in the Buddha is not superstitious [literally, "confused faith"]. Buddhism is not like other religions whose deities claim, "I am the true god. All others are false. No matter how faithfully you believe in me, you will eternally be my inferior. Never can you occupy my position."

Religion such as this is dictatorial, authoritarian, and unjust! On the other hand, everyone can become a Buddha. This is why Buddhism is the most democratic religion, the most just religion. The Buddha is completely devoid of selfishness, thoroughly devoid of desire for self-benefit. He is open, generous, and impartial, straightforward, true, and unprejudiced. He sees all beings as identical with himself and so he wants to take them all across.

Hearing this, someone has become arrogant. Why? It doesn't occur to him that the Buddha became a Buddha by virtue of his cultivation. He says, "Oh, everyone is a Buddha. I don't have to cultivate. I am a Buddha! Everybody is a Buddha!"

This person has deviant understanding and heterodox views. It's true that everyone can become a Buddha, but in order to do so,

one must cultivate. When you become enlightened you can certify tothe result of Buddhahood. If you do not cultivate and have notbecome enlightened, what kind of a Buddha are you? You are astupid Buddha, a confused Buddha. Muddled and dense, youunderstand nothing. You hear others talk about it, misunderstandingthem, yet consider yourself a Buddha, too. This is not permissible.

Why do I mention all this? Because in the past I have met many people who have held such views and so I decided to tell you about it.

We will now discuss the Pure Land Dharma-door, Buddha Recitation. The Pure Land is the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, the country of Amitabha Buddha. When the Buddha was in the world, no one understood the Pure Land Dharma-door. That is why not even one of the Buddha’ s disciples, with their great wisdom, didn’ t understand it. No one thought of asking for it, and so the Amitabha Sutra, which we just recited, was spoken by the Buddha without request. All the other Sutras which the Buddha spoke were requested by an interlocutor.

For example, in the Vajra Sutra the interlocutor was Subhuti, who asked the Buddha to speak the Sutra. Since none of the Buddha’ s disciples understood this Dharma-door of Pure Land recitation---not even the great and wise Shariputra---the Buddha spoke the Amitabha Sutra to Shariputra without waiting to be asked. It is an extremely important Sutra and takes across those of great wisdom. Those who lack wisdom are not able to understand it. That we now have met to cultivate this method of Buddha Recitation makes Shakyamuni Buddha very happy and pleases Amitabha

Buddha a great deal, too.

Simply explained, there are four kinds of Buddha Recitation. The first is "Contemplating by Thought Buddha Recitation"; the second, "Contemplating an Image Buddha Recitation"; the third, "Holding the Name Buddha Recitation"; and the fourth, "Real Mark Buddha Recitation."

In "Contemplating by Thought Buddha Recitation" one contemplates the following verse:

Amitabha Buddha's body is of golden hue,
His fine marks brilliant beyond compare.
The white hair-mark winds as high as five Mount Sumerus,
And his purple eyes are as deep and clear as four great seas.
Countless transformation Buddhas appear within his light,
With transformation Bodhisattvas, also numberless.
His forty-eight vows take living beings across
In nine grades of lotuses to reach the other shore.

Amitabha Buddha's body is of golden hue: Amitabha Buddha's entire body is gold.

His fine marks brilliant beyond compare: His characteristics are incomparable. Amitabha's light is unequalled. He has the thirty-two marks and eighty minor characteristics of a Buddha. His brilliant light pervasively illumines all living beings with whom he has an affinity.

Whoever is sincere in his recitation during this session may be illuminated by Amitabha's light. But your heart must be truly sincere. Bring forth your true heart to recite the Buddha's name, and don't fear suffering or pain. You must be extremely sincere and earnest.

Whoever is sincere in his recitation during this session may be illuminated by Amitabha’ s light. But your heart must be truly sincere. Bring forth your true heart to recite the Buddha’ s name, and don ‘t fear suffering or pain. You must be extremely sincere and earnest.

The white hair-mark winds as high as five Mount Sumerus: In the space between Amitabha Buddha’ s eyebrows there is a white hair-mark. How big is it? As big as five Mount Sumerus. And how high is Mount Sumeru? Mount Sumeru is the highest mountain there is. None of our mountains are as high.

The empty space that we see is called the Heaven of the Four Kings. Mount Sumeru is twice as high as this heaven. In other words, the Heaven of the Four Kings is located half-way up Mount Sumeru. Amitabha Buddha’ s white hair-mark is five times as high as Mount Sumeru. How high do you think that is?

His purple eyes are as deep and clear as four great seas: Amitabha Buddha’ s eyes alone are as large as four seas. Now, would you say he has big eyes? His purple eyes, bright and clear, are as big as four great seas, so how big would you say his entire body is? His body is as big as one hundred million trichiliocosms.

Countless transformation Buddhas appear within his light: Amitabha Buddha emits light from his eyes., his ears, his nose, and his mouth. His entire body pours forth light, and from every hair pore on his body appear Buddhas from boundless universes. See? Your mind can’ t possibly conceive of anything so big. No one knows how many transformation Buddhas he creates.

With transformation Bodhisattvas, also numberless: The Bodhisattvas which appear on every single hair pore of his body are also boundless.

His forty-eight vows take living beings across: He has made forty-eight vows to teach and transform living beings.

In nine grades of lotuses to reach the other shore. His lotuses are divided into nine grades:

1. superior rebirth in the superior grade;
2. superior rebirth in the middle grade;
3. superior rebirth in the lower grade;
4. middle rebirth in the superior grade;
5. middle rebirth in the middle grade;
6. middle rebirth in the lower grade;
7. lower rebirth in the superior grade;
8. lower rebirth in the middle grade;
9. lower rebirth in the lower grade;

Each of these nine grades in turn divides into nine, making nine times nine, or eighty-one grades in all.

Among the eighty-one grades, how big is the largest lotus? It's about one hundred times as big as the United States of America. A small lotus is about the size of this country. This should give you a general idea. The bigger your lotus is, the bigger your Dharmabody will be when you realize Buddhahood and sit upon the lotus throne. If your lotus is the size of single U.S.A., then as a Buddha you will also be just about that big. The Buddha's transformation bodies are inconceivable. This is called "Contemplation by Thought Buddha Recitation."

As we sit here listening to the lecture, several mosquitoes among us are thinking, "Oh! How can the Buddha be that big? I don't believe it." It's fitting that they don't believe it, because they are so small they can't believe there could be something that big. Not only do they not believe that the Buddha is as big as he is, they also don't believe people are as big as they are. Although they may see a person, they don't know what a person is. They think we are Mount Sumerus. Each one of us is, in fact, a Mount Sumeru. What does that mean? Today I'll reveal this most subtle and wonderful dharma: Your Mount Sumeru is just your arrogance, your smugness, and your disbelief!

Okay. That's all for today. There are still three more types of Buddha Recitation to be discussed. Perhaps someone will tell you in a dream tonight what they are. If not, I'll explain them tomorrow.

Tuesday, August 19, 1975 (afternoon)

Today is the second day of the Buddha Recitation Session. Yesterday you didn't know what the recitation of "Namo Amitabha Buddha" was all about, and so I explained it to you. By now, each of you should know how to apply effort in reciting the Buddha's name. When reciting, don't sing too loudly or it may injure your energies. However, if you recite too quietly, it's easy to doze off and lose your vitality. Whey you are drowsy, you are not able to hear yourself recite. If you can't hear yourself recite, then "Namo Amitabha Buddha" will not be present in your heart. So it is necessary to recite out loud so that your ears hear the sound clearly and distinctly, and your mind contemplates the sound clearly and distinctly. Don't waste even a single second. At all times be

mindful of your Buddha Recitation. Say "Namo Amitabha Buddha" with sincerity and concentration.

Your mindfulness should be uninterrupted. Continue reciting at all times without a break. Last night I explained the first of the four techniques of recitation, "contemplating by thought." Today I will continue with the second, "contemplating of an image Buddha Recitation."

When you contemplate using thought, Amitabha Buddha's Dharma body is so large that it is not easy to expand the measure of your mind to contemplate it. As an alternative, you may set up an image of Amitabha Buddha and practice mindfulness of the Buddha while facing the image. Look closely at the white hair-mark between the Buddha's eyebrows. The white hair-mark will emit a great light which will travel to the end of space throughout the Dharma Realm, so that all places receive the illumination. Within Amitabha Buddha's light appear limitless Buddhas and countless Bodhisattvas. This is the method called "contemplation of an image Buddha Recitation."

The third is "holding the name Buddha Recitation" in which one repeats the six-syllable vast name, "Na-mo A-mi-to-fo," that is, "Namo Amitabha Buddha." This technique is divided into audible recitation and soundless recitation. Here in the Dharma assembly we practice audible recitation. When the bell is rung, everyone recites "Namo Amitabha Buddha" in unison, making a melodious sound. Soundless recitation refers to the period when we sit in silence while single-mindedly reciting "Namo Amitabha Buddha." This is called "silent recitation," or "vajra recitation."

Of all the Dharma-doors in Buddhism, Buddha Recitation is the easiest one to cultivate, as it

Receives the beings of the three dispositions,
And gathers in both the intelligent and the dull.

Living beings are of three dispositions: a superior disposition, that is, people with wisdom; a mediocre disposition, that is, people of average intelligence; and an inferior disposition, that is, people who are very stupid. This method benefits both the young and the old, and works for both the intelligent and the dull. Intelligent people are those with wisdom and dull people are the stupid ones. People with wisdom who recite the Buddha's name can easily gain a response. People who are stupid who recite will also find it easy to gain a response. Therefore the recitation of "Namo Amitabha Buddha" on the one hand saves effort and on the other costs nothing. It's the most convenient Dharma-door of all. Not only is it convenient, it is the most expedient of all expedient methods, the shortest of all short cuts, the most wonderful of all Dharma-doors. Some people may say, "What's the significance of the phrase "Na-mo A-mi-to-fo?" Its significance is profound and vast. Its wonder cannot be exhausted in speech, nor can its advantages.

When the Buddha dwelt in the world, that era was called the Proper Dharma Age. At that time, the Buddha taught the Dharma and there were certified Arhats and great Bodhisattvas; the sages were dwelling in the world. The Dharma-image Age followed next, after the Buddha entered Nirvana. During this period people who cultivated the Way were few; those who were attached to external appearances and concentrated on making Buddhist images were many, but genuine cultivators were few in number.

After the Dharma-image Age, came the Dharma-ending Age. The Proper Dharma Age lasted for one thousand years. The Dharma-image Age lasted another one thousand years. That's two thousand years in all. The Dharma-ending Age endures for ten thousand years. We are now living in the Dharma-ending Age. What does the phrase "Dharma-ending" mean? It means that the Dharma has nearly come to an end and is about to disappear. The "disappearance" of the Buddhadharma involves the disappearance of belief in the Buddha. In the Dharma-ending Age, living beings' faith in the Buddha is not firm. When the Buddha dwelt in the world, people's faith was so firm that if you held a person at knife-point and threatened his life saying, "Don't believe in the Buddha or I'll murder you," he would rather die than surrender his belief. That's how solid in faith the people were during the Proper Dharma Age.

Now, in the Dharma-ending Age, you don't even have to threaten a person with death. You just have to say, "Don't believe in the Buddha," and they quickly reply, "Okay, fine." You don't have to threaten them, just tell them to quit believing and they will. It's very difficult to promote faith.

Calculate it for yourself: How many people are there in the world? Among the entire human race, how many people believe in the Buddha? You can lecture the Sutras to these believers every day and they will still waver between doubt and faith. You can conduct a small experiment. Try this. Invite a person out to a movie. He'll accept on the spot and away you go. Then try asking him to a Sutra lecture. He will say, "Ohhh...sitting there for two hours is nothing but suffering and tedium. It's not half as much fun as a movie!"

That’s the Dharma-ending age for you. You needn’t threaten them with death. You can simply say, “If you believe in the Buddha, I’ll bow to you three times.” And what do you think happens? They snap, “You go believe in the Buddha yourself. Why bow to me?” In the Dharma-ending Age it is difficult to believe in the Buddha. People may believe for a while but then they retreat. They may believe for two and a half days, but before the third day rolls around, they turn back and say, “I’m tired of Buddhism.” Tired. See? That’s the basic make-up of people in the Dharma-ending Age. You suggest to him gently or tell him, directly, “Don’t talk so much!” and he’ll continue to talk, talk, talk too much! That’s the way it is. If you tell them not to do something, they insist on doing it. If you tell them to do something, they will insist on not doing it. That’s the way beings are in the Dharma-ending Age.

In this age, the Dharma will disappear. The first Sutra to disappear will be the Shurangama Sutra. That is why those who study the Buddhadharma should first investigate the Shurangama Sutra. As long as someone understand this Sutra, the Buddhadharma will not become extinct. As long as there is someone who can recite the Shurangama Mantra, the demon kings, the heavenly demons and those of externalist teachings will not dare come into the world to play their tricks and to make trouble. The Shurangama Mantra is the most miraculous mantra for helping the world. The Shurangama Sutra is the primary Sutra which protects and supports the Proper Dharma.

The Shurangama Sutra will disappear first, and then no one will be able to recite the Shurangama Mantra, because it is too long. For example, many among us have been studying it for over a year and

still can’ t recite it. Basically, the Shurangama Mantra should take sixmonths to learn. The Sanskrit “Shurangama” is transliterated intoChinese as leng-yan, and those who study it are said to be “leng,” that is, in a daze, for half a year while memorizing it. Here in theWest, we have people who have been “leng” for one, two, andeven three years, and still have not come out of their “daze.”

The Shurangama Sutra and the Shurangama Mantra will be the first to disappear. The last Sutra to disappear will be The Buddha Speaks of Amitabha Sutra.

When the Amitabha Sutra has become extinct, only the six-syllable vast name “Na-mo-A-mi-to-fo,” will remain in the world. It will last another one hundred years and save limitless living beings. After one hundred years the six-syllable vast name will lose two syllables and only “A-mi-to-fo” will remain for another hundred years and then they will disappear. At that time people will be undergoing extreme suffering. They will have no blessings at all. What they eat will be like horse manure. The food will have no nutritive value, even the natural foods. No mater what one eats, it will be harder to swallow than horse manure. Why? Because the people will have no blessings. When the Buddha was in the world the water that people drank was more nourishing than the milk we have today. Why does today’ s water lack nutritive properties? It’ s because now the people don’ t have such great blessings.

At that time, people will be as tall as dogs. When their suffering reaches its peak, things will start getting better, and the eon will beg to “wax.” We are presently in an eon of “waning.” This means that every one hundred years the average lifespan of human beings decreases by one year and their average height by one inch. When it

has decreased to the point that an average lifespan is ten years, andan average height is about the size of our present-day dogs, peoplewill have sexual desire as soon as they are born and they will also beable to commit murder. That's how rotten they will be.

But at that time, the eon will being to wax, and every hundred years people's lifespans will increase by one year and their height will increase by one inch. When the average lifespan has reached eighty-four thousand years---would you call that a long life?---it will begin to decrease once again. When the average lifespan has waned to eighty thousand years, the next Buddha, the Venerable Maitreya, will appear in the world. Whoever wants to meet him at that time should work hard right now.

We are now conducting a Buddha Recitation Session. The Dharma-door of chanting "Na-mo A-mi-to-fo" is not easy to encounter. It is said:

Supreme, profound, wondrous Dharma
Is hard to meet in a million eons.
I see it, accept, hear, and uphold it,
And I vow to understand
the Tathagata's true principle.

Supreme, profound, wondrous Dharma: It may look to you like Buddha Recitation is very easy, yet this method is quite rare and hard to find. You should all think about it: In America Alone, how many people understand the Dharma-door of Buddha Recitation? Many people will say, "Buddhists sit in Zen meditation." Others say, "Cultivate the Secret School. It's fantastic. It's a secret." Very few truly understand how to recite the Buddha's name. In

America such a Dharma assembly has simply never been held before.

This is the very first time that the deep, deep, and wonderful Dharma has been explained in the countryside. You might say our Dharma assembly is unprecedented in the history of this country. And what is more, people have come from the four quarters to attend, including such distant places as Los Angeles and San Francisco. This demonstrates real sincerity. If they were not sincere, they would not have come all this way. They' d be at the movies instead, or out dancing, drinking, playing cards, shooting a few holes of golf, playing football, ice-skating, skiing, or whatever. However, these people have abandoned such pleasant diversions to chant "Amitabha" in the mountains.

Is hard to encounter in a million eons: Although it is hard to meet, you have now encountered it.

I see it, accept, hear, and uphold it: Now you have met with the Buddhadharma and know how to recite the Buddha' s name.

And vow to understand the Tathagata' s true principle: Vow to understand the true principles of the Dharma-door of the Pure Land.

You are all sincere and today I am very happy. Why? Because you have evoked a response and stopped the rain. It didn' t rain last night and it didn' t rain today. That' s two days. This proves that you are earnest in your recitation. If it rains tomorrow, you' ve retreated. But if it doesn' t, then you will have created three dry days. If it doesn' t rain for a whole week, that will be conclusive evidence of genuine effort on your part.

Since you are all so earnest, I will tell you what I' ve been doing. In the last few days I have negotiated and signed a contract with the

mosquitoes. It says,

Mosquitoes are not allowed to bite participants in the recitation session. Should they feel compelled to bite someone, they shall bite me first. This applies equally to all those attending, regardless of whether or not they are my disciples. Mosquitoes are not allowed to make trouble for anyone.

So they will bite me first because it doesn't matter if the mosquitoes drink a little of my blood; I want to give it away. After this, if anyone is bitten by a mosquito, please report it to me. If bitten by one mosquito, tell me. If two bite you, announce, "I've been bitten twice!" and I'll take it up with them. After all, they did sign a contract and if they don't live up to it, I just might take them to court!

Someone is thinking, "If I do, Dharma Master, you will say I'm not reciting sincerely." Well, if you don't tell me, you'll just cheat yourself. It's none of my business. Do as you please!

Disciple: Master, just as the subject of mosquitoes came up, one flew by my ear and I believe it is still biting me.

The Master: Oh? Very well, you can take it to Buddhahood. Tell it, "I vow that you will become a Buddha first."

Tuesday, August 19, 1975 (evening)

The second day of the session has almost passed. I believe it won't rain tonight. That means that during the last two days everyone has been sincere. I don't know if you will continue to be sincere tomorrow. We'll just have to wait and see whether it rains. While walking and reciting "Na-mo A-mi-to-fo," when you hear

the large bell, that is the sign that you are to return to your bowingcushions, and the tempo of the recitation is speeded up. I’venoticed that many of you are unaware of this. When you recite, keepyour hands in front of your chest; this is called the “palms-loweredposition.” Don’t let your hands hang down by your belly. Thatdoes not look nice. They should be right in front of your rib cage,directly below the heart.

When you hear the big bell, raise your palms and join them together. Then you no longer recite “Na-mo A-mi-to-fo,” but just “A-mi-to-fo.” I’ve noticed a lot of you don’t raised your palms at this time, but let your hands hang down or swing at your sides. This is because you don’t know about the rules. Although rules are not important, you still have to abide by them. As it is said, “If you don’t follow the rules [in Chinese the word for “rules” is made of the two words “compass and T-square] you can’t make circles or squares.” That is, if you don’t follow the rules you won’t attain your goal.

For example, when Guo Tong came to the temple at the age of four, the only question he had was, “Why do there have to be rules?” That was the question he asked at age four. Seeing that he had this question at such a young age, I knew that he was an unruly kid.

I told him, “The rules are there just because you don’t follow them. If you abided by the rules, there wouldn’t be any need for them.” Even now, I think he must still detest the rules. He wants to be free to run around, play, and be rowdy. That’s just his character. He’s like a monkey, jumping and crawling all over the place. He is very lively and his eyes are always looking around at everything. But

he can really tell stories. If he continues, in the future, he's going tomake his mark as a master storyteller. He is only eleven now and hecan really make stories up; wait till he grows up—he will be evenbetter at it then. So keep your eye on him. Pretty soon his stories willfly right up into the sky.

If anybody here wants a story, he can make one up for you. Don't forget about that story about a single strand of hair [given in the The Earth Store Sutra with the Venerable Master Hua's commentary, published by D.R.B.A.]. that's a secret dharma that most people don't know about. Even if people want to know about it, don't tell them right now.

Also, when you stand at your places, those who come first should stand up in front and those who follow should stand behind them in the order that they file in. The first to come should not stand in the back so that those who follow have to shove past to find a place. No matter where you go, you should proceed according to the rules for order in the assembly. Then things won't become confused, but will run smoothly. You should all take note of this.

Cultivation must be done every day. You can't cultivate one day and slack off the next. The same applies to following the rules. You have to follow the rules every day. If you don't, you are not acting in accordance with the precepts of the Buddhadharma. So, wherever you go, take care to observe the regulations and don't be sloppy about it.

"Holding the name Buddha Recitation" can be practiced by both the young and old, and those in the prime of life. It is suitable for everyone. Sick people can recite the Buddha's name. You who

are sick suffer from the pains of disease because of karmic obstacles.You should hold the Buddha’ s name in order to lessen theseobstacles. Those who are healthy should take advantage of theirhealth to recite the Buddha’ s name and dedicate their recitation toinsure their perpetual good health. Old people who are approachingthe end of the road should follow the good path to the end. Theyshould recite the Buddha’ s name. Young people whose road aheadis filled with limitless light should recite “Na-mo A-mi-to-fo,” tomake the light appear. Thus, the Dharma-door of Buddha Recitationis suitable for every type of person.

You can chant while walking, standing, sitting, or reclining. However, when reclining you should not recite aloud. Do it silently in your heart. If you recite aloud it is disrespectful. The busiest people can recite the Buddha’ s name, and people who are the most at leisure can also recite the Buddha’ s name.

How do you practice recitation when you are very busy? You practice the “Morning and Evening Dharma of Ten Recitations.” In the morning and the evening do “ten recitations.” Recite for the length of a single breath, “Na-mo A-mi-to-fo,” and that is one recitation. Ten such “breaths” is called “ten recitations.” In the morning when you get up, wash your face and brush your teeth. Then face the West, or better still face an image of Amitabha Buddha. If any of you would like to have an image, I have some paper images at Gold Mountain Monastery that I can give you. Face the Buddha image, join your palms together very respectfully and bow three times. Chant “Na-mo A-mi-to-fo” for the length of ten full breaths. Do this in the morning and in the evening. Recite “Na-mo A-mi-to-fo, Na-mo A-mi-to-fo, Na-mo A-mi-to-fo, Na-mo

A-mi-to-fo…until you run out of breath and that counts as "onerecitation." Do this ten times in the morning and ten times in theevening.

Don't deliberately stretch out the length of your breath or cut it short. It should be very natural. This is called the "Morning and Evening Dharma of Ten Recitations." Do this every day without interruption; it will only take five or ten minutes. Can you recite at other times during the day? Of course you can. The more you recite, the better. With the skill derived from your practice of this Dharma you can be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. This method of Buddha Recitation is the most convenient Dharma door.

As I said, "Those with wisdom should recite the Buddha's name, stupid people should do it, too." Suppose someone says, "I'm very stupid. Probably it's useless for me to recite." In using this technique, the more stupid you are, the better! The wiser you are, the better! No matter how wise you are you cannot exhaust the method of Buddha Recitation. No matter how stupid you are, you are still included within it and it can be your guide.

Among the Buddha's disciples, one in particular was extremely stupid. How stupid was he? When you taught him how to recite "Na-mo A-mi-to-fo" ---a mere six syllables---he could not remember them. Finally the Buddha thought of a plan.

"Fine," he said, "since you can't remember the Buddha's name, I'll give you two words. Just recite 'sweep clean.'" But he still forgot! He would say "sweep" and forget "clean," and then he would say, "clean…uhh…what was the first word again? Oh! Sweep! Sweep…sweep…Just a minute now; don't tell me, ah…what

was the second word?" He' d remember one and forget the other.He was that dumb. None of us here is quite that stupid. Even me.I' m a bit more intelligent than him. Don' t you think so? I do. Youare all, of course, much more intelligent than I am. Anyway, whatwas his name? Little Roaside (Shuddhipanthaka). He got that namebecause he was born by the side of the road. Although he was verystupid, he later became enlightened when he found out—What didhe find out?

He discovered that his mother was a woman! He didn' t know that before. The Buddha certified his enlightenment and he gained spiritual powers. See, if such a stupid person can get enlightened, we who are so intelligent will certainly have even more success. Okay, that' s all for today because someone is thinking the idle thought that, "You know, the lectures are really too long."

Bhikshuni Heng Hsien:

Today we' re in the third day of reciting the Buddha' s name, and you can expect to be getting a bit of response at this point in the session. Yesterday the Master talked about how people who were sick, if they recited the Buddha' s name, could be cured by virtue of their karmic obstacles being lessened through reciting "Na-mo A-mi-to-fo." Yesterday we had a "big cat" story. Today I thought I' d tell a couple of "little dog" stories. These are true stories of how reciting the Buddha' s name has effected cures.

The first involves a Pekinese dog who live in Fresno. Pekinese dogs were developed in China as a response to the introduction of Buddhist Sutras. The very first printed books in China, printed from wood-block, were of the Vajra Sutra, and they depicted the Bodhisattva Manjushri riding on a lion. The ladies of the imperial

court were very much taken by the lion, and so a new breed of dog was developed—the Pekinese—to look like the lion of the Bodhisattva Manjushri. So in Fresno, California, there was a small Pekinese—the runt of the litter. A runt, but a show dog. She wasn't special dog, and a very lively, good-tempered dog, with only a few minor failings—a little bit of vanity and a little bit of over-fastidiousness with regard to food, but aside from that, there seemed to be no reason that what happened to the dog should have happened, except perhaps it was due to the jealousy of one of the older, larger dogs.

At any rate, when I went down to visit my great aunt, who owned the dog, the Pekinese was paralyzed from the waist down. Something had happened to her spine, and the whole back end of her. She couldn't move, but she could drag it along just barely. She was in tremendous pain. You could see that she was exhausting her strength and was going to die very soon. I'd been studying the Buddhadharma for a while, and I had great faith in the power of the mantras and the power of the Buddha's name. She was being taken for treatment with some kind of rays, but I saw that the people giving the treatment were more concerned with my great aunt's pocket-book than they were with the dog. The treatments were not doing anything for the dog.

I sat down with a book of the Shurangama Mantra and recited it two or three times, and then I started to recite the Buddha's name, "Na-mo A-mi-to-fo." It was very strange and very wonderful, but as soon as I started reciting it, it's as if something clicked with the dog. I had her facing away from me, with the idea of concentrating

on her injured spine, and she started looking around at me andmaking all sorts of noises and gestures as if she wanted to recite theBuddha' s name too. And it occurred to me that perhaps—of courseI had no way of knowing—but perhaps in previous lives this hadbeen something that she was familiar with and that somehow strucka bell. At any rate, from that time on she improved. Within a fewdays, she was virtually normal with only a slight limp, and eventuallyshe recovered entirely. This was by virtue of the recitation.

Another incident involved people from Gold Mountain—Upasaka Guo Kui and Upasika Guo Cong. Before they had their daughter Guo Fang, they had a dog name Lucy. Lucy was a very lively and intelligent terrier. She had a lot of tricks and was very rambunctious—a very human kind of dog. I felt I had a lot of affinities with the dog. One afternoon I looked out the window of Gold Mountain Monastery to see Lucy being hit by a car. I went running out and found her lying in the street, severely injured. The car had probably hit her on the side of her head and the front part of her body. Her eyes were starting to roll back, blood was coming out of her mouth, her legs were sticking straight out and she was going stiff. The driver of the car, a demonic looking young man, came out and started yelling at her, "Hurry up and die, dog!"

I asked him to leave, which he did, and started reciting the Great Compassion Mantra. Other people came out to recite, and someone went to tell the Master what had happened. Word came down to us that the dog was going to die, and we should recite, "Na-mo A-mi-to-fo." We carefully moved the dog into the office, washed her wounds, wrapped her warmly in a blanket, and recited "Na-mo

A-mi-to-fo" for all we were worth. We recited for a couple of hours, and during that time, you could see Lucy coming back to life. By the end of an hour and a half, you had to hold her down—she didn't want to stay in the blanket. She'd been a dead dog out in the street, but she came back to life.

We kept reciting until it was time for the Master to lecture. The Master immediately asked how Luc was and had us bring her upstairs. Now some people figure that Lucy had taken refuge at some point. Someone else saw her being ushered out of the Master's quarters, presumably after an interview on another occasion. At any rate, she had a lot going for her in terms of studying the Buddhadharma. The Master scolded her and reminded her that he had told her that if she kept running out of the building, she was due for some trouble. But she hadn't listened, and that was why this happened. All of this she meekly accepted. She was already running around in a subdued fashion that evening, and she was normal by the next day—completely cured.

An interesting thing about Lucy is that her owner, Upasika Guo Cong, was expecting Guo Fang at the time. Shortly before Guo Cong's daughter was born, Lucy just disappeared. She didn't get lost; nobody lost her. She just wasn't there anymore and very shortly after that Guo Fang was born. Now, don't draw any conclusions from that necessarily, because I've never seen Guo Fang pull that trick of sitting down on her haunches and playing around with her paws, so there may not be a connection. At any rate, that's the story of Lucy. Lucy isn't here today due to those causes and connection of the Buddha's name. The important thing in this, of course, is the power of not of one person but of lots of people.

When I was reciting for the other dog---Ah Choo was her name and she's actually very much alive at the present---I knew that it was the power of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that worked through the invocation of the mantra and the Buddha's name. People aren't always clear about this. However, it's easy when you have an extremely powerful mantra in your grasp to figure that it's you doing it and somehow get confused and maybe show off a little bit. This can be very dangerous.

This happened to someone in China. There was a Bhikshu who had a lot of cultivation and he was known as the "Living Arhat." His specialty was using the Great Compassion Mantra to cure people, and he could cure anybody of any disease. One time a lot of Dharma Masters were assembled at Pu-tuo-shan (Pu-tuo Mountain) in china for a precept ceremony. After the ceremony was over, many of them had no way to get back to their home temples.

The Living Arhat did a lot of flamboyant curing with the Great Compassion Mantra, amassed a lot of money, and rather conspicuously bought everybody tickets or chartered a boat to get everyone back to their temples. At that time the Master was part of the assembly and he saw that the Living Arhat was due to die pretty soon himself, so he went up to him and said, "You're called the Living Arhat, aren't you? You can cure other people's illnesses, but have you cured your own?"

"What illness do I have?" asked the Arhat.

"Now you've got the illness of seeking for fame, and in the future, you're going to contract the illness of seeking for profit. In fact, it won't be long before you fall," said the Master. Now the Arhat

had some cultivation. He never lay down to sleep and ate only onemeal a day, and he had this power, and he recognized thatsomething was going on. But it was very strange: he immediatelybowed down to the Master and pleaded with him, not to keep himfrom falling, but that when he did fall, to come and save him. So,since the Master grants people's wishes and the man was sincerelyasking to be saved when he fell, the Master said, "Alright, when youfall I'll save you."

Years passed, and Dharma Masters had to leave the mainland and flee to Hong Kong and Taiwan and so on. After a passage of time, what should happen but, on the streets of Hong Kong, the Master ran into the "Living Arhat," except that he was no longer a Bhikshu. He was dressed as a layman. He had gone back to lay life; in other words, he had fallen. The Master said, "Well, what happened to your Living Arhat?"

The man said, "It's just because everything you say is so effective. Your words are magical. It's just because you said I was going to fall that I've fallen."

The Master said, "Well, I promised you that if you fell, I'd save you, so I'll save you. So you can go back to being a Bhikshu now."

"Well, I haven't got any money," said the man. Now, in China, you had to pay a lot of money to leave home. If you wanted to leave home and you were broke, you were out of luck.

The Master said, "That's OK, I'll give you money and you can leave home." And so the man did. You would think the man learned his lesson, but he got involved with a layman in Hong Kong who was looking for a Bhikshu as a drawing card for his establishment. The

layman at first approached our teacher, who would have no part inbeing used as an advertising gimmick. But this former Living Arhattook him up on the deal. So the layman set him up as a " LivingBuddha," bowing to him as such. It wasn't very long before the " Living Arhat" just disappeared. So it's very dangerous to play aroundwith the mantras and the curing power behind them for one's ownpersonal benefit.

What is generally done in order to aid people is to transfer the merit from recitation of the mantras or recitation of the Buddha's name for other people's benefit. Transferring merit is one of the Ten Great Vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, and these vows are recited every morning by people who do Morning Recitation.

The first vow is to worship and respect all Buddhas. This is done by bowing to all the Buddhas, not just one Buddha. It certainly doesn't mean bowing to blocks of wood or pieces of stone that are carved to represent Buddhas. Rather, it means taking refuge with all the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time.

The second vow is to praise the Thus Come One’ s qualities. Such praises are, for example, the praise of the Buddha Amitabha. The praise that says that Amitabha’ s body is a golden hue and the light of his fine marks are beyond compare. The mark of the white hair tuft between his eyes is as large as five Mount Sumerus and his clear purple eyes are as vast as four great seas. In his light there are countless transformation Buddhas and boundless transformation Bodhisattvas. His forty-eight great vows save living beings and the nine grades of lotuses completely cross beings over to the other shore. This is a praise of the Buddha and that fulfills the second vow to praise the Thus come One’ s qualities.

The third vow is to extensively cultivate the giving of offerings. Giving offerings can be done in many ways. It can be done by offering incense and flowers before Buddha images or it can be done with the offering of the pure heart which is not fixed at all.

The fourth vow is to repent and reform all karmic faults. This means repenting all the things you've done that make it hard for you to cultivate right now, that act as obstacles. Karmic obstacles make it hard for you to sit in quiet meditation; they make it hard for you to concentrate your mind on the Buddha's name or whatever practice you are practicing. You repent of all the evil done through body, mouth, and mind through beginningless time up to the present.

This is very important in taking refuge. There is a moment in the taking refuge ceremony when the aid of the Buddhas is invoked. At that point, the Buddhas of the ten directions shine light upon you, and if you can very sincerely repent at that moment, you can completely eradicate your karmic obstacles and be completely pure. It all depends on the degree of your sincerity at that time.

The fifth vow is to compliantly rejoice in merit and virtue, which sounds sort of occult and mysterious, especially about 4:30 in the morning when we recite the vow. But this means that whenever anybody is doing something that is good, you are pleased and you also participate; you join in. If people are having a recitation session, you don't just say, "Well, that's really fine that they're having a recitation session." You also go and participate. Some people heard from as far away as Los Angeles that there was this session of reciting the Buddha's name up here in Oregon. They not only approved, but rejoiced or followed in accord and came up to

participate. Other people have also come from a great distances.

The sixth great vow of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is to request the turning of the Dharma Wheel. Now we know that the explanation of the Pure Land Dharma door was spoken by the Buddha without anybody explicitly requesting it. But in general, the Dharma must be requested before it is spoken. Of course the speaking of Dharma can be a speaking that takes many forms; it' s not just necessarily in words. So the sixth great vow is to request that giving of Dharma, the turning of the Dharma Wheel.

The seventh vow is to request that the Buddhas dwell in the world. Now, of course, when Buddhas become Buddhas, they just enter Nirvana and don' t have to stay around in our suffering world. They' re not subject to any kind of suffering whatsoever. If living beings want them to stay around, however, they will. So the seventh is to request that the Buddhas stay in the world and teach living beings.

The eighth vow is to always follow the Buddhas in study, which means doing what the Buddha did. The Buddha, for example, gave his life to save a starving tiger. This vow involves doing this kind of practice. The Buddha also cut off his flesh to feed an eagle. That' s another example of what can be done to constantly follow the Buddha in study.

The ninth vow is to forever accord with living beings. This doesn' t mean that when living beings are doing things which are questionable you go ahead and do them, too, because you want to follow in accord. It means that whatever living beings like, you start from there in teaching them. Whatever they like to do is what you

use as a basis for helping them to end birth and death, withoutimposing some exterior kind of structure or regulation on them. Youstart out from where they’ re at.

The tenth is to universally transfer all merit and virtue. That means that you take the merit and virtue of all of the practices that you do from knowing about the Buddhadharma and being able to cultivate according to it, and transfer it to other living beings, ideally to all living beings on a very vast scale so that all will accomplish Bodhi. Merit can also be transferred for individual needs or for healing purposes.

Those are the ten great vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. Now the living Arhat that was mentioned, of course, was no Arhat because a real Arhat has ended one of the two kinds of birth and death. There are two kinds of birth and death. One is being born in a body with a given life span which is more or less fixed, though not completely fixed. And the other is change birth and death which is the birth and death involved in the constant succession of thoughts: One thought being born and dying, the next thought being produced and then being destroyed, and so forth. Arhats have ended the first kind of birth and death. They are no longer subject to being born in a body with a given life span. But, of course, the so-called ‘Arhat’ in the story had not reached that point. He didn’t have control over his own birth and death and so when his offenses had accumulated to a certain point, he had to die.

Now I know that some people wonder why we’ve said that our Master does not concern himself particularly, in most cases, with individual cures. It’s because the Master is curing on a much larger scale. He’s giving people the medicine for curing birth and death;

that is, if one follows those teachings that he teaches one can learnto have complete control over one’ s own destiny and be able toteach other people to do the same as well. So it’ s not just a matterof being cured of a given illness, but of completely being free ofbirth and death.

A man:

Oftentimes examples are used to illustrate things that happen on the mind ground that happen in the world of the relative. An example such as this occurred to me today. I used to live with a group of people on a beach on Maui, called McKenna Beach. We were all engaged in setting up a camp. Right smack-dab in the middle of the camp was a part of the foundation to an old army bunker of reinforced concrete that was about a foot thick, two feet high, and quite a few feet long. Anyway, it had to go. We were all busy setting up camp and none of us really wanted to face the task of getting that thing out of there. Nevertheless, it was right in the way of the camp and impractical to keep. So, we’ re all busy setting up camp and one person would go over with a sledge hammer and hit it a few times, and the thing wouldn’ t move. This went on throughout the course of the day. A person would get on it for five or ten minutes, get discouraged and bummed out about the thing, then go back to whatever they were doing. Basically no one wanted to get on this thing. I was avoiding it altogether. It just looked hopeless.

An idea occurred to me about half way through the day that with anything in the world, if you hit hard enough and long enough in one spot, it will eventually break up. After I took a swim to refresh myself, I grabbed a sledge hammer and worked on that piece of

concrete. I just kept hitting it in the same place---toward the middleand toward the bottom---for about two hours. Finally, the entirething broke. A couple of us hauled it out in two long pieces and gotit out of there.

This illustrates how one should cultivate on the mind ground. Often people will begin cultivating a Dharma door such as reciting mantras or perhaps a Bodhisattva’ s name or a Buddha’ s name like we’ re doing now. The beginning is usually fine, but after one achieves a little bit of concentration, one’ s karmic obstacles rise to the surface and the more one meditates or recites or whatever Dharma door it is, the longer the obstacle will stay up on the surface. Many people don’ t understand what is actually happening and say, “Well, meditation is just an utter drag. I’ m more bummed out now than a few years ago when I started,” and they quit. This is a very, very common tendency and a tactic that people use to avoid facing the deeper problems of life.

Basically when cultivating a Dharma Door, such as reciting the Buddha’ s name for example, one recites and recites. At the beginning notices nothing. After a while one notices that attachments and false views come into view. These will take a very definite personalized form according to who the individual is and what his attachments and shortcomings are. After a long as definite, tangible forms, these attachments all merge together into a kind of a blob within oneself of misery and melancholy and total, utter blah. This actually shows a little bit of success. Then one meditating on it, and lo and behold, this blob starts producing light. This is when a state of equilibrium is achieved. It’ s basically the same whether one is reciting a Buddha’ s name or reciting a mantra.

One takes a conscious thought, this thought of the Buddha, and uses it to overcome one's unconscious thoughts or false thoughts. Normally one's false thinking is most definitely strong, very strong, stronger than one's conscious thoughts. When one's conscious thought, one's recitation becomes as strong as one's unconscious thoughts or false thoughts, they start bouncing back off one another and this will produce light in the mind. The longer you can keep the conscious thought equal to the unconscious thoughts arising, the longer the light will actually appear. And eventually this light will destroy one's attachments and obstacles.

Very often—I know I find myself doing it all the time and many of you may notice the workings of your mind while reciting and walking around outside and sitting in here—one tends to say to oneself, "Oh, I don't care about that. I don't think that is necessary or I don't think this is necessary." When this kind of thinking occurs, one should ask oneself, "If I don't think this is really so, then who is it that does?" Look into this question and really contemplate it. "If I'm not really attached to such and such a thing, who is it that is? If I don't think I'm doing this wrong, who is it that thinks I'm doing such and such wrong or incorrectly?" These are things that should be looked into in order for one to realize who one really is. It's very important to recognize the fact that you may be wrong and everybody else may be right, and really acknowledge this fact. Otherwise if one can't bring a change of attitude to one's mind, even one's own cultivation could be totally incorrect. Basically, even meditation is false. If one's attitude isn't correct toward meditation, meditation itself will become an obstacle. It is important to realize this, so one doesn't spend years

of cultivation in vain.

This sort of reciting that we’ re doing today here in the session is really fine, because sitting is fine and most people here have probably done quite a bit of sitting meditation, but I know I, myself, and a lot of my friends never practice walking meditation. Walking meditation is a really fine practice and should be introduced more because it’ s very important for people to realize that one doesn’ t have to be seated in order to mediate. In our daily activities there is ample opportunity to practice meditation, even for very busy people. There are always times when one is waiting in line or one has to just bide one’ s time. One can take these opportunities to get in quite a few hours of meditation a day, even in the course of daily activities.

In addition to meditation, to eliminate obstructions and whatnot and to help one to realize one’ s fundamental nature, there’ s the keeping of precepts. The Buddha instructed his left-home disciples that after he passed into Nirvana the monks should take the precepts as their teacher. Basically, a person who becomes a monk is not supposed to get involved with any meditation whatsoever before keeping the precepts for at least five years, and there is a very good reason for this.

To draw another analogy, it’ s sort of like going along in an automobile and trying to stop the automobile by just turning off the motor and not even bothering to apply the brakes. Now, the car will eventually stop and if it does stop, it will take a lot longer and it will also be a lot easier to get going again with no brakes applied, a child could come along and push it. The same principle applies to keeping precepts. If one achieves success in meditation and one has held the precepts for a good length of time, his chances of falling into

worldly ways are pretty slim. Suppose one runs across a beautifulwoman or a nice beautiful bag of ganja (marijuana) or psilocybum(another drug) or whatever one may like. It' s highly unlikely thatone will think, "Oh, that' s really great," and get involved in it. Onthe other hand if one cultivates on one' s own and ignoresprecepts, one can very easily not only fall into one' s oldattachments, but create very new ones that will emerge very strongand make it very difficult to cultivate.

Wednesday, August 20, 1975 (afternoon)

The Master: Are there any questions?

Student: I am rather new to Buddhism and would like to know what school or sect you teach.

The Master: What is your name?

Student: Bob.

The Master: Where are you from?

Student: Manhattan.

The Master: At gold Mountain Monastery we study the entire spectrum of Buddhism. We do not subscribe to any one particular sect or school. We maintain no such divisions.

Student: I recall the Master once saying that we must cultivate our roots where we come from and we must cultivate the Dharma where it comes from. I' m very new and I don' t really understand very much, but I do grasp the idea of birth and death. I understand that when things die, new things are born. I would like the Master to expound upon that and tell us more about what the Dharma is and how we can learn to propagate it in the Dharma-ending Age. Like

other living things, when the Dharma ends, does it then get reborn?

The Master: The Dharma is a method---a method for cultivating the Way. After practicing for a time, people often feel that the Dharma is not as fresh and exciting as it was at first and they quit cultivating. Basically, there is no Dharma-ending Age and there is no Proper Dharma Age. The Dharma itself is unmoving. It is not inherently "proper" or "ending." People, however, are sometimes diligent and vigorous and at other times they are lax and lazy. When people are vigorous, that's the Proper Dharma Age. When people are lazy, it's the Dharma-ending Age. The Buddha Recitation session we are conducting here is a vigorous one and it is the proper Dharma Age for us. After the session is over, if you don't cultivate and aren't vigorous, it will revert to the Dharma-ending Age.

Another student: Could the Master please tell us more about the third eye?

The Master: There are five eyes, not just three eyes. Where have you heard about three eyes?

Student: Yesterday, when the Master discussed Amitabha Buddha's white hair-mark, I took that to be the third eye.

The Master: That's not the third eye. That's just the white hair mark. The Buddha doesn't have just three eyes. The Buddha has a hundred thousand billion, limitless, boundless eyes. If we living beings cultivate, we too can possess a measureless number of eyes. On the tip of every hair alone there is an infinite number of eyes. The third eye which non-Buddhist religions talk about is really nothing. They simply have no understanding of what the doctrines of

Buddhism are all about. If you cultivate and become a Buddha youwill have an uncountable number of eyes and an uncountablenumber of hands. Guanyin Bodhisattva is said to have "a thousandhands and a thousand eyes," but not only has she a thousand eyesand hands, she has more than ten thousand. It cannot be knownhow many hands and eyes she has.

Has anyone been bitten by mosquitoes? Certainly a lot of people must have bites?

Student:...

The Master: That's because you haven't been sincere in your recitation! You haven't brought forth your true heart.

Student: What about the contract?

The Master: The mosquitoes are not trustworthy. They are bound to fail to observe the terms of the contract. There's not the slightest doubt about it. They are just too small to pay attention to things like that. There are too many of them, besides. I can sign a contract with one of them, but another won't keep the agreement, and will close in. They like their independence and are very democratic in spirit. They won't put up with having people supervise them. If I sign a contract with one of them, another will say, "I didn't sign nothin'. I'm not following no contract," and so they bite.

Translator: The Master only made out a contract with one mosquito...

The Master: Hey, it wasn't just one. It was a lot of them. But there were still a lot of them who didn't sign. For example, in this country there are the Democrats and the Republicans. If I signed a

contract with one of them, the other would say, "He didn't sign.It's none of our business." Mosquitoes, too, have a lot of differentparties and sects.

Mosquitoes have the Mosquito Party. Ants have ant parties and bees have bee parties. Each creature belongs to its own organization and faction. Only my Buddhism has no party, no school, and no sect; it is all-inclusive, complete Buddhism. The Buddhism I teach is not Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Burmese, Ceylonese, or Indian. The Buddhism I promote is world-Buddhism, universal Buddhism, the Buddhism of the entire Dharma Realm. The Buddhism I promote I don't even call Buddhism; I call it "the teaching of people." If you are a person, you should believe in Buddhism. This is because people can become Buddhas. Since all people can become Buddhas, we can call this teaching "the teaching of people."

But "the teaching of people" is not an all-inclusive term, so we will give it yet another name, "the teaching of living beings." All living beings are included within it. This includes the living beings who fly in the air, those who walk on the earth, and those who live in the waters, as well as all the plants and trees. All the trees have living beings inhabiting them. Living beings are born from a conflux of changing conditions. When the causes and conditions conjoin, living beings are born. So I advocate that Buddhism be renamed, "the teaching of people," and that that name be further changed to "the teaching of living beings."

What is more, "the teaching of living beings" can be renamed "the teaching of the mind." Because all living beings have minds, they can all become Buddhas. Thus we call it "the teaching of the mind." The mind, the Buddha, and living beings are three and yet

are not different. They are one and the same. That take the DharmaRealm as my school; I take the Dharma Realm as my name. And Iembrace the teaching of the Dharma Realm. So, in name, substance,school, function, and teaching, it is all "the Dharma Realm."

Name: The Dharma Realm.
Substance: The Substance of the Dharma Realm.
School: The School of the Dharma Realm.
Function: The Function of the Dharma Realm.
Teaching: The Teaching of the Dharma Realm.

The entire Dharma Realm is our scope. All living beings live within the Dharma Realm. No matter what religion you follow, you can't go beyond the Dharma Realm. Moreover, there is no way you can deny that you are a living being. All living beings are included within the Dharma Realm. Thus you are encompassed within Buddhism. Whether you are a good person or a bad person, you are included within Buddhism, and I consider you to be a Buddhist whether you consider yourself to be one or not.

You may say, "But I don't believe in Buddhism." Well, that's your business. You are like a person who ran away from home at an early age and now no longer recognizes his own father. Even face-to-face you no longer know your father. The scope of my Buddhism includes everyone---believers and non-believers alike. Are believers real Buddhists and non-believers not Buddhists? No. Whether you believe or not, I claim you as a Buddhist. The Buddha himself said, "All living beings have the Buddha nature and all can become Buddhas." You can't run away. There's no place to run to! So when my disciples want to draw near, they may do so; if they

want to leave, they are free to leave. No matter where you go, Iknow you’ ll never run beyond the Dharma Realm, and that is justmy territory.

My Buddhism has no limits. If you believe, fine. If you don’ t, that’ s even better. If you praise Buddhism, fine. If you slander it, it doesn’ t matter. I am vigorous whether the situation is favorable or unfavorable. Even if you slander Buddhism, I will still take you across to Buddhahood. For example, yesterday Guo Li said a mosquito was biting his ear and I told him to make a vow to cross it over to Buddhahood. When you have that kind of vow power, the mosquitoes won’ t bite you. Guo Tong said that a mosquito had bitten him and I told him to take it to jail. He said, “No, no, no…” Even though he was bitten, he wouldn’ t lock the bug up in jail. That’ s the heart of compassion.

Even though I said that I had signed a contract with the mosquitoes, some people have been bitten by them. Although a contract was signed, in all matters one should reflect upon oneself, illuminate inwardly. The first doctrine I spoke was the real one. What was that? I said that if you brought forth your true hearts to recite the Buddha’ s name, no mosquitoes would bite you and no contract would be necessary. If you do not recite sincerely, but drift off in idle daydreams instead, the mosquitoes know what to look for and they’ ll say, “You! You’ re supposed to be cultivating and reciting the Buddha’ s name but all you’ re doing is day-dreaming. Okay, you can just offer me a bit of your blood. How do you like that?” They can tell just by looking, you know. If your heart is true, then,

Better would it be to change the course of a thousand rivers,
Than to disturb the mind of a cultivator of the Way.

The mosquitoes intuit, "That person is busy cultivating and reciting. No matter what, I'm not going to pester him." Although mosquitoes are small, they can tell by looking, and they also know how to distinguish odors. If you have the "Buddha Recitation fragrance," if your heart is true, they won't bite you. If your heart is not true, if you're like me, for example, and do nothing but day-dreaming, they come to beg from you all the time. The mosquitoes come to ask for a handout, and although I'm very stingy, I have to oblige and give them a little blood.

The same is true, of course, for all of you as well. You never, ever considered giving away a penny in order to help someone else, so the mosquitoes say, "This guy is a hard case. I have to transform him in a tough way instead of gently. He's very stingy with his blood and so I'm determined to taste it." They are encouraging you to bring forth the thought of Bodhi, because when they sting and drink a little blood you may wake up a little, "Ah, the Saha world is truly filled with suffering." Because the bite hurts for several days, you can know how bitter samsaric existence is, and think, "I must hurry up and recite the Buddha's name and seek rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss where there is no suffering, only happiness. There are none of the three evil paths, and no mosquitoes, ants, or other pests there either."

And if you do bring forth the thought of enlightenment, then the mosquitoes become your Good Advisors. They truly help you cultivate. You've got to turn the illumination around and reflect inwardly. Ask yourself, "Have I recited in earnest?" That's the important point. Yesterday when I said that I had signed a contract, that was false. What I told you today is the truth.

Someone is thinking, "I came to this recitation session to hear instructional talks; why is he talking about mosquitoes?" Although the mosquitoes are small, they are a topic for a major essay. When we cultivate the Way, we should start from the small, not from the big. One proceeds from the small to the big, from the near to the far, from the lowly to the lofty. So if you can be clear about the things close at hand, you will understand what is going on at a distance.

If you don't want to hear what I have to say, simply forget it. If you can forget it, you're truly mindful of the Buddha. However, I feel sure that you won't forget it today.

Someone is thinking, "I can forget. When I fall asleep I'll forget about it." That's all too true.

Wednesday, August 20, 1975 (evening)

All of you participating in this session should earnestly recite the Buddha's name so that other people will not have to suffer just because of you. If you don't recite sincerely, it will rain, and those who are sincere will be forced to suffer because of you. If the majority of people are sincere, of course it won't rain. There's no question about it. When it rains, the paths are hard to walk, especially at night. It hasn't rained now for three days, and that is a great response, but there are still four days left. We'll have to wait and see what happens. Everyone should be mindful; be extremely earnest and sincere as you chant. Don't be lazy and sneak off to rest, and don't neglect to join the recitation. You've come from such a long distance; to be careless and flippant at this point would make the experience meaningless. So it doesn't matter who you

are, all participants in the Dharma assembly must endure thebitterness and recite the Buddha’ s name. Be patient, no matterwhat happens, and continue to recite sincerely.

You shouldn’ t sing too loudly or too softly. When it’ s time to recite, don’ t sing like someone asleep and then suddenly wake up and energetically babble to your friends. Don’ t be like that. You should put all of your energy into reciting the Buddha’ s name and visualizing Amitabha Buddha. Then you may obtain a response or observe an auspicious sign. For instance, you may see Amitabha Buddha come to rub you on the crown of your head; he may draw near and cover you with his sash; you may see Amitabha Buddha emitting light. These are all auspicious signs. You may also smell a very strong and fragrant incense, and extraordinary scent, or you may see lotuses. At night you might dream of reciting the Buddha’ s name or other various portents. If you obtain such a response, it proves that Amitabha Buddha has come to watch over you, to take care of you.

There are other types of favorable signs. Tomorrow, if anyone has experienced such a sign or evoked a response, they can tell everyone about it. I want to know about it. We’ ve managed to move heaven and earth and stop the rain, so you can expect more portents. No matter who you are, if you see Gunayin Bodhisattva or Amitabha Buddha, tell us about it. Guo Tong, have you seen any Bodhisattva or Buddha during this recitation session? If you have had any such experience, you can tell everyone. Little Guo Fang, you can speak up, too, if you have had some special state. Anyone can speak up. Young and old can relate what they’ ve seen and heard because everything we do here is open and democratic. Everyone

can know everything that's going on.

Don't assume that the Dharma-door of Buddha Recitation is a trivial matter. All the Buddhas of the ten directions were born from this practice. At present, Guanyin Bodhisattva, Great Strength Bodhisattva, Manjushri Bodhisattva, and Universal Worthy Bodhisattva all continuously recite the Buddha's name. There was once a Dhyana Master called Yong Ming Shou. He started out as a cultivator of Dhyana meditation and later he became enlightened. After his enlightenment he understood that the Dharma-door of Buddha Recitation was most wonderful and so he began to chant the Buddha's name. Every time he recited "Namo Amitabha Buddha," a ray of light flashed out of his mouth. What's more, this was no ordinary light. Within the light was a transformation body of Amitabha Buddha! So it is said,

One thought of Amitabha, One thought is the Buddha; Every thought of Amitabha, Every thought is the Buddha.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught this Dharma-door without having been requested to do so, because its wonders are manifold, ineffable, and uncountable. The Sutras say, "Of all the living beings in the Dharma-ending Age, if a billion cultivate, rare will it be for even one to obtain the Way. They shall be taken across only by relying on Buddha Recitation." However, if you recite the Buddha's name, you can end birth and death, and be released from the spinning wheel of rebirth. That is why we call it the most wonderful of Dharma-doors. You shouldn't mistake what is right in front of your eyes. Don't let it slip through your fingers. Don't go to the mountain of jewels and return empty-handed. You see, the recitation session itself is a mountain of treasures. When you come

to the mountain, you should take some treasures back with you.What do we consider to be gems and treasures? There are manykinds of them. Gold is a treasure, silver is a treasure, lapis lazuli is agem, mother-of-pearl is a gem, red pearls are gems, carnelian is agem. Ginseng is a treasure! So are he-shou-wu (Polyonummultiflorum Thunb.) and huang-jing, but you may or may not beable to get them.

How does ginseng become a treasure? If it weighs nine ounces, it’s called ginseng. If it weighs eleven ounces, it’s called a “gem.” Look carefully, because there’s a lot of ginseng in these mountains. Whoever finds a root weighing eleven ounces will live without disasters, without sickness, and have a lifespan as long as that of the gods. As for he-shou-wu 何首乌 (“Mr. He's Hair Blackener”) a thousand year-old piece is considered a gem. Many Westerners have white hair, and the moment they are born they look like old men and women with frosty temples. But there is hope for all of you. Eat a little he- shou-wu and your hair will turn black and so will your beard. Therefore, we consider it a treasure.

Huang-jing 黄精 (Solomon’s Seal) was eaten by cultivators of old who lived deep in the mountains. Because they were far away from civilization and had no car, plane, motorcycle, or other means to get to town to buy rice or other staples to eat, they subsisted on whatever herbs they could find growing in the mountains. It is a very nutritious herb that can prolong your life. In the Ben-Cao, a book on Chinese herbs, it says that if you eat huang-jing, you can fly. The Ben-Cao-Bei-Yao (Treatise on Herbal Medicine) tells of a young woman—like Guo Fang—who ran away from home after she had been scolded by her stepmother. She ran into the mountains where

there was no food for her to eat, no oil, no salt, nothing. Shesurvived by eating huang-jing and before long she was able to flythrough thin air. People saw her flying around in space and coaxedher down with some food to eat—a piece of candy—but once sheate their cooked food, with its oil and salt, she lost her power offlight. Thus, we consider huang-jing a treasure.

The layman who is sponsoring this Buddha Recitation Session---I can't pronounce his name---has given everyone this opportunity to gather here to recite the Buddha's name. This layman plants and studies Chinese herbs. So all of you who've come to participate in the Recitation Session will obtain his treasures.

I was told that the kitchen served ginseng tea today. Did you drink any? If you did, then when you recite you should have even more energy. You'll have no excuse to doze off. In just a minute we are going to do the Great Transference of Merit Ceremony and you can strike up your spirits and sing so loud that each sound of the Buddha's name pierces the heavens and plows into the earth. I want you to sing so that the gods in the heavens will hear our sound and join in! The creatures in the hells will hear us recite the Buddha's name with such ringing clarity that they will all bring forth the thought of enlightenment. That will be a great response!

[Explaining to translator] Huang-jing is a medicinal herb that immortals eat. It can prolong your life, and people who eat it can fly. People who are cultivating immortality eat it. They have to steam it and sun it nine times. They steam it until it is cooked, then dry it in the sun, then steam it again. After doing this nine times, they eat it.

Translation is really a troublesome affair, isn't it? Just when it's your turn to translate, I talk about so many things which are unfamiliar to you.

Well, I wasn't thinking. If I had thought about it first, I wouldn't have talked about this.

Translator: [in Chinese] If I had thought about it, I wouldn't be translating.

Venerable Master: Well, if you don't translate, we'll just get Guo Fang to do it. She's very intelligent.

My hair once turned white. I didn't eat any he-shou-wu but it still turned black again. I didn't use Mr. He's Hair Blackener, I used my own hair blackener.

You have been working so hard translating; I hope everyone will work just as hard when we do the Great Transference of Merit.

Guo Fang, don't go to sleep! That goes for Guo Tong, too!

Thursday, August 21, 1975 (afternoon) Ullambana Day

Bhikshu Heng Sure:

So much has been going on that trying to share with people the beauty and wonders of it is like trying to scoop the ocean out with a teacup. It's really hard because you can only get a drop at a time. But the water that comes out is so nourishing, so fine, that it's really worth all the effort. It's kind of frustrating for people who have been cultivating a little longer to know how much there is and to want to share it all at once. Of course you can't do it, but I think this week has been an epoch-making event. This is a historically significant occasion because it's very similar to the Dharma

assembly---this is an arrogant thing to say, but it seems to me Sixth Patriarch, the Great Master Hui Neng, spoke his Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra.. The conditions were somewhat similar, and certainly the quality of Dharma was of the same flavor. This is a remarkable event; don't miss it. As the saying goes,

Whether you're walking, standing, sitting, or lying down,
Don't depart from this.
Once you separate from this, you've gone amiss.

As the Master said last night, to return empty-handed from the mountain of jewels would really be a mistake. One of the more obvious Dharma treasures we can share is the verse you hear every afternoon, just before you plunge into the natural goodies that Peggy Brevoort lays on the table. That verse goes, in part: "The Buddha told the assembly, while eating observe the Five Contemplations." I imagine every one of you has said, "Okay, what are the five? I'll observe them if you let me know." Well, here are the Five Contemplations:

1. As you eat, you should be mindful of the amount of work that it took to bring the food here to the place of eating. Think about the farmer who grew the vegetarian meal that you're eating, the various people that were involved in planting, nurturing, harvesting, trucking, sorting, selling, and preparing the food all to bring it into your mouth. There's a lot of work involved, a lot of sweat and toil. You're reaping the benefits from it, and you should be mindful of the amount of work that was required in all these different phases to bring the food to the place of eating. The second thing that Sanghans and faithful disciples should be mindful of is:

2. Are you worthy of this offering of food? That is to say, have you done anything today to deserve the blessing of eating? The Chinese talk about "mouth blessings" (口福 kou fu) – the mouth gets a lot of blessings to enjoy. What have you done today to serve the Dharma? Have you served anyone else? Have you been a lazy worm? Have you been vigorous? Have you been mindful of the Buddha and really done the work out here? Have you been interested mainly in pursuing the five desires instead? These are questions that only you can answer. This is the second contemplation.

3. Guard your mind and depart from all transgressions, of which the most coarse is greed. The foremost of the three poisons (greed, hatred, and stupidity) is greed. Now, who isn't greedy? Who doesn't have greedy thoughts? Well, the Buddha doesn't have greedy thoughts. Sages don't either. But almost everyone else, up to and including Seventh Stage Bodhisattvas, still have some slight flicker of desire, some slight stirring of the passions. Now, someone who is just beginning to cultivate the Way will think, "Gee, I'm doing pretty well. I don't have any greed left. I was able to put down that fourth bowl of noodles today and share it with someone else." Well, that's good. That's the first step. You start near if you want to go far. That's the way to begin.

But know that greed manifests in a thousand different ways, and once you get past the coarse forms of greed, there are subtle forms of greed that are just as powerful and poisonous. It all depends on the subtlety and quality of your mind as you cultivate.

So the third contemplation is to guard the mind and depart from all transgressions, of which greed is by far the most prominent.

Some people say that greed is the thing that turns the world. Well, ifyou can put your greed down, if you can actually get in there anduproot the greed and the mountain of self---that false illusion of aself that you’re getting something for---then you’re reallycultivating the Way. That’s where cultivation actually works.

People say, “My gosh, Buddhism? I know all about Buddhism. I’ve read all those books. I’ve seen those farout pictures of things popping out of these sages’ heads---they sit there all tranquil. I sat in meditation this morning and I know what Buddhism is all about.” Well, they’re not wrong. Buddhism includes all that. Buddhism includes just about every kind of practice and every kind of thought that you can imagine. But the Buddhism that’s taught at Gold Mountain starts with the very common, the very ordinary, mundane things of daily existence---for instance, eating. Wow, eating is the place where a lot of cultivation or lack of cultivation happens every single day.

The Master urges his disciples to be mindful of their eating. He sets a perfect example by the vow he made, which was to strictly observe the Buddha’s regulation and take only one meal a day, and that being taken before noon. This is one of the Twelve Ascetic Practices that Shakyamuni Buddha and early Buddhists cultivated. It’s not to say at all that to be a Buddhist you can only eat once a day. For a lot of people that would be too much---it would turn them away from Buddhism. That’s not the way to go about it. The way to go about it is to be mindful of your eating, and be mindful of the greed that makes you want to eat more, and eat more, and eat more…

Basically, Americans are pretty wasteful when it comes to eating. Americans eat much too much. They just pile it on when they don't have to. That's why we have so many heart attacks, so many arterial diseases---that sort of thing. It's because people's eating habits are pretty gross. So the third contemplation is to guard the mind and depart from transgressions, of which greed is the most prominent.

4. The fourth contemplation is that food is medicine. If you can really think that way and grasp that idea, you'll never use more than you need to cure your disease of hunger. If you think about it, it is medicine. Everything that you put in your body is medicine of one kind or another. The Master has lectured time and time again: Don't pay any attention to whether food is delicious or plain. That's not the point. The point is to eat until you're full, and then stop. People who stress the variety of flavors and the delicious quality and the perfect turning of a pot of rice or the expert seasoning of that salad dressing---that's to be attached to food, and that's to use up your blessings. People eat away their blessings.

In fact, in the mind ground, where real cultivation takes place, you should pay no attention to whether food is delicious, or super-nutritious, whether it's perfectly cooked or badly cooked. You should eat what comes in front of you, and eat until you're eighty percent full---don't stuff it right up to the top. Then you'll see that food is really medicine. Now, you wouldn't take nine aspirin to cure a headache any more than you would put a gun to your head and pull the trigger. That's overkill. The same thing with food. Food is medicine, and if you see it as medicine you'll never eat too much. You'll eat just enough to cure your disease of

hunger, and then you' ll stop.

Now, this is not to say that you' re really virtuous if you eat less than the person sitting next to you. That' s not the point. Some people have a huge capacity. If they eat six bowls of rice and they' re not full, they should eat until they' re eighty percent full. Another person has a smaller capacity. If he ate three spoonfuls of rice and he could only hold one, then he' s being greedy. It' s entirely up to you. You eat your own food, just like you wear your own clothes. But you should know your own limits.

5. The fifth contemplation is that you should accept food only to cultivate and to accomplish the Way. The only reason that you eat at all is to keep your body going so that you can continue to do the work with vigor and accomplish the Way. Basically, the body is impure. It' s got all kinds of impurities floating around inside; every hole puts out a different kind of foul stuff. When you die, this beautiful body that you' ve put deodorant on all these years to make it smell better, that you' ve brushed, combed, washed, patted, exercised, and taken care of in all these ways to keep the illusion going that it' s attractive and bearable---is revealed. At death, this fallacy really comes home and you can see this body for what it is---a stinking bag of skin. Inside are bones and they come popping through; and the worms eat it and it goes right back to the ground.

While this body is impure, at the same time, a human body is the perfect vehicle to cultivate the Way. If you don' t eat, you' re going to die. So you eat just enough to cultivate and accomplish the Way. That' s the purpose of eating.

There’s a verse that makes the Five Contemplations a little easier to remember. It goes like this:

This offering of the faithful is the fruit of work and care.
I reflect upon my conduct: Have I truly earned my share?
Of the poisons of the mind, the most despicable is greed.
As a medicine cures illness, I eat only what I need.
To sustain my cultivation and to realize the Way,
So I contemplate in silence on this offering today.

The first line says, “This offering of the faithful is the fruit of work and care.” The whole matter of offerings is an important one in Buddhism. It’s very important in that it’s the first of the Six Perfections in Sanskrit, bu-shi (布施) in Chinese. When a person leaves the home life, he takes a vow of poverty. One of the Shramanera (novitiate) precepts is that you own nothing valuable---money and so forth. Basically, Sanghans need nothing. They need the requisites of a roof, food, and clothes, but in minimal amounts. In India, monks went begging. Because in China the weather could go to extremes and it was really hard for monks to go out daily begging---often the monasteries were way out in the wilds and there were no communities to beg from---gradually the practice of begging was discontinued in China, and the monks relied for the sustenance on the offerings of the faithful. How can a monk say, “Gee, you ought to give to me”? Well, they don’t say that.

The major function of a left home person is to serve. He serves by maintaining the Proper Dharma, keeping it alive in the world. That’s how he serves the Triple Jewel. How does he serve the community of laypeople? He serves by becoming a field of blessings.

That’ s an analogy. Think of a field---there’ s fertile soil in a field of blessings, and it can grow just about anything. Does the Sanghan cultivate his own blessings? No, the Sanghan does not consciously set out to cultivate his own blessings and say, “Boy, I’ m getting a lot of blessings by reciting this mantra, by walking around and reciting the Buddha’ s name so many times---I’ m really rolling up a big bank account of blessings.” That’ s not the way he looks at it.

He serves the disciples, the lay community, by allowing them to make offerings through him and thus cultivate blessings for themselves. In this way they also make offerings to deceased relatives, and do real work for others. A layperson can make offerings and cultivate this principle of Bodhisattvaship, which is helping himself and helping others.

By making offerings to the Triple Jewel, you are doing real work for other people-you are planting seeds in the field of blessings that the Sangha represents. At the same time you are tying conditions with the Dharma so that in the future you can encounter the miraculous Dharma again and continue your cultivation towards Buddhahood. And you are also keeping this pure, ancient wisdom in the world a little longer by making these offerings. So it’ s an important role and shouldn’ t be taken lightly. Now in America where the Dharma is really young, the sprout is just out of the ground. It’ s a sturdy sprout moving towards the sun, but it’ s still a small one. People have to investigate how this relationship between the Triple Jewel, between the Sangha and the lay community operates. There is a proper way for it to work.

For a Sanghan to accept any offering whatsoever is to put himself under a heavy karmic burden. When accepting an offering, the Sanghan says, "Well, I've got to get enlightened because I've accepted this. Otherwise, I'm making a karmic mistake." Only an Arhat is really worthy of an offering. That's one of the names of the Buddha-Worthy of Offerings. Once Sanghans accept an offering, they're giving themselves a heavy mandate to cultivate to enlightenment. They should not miss that point.

On the way to Buddhahood, the Buddha cultivated the Paramita or Perfection of Giving. He gave up his life, which you could say is a sincere offering. Time and time again, for the sake of the Dharma, for the sake of other living beings... The Master has said that to give up your life for the sake of the Dharma as many times as there are atoms in the universe. That's taking a long view of history, but that's the way it is. He gave up his life that many times. How much the more did he give up his external wealth-things like money, possessions, even wives, husbands, children, families, houses, vehicles... Venerable Master: If anyone has experienced any unusual states, now is the time to tell us about them.

Student: My mind feels a lot clearer than it did before I came here. I feel like when I leave here I will have a few more tools to cultivate the seed that has been planted within me. I've only heard the sounds, "Namo E Mi Tuo Fo" a few times, and at first when I chanted it, it didn't mean anything to me. I centered on the concept of putting my trust and faith in "limitless light," and that uplifted me a great deal. I haven't yet seen any tall Buddhas as big as Mount Sumeru with purples eyes, but maybe if I am persistent to use these tools well.

I have something I would like to share with the people who are planning to take refuge. When I took refuge with the Master last year, I didn't have a clear idea of what I was doing. I was drawn there through faith, very auspiciously, as someone said. Before I left for San Francisco, someone gave me a very meaningful poem which I would like to read:

There are ways we travel
Silent, golden and yet unseen
By most who stand behind
The hand of life as it sows the field.
Those who know say let it go
And it will grow to radiate itself.
Never fear,
For very near you stands the guardian.
The gate he guards is never closed
To close inspection.
Close your eyes to distracting images,
Open your mind's eye and say,
"I am the Buddha; the Buddha lives in me.
His compassion shines, and forever lights up my way."
There are truths we know,
And yet beyond our knowing
Still more await.
And again we stand before the guardian
Of yet another gate.

The Master: Does anyone else want to say something?

Student: Last night I dreamt that I was with my mother, my sister, and three of my cousins and we were all respectfully walking

around the Buddha.

Another student: I had some significant visions while I was sitting. I saw a golden sphere with a keyhole in it. A golden key was inserted in it and it began to turn. As it turned, the light intensified. Another vision was that of a formation of jewels. It had a definite pattern and was set in something that looked like highly polished lapis lazuli. The colors were intense reds and golds.

The Master: Who else had an experience? Speak up.

A student: In the world at present there are a great number of people who do not have enough food to eat, who are not properly dressed or housed, while a small minority of people have much more than they can use. I experience a lot of frustration because of my actions seem very insignificant and the problems are great. Just what can we do to change these things?

The Master: Worrying about them is of no use. Exhaust your efforts and do what you can and don’ t ask too much of yourself. An individual has only a limited amount of influence. There are too many people in the world. You must first rescue yourself.

Guo Tong: [Sound unclear.]

A woman: A couple of months ago, I asked a friend to wake me up in the morning… [Sound unclear] The Master: Who else had an experience? If you had a special feeling or experience that you feel good about, you can bring it up.

Bhikshuni Heng Hsien: Sometimes I see light that pervades universally, but occasionally I see light that’ s kind of different, like sudden flashes, like a little point of light in space. I saw a couple of these a couple of days ago while I was writing notes; it wasn’ t

during meditation. I’ ve seen them at Gold Mountain too, and itoccurred to me what Sutras describe as mani jewels, but I don’ tknow. They were silver-colored.

The Master: When we are reciting the Buddha’ s name and we stop and take our seats, that can be considered investigating Dhyana. But you can also continue to recite the Buddha’ s name silently. It is then very easy to experience a state of “peace.” What is “peace”? It is the beginning sign of entry into samadhi. You may feel as if your body and empty space have united into one. There will be no mark of people, no mark of self, no mark of living beings, and no mark of a life span. You are certainly not asleep, but everything has come to a stop. This is the state of “peace.” Whoever can stop his idle thoughts can realize genuine wisdom.

This layman just said that many people in the world lack food, clothing, and shelter. Many people have no food to eat, no clothing to wear, and no house to live in. Why is this? It’ s because those who do good are few and those who do evil are many. People who commit many evil acts and do not practice good deeds must undergo this kind of retribution.

This kind of retribution is not easy to avert, since those who do evil are so numerous and those who do good are so few. If you want to make the world a good place, you must first begin with yourself. If you want to alleviate the sufferings of everyone in the world, you must also begin with yourself. How? Do no evil yourself; instead, practice all kinds of good deeds. In this way you can avert the disasters due to afflict us and help the world out a bit. Do as many good deeds as you have the power to do. Do your best to fulfill your responsibilities, but don’ t worry too much.

If you do nothing all day except sit and think, "People are suffering too much. What can I do?" it is useless. You yourself must do good deeds and make it so that there are more good people in the world every day and fewer bad people. Then the world will be well, and everyone will have clothing, food, and shelter. It is not a matter of saying, "Democracies are no good. We should become communists and share the wealth." In communist countries, it's not necessarily the case that everyone has food, clothing, and shelter. In fact, sometimes there is misery on top of misery. Therefore, if you wish the world to be good, you must refrain from all evil and practice all good, and then the world will naturally become good. It is said,

Plant a good seed, reap a good fruit;
Plant an evil seed, reap an evil fruit.

If you plant ginseng, in the future you will harvest ginseng. If you plant he-shou-wu, in the future you will harvest he shou wu. You get what you plant. Karma works in the same way fields are planted and harvested.

I have just asked you to speak about your experiences, and I, too, remember an experience I had at Gold Mountain Monastery in San Francisco. Once, after a ceremony at which some thirty people took refuge, I asked, "Why did all of you decide to take refuge?" The new disciples had been followers of an outside-way teacher, whom I had given the name, "Shan Lu," "Mountain Deer." When I first came to San Francisco, Shan Lu wanted to come and study the Buddhadharma with me. At that time I only gave informal Dharma talks once a week, on Sundays. He came every Sunday for two years. His name was Mountain Deer. I gave him this name. His original

name might have been “Wild Deer” but I called him “MountainDeer.”

Why did so many people believe in him? Because during the two years he studied with me, he learned a few doctrines and set himself up as a patriarch, and took disciples. Why did his disciples believe in him? He had money, perhaps as much as a million. Whoever went to him and believed in him had food to eat, a place to live, and clothes to wear. They solved their problems of the three necessities. Thus, many people who had no food, clothing, or shelter came to believe in him.

He was seventy or eighty years old and very rich, so he gained a large following. He was also very casual. You could eat meat and drink wine if you liked-he would buy you your wine and your meat!-in fact, you could have anything you wanted. There was no moral code at all. He didn’t talk about the moral precepts at all, yet he claimed to be an enlightened patriarch. A lot of people, as the word got around, said that he had attained sagehood and others said that he was enlightened. Some really stupid people studied the Buddhadharma with him, while others, the smart ones, thought continually about his money.

He had one disciple who thought, “I’ve followed you for so long, and you still haven’t died and left your money to me! What a nuisance!” One day as the teacher was on the stairs, that disciple gave him a push and he went tumbling down the stairs and became unconscious. Taking advantage of the fact that the “enlightened patriarch” was in a coma and couldn’t talk, the disciple claimed that his teacher’s final instructions were to give the money to so-and-so, and that no one else had any share in it.

Then, without a sign, without a sound, the teacher died. After his death, the group published his books and styled him a patriarch. One night, he appeared to his followers in a dream. He said, "The Dharma I taught you in the past is not ultimate. You should now go take refuge with Dharma Master so-and-so, and study the Buddhadharma with him. That's the right thing to do." So his followers came to me and signed up to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and started studying the Buddhadharma over again.

When you cultivate the Way, it's not easy to meet a genuine good advisor. Some people pretend to be such advisors, and without any real understanding they proceed to teach other people. Shan Lu, for example, was such a one. Yet he still had a sense of conscience, for when he realized he had done wrong to his disciples, he told them to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and thereby avoid falling into the hells. That was pretty decent of him. And so many of his followers came to Gold Mountain Monastery to take refuge. Of the thirty people who took refuge that day, more than twenty of them were Shan Lu's disciples. After the ceremony, they told me about this dream. They said that Shan Lu had instructed the entire group to come and take refuge. They believed their dream, because over twenty of them had dreamt the exact same dream. They thought it was a miracle. Do you all remember this incident? [Disciples: Yes.] And so all those people had that dream.

In this world, everything proclaims the wonderful Dharma. The mountains proclaim the wonderful Dharma of the mountains. The rivers announce the wonderful Dharma of the rivers. The seas proclaim the wonderful Dharma of the seas. The streams and plains report the wonderful Dharma of the streams and plains. It is said,

"Both sentient and insentient things are speaking the Dharma." People speak the dharma of people. Dogs speak the dog-dharma.Cats are speaking the cat-dharma. And so, all the myriad things arespeaking the Dharma.

For example, cats eat mice. They say that in past lives they liked to kill and in their present life they still like to kill. Tigers are the same way. They proclaim their own wonderful Dharma, and if you understand that they are speaking the Dharma you will not imitate their conduct.

How did dogs get to be dogs? Dogs are very stingy. They can't give anything away, so they guard the door. When someone comes, they bark and bite. Why do they bite? It shows their stinginess. They don't like strangers, so they bite because they are afraid someone will steal the valuables. You could say that they are "wealth-guarding slaves."

There are people who share this attitude towards money. They can't give up a single cent. When you tell them to give, they object violently. In China, many people keep their money for their sons and daughters. They turn into beasts of burden, scraping together a pittance to leave to their children. This is utterly foolish. A verse says,

Sons and grandsons have their own blessings.
Don't slave like an ox on their behalf.

Don't be a draft-horse for the sake of your kids. Westerners are much more intelligent than the Chinese in this respect. They also accumulate money, but after they have accumulated it, they give it away. As a result, in their next lives they can be even wealthier.

You might say, "I don't believe that there are future lives."

Then let’s not talk about future lives. Let’s talk about tomorrow. Do you believe tomorrow will come? Do you believe that yesterday happened? Then, because you cannot believe in such a distant time, I’ll shrink the time period so that you can understand. [The Master added the following during translation] Yesterday was just your former life and today is your present life. Tomorrow will be your future life. If you don’t believe in future lives, you still can’t deny that there was a yesterday, is a today, and will be a tomorrow. Can you seriously object to this? Yesterday, today, and tomorrow exist and in the same way so do past, present, and future lives. That’s a fact.

“Then why don’t I know about it?” you ask.

If you knew, you would have become a Buddha long ago. But because you’ve been muddled and confused through limitless eons until the present, you haven’t known your former or your future lives. Thus, you did mixed-up things, like acting as a “wealth-guarding slave,” watching the door, afraid that some stranger would come to steal your goods.

When the Buddha was in the world, he once went to a layman’s house to accept offerings. In the house there was a dog that stayed under the bed, day and night. He wouldn’t allow anyone except members of the family to get near the bed. Anyone else who approached got bitten. Even the Buddha was not allowed near the bed. The household experimented to see if the dog would bite the Buddha, and, sure enough, it snapped at him. They asked the Buddha why the dog was so protective of the bed.

The Buddha said, “Don’t you know? In its last life the dog was your father. Your father spent his whole life earning about three hundred ounces of gold and loved it so much he buried it under the bed. Then suddenly he got sick and died before he could tell you what he had done with it. After his death he hurried right back as a dog to guard the pile of gold. If you don’t believe me, start digging and you’ll find the gold.” They dragged the dog away and did, in fact, uncover three hundred ounces of gold. This proves that stingy people can easily turn into dogs.

Dogs are speaking the dog-dharma. Cats relate the cat-dharma. People expound the people-dharma. In the world, everything speaks the dharma it wants to speak. The important point is whether you understand it or not. If you understand it, the dharma is spoken so you may understand more. If you don’t understand it, you’re dreaming, and the dharma simply makes you muddled.

Those who have left home proclaim the dharma of those who have left home; those at home expound the dharma of those at home. Bhikshunis speak the dharma of Bhikshunis; Shramanerikas proclaim the dharma of Shramanerikas. Bhikshus speak the dharma of Bhikshus; Shramaneras proclaim the dharma of Shramaneras. Boys relate the dharma of boys; girls relate the dharma of girls. If you don’t understand it, you will become confused. When you understand, you can wake up, become enlightened.

This principle extends to Arhats speaking the dharma of Arhats; Bodhisattvas speaking the dharma of Bodhisattvas; Hearers communicating the Hearer-dharma; and Buddhas speaking the dharma of Buddhas. Gods speak the dharma of gods, asuras speak the dharma of asuras, and ghosts speak the dharma of ghosts.

Animals expound the dharma of animals, hell-beings are moaningthe dharma of hell-beings. In the ten Dharma Realms, each speaksthe dharma of its own realm. If you understand that in the tenDharma Realms all proclaim their wonderful dharma, you can thenbecome enlightened; you can realize Buddhahood. And Little GuoTong is here proclaiming the dharma of Little Guo Tong.

Let’s talk about people. People with eyes expound a dharma with eyes; people without eyes speak an eyeless dharma. What does this mean? Why do people have eyes? It’s because in the past they refrained from doing much evil. Why does someone else lack eyes? Because that person looked down on others. Since he looked down on everyone, he now has no eyes.

Why are deaf people deaf? They expound the dharma of deafness. Deaf people in the past liked to mind other people’s business. They wanted to hear everything so they listened in on conversations, phone calls, and so forth, and thus they became deaf. Why are mutes mute? Because they indulged in gossip. Before long, they themselves became unable to speak. The deaf, mute, and blind all speak the Dharma.

Cripples can’t walk because they always took wrong roads. They walked down roads they weren’t supposed to travel and thus became crippled and unable to walk. Those whose hands are paralyzed got that way because they stole too many things in the past. They are all speaking the wonderful Dharma. All of you, when you see something, if you understand it, it’s speaking the Dharma. If you don’t understand it, you’re dreaming. Everything is a matter of cause and effect. So don’t worry about the world, thinking that there are too many poor people who have no food,

clothing, and shelter. It's because they planted those kinds ofcauses that they have reaped such effects.

If I explain more clearly, I'm afraid everyone will be unhappy. People without legs don't have legs because in the past they danced too much. People without eyes are that way because they watched too much dancing, too much striptease, and too many plays and movies. Now, a lot of people are very unhappy with me...

The principle is demonstrated in this verse: As is the cause, so shall be the result...

Question: Does Dharma speak the Dharma of Dharma?

The Master (in English): Dharma cannot speak the Dharma.

Friday, August 22, 1975 (afternoon)

So far, I have explained three techniques of Buddha Recitation: "contemplation by thought," "contemplation of an image," and "holding the name." But I have not yet explained the fourth method, which is "Real Mark Buddha Recitation." The Real Mark is apart from marks; it is not attached to any distinguishing characteristics. It has left all dharmas behind and swept away all marks. This is the Dharma door of investigating dhyana. Those who truly practice dhyana truly chant the Buddha's name as well. Those who can really recite the Buddha's name are, in fact, investigating dhyana. Dhyana practice and Buddha Recitation both help you to stop your idle thoughts and sweep away your personal desires and random thoughts, so that your original face appears. This is called Real Mark recitation.

The Buddha spoke all the Dharma doors to cure the illnesses of living beings. If living beings had no illnesses, then none of the methods would be of use. But, because we living beings have such problems, the methods are useful. Of the eighty-four thousand Dharma doors spoken by the Buddha, every Dharma door is number one. Not one of them is number two. Whichever method is appropriate to your situation is number one. If one is inappropriate and you can't use it, that doesn't mean that it is number two, because it may be number one for someone else. So I say that there are eighty-four thousand Dharma doors and eighty-four thousand of them are number one.

Now we are cultivating the method of Buddha recitation, and some also cultivate the technique of holding mantras. There are various mantras, and there are many different Buddhas, but of all the Buddhas, Amitabha Buddha has the closest affinity with us. We living beings may be likened to iron filings and Amitabha Buddha is like a magnet which draws us in to the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. The other Buddhas are also like magnets, but their magnetism is not as strong. So living beings should recite the name of Amitabha Buddha and cultivate the Pure Land Dharma door. This is the first time in the history of America that we have gathered in the mountains to recite the Buddha's name. I believe that we are planting a cause which will in the future certainly produce a grand blossom and bear a great fruit. I absolutely believe that this will be the case.

After the session, I will teach you a secret mantra. When you return home, if you want to recite the mantra you may, or if you want to recite the Buddha's name you may. We'll see who succeeds first in their cultivation. Does anyone have an opinion on

this?

Student: Could we still speak about special occurrences? Yesterday during the hour sit, I felt a lot of electrical energy and at one moment I felt very large. My head was in the clouds and a rainy feeling was in the air. Later, I was once more in the clouds only this time I was talking with an entity and I did not want the rain to fall.

The Master: This state may happen to those who cultivate dhyana. I just said that when the session was over I would teach you a mantra and I think now that some people are having a particular idle thought and there is something they want to say. If you want to speak, just go ahead. Someone is thinking, "I' m leaving tomorrow. I might not get a chance to learn it." Isn' t that correct?

Student: Yes.

The Master: Well, if I taught it to you now, would that be okay?

Student: Yes, thank you!

The Master: This is the most wonderful of mantras. Now I will teach it to you audibly, but when you recite it you should do so silently. Don' t speak it out loud, because it' s a secret mantra, and if you speak it out loud it won' t be a secret any longer. Walking, standing, sitting, and reclining, you should always recite this mantra.

The mantra' s power is very great. For example, if you recite it in the mountains, after five hundred years have passed all the living creatures on the mountain will become Bodhisattvas. Its merit and virtue are that great. If you recite it in the water, after five hundred years all the living creatures in the water will bring forth the Bodhi resolve and in the future will become Bodhisattvas. Just recite it, and five hundred years later all the fleas, nits, and bed-bugs, and all the

germs in your own body will also bring forth the thought ofenlightenment and become Bodhisattvas. Is this or is this notpowerful? If you yourself do not wish to become a Bodhisattva,helping other living beings to become Bodhisattvas is a good thingto do. Therefore, you can't fail to recite this mantra. You shouldhurry up and recite it!

I will now transmit it to you and you should all pay special attention to it. If you already know the mantra, don't think, "Oh, I know it," and look on it lightly. Those who don't know it should be even more respectful of this dharma. Now I will teach it to you. Pay attention, because I'm only going to repeat it three times and whether or not you remember it is up to you:

Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum....

The power of the mantra is inconceivable. Pay special attention in cultivating and upholding this dharma.

[On Friday afternoon, seventeen people took refuge with the Master, including Mr. And Mrs. Brevoort, hosts of the Buddha Recitation Session, and their son, Joshua. At the end of the ceremony, the Master delivered the following short talk to the new disciples:]

I have a few more words to say to you. Please sit down. You should all remember that you took refuge at Buddha Root Farm. I gave young Joshua the Dharma name "Fruit of the Root," (Guo Gen) because he is a Buddha root. All of you who have taken refuge here should be leaders of Buddhism. You must act as models for all peoples of the world. Be good Buddhist disciples and spread

Buddhism throughout the entire world, throughout the DharmaRealm. If there is one person who does not believe in the Buddha, itwill be because you have not fulfilled your responsibilities. Youshould vow to cause all people to take refuge with the Triple jewel.That will result in the greatest merit and virtue.

The Sutra of Comparative Merit and Virtue says,

"If there were Buddhas in number like the seedlings of rice, stalks of hemp, stalks of bamboo and reeds in the great trichiliocosm, and if you presented those Buddhas with the four kinds of offerings, and then, when those Buddhas passed into Nirvana, you again made offerings of incense and flowers, food and drink, and built shrines and temples for them, the resulting merit and virtue would be great indeed. However, when you yourself take refuge with the Triple Jewel and exhort others to take refuge, the merit from this exceeds the former."

What are the four types of offerings? They are: food and drink, clothing, bedding, and medicine. Although the merit from offerings of flowers and incense and building shrines and temples is considerable, when you encourage one person to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and when you do so yourself, the merit from that action surpasses the merit obtained by making offerings to all those Buddhas. Thus, the result of taking refuge with the Triple Jewel is inconceivable.

Each of you should make Buddhism your own responsibility. Think, "Buddhism is just me; I am Buddhism." Don't set yourself apart from Buddhism. "Not only is Buddhism my religion, but I am going to convert those of other religions to Buddhism. This is my

vow." You should make the Four Vast Vows:

I vow to save the boundless number of beings.
I vow to sever the endless afflictions.
I vow to study the unlimited Dharma doors.
I vow to realize the supreme Buddha Way.

You should make great vows to spread the Buddhadharma. Okay?

Refuge-takers: Okay!

Of those who took refuge today, many are familiar to me and need not stand on ceremony. Go ahead and do a good job, okay?

Refuge-takers: Okay!

Friday, August 22, 1975 (evening)

[Bhikshuni Heng Chih records: It's raining. The Venerable Master just told Guo Tong to stop the rain.]

Venerable Master: The reason for this is his rocket didn't go off and he cried, and the dragons couldn't do anything about it. You see? He doesn't have any talent except crying. We're not going to listen to that anymore.

Bhikshuni Heng Yin: Today's rain was brought to you by Guo Tong, because he cried and cried so much that the heavens started crying too.

Guo Tong: This is a story about the Buddha in a life before he became Shakyamuni Buddha. He was a Patient Immortal...

Are there any questions?

Student: I would like to know if the coming of Maitreya Buddha and the return of Christ is going to be the same event.

Venerable Master: What’ s your name? (Student: Guo Li)

Master: What do you think?

Student: It makes sense that it would be, but I don’ t know.

Master: Why do you think it makes sense?

Student: I don’ t know a lot about the coming of Maitreya, but I think they’ re both supposed to come to save humanity and they’ re both supposed to come soon.

Master: I have no comment on when Christ is due to come. As for Maitreya Bodhisattva, it’ s still very early to look for his coming. Those who say that Maitreya is due simply do not understand the situation. Although Maitreya actually comes here all the time, he hasn’ t yet become a Buddha. When we talk about the coming of Maitreya, this refers to his return as a Buddha, not just as an ordinary savior.

Every one hundred years our average height decreases by one inch and our average lifespan by one year. When the average human lifespan, which is now sixty or seventy years, has decreased to ten years, it will begin to increase again. When it reaches eighty-four thousand years, then it will start to decrease. When it has decreased to eighty thousand years, then Maitreya Buddha will appear in the world. So if you calculate the time, it is still in the distant future. Those who are coming now are Maitreya’ s transformation bodies, not his true body, and they are not coming to manifest the attainment of Buddhahood.

Do you who are Christians know that Jesus disappeared for three years, during which time no one knew his whereabouts? During those three years, he went to India to study the

Buddhadharma. Having studied the Buddhadharma, he preachedabout rebirth in the heavens and going to a heavenly paradise. Thisconcept is pretty similar to what the Amitabha Sutra says. Jesus wasalso a part of Buddhism. He used those methods to teach andtransform a certain kind of living beings, but ultimately, they will allgo back to the root and return to the source and everyone willbecome a Buddha. But many people are unaware of this. (Addedduring translation: Jesus was a part of Buddhism. He was a Buddhist.However, he did not want to admit that he was Buddhist, so he didnot preach Buddhism.)

A few days ago I said that all the world's religions are included within Buddhism. This is because Buddhism takes the Dharma Realm, the universe, as its substance, and no living being can escape it. Other religions do not teach this. There are Ten Dharma Realms: The Dharma Realms of the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas, the Condition-Enlightened Ones, the Hearers, the gods, humans, asuras, animals, ghosts, and the beings in hell. No religion surpasses these Ten Dharma Realms and so all are included within Buddhism; none are not Buddhism. Although they might not admit to being a part of Buddhism, it's only just a matter of time. In the future they will certainly acknowledge it. There will be no way they can avoid acknowledging it, since they can't run outside of the Dharma Realm. Buddhism takes the Dharma Realm as its substance. I hope that you will all use effort and look into this doctrine.

Many people do not acknowledge that they are Buddhists, but this is no problem. Why don't they acknowledge that they are Buddhists? Because they have not understood that they are within the Dharma Realm. They are like dreamers who are not in control of

their actions. They are out of touch with what is really going on.They are also like the insane. Sometimes insane people don’ t evenknow that they are human beings. When you ask them what theyare, they may answer, “nothing at all,” or they may think that theyare some strange creature of their own demented fantasy. When aperson has lost touch with his humanity, you can’ t rely on his ownword when he tries to identify himself. In the same way, you can’ taccept as reasonable the statement that one is not within the TenDharma Realms when it is made by someone who does not knowthe truth.

The Shurangama Sutra relates the story of Yajnadatta, who one day looked in the mirror and noticed that the person reflected in it had a head. At that point, he lost his wits and said, “How come that person has a head and I don’ t? Where has my head gone?” He then ran wildly through the streets asking everyone he met, “Have you seen my head? Where has it gone?” He accosted everyone he met, yet no one knew what he was doing. “He already has a head,” they said. “What’ s he looking for another one for?”

There are a lot of people just like poor Yajnadatta.

Are there any more questions?

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Student: Are there people who have written about Buddhism, other than yourselves, who are worth reading? Most writers come from a Western orientation and this tends to lead them to alter the doctrines.

The Master: There are other translations, but it is not a question of relative worth. Many previous translators of Buddhist texts were priests, ministers, scholars, or professional writers. Although they did

translate Sutras, they didn’ t necessarily understand theBuddhadharma. However, their translations cannot be said to be ofno worth---they sell; people buy them. Thus they are worthsomething. But their principles do differ from the orthodox tradition.The translations done at Gold Mountain Monastery are done byBhikshus, Bhkshunis, Shramaneras, Shramanerikas, laymen andlaywomen, professors, and scholars of the Buddhadharma who allwork together. They translate Sutras from within the Buddhadharma.Previous translations were largely done by people standing outsideof Buddhism. Even if these Sutras were translated by Buddhists, theyrepresent only one person’ s opinion. They were not subjected tothe scrutiny of others, not examined by many people, andinaccuracies passed unchecked into print. It is not, then, a questionof worth; it’ s a question of validity.

Previous translations do exist, but the difference is here: The translators have an external viewpoint---they do not stand inside the study and practice of the Dharma. “Outsiders” don’ t have a genuine, reliable understanding. That’ s where the problem lies.

The translations done at Gold Mountain Monastery are checked and criticized by many people. We do not claim that our translations are perfect, but we do strive for perfection. We don’ t want to imitate the earlier translations (done by clergymen or scholars) which became vehicles used to talk about the doctrines of Christianity. We don’ t substitute Christian terminology for Buddhist technical terms, so that nothing substantially Buddhist remains in them.

We have been investigating the Buddhadharma for many years, yet there are many things we do not understand. How much the less

can those who have never looked into Buddhism be expected torender the original meaning of the Buddhist Sutras?

We at Gold Mountain Monastery would not dare to say that our translations alone have worth. We would simply not say that. But we are trying to do a good job; we are striving for perfection.

I now have a few more words for those of you who took refuge this afternoon. After this, anywhere you go, if people ask you who your teacher is and you want to admit that I am your teacher, you can tell him. "The stupidest person in the world is my teacher. His name is such and such. There isn't anyone dumber or more ignorant than he is." That's how you should answer. Don't say something like, "My teacher is really intelligent and he has all these good qualities." Your teacher has no praiseworthy qualities. Don't go around promoting your teacher and talking about how great he is. He doesn't have any good qualities at all, only shortcomings.

Whenever you go to a Buddhist temple you should be humble. Do not be arrogant. You should feel that everyone else is better than you, and that you have much to learn from them. For example, when you bow to the Buddha, don't stand in the center aisle, because that is the space reserved for the Abbot. Bow off to one side. Don't cause those who see you to think, "Oh, your teacher is really stupid. He hasn't taught you anything. You don't even know how to bow to the Buddha." Then no matter how good you say your teacher is, no one will believe you. On the other hand, if you do everything well and according to the rules, then you won't even have to say anything about your teacher being a good teacher. People will just take one look at you and think, "He's so well-behaved and well-mannered; probably his teacher doesn't have any major

flaws." Do you believe this? No? Okay, that's all for today.

Saturday, August 23, 1975 (afternoon)

Disciples: When Guanyin Bodhisattva succeeds Amitabha Buddha in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, where will Amitabha Buddha go?

Venerable Master: He's going to go right into your heart. Who else has a question?

Disciple: When you are born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, do you stay there until you are a Buddha or get enlightened, or do you stay only briefly and then leave?

Venerable Master: You become a Buddha right there. Those born in the superior grade of the superior lotuses become Buddhas as soon as they appear. Those born in the lower grade of the lower lotuses must wait ninety great eons to become Buddhas.

Several days ago Guo Tong asked a question about why there were two Buddhas with the same name in the Amitabha Sutra. There were unreckonably many Buddhas with identical names.

In the Land of Ultimate Bliss alone, there are three hundred and sixty billion, one hundred nineteen thousand, five hundred Buddhas all called the "Guiding Master, Amitabha Buddha." The answer that Guo Hang gave to his question was correct. There are that many Amitabha Buddhas, all of whom guide living beings.

Yesterday, I said that Amitabha Buddha was like a magnet and that all living beings are like iron filings. When iron filings meet a magnet, they are irresistibly drawn to it. I also said that the other Buddhas were like magnets, but their magnetism was not as strong

as Amitabha’ s. Several people couldn’ t sleep last night becausethey were having this false thought: “If all the Buddhas are likemagnets, how come some have a stronger magnetic field thanothers? How can their powers be different?” Today, when I asked ifthere were any questions, no one dared bring the matter up, but Iwill answer it anyway.

It is because Amitabha Buddha has made forty-eight vows, and these vows are like the power of a magnet. Other Buddhas have also realized Buddhahood, but they have not made these forty-eight vows and so their power is not as great. Thus, in cultivating the Way, one must make vows. If you have vows, they are certain to come true. Vows are like a lamp to light the path, it is very easy to travel. Each one of us should make vows in our cultivation.

At Gold Mountain Monastery, every year on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month, the anniversary of the enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha, those who wish to do so may make vows. That day is called “vow day.” Although the word vow (愿, yuan) in Chinese sounds the same as the word for resentment (怨, yuan), it is not a day of resentment. Some people resent heaven and blame their fellow human beings, saying, “Heaven! You really don’ t know how to do your job. You are so unjust! And every soul on this Earth is wrong!” People like that think everybody else is in the wrong. That’ s the day to make vows. You can make a vow about something you want to accomplish or about how you want to cultivate. Can one make vows at other times as well? Yes. However, that particular day is the anniversary of Shakyamuni Buddha’ s enlightenment and so, when you make vows on that day, he is very pleased. “Oh! In the Saha world living being has made vows

because of my enlightenment! These are supreme conditions!"

And so he says, "Good indeed! Good indeed! Good man, good woman, you have made these vows and I shall certainly help you to fulfill them."

Yesterday, I taught you the mantra, "Om Mani Padme Hum," and some people had these idle thoughts, "Perhaps I was one of the bugs on that Dharma Master's body three or four hundred years ago. Since he recited the mantra, I've now become a human being and taken refuge with the Triple Jewel. Could that be the case?" That's their false thought. Well, I'm not going to answer that question. Maybe Little Guo Fang was such a bug. She likes to eat candy and when I recited the mantra it probably kept turning things into candy.

Today I will continue speaking about Amitabha Buddha. It's not the case that there's just one Buddha or two Buddhas. In fact, there are as many Buddhas as there are grains of sand in the River Ganges, and they dwell in the ten directions. What are the ten directions? They are: north, east, south, west, northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest---that's eight directions. Then add the zenith and the nadir and you have ten directions. In each of the ten directions there are Buddhas in number like the sands in the Ganges. The Buddha is a living being who has become enlightened. As many living beings as there are, there are that many Buddhas. Can you count the number of living beings that currently exist? There's no way to count them. You can't even reckon the exact number of human beings. You might figure out the number of people in one country, but you don't necessarily know the population of all the countries in the world. There's no way to come up with an accurate

figure, no matter what scientific methods you use, includingcomputers!

Even if you could count the human population, could you count the mosquitoes? How many are there in one country? How many are there in the whole world? You can’ t count the mosquitoes; you can’ t count the ants; you can’ t count the bees. All the insects, the birds, and all other living creatures are also uncountable. And the Buddhas are also like that. There are so many you could never count them. For every living being, there is a Buddha, and that Buddha will take that living being across. Thus, we talk about the Buddhas of the three periods of time throughout the ten directions. The three periods of time are; the past, the present, and the future. A few days ago I mentioned that some people do not believe in past, present, and future lives, especially rich people. They don’ t believe at all in future lives. They just enjoy themselves, thinking that if they can make a fortune in their business, they are “getting the most out of life.” But they are wrong.

Why is one wealthy in one’ s present life?

It’ s because in the past one made offerings to the Sangha and aided the poor.

Why are you wealthy and honored in this life? It’ s because you practiced charity in past lives. It’ s said, “Renounce one, and gain ten thousand in return.” If you gave away a penny in a past life, in this life you get it back ten thousand times as interest.

Why is one poor in one’ s present life?

It’ s because in the past one refused to aid the poor.

In past lives, when you had money, you didn't give, and so now you are poor. You were afraid if you gave away your money that you wouldn't have any for yourself. "I'll be stone broke. Why should I give my money away? That's too stupid." You held on to every single cent, squeezing it so tightly that it melted in your hand. You would rather have it melt than let go of it. That's how stingy you were. Those so terribly afraid of being poor, in their next life are, in fact, poor.

Why is one handsome in one's present life?

It's because in the past one offered incense, flowers, and lamps to the Buddha.

Suppose a person is extremely attractive. Everyone who meets him respects him and is fond of him. In general, no one dislikes him. Why is this? It's because that person made offerings of incense and flowers, and lit lamps before the Buddhas in past lives.

Everything is a matter of cause and effect. So it doesn't matter whether in your past lives you were an American Indian, American, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Burmese, or Sri Lankan---at some time or another you changed your residence. You may live in one "house" for a while, but eventually you will have to pack up and move. The principle of cause and effect works in human life in the same way. There's nothing strange about it at all. In the world:

The good flock together, and the evil run in packs; People seek out their own kind.

Buddhists associate with Buddhists. Those who believe in ghosts gather with those who believe in ghosts. Those who have faith in demons stay with those who have faith in demons. Students

associate with students. Politicians associate with politicians,businessmen with businessmen, laborers with laborers, ginsenggrowers with ginseng growers. (this was added during translation)So that’ s what is meant by, “The good flock together, and the evilrun in packs; people seek out their own kind.”

Now we are all investigating the Buddhadharma, and we did so in former lives. In former lives we made vows to propagate the Buddhadharma, and in this life, quite unconsciously, we have gone down that road again. This is because we vowed to spread the Dharma in past lives. Here in this country where there is no Buddhadharma, because of past vows, we have come to help the Buddhadharma grow and prosper. In past lives we made such vows, in the present we are carrying them out, and in the future they will be fulfilled. So don’ t ask what nationality you were in a past life or how you have been reborn in America. No matter what nationality you were in your last life, you were a person. So you don’ t need to ask. Do you understand? You still don’ t know? Then you’ re really dreaming.

No matter what nationality people are, they should be good towards everyone. They should think, “If someone is bad to me, I will forgive them. I will treat everyone well. I will forget the evil done to me. I will look for the good points in others and not for their faults.” If everyone were like that, there would be no war in the world. Why are there wars? It’ s because everyone looks for the faults in others, and no one looks for the good points. So, day by day, there is more and more trouble in the world.

Saturday, August 23, 1975 (evening)

Disciple: When I was three or four years old, I suffered a fall. At that time, I had a feeling of going far away to a place that was filled with golden-yellow light. It felt steady and mellow, and everything was okay. The way everything has been going for the last few weeks for me, as I' ve said before at the monastery, I felt like I was coming home. Now, I was wondering what this experience I had when I was really little amounts to in relationship to my present experience.

Venerable Master: Of course there is a relationship. It' s telling you not to forget. It' s like crystal, through which you can see from one side to the other. It' s telling you to see through things.

Disciple: Ever since I was little, I have had a lot of strange sicknesses.

Venerable Master: No Matter what sickness you' ve had, you haven' t died, and so now you ought to cultivate.

Disciple: Okay, I will cultivate.

Venerable Master: Does anyone have anything to say?

Disciple: The Master has likened the experience of enlightenment to earning a college degree. Shakyamuni Buddha had to cultivate for three great eons before he became a Buddha. Is the "schedule" for enlightenment fixed in any way or could one, through diligent cultivation, exhaust one' s karmic obstacles in a single lifetime and manifest one' s original face, that is, obtain the Buddha' s wisdom very quickly?

Venerable Master: Have you heard the story of Dhyana Master Gao Fengmiao?

Disciple: Dhyana Master Gao Fengmiao? Was he the one with the human-faced sore?

Venerable Master: No. He's the one who went to sit in meditation on top of a mountain which looked like an inverted lotus. When he fall asleep, he fell over the edge, and Weitou Bodhisattva caught him in mid-air.

Disciple: Yes, I've heard the story.

Venerable Master: You heard it told by Guo You, but I don't know if his is the same version as mine. Probably they're about the same. You can find the answer there. Do you remember how the story goes?

Disciple: I have to think about it.

Venerable Master: Weitou Bodhisattva said, "You are so arrogant, I won't protect your Dharma for eighty thousand great eons." Why did he say that? Isn't that what he said?

Disciple: Yeah. And later Dhyana Master Gao Fengmiao repented, and Weitou Bodhisattva...

Venerable Master: He fell over the cliff again, and Weitou Bodhisattva caught him in the air again. Then he asked, "You said you wouldn't protect my Dharma for eighty thousand great eons. Why then have you come to save me?" And what did Weitou Bodhisattva say?

Disciple: Weitou Bodhisattva said, "There are tons of arrogant people. But if you have a single thought of sincere repentance, I will come to protect your Dharma again."

Venerable Master: It's not "if," it's "because." "If" indicates a possible event, whereas "because" states that it definitely occurred. So it should be, "because you repented." "If you repent" means you haven't repented yet. Right?

Disciple: Yes.

Venerable Master: "Because you repented, you surpassed eighty thousand great eons." Isn't that what he said?

Disciple: probably. I don't remember.

Venerable Master: Do you understand the answer to your question now?

Disciple: Yes.

[This is the synopsis of the story given in the book---compiled from what the Master and the translator said and filling in a bit.]

Venerable Master: Dhyana Master Gao Fengmiao always fell asleep during his meditations and so to prevent this he went to sit on top of a mountain. He sat atop a rock which looked like an inverted lotus, and the drop was who knows how far. He knew that if he fell asleep he would fall over the edge and be smashed to a pulp. The first day he sat very well. The second day went fine. But on the third day he dozed off and slipped over the edge. "I'm finished!" he thought, but just then Weitou Bodhisattva reached out his hand and snatched him out of the air.

Gao Fengmiao thought, "Weitou Bodhisattva is protecting me. How many cultivators are there like me in the world?"

"There are as many as the hairs on a cow," answered Weitou, "and since you are so arrogant, I won't protect your Dharma for the next eighty thousand great eons."

Hearing this, Gao Fengmiao was deeply ashamed. He repented earnestly. He cried and cried until he even forgot about sleeping. He cried himself into a stupor, forgetting everything, until suddenly, as if waking from a dream, he realized, "Before I knew that Weitou was

protecting my Dharma, I cultivated the Way. Now, I will continue tocultivate whether he protects me or not. And he sat down again,more determined than ever. It wasn't long, however, before he fellasleep again and fell over the edge. Oddly enough, the same handreached out and caught him.

"Who's that protecting my Dharma?" he asked. "It's me, Weitou Bodhisattva," came the reply. "Hey, Old Wei," said Gao Fengmiao, "You don't keep the precepts either. You told a lie." "I did not," countered Weitou. "You said you wouldn't protect my Dharma for eighty thousand eons and here you are protecting my Dharma," challenged Gao Fengmiao. Weitou replied, "Because of your one thought of genuine repentance, you overstepped eighty thousand great eons of retribution and so I came to save you."

The important point was that in his one thought of repentance, he was able to cancel out, to pass beyond, as it were, eighty thousand eons. That should answer your question. If the "schedule" for enlightenment was fixed, it would turn into a dead dharma, not a live dharma. It would be a fixed dharma, and there simply are no fixed dharmas. Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated for three great asamkhyeyas of eons, but that's just a manner of speaking. Three great asamkhyeyas of eons don't go beyond a single thought; one thought is just three great asamkhyeyas of eons. Haven't you been listening to the Avatamsaka Sutra? Do you know how many great asamkhyeyas of eons you have already cultivated? Maybe you have been cultivating for six great asamkhyeyas of eons.

Disciple: Perhaps not.

Venerable Master: How do you know that you weren’t a louse on the body of a Dharma Master who recited “Om Mani Padme Hum”?

Disciple: Perhaps I still am.

Venerable Master: Guo Lin, what question did you want to ask? You can’t come out to ask questions during the time when people are reciting the Buddha’s name. That shows a total disregard for the rules.

Disciple: The Gold Mountain Doctrine in two separate places says that “we do not change,” and it also contains the phrase, “make revolution in the Sangha.”

Venerable Master: The phrase “making revolution in the Sangha” is not part of the doctrine itself. The first three statements are the Gold Mountain Doctrine: “Freezing, we do not scheme. Starving, we do not beg. Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.” What follows is the transmitting of the Buddha’s mind-seal in accord with true principle.

Disciple: I was wondering, since you are the Orthodox Dharma, how can you advocate revolution?

Venerable Master: It is just because we are the Orthodox Dharma that we need a revolution. Every place else, it’s the Dharma-ending Age. If you don’t reform the Dharma-ending Age, you're neglecting your responsibility. Revolution refers to revolution in the Dharma-ending Age, not in the Orthodox Dharma.

You don’t realize how things are done in Asian Buddhism. For example, during the Incense Praise, the abbot lights the first stick of incense and when he is done he signals to the lay people to offer

incense. The one who wants to light the first stick has to pay $5,000or $50,000 [added during translation] and only then can heapproach the altar. Not just anyone can go up and light incense. Thefirst person to light incense pays $5,000, the second, $4,000, and thethird, $3,000. That's a fixed rule. In the Dharma assembly, the onewho gives the most the money is the greatest Dharma protector. Doyou think this is right?

Here, everyone is equal. It's not the case that if you give more money you go first, and if you give only a little you must stand behind. In China, monks recite Sutras for people, to help the dead, and for this service one pays $10,000 or maybe $100,000. It's not fixed. In general, "the more money, the better." "If you have a lot of money, you are good." Asian Buddhism is this way. Here, if you give a lot of money, it's okay. If you don't give money, it's also okay. If you like to do good things, it's okay. If you don't like doing good things, it's okay. Everything's okay. That is what is meant by "making revolution in the Sangha." We are not like Asian Buddhism, which sees money as all-important, and sees other things, such as the Sutras, the Dharma, the Buddha, and the Sangha, as really low.

That's how it is in Asian Buddhism. The monks play the wooden fish--- "dong, dong, dong" ---and hit the bell, and then ask for money. If you bow to the Buddha, you have to give money. Otherwise, the Buddha won't notice you. If you give more money, the Buddha's eyes may open wider. This is the kind of attitude that leads to the Dharma-ending Age.

At Gold Mountain Monastery, we don't do it that way. Here, the poor and the rich bow to the Buddha on equal ground. There is

no discrimination. It’ s not the case that if you give more money,you’ re number one. At gold Mountain Monastery, it’ s not that wedon’ t accept money, rather we don’ t place such great importanceon it.

This kind of an attitude is revolutionary! This is “revolution in the Sangha.” We are making revolution against the improper elements of Buddhism. All the improper customs and habits must be eliminated. Thus, we uphold the Orthodox Dharma by purging it of its “unorthodox” elements. We want to do away with the Dharma-ending Age and usher in the Orthodox Dharma.

That was a good question. How can the Orthodox Dharma conduct a revolution?

The following sentences say, “We accord with conditions, but do not change.” This means that we follow the conditions, but do not stray from the basic doctrines. We don’ t go around criticizing others and in this way we “accord with conditions.” If other people do things differently, we don’ t hinder them.

However, we never change in our basic principles. We insist on doing things correctly ourselves and that’ s what is meant by “we do not change, but accord with conditions.” Do you understand?

This afternoon we spoke about the Buddhas of the three periods of time throughout the ten directions. It is said,

Among the Buddhas of the three periods and the ten directions,
Amitabha Buddha is foremost.
In nine grades, he saves living beings.
His awesome virtue is infinite.

Amitabha Buddha is number one. This is because of the power of his vows. This power is so great that when you recite "Na Mo E Mi Tuo Fo," you can very quickly realize Buddhahood. To become a Buddha, all you need to do is recite the Buddha's name. The Dharma-door of Buddha Recitation works on the same principle as the mother-son relationship. Those who recite the Buddha's name are like the "sons" and the Buddha is like everyone's "mother." Whoever recites Amitabha Buddha's name is like Amitabha Buddha's son.

In the Shurangama Sutra, in the section in which the twenty-five sages explain their ways to enlightenment, the Bodhisattva Great Strength says,

"It is like a mother thinking of her son. If the son has gone to roam..."

If the son leaves his mother, it is hard for his mother to find him again. But if the son wants to find his mother, all he has to do is return home. If the mother thinks of her son, but the son cares not for his mother, he will run farther and farther away. If the mother thinks of her son and the son is mindful of his mother, then they will always be together. We are all the sons and daughters of Amitabha Buddha. All we need to do is wish to return home and we can. If we don't want to return home, our father and mother might wait for us, but there is nothing they can do. So it is said, "Amitabha Buddha is foremost."

In nine grades, he saves living beings: There are nine grades of lotuses:

1. superior-superior
2. superior-middle
3. superior-lower
4. middle-superior
5. middle-middle
6. middle-lower
7. lower-superior
8. lower-middle
9. lower-lower

Each of the nine grades further subdivides into nine grades, making eighty-one grades in all. Whoever recites Amitabha Buddha’ s name causes a lotus flower to bloom in the water of eight meritorious virtues in the pools of the seven jewels in the Land of ultimate Bliss. The more you recite, the larger your lotus blossom grows. If you recite just a little, your lotus will be small. If your lotus is big, you will rapidly become a Buddha. If your lotus is small, it will take a little longer. If you recite for a while and then quit, your lotus will wither and die. If you want to have a high grade of lotus, you should recite more. Recite sincerely. If you don’ t care whether or not you have a low grade, then you can be lazy and not recite---but your lotus will vanish.

His awesome virtue is infinite. The power of Amitabha’ s great awesome virtue is incomparable. No other Buddha can compare with him.

If anyone’ s got anything to ask, you should ask it now, because in a day or so we’ re going back to Gold Mountain Monastery.

Disciple: Sometimes children have invisible playmates. I was wondering if they are real human beings. I had a friend whose child played with a whole bunch of them, but when he misbehaved, he blamed the invisible playmates for his mistakes, and they all disappeared.

Venerable Master: Who knew about this?

Disciple: His mother.

Venerable Master: Could she see them?

Disciple: No, but he played with them for hours and hours.

Venerable Master: They may have been ghosts or immortals. But because he didn't recognize them as ghosts or immortals, he treated them as playmates. Some children can see such beings. When children cultivate the Way, they can very easily succeed. I've often said that for boys under the age of sixteen and girls not yet fourteen, it is very easy to become enlightened, provided they sit in meditation, work hard at their cultivation, and meet with a teacher of genuine wisdom. It's easy for them to accomplish the fruits of the Way. This is because they don't discriminate all the true and false things going on in the world. They don't deal with all those "you cheat me and I cheat you" affairs that go on. As soon as they go to school and learn how to use a "cheat-sheet," then it's no longer as easy for them to realize the Way.

Sunday, August 24, 1975 (afternoon)

Venerable Master: Questions?

Disciple: I was wondering if living beings come into existence at a given point in time or if their existence is beginningless. If the

latter is the case, then is there a fixed number of living beings? Ifthey do have a beginning, an origin, what is it?

Venerable Master: Their origin is the zero: O. As for the zero, where does it begin and where does it end? That's the "beginningless and the endless." When you break open the zero: O, it becomes the number one: —. In English it stands up on end like this: |. When this happens, there is a beginning.

When there is the one, then "two" comes into being. With two, comes three, with three comes four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, and on up to infinity. So how many living beings are there?

Disciple: If you twist the zero, it turns into the sign for infinity: ∞

Venerable Master: That's just the yin-yang symbol. Westerners just draw it differently.

In cultivating the Way you must cultivate to attain the one, and then turn the one back into the zero. That's called "returning to the root and going back to the source." Does that answer your question?

Disciple: Yes. It's a question of cultivating the Way.

Venerable Master: When you cultivate, you return to the root and go back to the source; you cultivate the one to return to the zero. Everyone has forgotten about the one, to say nothing of the zero. They don't even know what the one is all about.

When the heaven attains the one, it's clear.
When the earth attains the one, it's serene.
When people attain the one, they become sages.

When heaven attains the one, the sky is clear. For ten thousand miles, there's not a cloud. When the earth attains the one, there are

no earthquakes. People who attain the one are sages. If you can thencultivate and get back to zero, that’ s Buddhahood.

Disciple: Could the Master please explain the five precepts?

Venerable Master: As to the five precepts, they prohibit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants. Why should one keep the five precepts? In order to “do no evil, but reverently practice good deeds.” Do not kill; do not steal; do not commit sexual misconduct; do not engage in false speech; do not take intoxicants. If you observe the five precepts, you do not do these five kinds of evil deeds and you instead practice good acts.

Why should one refrain from killing? It is because all living beings have a life; they love their life and they do not wish to die. Even one of the smallest creatures, the mosquito, when it approaches to bite you, will fly away if you make the slightest motion. Why does it fly away? Because it fears death. It figures that if it drinks your blood you will take its life. From this you can see that all living beings love life and do not wish to die. Especially people. Everyone wants to live and no one wants to die. Although people sometimes commit suicide, ordinarily people do not seek death. Suicide is a special exception to the principle. That is why we should nurture compassionate thoughts. Since we wish to live, we should not kill any other living beings. That explains the precept against killing.

Stealing: If you don’ t steal, in the future no one will steal from you. Many of you have heard this verse:

If in this life you don’ t cage birds, in future lives you will not sit in jail.

If in this life you do not fish, in future lives you will not beg for food.
If in this life you do not kill, in future lives you' ll suffer no disasters.
If in this life you do not steal, in future lives you won' t be robbed.
If in this life you commit no sexual misconduct, in future lives you will not have marital troubles.
If in this life you do not lie, in future lives you will not be deceived.
If in this live you do not take intoxicants, in future lives you will not go insane.

This covers the general meaning of the five precepts.

Some people say, "Of the five precepts, the four which prohibit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying are very important. But taking intoxicants is a very commonplace thing. Why prohibit that?" When you consume intoxicants, it becomes very easy to break the other precepts. Thus, we ban such things as drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, and taking any kind of intoxicating drugs. Some people say, "The five precepts don' t specifically prohibit smoking tobacco or taking drugs. Doing those things is not in violation of the precepts." These people are wrong. The precept against intoxicants also prohibits smoking tobacco, taking drugs, and using all intoxicating substances---including marijuana and opium.

Once there was a layman who received the five precepts. At first they were very important to him and he strictly observed them. After a time, his old bad habits surfaced and he longed for a taste of wine. He thought, "Among the five precepts, the one against drinking is really unnecessary. What' s wrong with a little glass of wine?" He bought several pints of brandy and downed them.

As he was drinking, the neighbor’ s little chicken ran into his house. “They’ ve sent me a snack!” he thought. “I’ ll put this chicken on the menu to help send down my brandy.” He then grabbed the bird and killed it. This is a distinctly Chinese story and not a Western story. Why? Chinese people like to eat hors d’ oeuvres with their alcohol. Westerners don’ t need snacks to send off their wine. So, this layman couldn’ t possibly have been a Westerner. Anyway, because he drank the wine, he wanted the meat and thus broke the precept against killing. Since he took the chicken without the owner’ s permission, he also broke the precept against stealing. Then the neighbor lady walked in and said, “Say, did you see my chicken?”

Drunk as he was, and full of chicken, he slurred, “No…I didn’ t see no chicken. Your old pu…pu….pullet didn’ t run over here.” So saying, he broke the precept against lying. Then he took a look at the woman---she was quite pretty---and forthwith he broke the precept against sexual misconduct. A little drink of brandy led him to transgress all five of the precepts. Therefore, the precepts against taking intoxicants is also very important.

You may be wondering, “You have said that to keep the precepts is to do no evil and to practice all good deeds, but I wonder if this is really the case?”

If you have your doubts, then of course there will be problems. But if you have no doubts, your good roots will certainly deepen and grow stronger. What is more, when you receive the five precepts, for each precept you receive, five Dharma-protecting good spirits come to support you and protect you. After receiving the five precepts, if you keep them well, you can turn disasters into lucky occurrences

and transform difficulties into auspicious events. You will encounterno tragedies or calamities. Those are the advantages of keeping theprecepts.

Last night we talked about Amitabha Buddha, and today we shall continue. Everyone has now taken refuge with Amitabha Buddha; we are now Amitabha Buddha' s disciples. We should be deeply ashamed of our past conduct and repent of the offenses we have committed through the three types of karma. What are the three types of karma?

1. The karma created through the body, of which there are three types.
2. The karma created through the mouth, of which there are four types.
3. The karma created through the mind, of which there are three types.

The three types of evil committed by the body are killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

The mind creates three kinds of evil karma: greed, hatred, and delusion. Greed: You might say that greed is just insatiable desire. Then, if you fail to obtain the object of your desire, you grow hateful. Once you are hateful, you become deluded. You then pay no attention to heaven and earth; you heed nothing and no one, and you do things that are upside-down.

There are four evil committed with the mouth. The first is irresponsible speech, speech in which deviant knowledge and views are expressed, rather than proper knowledge and views. The second is false speech, that is, lying. The third is abusive speech, that is,

scolding people.

Double-tongued speech involves talking about the faults of one person to another person, and then relating the second person's faults to the first party. "Do you know what Lee said about you?" he says to John, and then to lee he says, "Do you know what insulting things John has been saying about you?" This is like the question yesterday about the invisible playmates. She said they disappeared as soon as the child started to slander them. If invisible friends disappeared as soon as the child started to slander them, you can bet that the visible ones would be even more upset. Now "double-tongues. It means that you speak in two different ways. You cause dissension and generally create trouble.

All these kinds of bad karma together form the ten evils. Not committing the ten evils is called practicing the ten good acts.

Students of the Buddhadharma, stop doing the ten evils! Always practice the ten good acts! The ten evils and the ten good acts are created through the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind. When the three karmas are pure, you will not commit the three types of bad karma. We who recite the Buddha's name should make vows together to have a response manifest before us at all times. That is, when we approach the end of our lives, all the various qualities of the Land of Ultimate Bliss will appear very distinctly before our eyes. As a result, people who see and hear the recitation of the Buddha's name will all cultivate vigorously and all be born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss together. We who recite the Buddha's name should have this aspiration.

Venerable Master: Who's got a question?

Disciple: (Guo Jie – Fruit of Precepts) Please clarify some things about the precepts. Does the precept against sexual misconduct prohibit all sexual conduct between men and women, or does it allow it between husband and wife? My girlfriend and I are not officially married, but in our minds we are already married, and it' s very clear to us that we' re not going to have sexual relations outside of our relationship.

Venerable: That' s fine.

Disciple: As to the precept of not lying, there is the so-called "lie of silence." For example, the American government would allow us to make war on Vietnam because the people of this country did not stand up to say it was not alright to do that, so those officials say, "Well, we' re doing fine, because no one says we' re not doing fine. If you don' t stand up and speak out against evil, then you' re complying with the forces that bring it about. Is being silent in this case a form of lying?

Venerable Master: Yes, it is, but it is still a little better than actually speaking a lie. Of course, lying through silence is not allowed, but actually speaking a lie is even less correct. It is to be hoped that such things would not occur. But if you are not able to keep these precepts, that is none of my business. It is beyond the power of one individual to single-handedly stop all people from lying.

Disciple: As for intoxicants, I looked that word up and the root word is toxin. There are a lot of toxins in our food. Monosodium glutamate and other chemicals are sneaked into our food. The caffeine in the coffee we drink is a drug. Ginseng has drugs in it. On

the other side of it, peyote, although it has toxins in it, it' s aspiritual tool that' s traditionally been used by the American Indiansfor a long, long time. And it' s a Dharma door, so to speak, thatleads to single-mindedness.

Venerable Master: I' ve eaten that kind of mushroom. Back in the days when I was practicing filial piety by my mother' s grave, I ate that kind of mushroom, and it made me want to laugh. That' s called the "laughing mushroom." After you eat it, you have a strong urge to laugh. I think this mushroom is quite commonplace. They are probably here in this country, too, but I don' t remember what they look like. After I ate it that time, I never ate that kind of mushroom again, nor did I see them again. I just ate that one mushroom.

Disciple: There are many poisons in the food we eat, like coffee and ginseng. A lot of people use mushrooms as means of cultivation of the Way or as a Dharma door. Does the Venerable Master have any suggestion? What should we do?

Venerable Master: The reason for the precept against taking intoxicants is that intoxicating substances can make people go insane. They can make people go crazy and act in upside-down ways. If you take a small amount and it doesn' t confuse you, that' s okay. It' s only to be feared that you start out taking a little, but you end up taking a lot. For example, people who drink alcohol may start out with one glass, then drink another glass because they don' t realize they are tipsy. People who drink usually won' t admit that they are drunk. Even if they are drunk, they say they aren' t. I' ve seen a lot of people who are like that. They drink a little, and then some more, and then more. That' s the reason for the precept.

If you use a little bit as medicine to cure an illness, it is acceptable. If you are not sick, then you don’t need to use this medicine. Just now ginseng was mentioned. Ginseng is not poisonous. It is sweet in nature. “Ginseng has a sweet flavor and is very bolstering to the constitution. It quenches thirst, helps to produce saliva, regulates the complexion, and nurtures the stomach.” What advantages does it have? If you are thirsty and you eat it, it will quench your thirst. It also produces saliva. It nourishes your inherited constitution (yuan-qi). The qi or energy in your dan-tian (near your abdomen) is called central energy (zhong-qi). The inherited constitution is the energy that gives rise to your central energy. It is the source of energy. Ginseng bolsters your energy. If you are weak, eat some ginseng and you will feel invigorated.

Many Chinese Dharma Masters, when they give lectures, have to drink ginseng tea, because lecturing drains their energy, and the ginseng tea helps to replenish it. So, “ginseng has a sweet flavor and is very bolstering to the constitution. It quenches thirst, helps to produce saliva…” If you are very thirsty, drink ginseng and it will cure your thirst. It “regulates the complexion, and nurtures the stomach.” Regulating the complexion means regulating the blood, and nurturing the stomach means nurturing one’s energy. That’s ginseng.

You have to know the functions of each medicinal herb. You can’t just take a little of this and a little of that. If you do that, then even if you were healthy to begin with, you could end up getting sick. Medicines are for curing sickness. If you aren’t sick, you don’t need to take them. Some people say, “I feel tired, I think

I’ll take some drug to make my tiredness go away.” If you feeltired, just take a rest and then you’ll be fine. You don’t need totake medicine.

Disciple: Regulating the complexion refers to regulating blood?

Venerable Master: It regulates the blood so that the blood circulates well and doesn’t get clogged up like a sewage pipe. If a person has good blood circulation, he will not get sick. Who else has a question?

Disciple: What about taking ginseng during Chan sessions? Is it appropriate to take ginseng at that time? Does it count as curing illness?

Venerable Master: It helps your cultivation. If your legs tend to go to sleep a lot, you can take some ginseng to help them wake up. That’s okay.

Disciple: We ate some ginseng here. It creates a very yang state that some people have a hard time handling. The tide flow will block up in the shoulders or the back for awhile, and some people were uncomfortable with that yang state. I find that just by hanging on for awhile, the blockage will stop. Is there some exercise you can do, or some other medicine that can be taken together with it?

Venerable Master: If it’s too yang for someone, he doesn’t need to take it. With the human body, excess is as bad as deficiency. Too strong is as bad as being too weak. Don’t overdo it. Just follow the middle path.

For example, if you can carry a hundred pounds and you take some ginseng so you can carry 150 pounds, that’s going overboard. If you have a cup, you want to fill it up full. But if you

keep pouring after it is full and it overflows, it' s the same as notbeing full.

Suppose you feel very weak and lacking in energy, so your voice is very soft and you can' t speak any louder. If your vital energy is weak and you pant when you walk, then ginseng can help to bolster your energy.

It' s not the case that everyone should take ginseng, especially when they are not sick. If one is not sick, then one should take it very sparingly. Even once a month is already quite substantial. One should not take it every day. If one is taking pure ginseng, one should only take one or two qian (1 qian is 1/10th of a Chinese ounce), or about half an ounce. And one should take ginseng only in the three winter months, not during the rest of the year.

OK, it' s time to send off the plaques.

Disciple: As to the precept against taking life as it relates to not eating meat, I want to ask how we can live without taking life. Plants, for example, seem to have a higher consciousness than most animals. They have a consciousness that' s everywhere at once. They display emotions such as fear and recognize individuals. Personally I don' t feel any more comfortable eating plants than I do eating animals. According to scientific experiments, you can pinch one plant here and its partner will feel the pain at exactly the same time even though it is a thousand miles away. Since they have emotions, how can we kill and eat them any more easily than we can kill and eat animals?

Venerable Master: That which has a life is said to be "sentient." Plants are said to be "insentient." This includes the

earth, wood, rocks, and minerals. Rocks may appear insentient, butthey are alive. Their "life" is a bit less, however; it's not ascomplete, and they cannot be compared with human beings, whohave eight consciousnesses. Although we can say that plants havesome sort of awareness, it is incomplete. That's why we have theterm, "senseless rocks." Although they are said to be senseless,they actually do have emotional feelings. What proof is there?

In China, Dharma Master Dao-sheng lectured on the Nirvana Sutra at Hu-qiu Mountain. The first half of the Nirvana Sutra said that icchantikas, that is, unbelievers, did not have the Buddha nature. Dharma Master Dao-sheng said, "Icchantikas also have the Buddha nature." When he said that, all the other Dharma Masters objected. "The Sutra plainly says that icchantikas don't have the Buddha nature; how can you say that they do?" and they told everyone to avoid his lectures. So he went up to Hu-qiu Mountain and lectured to rocks. He addressed them, saying, "I say that icchantikas have the Buddha nature. What do you say?" At that point the rocks nodded their heads! It is said,

When Sheng, the Venerable, spoke the Dharma,
Even the rocks nodded their heads.

Thus proves that insentient things, such as rocks, also have the Buddha nature.

Well, then, how can one remain alive in this world? If you were to be very strict in your interpretation, then even eating plants is killing. But it's a bit less serious. If you did not eat, you could not stay alive. "Killing" vegetables is less offensive to one's

compassionate sensibilities than wantonly killing animals for food.Killing animals creates thoughts of hatred, not of compassion. Yourcompassion grows lighter while your hatred increases. His questionis pretty tough to answer.

Since plants have no blood or breath, how can we prove that they have "life"? Ginseng, for example, after 1500 years can turn into a human being. It can transform into a child and run around. These transformations are called "ginseng immortals."

Disciple: In some people's view, when you eat one bowl of rice, you take the life of all the grains of rice, whereas eating the meat of, say, one deer, you take only one animal's life.

Venerable Master: On the body of one single animal are a hundred thousand, in fact several million little organisms. These organisms are fragments of what was once an animal. Why did they become organism? Because they did not believe in Buddhism.

All animals are fragments of the consciousnesses of people. The spirit of a human being at death may split up to become many animals. One person can become about ten animals. That's why animals are so stupid. The spirit of an animal can split up and become, in its smallest division, an organism or plant. The feelings which plants have, then, are what separated from the animal's spirit when it split up at death. Although the life force of a large number of plants may appear sizeable, it is not as great as that of a single animal or a single mouthful of meat.

Take, for example, rice: tens of billions of grains of rice do not contain as much life force as a bit of meat the size of a grain of rice. If you open your Five Eyes, you can know this at a glance. If you

haven’t opened your Eyes, no matter how one tries to explain it toyou, you won’t understand. No matter how it’s explained, youwon’t believe it, because you haven’t been a plant! Do youunderstand?

Disciple: Not for sure.

Venerable Master: I know you aren’t sure. Another example is the mosquitoes. The millions of mosquitoes on this mountain may simply be the spirit of one person which has transformed into those bugs. It’s not the case that a single human spirit turns into a single mosquito. One person can turn into limitless, boundless numbers of mosquitoes.

At death, the nature changes, the spirit scatters, and its smallest fragments become plants. Thus, there is a difference between eating plants and eating animals. What is more, plants have very short life spans. The grass, for example, is born in the spring and dies within months. Animals live a long time. If you don’t kill them, they’ll live for many years. Rice, regardless of the conditions, will only live a short time. So, if you really look into it, there are many factors to consider, and even science hasn’t got it straight. Okay, that’s all I’m going to say. The more I say, the more you will disbelieve.

Disciple: The Dalai Lama, the highest lama in Tibet, eats meat, because Tibet is a very cold place. What is his view on eating meat?

Venerable Master: Are you asking these questions because you can’t stop eating meat?

Disciple: I’ve been asking myself this question for twenty years now. I can eat meat, and I can also not eat meat. I believe it’s a matter of degree.

Venerable Master: Do you believe in the Dalai Lama or do you believe in Shakyamuni Buddha?

Disciple: Well, I believe in the Buddha, but I, well…

Venerable Master: Well, I don’ t know if the Dalai Lama eats meat. I’ ve heard that he is vegetarian, but that many Lamas under him do eat meat. Even if the Dalai Lama himself does eat meat, Shakyamuni Buddha did not advocate eating meat. Now are you going to follow the Dalai Lama in eating meat, or follow Shakyamuni Buddha in not eating meat?

Disciple: Do Buddhists have some way of counteracting the effect of eating meat on a karmic level? I understand the karmic retribution involved in eating meat. I know that we shouldn’ t eat meat. But I’ ve heard that there are certain circumstances in which Buddhists can eat meat. I was wondering what your views on this were, and whether there was a way of counteracting the bad karma of eating meat.

Venerable Master: The Buddha ate meat. But he did not advocate eating meat. He himself did not want to eat it, but it was offered to him. Also, he did not kill the animals he ate. He condoned three kinds of pure meat which could be eaten by Bhikshus and lay people.

What are the three kinds of pure meat? If you did not see the animal killed, it is pure. If you did not hear its cries as it was being killed, it is pure. If it was not killed expressly for you, it is pure. If you didn’ t see the animal killed or hear its screams as it died, and if the animal wasn’ t killed just for you to eat, in that case, if your body is weak, you can eat it. In the Buddha’ s day, the monks went out

begging for food and they ate whatever they were given. It wasn’tthat they could cook whatever they wanted to eat. They just atewhatever was offered to them.

But why is it that cultivators of the Way should not eat meat? It’s because eating meat increases people’s sexual desire. Cultivators should have no sexual desire, and so they should consume food and drink which do not stimulate desire. That’s the most important reason, really, for practicing vegetarianism. Cultivators must be pure and undefiled. That is the most important reason for not eating meat.

Okay, we can do the Great Transference now and recite the Buddha’s name. Burn the plaques when we recite the Mantra for Rebirth in the Pure Land.

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[Epilogue]

The assembly then drove in a caravan to the ocean and performed the final Great Transference of Merit at the beach as the sun set, recalling the first of the contemplations listed in the Sutra of Sixteen Contemplations: “Contemplate the setting sun, its appearance like that of a suspended drum…”

- The End -