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The Path to Buddhahood

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Today, very few practitioners truly understand the term cultivation although many talk about it and this is why our thoughts and behavior have not changed. There are countless types of behavior, but Buddha Shakyamuni categorized all of them into three major types. They are the three karmas of the body, speech, and mind.

What is karma? The act of doing something is called a deed and the consequence of that deed is called karma. Karma is divided into three types: good, bad and neutral or that which is neither good nor bad. What is considered good or bad? The standard for good or bad is actually very complicated.

Just like the educational system of our schools, the standard of good or bad for a primary level student is different from that for a secondary level student. The standard for the latter is different from that for the university student and that for the university student is different from that for people in society.

Similarly, Buddhism has levels of standards; each is finely detailed and differentiated because Buddhist teachings are for all the sentient beings in the universe and their abilities are very different. For example, in this world the beings are of different cultures, races, religions, lifestyles, and live in different environments and geographical locations. Just one standard for good or bad cannot possibly meet the needs of everyone; thus, we need many standards.

Today, due to the advancements in technology and communication, we can easily travel to other countries. When we are in a different country, we learn about their diverse cultures, customs, and laws. As it is said: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." The standard for what is good in our region may not work elsewhere, for others may think that it is bad, while what they regard as good, we may consider as bad.

However, among all the different standards, one never changes. What is it? It is love. This standard does not change with different ethnic groups, cultures, or religious beliefs. Every ethnic group and religion teaches people to love themselves and others. God loves everyone in this world. If we adhere to this absolute standard, then we would commit fewer mistakes.

In Buddhism, we are taught not only to love, but that our love needs to arise from a mind of sincerity, purity, and

equality. We call this kind of love compassion. Compassion is rational love. We also need to use true wisdom. Wisdom is the true mind and emotion is the illusory mind. Love that arises from emotions will change while love that arises from wisdom will never change. Hence, Buddhas do not use love, but instead use compassion. On appearance, love and compassion seem the same, but their intentions are different. Love may change to hatred but with wisdom, love will never change. All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will love us no matter what; whether we love or hate them, become jealous, or slander, harm or destroy them. Their compassion for us will never change. This is true love.

Ordinary beings have an illusory mind, the mind that arises and ceases. In other words, ordinary beings have wandering thoughts. Enlightened beings have true minds that constantly dwell on truth. They do not have wandering thoughts, only deep concentration. Deep concentration is the state without discriminatory wandering thoughts or attachments. However, this does not mean that we are idle all the time; we continue to do our job with a pure and completely aware mind. When the external environment no longer hinders or affects us, we have attained deep concentration.

Understanding this principle, we will know how to correct our improper behavior. When our six senses encounter the external environment, our thoughts, words, and deeds are improper because our senses follow the external conditions and we allow afflictions to take hold. We have been wrong for countless eons and this is the root of our improper behavior. We have lost our True Nature and have allowed afflictions, especially those of views and thoughts, to be dominant. Thus, we have transformed the One True Dharma Realm into the Six Realms of Reincarnation. How are the Six Realms formed? They are formed by our attachments.

The first mistake from the view or thought affliction is our attachment to our bodies as we think that this body is "I." This is why the Buddha told us there is no self and therefore our attachment to self is wrong. With the initial attachment to self, we have a mistake that is hard to undo. This body is not "I." This body is something that we possess just like the clothes that we own. If we understand this, we will realize that humans do not have births or deaths. Death is just like taking off our soiled clothes and birth is like putting on a new set of clothing. In the cycle of reincarnation, our birth and death is like changing clothes.

What then is "self"? In India, some religions believe that the spiritual self is "I." In China, we call it the soul. In Buddhism, we call it the spirit. This state of believing that the spiritual self is "I" is higher than that which views the body as "I." Why is it such an improvement? Because when one believes that when revolving in the cycle of reincarnation the spiritual self takes on a body just like someone takes on a piece of clothing, there is no fear of death. Rather, death is regarded as something quite normal.

If we have accumulated only good karma in this lifetime, then we will be reborn into the Three Good Realms - changing from a human into a heavenly being and having a much more beautiful and dignified appearance, a longer lifespan and greater good fortune. This is to "sow a good cause and reap a good result." However, if we were to do bad deeds, then our body will change for the worse.

Recently, in Singapore, some Chinese practitioners told me about an elderly woman in Tianjin, China. She dreamt that her son, who had died two years before, came to tell her that he was now a guardian at a certain temple. She woke up feeling very sad.

Sometime later, she heard some practitioners planning a pilgrimage to the temple her son had spoken of in the dream. She accompanied the practitioners to the temple and asked the abbot about the temple guardian. The abbot answered that there was only a temple guard dog named Xiaohu (which means little tiger). As the woman heard the name, she suddenly had goose bumps because that had been her son's name. She rushed to the gate of the temple to find the dog. When she got there and the dog saw her, tears began to stream down its cheeks and as they hugged each other, she too began to cry.

This account of a human being reincarnated as a dog is the consequence of the human having done bad deeds. When the residents of Tianjin heard what had happened, many of them came to see the dog. The intelligent dog felt ashamed and he avoided people who came from his former hometown but would reappear when people from other places visited the temple. Some practitioners encouraged the woman not to feel embarrassed, but to tell her story so others could learn the truth.

There is another case of a person being reincarnated as a dog. I will ask those who know about what happened to record the details so that all of us will know that reincarnation is true and that we need to be cautious in our every rising thought. Life is short but death is really not frightening. However, what comes after death? Have we seriously considered this? This critical issue of death is the major reason why we cultivate. We hope that our future lifetimes will be better than this one and that tomorrow will be better than today. With this goal in mind, we must know how to practice and remember the teachings of the Buddha that are recorded in the sutras.

We need not learn all of the Buddha's numerous teachings but instead grasp their essence that is within the Three Conditions found in the *Visualization Sutra*. First, we are to be filial to our parents. Second, we are to be respectful to our teachers and elders. This is the heart; the very foundation of the Buddha's teachings, and it is from this foundation that the innumerable Dharma methods were developed. Hence, filial piety and respect for teachers and elders are the way of Buddhism. In many Mahayana sutras, especially those on the Bodhisattva precepts, the Buddha taught us to regard all women as our mothers and all men as our fathers. This is the basis for our practice of filial piety. Also, every being is a future Buddha and this principle is the basis for respecting teachers and elders.

Who is a Bodhisattva? Bodhisattvas are beings who regard and respect all others as their parents and as Buddhas. This is the mind and heart of a Bodhisattva. Today, the main reason we cannot achieve results in our cultivation is due to our lack of filial piety and respect for others, and our incessant thoughts of superiority. Without respect for others, no matter how hard we practice, even to the point of chanting a Buddha's name one hundred thousand times a day until our voices become hoarse, we cannot escape retributions in the Three Bad

Realms.

In the *Surangama Sutra*, we learn that when our causal intentions are impure, our results will be false and confused. What is the causal intention? It is the very first arising thought. Thus, we need to follow the teachings of the Buddha to correct any erroneous thought.

The Buddha said that every sentient being was our parent in our past lives and is a future Buddha. If instead he had said that every being is our current parent and a current Buddha, we may not understand or accept this fact so readily. We can more readily accept his explanation that every being was our past parent and is a future Buddha. But frankly, even after hearing this, we still cannot accept this wholeheartedly; if we did, we would become a Buddha. Those who are able to practice this teaching in their daily lives are Bodhisattvas who have attained at least the first level of the Ten Beliefs Bodhisattvas; they have already corrected their basic wrong views.

Without exception, the great masters of all schools in Buddhism taught us to cultivate from the root, and from here, to bring forth the minds of sincerity, purity, equality, awakening, and compassion. Today, although we know the essence of the Buddha's teachings, we have yet to benefit from our cultivation. The reason why we cannot reap anything is that we have yet to find the root. For countless eons, we have been revolving in the cycle of life and death. We do not know where the problem lies or what is our relationship to the universe. The Buddha was a human being who had experienced life and who revealed the truth to us. Thus, we need to believe and accept this truth, and truly reform. After we have reformed, we will be leading the lives of the Bodhisattvas and following the Bodhisattva's way.

The word "Bodhisattva" is a Sanskrit one meaning an enlightened sentient being. A sentient being is an ordinary being and all of us are sentient beings. Bodhisattvas are enlightened sentient beings. The difference between an ordinary being and a Bodhisattva is that the former is deluded and the latter is enlightened, and thus they are given different names.

Enlightened beings are constantly correcting their erroneous behavior. But, before we are able to correct our faults, we must first discover them. In Buddhism, one who discovers and clearly knows his or her faults is awakened. After we have awakened, the next step is to correct our faults. Bodhisattvas abide by six guidelines that are called the Six Paramitas of Giving, Moral Self-discipline (Precepts-keeping), Patience, Diligence, Deep Concentration, and Wisdom, to remedy our six major afflictions. The foremost of our six afflictions are greed and stinginess. Most people desire wealth, lust, fame, food, and sleep as well as sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and thought while Bodhisattvas correct these faults by the practice of giving. The *Paramita of Giving* can free us of greed. The roots of greed and stinginess are our attachments to our bodies, fear of death and selfishness.

How do we practice giving in order to free ourselves of greed and stinginess? We need to know the true meaning of giving for it does not mean donating money to temples. Its underlying meaning is to be filial to parents, and to respect teachers and elders as all beings are our parents, teachers, and elders. The Paramita of Giving is to

consider all beings with sincere filial piety and respect, to serve and to help them. We give wealth to benefit society and all beings, and we sacrifice ourselves to help and serve all others unconditionally.

Today, voluntary social work is the Paramita of Giving. Constantly bearing in mind the needs of all beings and how we can help them encompasses the giving of wealth, teaching, and fearlessness. When our minds are filled with filial piety and respect, giving becomes an offering, which is one of the Ten Great Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. These Ten Great Vows are the highest level of practice.

It is important that we nurture in ourselves the spirit of filial piety and respect, and do not slight anyone for that means slighting our parents, teachers, and elders - a serious offence. We cannot be born into the Pure Land even though we chant the Buddha's name because we continue to commit these mistakes daily. So, we have actually not accumulated great merits although we think we have.

When working for others, no matter how inconsequential the task might seem, as long as we do it logically and abide by the rules, we are practicing the Paramitas of Wisdom and Precepts keeping respectively. We are setting good examples for others by systematically completing the task. The practice of the Paramita of Precepts Keeping helps us to correct our bad habits and erroneous behavior. We have countless weaknesses that are bad examples for others. If we can constantly remind ourselves to be good examples for all through our behavior, we are practicing precepts keeping. Thus, we need to understand the Buddha's teachings.

When we interact with circumstances fairly and sensibly, we are practicing the Paramita of Wisdom. When we are courageous when helping others, we are practicing the Paramita of Patience. Practicing the Paramita of Patience frees us from the afflictions of intolerance, anger, and hatred. Small tasks require a lesser amount of patience while great undertakings require an abundance of patience. Without patience, nothing can be achieved.

In the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha told us that everything is achieved through patience. In the Bodhisattva's practice of the Six Paramitas, the Buddha particularly emphasized endurance, showing that in this Saha world of endurance, patience is greatly lacking in all beings. This is why we cannot succeed in anything (either worldly or Buddhist). To obtain success, we must learn to cultivate endurance. And in whatever we do, we must not be overly enthusiastic or rash because rashness results in mistakes. It is good to slow down a little.

Two days ago, in Australia, we met Mr. Uri Themal and today we met with a senator in Brisbane. We talked about the rapid advancements in technology that are causing disasters in our world. Wisdom tells us that some things need to be done quickly while others need to be done more gradually. People today do not possess the wisdom to differentiate between the two.

In the past, the ancient teachings like those of Confucius and Buddha Shakyamuni taught that a moral character should be quickly and enthusiastically cultivated while material objects should be pursued at a slower and less aggressive pace. Buddhism emphasizes progress in cultivation and teaches us to be contented with just the

necessities. Many religious teachings, such as those in Christianity and Catholicism, also place great importance on leading a simple and honorable life, and are indifferent to pursuing materialistic enjoyments.

If we feel the same way, we need to be enthusiastic in helping others and unconcerned about our own needs. In doing so, we will be practicing the Paramitas of Patience and Diligence. The *Paramita of Diligence* frees us from laziness. If we follow the teachings of the Buddha to practice the Six Paramitas, they will benefit us for the rest of our lives. And when we dedicate the merits from our practice, vow to be born into the Pure Land, and chant Buddha Amitabha's name from one to ten times, we are assured of being born into his Western Pure Land.

Can we really be born into the Pure Land by chanting "Buddha Amitabha" just one to ten times? The sutras assure us that yes, we can. When we do not create negative karma but accumulate merits due to our daily cultivation of the practice of proper thoughts, words and deeds, we are assured of being born into the Pure Land.

What is the *Paramita of Deep Concentration*? The Buddha taught us to concentrate deeply in order to free ourselves of distractions. In the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha taught Subhuti, who had generated the Bodhi heart to help all beings, that the most important criteria in helping others are deep concentration and wisdom; that is to not be attached to phenomena, but to maintain the mind of tranquility. These principles are the basis of the teachings of China's Sixth Master of Zen, Master Hui-Neng, who taught us not to be attached to external forms and to maintain the mind of stillness within. Not to be attached to external forms is not to be attached to phenomena, while maintaining the mind of stillness means that we do not have greed, anger, or ignorance as we encounter external conditions. When we encounter external conditions but are unaffected and can thus help others, it is due to our deep concentration and wisdom.

With deep concentration and wisdom, we will be unaffected by external situations; without deep concentration, we will be unable to educate others, but would instead be swayed by them and end up being confused about the whole situation. How does this happen? When we are in contact with others and things go our way, thoughts of greed arise. When things do not go our way, anger and hatred arise because we lack deep concentration and wisdom. With deep concentration and wisdom, we will not have thoughts of greed, hatred, or anger in any circumstance, whether they are favorable or unfavorable.

Deep concentration is the state of constantly maintaining a mind of purity and equality. Cultivating deep concentration does not solely mean sitting in meditation in the cultivation hall. Practicing sitting meditation is similar to teaching the skills to a beginner. After graduation from school, the students need to practice what they have learned in the cultivation hall by applying the principles in their daily lives. The practitioner will have practiced deep concentration when he or she can remain unaffected by external circumstances.

In the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, Master Yu-Xiang practiced deep concentration by visiting busy places, such as marketplaces. Today, we need not need to visit noisy and busy places. We can practice deep concentration while having the television turned on. However, are we able to remain unaffected by external situations in places

such as discotheques, movie theaters or other places of entertainment? If we can, then that is deep concentration. When we can clearly perceive what is happening around us, remain unmoved, and not have any wandering discriminatory thoughts or attachments, we are cultivating wisdom and deep concentration simultaneously. Bodhisattvas use these principles in their daily lives. We do not need to change our current lifestyles or jobs to accord with the teachings. Of all professions, the ones that involve killing are the worst as they create negative karma and consequences. Bodhisattvas however, can practice any profession even that of a butcher or a restaurant owner.

Why is it that Bodhisattvas do not create negative karma by doing these seemingly negative deeds and instead are able to help sentient beings? This is because in everything Bodhisattvas do, they do not have wandering discriminatory thoughts and attachments. Therefore, they do not create negative karma. By not creating such karma, they are able to liberate all beings from sufferings.

Not creating negative karma is not achievable by ordinary beings because we kill animals and eat meat, while at the same time, have wandering thoughts such as what does or does not taste good. Hence, we will have to suffer the bad consequences. It is crucial to understand that we should not try to emulate all of the Bodhisattvas' behavior because we have not yet attained their level of deep concentration.

One of the fifty-three advisors in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, Sweet Dew Fire King represents a profession that involves killing. Another advisor, Shengrepoluomen represents a profession where beings are deluded. And a third advisor, Fasumiduonu, can also be a Bodhisattva because as a prostitute she practices the Bodhisattva's way to help beings. The fifty-three advisors, who are actually portrayed by Bodhisattvas, represent all levels of society. Thus, we see that the Buddhism encompasses all of society.

With the minds of sincerity, purity, and great compassion, Bodhisattvas benefit society in every field they are engaged in. These beings take on these immoral jobs in order to help sentient beings reduce their own disasters and negative karma. If we do not possess the Bodhisattva's great compassionate and sincere mind to help all others as well as their level of achievement, and try to follow their example in doing these jobs, then we are creating negative causes and results.

The practice guidelines in the *Flower Adornment Sutra* are comprised of the Ten Paramitas of Great Wisdom Bodhisattva and the Ten Great Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. These twenty Paramitas and vows are the primary guidelines for the Dharma Body Bodhisattvas of the Flower Adornment Assembly. Each of the guidelines has profound meanings and encompasses the entire universe.

Since we are mere beginners in learning Buddhism, it is necessary for us to look for favorable environments in which to practice. But, the Dharma Body Bodhisattvas are the advanced learners of Buddhism; they practice in whatever environment they are in and do not try to change their present lifestyle or job. They cultivate the Ten Paramitas and the Ten Great Vows in meeting their daily responsibilities to become Buddhas.

Although we are not yet able to accomplish this, we must know this principle so that our spiritual level will be continually raised. We may practice very hard, but if we do not know this principle and truth, our level of achievement will be limited. We cannot achieve a breakthrough because our thoughts are barriers.

In recent years, we have maintained contact with friends from religions and other races; this is truly practicing the teachings in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*. The ancient sages explained that the *Flower Adornment Sutra* is the expanded version of the *Infinite Life Sutra*. At the end of the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, Manjushri Bodhisattva and Universal Worthy Bodhisattva dedicate the merit of the Ten Great Vows to be born into Buddha Amitabha's Pure Land. If we abide by the methods and principles in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, correct our improper thoughts and behavior, and dedicate the merits of our cultivation to being born into the Pure Land, we will be born there. As the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas said, such truly wonderful merits and benefits are beyond description and comprehension.

The teachings in the *Flower Adornment Sutra* are in accordance with the level of understanding of people today and are suitable to our current conditions. Although people are creating heavy negative karma, they possess deep and great roots of virtues and merits. It is a pity that these beings have not had the good conditions to bring about the germination of their virtuous roots and merits. With a change of thought, they would uncover the Mahayana's perfect root nature. Without such a change, then as the ancients said: "We will get the result that we are destined to get (as we have not yet encountered good conditions)." With such a change in thought, we will immediately break through delusion, become awakened, and be transformed from an ordinary being into a sage. As Master Shan-Dao said, a person's achievement depends on the conditions he or she encounters. Thus, encountering the right conditions is crucial in determining whether we attain results in our cultivation.

However, an ordinary being is simply that, an ordinary being. Even if we were to listen to the Buddha's teachings for hundreds or thousands of times, it would still be difficult for us to reform. Buddha Shakyamuni taught daily for forty-nine years, he lectured for tens and hundreds of thousand of times to "wake" us up. If we will turn back from our erroneous behavior, then the Buddha's goal of eradicating our suffering will be achieved.

Have we lost our chance to encounter the right conditions now that the Buddha is no longer with us? No, the question is - do we know how to hold on to the right condition when we encounter one?

At eighty-six years old, the former president of the Singapore Buddhist Lodge, Mr. Guang Bie Chen, who was recently been reborn into the Pure Land, did not ignore the right condition when he encountered it.

A few years before he died, his poor health forced him to stop working and to remain at home. During this period, Mr. Bock Guan Lee gave him videotapes of my lectures on Buddhism. Mr. Chen listened to these lectures eight hours daily for four years. He had met a wonderful opportunity and made good use of it. He succeeded after four years, attained the state of One Mind Undisturbed and knew three months in advance the day he would die.

Two years ago, he saw Buddha Amitabha and requested to leave for the Pure Land. However, Mr. Lee said that probably Buddha Amitabha advised Mr. Chen to wait another two years to take care of the Buddhist Lodge until the election for the next committee was over.

I was there the day he attended the election seated in his wheelchair. A few months later, Mr. Chen left this world. This shows that conditions depend on us. The late president of the Lodge had the wonderful opportunity to obtain the videotapes of all my lectures. If our conditions are not as good as his were it does not matter. If we can only obtain one videotape and listen to it eight hours a day for four years, we are assured of surpassing him in our merits.

This kind of prolonged cultivation on one single subject encompasses the Three Learnings of self-discipline, deep concentration, and wisdom, and assures us success in our practice. Thus, if we do not succeed, we cannot blame others, our bad luck, or the lack of good teachers or classmates; all these are just excuses to shift our responsibility. True practitioners understand that we ourselves are to blame; others and our environment are without fault, but rather we let the opportunity pass us by.

About fifteen years ago, when I lectured in Los Angeles, I met a retired university professor, Mr. Li-Ben Zhao. After his retirement, Mr. Zhao had opened a restaurant with a friend. He heard my lectures and was very happy to learn the teachings. He brought home audiotapes of the lectures on the *Platform Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra* and listened to these for twenty-six times. Mr. Zhao asked me if his approach of sutra study, of simply listening to these two sets of lectures, could help him be born into the Pure Land when he chanted Buddha Amitabha's name and vowed to be born there.

I assured him it would, but that twenty-six times was not enough, that he needed to listen at least one hundred times. When he had done so, he came to me again and I told him to listen for another one hundred times. Now, Mr. Zhao lectures very well on these two sutras and receives many invitations to give lectures. It really is possible. If we can become very familiar with the teachings, then they eventually will become part of us and will come from within us.

It is good if we know this method of concentrated cultivation for it contains each of the Three Learnings. Practicing according to the teachings is *self-discipline*; when our minds are settled and focused on learning one method of cultivation, we will have *deep concentration* and with deep concentration, we will uncover our *innate wisdom*.

Why is it that most people cannot uncover this wisdom? It is because our minds are too cluttered. If we can concentrate deeply, we will uncover wisdom with new awakening and understanding each time we listen to the lectures. Accumulating small awakenings leads to complete enlightenment. When we dedicate this merit to be born into the Pure Land, we are assured of being born there. This is stated in the last section about the three levels of rebirth into the Pure Land of the *Infinite Life Sutra*.

Master Ci-Zhou (who wrote the study outline of the thirty-seven chapter version of the *Infinite Life Sutra*) said that it does not matter whether the sutra we choose to learn is one of the Pure Land sutras or not, as long as it is one of the Mahayana sutras. If we dedicate the merits from our learning to being born into the Pure Land, we are assured of attaining our goal. There have been practitioners who succeeded in this way and they are good examples for us.

With our advanced technology, it is easy for us to use a cassette player and listen to audiotapes of one or two series of sutras. There is no reason why we cannot succeed in our practice. If we truly practice, everything we do will be in accordance with each of the Six Paramitas for to practice one Paramita is to practice all Paramitas. This is the way Bodhisattvas practice.

We need to understand these principles to know how we should practice. Those who succeeded are those who practiced patience. The Buddha taught us that everything is obtained through patience. If we patiently and persistently listen to the Buddhist teachings and correct our faults everyday, follow the teachings in the sutras on what should or should not be done and repeatedly engrave them in our memory, we will be able to immediately perceive a rising thought and detect whether or not it is proper during our daily interaction with others and circumstances. If the thought is improper, we should correct it instantly; this is true cultivation. We no longer follow our afflictions and bad habits, but instead accord with the teachings of the Buddha. In this way, we are assured of success in our practice.

In the *Infinite Life Sutra*, the Buddha said that this kind of practitioner is the Buddha's best student, for he or she abides by the Buddha's teachings, studies the sutra, and is a good example for all. If we truly understand what the Buddha told us, we will accept his teachings wholeheartedly; if we have yet to accept his teachings, it simply means that we have not truly understood them. Why are we unable to understand the intrinsic meanings? It is because we have not read the sutra enough. The ancients said that we would naturally understand the meaning in a book if we read it one thousand times.

This principle can also be applied to listening to teachings. One who listens to the lectures for one or two thousand times, will naturally attain awakening. When the number of times we immerse ourselves in the teachings is insufficient, we will be unable to overcome our afflictions. Focus on one subject, for that will block the distractions that keep us from entering the door to awakening.

To listen or read the sutras with concentration is to practice all Three Learnings at one time. If we listen to too many different types of teachings, then all that we gain is knowledge. This will not qualify us to teach others. The secret in obtaining deep concentration and in uncovering wisdom lies in choosing one method of cultivation and studying it for a prolonged time. With deep concentration, our wandering thoughts and afflictions will lessen as our wisdom increases proportionately. Whereas in the past, we were confused and disorganized, now we are intelligent and clear about everyone and everything. This indicates that we have increased deep concentration. In the past, we used to make mistakes, now we no longer do so. This is a sign of deep concentration and wisdom.

To be able to overcome our afflictions accumulated from incalculable lifetimes, to transform afflictions into wisdom, evil to good, delusion to awakening, and from being ordinary to a sage, we must use great efforts in our practice. Everyone can achieve this goal so long as we know how; it has nothing to do with our lifestyles or jobs.

Do not mistakenly think that your job makes it too difficult to cultivate or that another job lends itself more easily to cultivation. The key lies in whether we know the proper way to succeed. If we do not know the right method, then even if we were to become monks or nuns, chant the Buddha's name and meditate all day in the cultivation hall, we will still never be able to achieve the way in our practice.

The Three Learnings and Six Paramitas can be achieved all at one time in our daily lives, whether eating, dressing or doing anything else, all activities can completely encompass the Six Paramitas. This is the state of "one is all, all is one" that was taught in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*. Any cultivation method encompasses infinite cultivation methods and contains the complete Paramitas and infinite teachings within each. Thus, if one method works, all methods work. We need to listen to the Mahayana teachings more often so that we can break through our wandering discriminatory thoughts and attachments. This will reduce our misunderstandings and obstacles in our path of cultivation.

Today, although this lecture is only ninety minutes long, we can still benefit from it if we grasp the important points on how to cultivate, and make use of today's technology to keep listening to the lectures. We are much more fortunate than our ancestors were because we are able to listen to a lecture repeatedly until we thoroughly understand it. Listening to the lecture many times will enable us to truly understand the way to attain Buddhahood.

Boston Amita Buddhism Society new website: <http://www.amtb-ma.org/>

Group Buddha Recitation Every Saturday 9:30am

For details please call ABS (857)998-0169 or email to amtb.ma@gmail.com