

CULTIVATING THE BODHISATTVA WAY

(Based on the direct transcript from the recorded talks
of the Four Dharma classes on the topic walking the
Bodhisattva Way And the Taking of its Vows
as conducted by Brother Teoh Kian Koon)



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(Biodata of Bro. Teoh Kian Koon)

Bro. Teoh graduated from University of Malaya in Civil Engineering in 1979. He has been a ***spiritual practitioner cum 'Meditator'*** since 1971. Since his retirement in 2001 from his engineering career, he has been **sharing** his ***understanding*** and ***experiences*** with those who are *keen in their search* for ***true happiness, peace*** and ***liberation*** from ***birth and death*** and ***all mental suffering*** to become a ***more virtuous, noble*** and ***wiser human being***. He gives dharma talks and holds meditation classes & retreats and weekly Dharma classes at various meditation centers and places that invite him.

For more detail of Bro. Teoh's *dharma activities* and his *unique Kalyanamittaship grouping* please login to his website at: <http://broteoh.com> OR Google '*Bro. Teoh's Kalyanamittas – A Repository of Dharma Material*' to view them.

1. Preface

This book is compiled from the combination of **4 transcripts** arising from 4 different dharma talks delivered by Bro. Teoh Kian Koon on the topic '**walking of the Bodhisattva way and the taking of the vows**' over a period of about **2 years**. The 1st talk was delivered on the **2nd January 2015** followed by the 2nd talk on the **19th April 2016**, the 3rd talk on the **26th April 2016** and the 4th talk on **28th September 2016**.

It is Brother Teoh's **sincere** wish that all Dharma friends, spiritual practitioners, seekers of truth, and cultivators will be able **to make use** of these enclosed **Bodhisattva way dharma transcript notes** to develop a **clear and better understanding** of the **cultivation** of the **Bodhisattva way** and the Buddha **Dharma as taught** by the Buddha so that they may **progress along the path of dharma** to become more **virtuous, nobler and wiser** human beings to be a **blessing** to all of **humanity** and the world.

As these notes were mostly **compiled** based on **direct transcript** from the recorded talks (dated 2.1.2015, 19.4.2016, 26.4.2016 and 28.9.2016); the text are *aligned as closely as possible* to the **colloquial speeches** in those talks. **However**, some **editorial amendments** have been made to the **text** without **detracting** from the **essence** of the talks. With this, it is hoped that readers can **adjust** themselves accordingly to better understand its **true meaning** and **intent**. A **good** way to do this is **to listen** to the recordings **before** reading these transcript notes.

To listen to the **recordings (audio files)** you can log on to our <http://broteoh.com> **website** under **Repository** of Dharma material to view them or **alternatively download** the audio files via these below MP3 audio links:

- i) 'Bro. **Teoh's Special Tuesday class** recording dated **2.1.2015** on *Taking of the Bodhisattva Vows*: <http://broteoh.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Teoh-150102-Bodhisattva-way.mp3>;
- ii) 'Bro. **Teoh's Special Tuesday class** recording dated **19.4.2016** on *Cultivation of the Bodhisattva way*: <http://broteoh.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Teoh-160419-Bodhisattva-vow-Tues.mp3>;
- iii) 'Bro. **Teoh's Special Tuesday class** recording dated **26th April 2016** on *Taking of the Bodhisattva Vows*: <http://broteoh.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Teoh-160426-Bodhisattva-Vow.mp3> and

iv) 'Bro. **Teoh's Special Tuesday Class** recording dated **28/09/2016** on *Taking of the Bodhisattva Vows*: <http://broteoh.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Teoh-160928-Bodhisattva-vow.mp3>'.

Alternatively you can also **Google** '*Bro. Teoh's Kalyanamittas – A Repository of Dharma Material*' to view the soft copy.

2. Acknowledgement

It is the donors' **sincere intentions** that these *dharma transcript notes* be **given free** to those who are **interested** and have the **affinity** to receive them. I would like to take this opportunity **to thank** and **rejoice** in the **generosity** and **wholesomeness** of all those **Dharma friends** or **Kalyāṇamittas** who have donated and/or helped out in the **transcription, typing, typesetting, formatting, proof reading, etc.** to make this **free distribution** of *dharma dāna* possible.

Special thanks should be accorded to Sister **Chee Guit Yeng** (Puan Chee) and Sister **Gladys Loh** who had taken their **great initiative** to develop the **draft transcripts** for my **subsequent editing** thereby enabling this ***dharma book*** to be printed.

By the **power** of all these **wholesomeness**, may all beings be **well and happy, free** from all **mental** and **physical** sufferings and **dangers** and may there be **love, peace and joy** - deep **within** their hearts. And may it also **pave the way** for the existence of **causes and conditions** for all dharma friends who have **donated and/or helped out** in one way or another to realize their **good and noble wishes/aspirations** soonest possible.

With Mettā always,

Brother Teoh Kian Koon

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Dated: 31.7.2017

A. Introduction to the Bodhisattva Way (1st sharing)

(Based on a direct transcript from the recorded Dharma sharing by Bro. Teoh dated 2.1.2015)

A.1 Briefing

We are still early. We still have another 5 to 6 minutes before 8 o'clock. So, for those who have brought the fruits for *puja offering*, you can prepare them for offering and get ready for Puja at 8pm.

Tonight we will have a **very important** discussion on the whole of the **Bodhisattva way cultivation** and *practices* and I will also explain to you the **basis** and **understanding** behind all these so that you all can have the *right understanding*. A lot of people don't have the understanding because they think this is a very **difficult way** and they **dare not even** think about it. *But when you come to understand, you will be very surprised.* Actually it's *very easy* even though it *may take very long*.

You must have strong **faith, sincerity** and a lot of **perseverance**. Then you must have a lot of **love** and **compassion**. *With these, everything will just happen*, even though we talk about *eons and eons* of cultivation, but in terms of time, this is very normal because a lot of Samma Sambuddha took much longer especially **Amitabha Buddha**. It took him 12 world cycles to perfect all **virtues** and **wisdom** needed to complete the cultivation. Even though it was *done in such a way which seemed quite impossible to many people, yet he could accomplish it*.

If He could complete it, there is no other Samma Sambuddha who **could not** complete it because His vows were **extremely extensive** and **unusual**. Yet, He was *able to perfect* them until **Pure Land** can become *a reality*. That *was a great breakthrough*. That's why the Pure Land teaching is **very popular** and **very unique**. The main thing that people don't understand is the **uniqueness** of all these Great Beings nature.

So if you know how to **connect** and develop the **affinity** with all these *great beings' nature* then it can help you in many ways *especially your cultivation*. This is just a briefing for those who are early. Afterwards, when we start, we will go through the whole thing again. Then you can **participate** and ask whatever **questions** you have. Don't be shy because this is a **very rare** condition. When there is condition, if you don't ask then when this **form and mind** is no more, there is no more condition for you to ask. So while this **form and mind** is still around, *make full use of it*.

Chin How, come, we are about to start the puja already. So, yours is the last one. You can offer those garlands over the images. Okay now it's exactly 8 o'clock. We shall prepare for Puja. Maybe we give Bro. Swee Aun and Sis. Mee Fong the opportunity to light the candle and incense. Come, the both of you. You all haven't done Puja here before, right? Come, come. You light the candle while Bro. Swee Aun lights the incense. You light the red candle while Swee Aun lights the incense. These flowers from Sister Padmasuri and Bro. Tune are very nice! We should **rejoice** with all these **offerings** and we can start the puja now:

Buddhaṃ Pujemi, Dhammaṃ Pujemi, Saṅghaṃ Pujemi

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsaṃbuddhassa (Repeat 3X)

TISARAṆA

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Dutiyampi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dutiyampi Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Dutiyampi Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Tatīyampi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Tatīyampi Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Tatīyampi Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

PAÑCA SĪLA

Pānātipātā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

Adinnādānā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

Musāvādā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

Surā-meraya-majja-pamā-daṭṭhānā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

We will now chant the **Padīpa Puja**

Ghana sārappa dittena, Dīpena tama-dhansinā, Tiloka dīpaṃ sambuddhaṃ,

Pūjayāmi tamo-nudaṃ

Gandha sambhāra yuttana, Dhūpenāhaṃ sugandhinā, Pūjaye pūjanīyam taṃ

Puja bhājana muttamaṃ

*Vaṇṇa gandha guṇopetaṃ, Etaṃ kusuma santatiṃ, Pūjayāmi munindassa, Siri
pāda saroruhe*

Pūjemi Buddhaṃ kusumena nena, Puññena metena ca hotu mokkhaṃ,

Pupphaṃ milāyāti yathā idaṃ me, Kayo tathā yāti vināsa bhāvaṃ

*Adhivāsetu no bhante, Pāniyaṃ parikappitaṃ, Anukampaṃ upādāya,
Paṭigaṇhātu muttamaṃ*

Okay. We shall now turn to page 18 to make our **aspirations** base on our **understanding** of the **significance** of all these puja **offerings**.

Understanding the Significance of Offering of Lights, we shall chant:

May this offering of lights to the Buddha bring forth the causes and conditions to illuminate our minds and help arise the needed clarity and understanding to dispel all darkness of Ignorance therein.

Significance of Offering of Water

May this offering of pure, clear, cool water lead me/us to the pure, clear Dharma that cools and douses off the fires of all Defilements within our mind.

Significance of Offering of Incense

May our morality, virtues and understanding shine forth far and wide just like the fragrance of this incense which we are offering to the Blessed One, who is perfect in Wisdom and Virtues.

Significance of Offering of Fruits

May this offering of fruits remind us of the dana pāramī of generosity and the fruits of our Karma so that we will diligently strive on with Heedfulness to attain the Paths and Fruitions soonest possible.

Significance of Offering of Flowers

May this constant offering of flowers to the Blessed one strengthen our faith and constantly remind me of the impermanence of this body, so that we will diligently and sincerely strive on to cultivate Sīla, Samādhi and Paññā leading to Ultimate Liberation, the bond-free Nibbāna.

Now you will **invoke** the power of merits and make the **aspiration**.

By the power of all these merits borne of these offerings, may our spiritual faculties of Saddhā, Vīriya, Sati, Samādhi and Paññā be further strengthened until they become Bāla / powers.

Now we will do the **sharing** and **transfer of merits** to all beings.

May these merits be shared and transferred to all beings without exception especially to those who have the conditions and affinity to receive them.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

Okay. Thank you so much. For those who just came in, we've just completed the puja offering and the Puja chanting. Now we will commence the **invitation or invocation** to the **Devas**.

Invocation to the Devas.

In this Universe in their entirety, let the deities and the devas come here; Let them hear the good doctrine of the King of Sages, which gives Heaven and Release (Nibbāna). This is the time to listen to the doctrine. (3X)

Okay. Eng Bee. You can start the **invocation chanting** in pāli:

***Samantā cakkavālesu, Atrāgacchantu devatā, Saddhammaṃ munirājassa,
Suṇantu saggamokkhadaṃ;***

Dhammassavaṇakālo ayaṃ bhadantā (Repeat 3X)

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato; Samma sambuddhassa (Repeat 3X)

Iti pi so Bhagavā, Arahaṃ Samma sambuddho, Vijiā caraṇa sampanno

*Sugato, Lokavidū, Anuttaro purisa dammasārathī, Satthā devamanussānaṃ,
Buddho Bhagavā ti*

*Svakkhato Bhagavatā Dhammo Sandiṭṭhiko Akāliko Ehipassiko Opanayiko
Paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi ti.*

Supaṭipanno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho; Uju paṭipanno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho

*Ñaya paṭipanno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho; Sāmīci paṭipanno Bhagavato sāvaka
saṅgho*

*Yadidaṃ cattāri purisa yogini; Aṭṭha purisa puggala; Esa Bhagavato sāvaka
saṅgho*

*Āhuneyyo pāhuneyyo Dakkhiṇeyyo añjali karaṇiyo; Anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ
lokassā ti*

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

Thank you so much. We will now end the Puja by paying respects to the Triple Gem.

Buddhaṃ Pujemi; Dhammaṃ Pujemi; Saṅghaṃ Pujemi

A.2 Introduction to the causes and conditions for this Sharing

Just **relax** your **body** and **mind** and we will start our sharing. Tonight's session will be **very unique** and **special** as I had promised you all many months ago (even before the *Emei Shan spiritual trip*) to speak on this topic, '**Walking the Bodhisattva way**'. I knew then, there were **causes** and **conditions** for such a **teaching** to come to this world. And this **particular condition** was **very unique** because it actually came about when I was sharing the Buddha Dharma earlier on. Somehow this **particular topic kept on arising**. Then the funny thing is, all of a sudden, **many Kalyāṇamittas**, wrote to me to inquire about this topic.

They asked me about this type of cultivation. A few of them even told me before this, they **dared not even dream** of taking this Bodhisattva way. They were already **very contented** with the **Sainthood way**. But somehow things happened. **Deep inside**, they **felt** there was something they had to do. Then **because** of all these **conditions**, when I saw the emails and inquiries I replied to them all. Then later on, another **strong condition** arose, when I was at the **Tzu Chi, Jing Si book shop** at Tropicana Mall; I just picked up one book with the title **'Wu Liang Yi Jing'** (无量义经)

I didn't really **know** what this **'Wu Liang Yi Jing'** (无量义经) was all about. I only knew it was a Pure Land teaching. So I flipped over the book and I saw this Sutra. Then **when I read** the **Sutra**, I found it **strange** but **familiar**. It first **talked** about the **cultivation** of these *Great Beings*, the **Bodhisattvas**, and how they **cultivated** the **Bodhisattva way**. Then there was another section that talked about the **perfection** of **Pu Hsien Pusa**. It was all in the Sutra. Then when I read the one on the **Bodhisattva way** (which I wrote to you all later on), it was **so beautiful** because **everything that was written** there, I realized I had **already done them** all before. So when the conditions arose, I knew there were a lot of Kalyāṇamittas who have the **affinity** born of their *past cultivation*. They also felt something and their **nature** somehow *knew* this was something where **they had to seriously develop** the **understanding**. Then when I **started to share** some of the **Bodhisattva way cultivation**, I came to know that many cultivators and living beings (because of their *lack of knowledge and understanding* of this way) **dared not even dream** of walking this way because it appeared **like impossible** to them.

They had this thought that told them *'this is not for me, impossible'*. But this is a **fallacy**. This is what your **thought** will say. That's why *when you understand this teaching* and the **Great Vows, Perfections** and **Virtues** of **all these Great Beings**, (especially Fo Pusa which are the Great Bodhisattvas and Samma Sambuddha), you will come to know **how unique** and **special they are**. You only need to develop the very **strong faith**, the **sincerity** and the **diligence**, to **cultivate** the **affinity with them** and **connect to their nature**. Then their nature will take you along and **help you walk this way**.

The only thing you need is the **three qualities** that I always talk about, i.e. the **faith**, the **sincerity** and the **diligence** to **persevere**. You must have **very strong faith** in the Triple Gem, and then you have to be **very sincere**. The third one is **diligence** or **perseverance**. When you have these three, then with some **basic understanding** and **wisdom**, you **can connect to the way**. You can develop the **affinity** with all these **Great Beings**. Then *when the affinities are there*, this *Bodhisattva way* becomes very clear and easy. That's why you **need to cultivate affinity** with the **Triple Gem**. That's the reason why the Buddha asked you to **take refuge**. Taking Refuge is to cultivate the strong affinity. But many

Theravada practitioners fail to understand what taking refuge in the **Triple Gem** meant. The **Triple Gem** actually represents all of the **Buddha**, all of **Truth** which is the *teaching* and all of the *enlightened disciples* of all Buddha. That's the reason why The **Triple Gem** is **very unique** and **very beautiful**. These three qualities are not difficult *if you already have the understanding*.

So as you cultivate, as you move along the path of Dharma, the conditions will arise. And when you have **affinity** with these Great Beings and you have the **determination to cultivate this Bodhi mind**, the cultivation will become easy.

Do you remember our **Taiwan, spiritual trip** where we visited the **Zhong Tai Chan Si** (中台禪寺)? Do you know what was written on their leaflet? What was the **main reason** this **monastery** was built? It was told to us that *every year millions of people will come and visit this place*. Then what do they look forward to? Yes! The **Bodhi thought** to plant the seed of Bodhi to arise the **Bodhi mind** (菩提心) to go this way. Cultivators and visitors to their way place **only** have to develop the **faith** and condition to **arise** the **single thought of Bodhi** to **walk this way**. Then, the **world will never be lacking** in all the **Great Beings** because it all starts with that one **single thought of Bodhi**.

It is just this **single thought** of Bodhi to **realize enlightenment**. Then one must have the **faith, perseverance** and **compassion** to walk this way. I will **connect** all this *understanding to the Bodhisattva precepts* and its **vows**. The **Bodhisattva precepts** and the **vows** are very important. These *initial precepts* and the *vows can already take you along*. But later on as you walk this way, you **will know how to modify** all these **basic vows** to **suited** and you can also include all the **special vows** that your **nature has**. You will come to understand all these later on. That's why **every Bodhisattva** is **different**. Every **Samma Sambuddha** is different. But the **four basic vows** of the **Bodhisattva** are **basically always the same**. And they *complement* the three types of **Pure Precepts**, which the **Bodhisattva takes**. I will explain them to you later.

Now I will read to you some of the emails I received for you to **develop** the **faith** and the **understanding**. Then we can continue with this sharing. If you have any questions, you can ask. You are free to ask. Do **make use of these conditions to ask**, while this **form and mind** is still around. **Whatever you want to know** about **this way** and the **Buddha Dharma, you should ask**. Otherwise, when the **conditions cease**, whatever you want to ask, is already **too late**. It was the case with Venerable Ananda. When Sākyamuni mentioned that He would come to pass, in 3 months' time, Ananda was crying in **grief** because he was only a **Sotāpan** then. And he had so *much emotion* until he forgot to ask the Buddha all the important questions. Luckily, Anurudha, the other disciple of the

Buddha, advised Ananda to ask a few key questions before the passing away of Sākyamuni Buddha. Hence at the last minute, Venerable Ananda went to ask the Buddha those important questions.

He asked the Buddha, 'after you are gone who shall we follow?' The Buddha replied, 'follow the *Sutra* and the *Vinaya*'. This means all the discourses He has taught and all the precepts He has laid down. The main core precepts must be held onto. But He did say 'as for the **minor precepts**, one can do away with them, **depending** on the **conditions** and the **situation**'. After that, I think Venerable Ananda was also told to ask a few other questions even though what he wanted most was for the Buddha to stay back.

But the Buddha said '*no point*' because when the Buddha made the decision, He told Ananda, this physical body, the *Nirmanakaya* of the Buddha was already like a **worn-out bullock cart**, waiting to *collapse* any time. Sākyamuni Buddha's great *compassion and love* for the world and sentient beings **had deprived** Him of **enough rest**. That was the reason why He passed away earlier, at the age of *eighty* only whereas most of his disciples were able to live on until the age of 120.

As per my advice earlier, when there are conditions, do make full use of them. Okay, I will read to you one of these emails that I have compiled and sent out. I think there are two. I will read to you this one first:

A.3 Sutta of Innumerable Meanings (无量义经) - Chapter 1 on Virtues.

You have to listen to this – '**when you go this way**, when you take the **Bodhisattva precepts**, do start with the **planting** of the **first seed** of **Bodhi thought** or the **Bodhi mind** because finally, your **whole cultivation** will embody all these understanding'. This is mentioned in the Sutta of the Innumerable Meanings, Chapter 1 on Virtues. So, the whole of cultivation centre on **virtues**, nothing else. From **virtues, the whole teaching comes about**.

The Sutra says, '**True Bodhisattvas** are **wise beings** with **great compassion**'. That is the opening statement. Then the Sutra further describes '*Their minds are **tranquil, ever abiding in meditation, peaceful, free of desires and immune from any kind of delusion or wrong thoughts***. Theirs is a mind of *translucent purity*, with **vast, profound** vows. They **hold** these vows **unwaveringly** for **countless eons**. Having attained **great wisdom** they **penetrate all laws** and come to **understand all the innumerable teachings**. They bring **refreshing coolness** and help **cleanse away ignorance**. With **boundless**

compassion, they work **to relieve** suffering beings. **Bodhisattvas** are *living beings' true friends, mentors and guides*. They help and enable living beings to cultivate a great field of merits and blessings without being asked, they offer guidance to living beings. They are *living beings' place of security and happiness*. They uphold the Buddha's precepts of purity and never break them even at the cost of their life. They never become angry even when harmed, cursed or insulted. Their mind abides in Dharma day and night. They abide in their **vows of purifying** the world of all negativity and unwholesomeness of body, speech and mind.'

Then after that, I received a few more of these types of emails. One of them was from a very special kalyāṇamitta. It was definitely a lady because all these were mainly written by ladies. The title she uses was '**Arahanta and the Bodhisattva paths**'. She said, 'I have been resisting giving the issue about the Arahanta and Bodhisattva vows **any serious thought** since I'm still a *Puthujjana*, no wisdom as yet. I have *intended to wait until* I have some measure of wisdom i.e. after *attaining the path and fruition* before deciding on the **specific path** to take. However, there seems to be **some unease** each day; for the time being, I **only aspire** to work towards **Arahantship**. I have *no courage or wisdom* whatsoever to walk the *Bodhisattva path*. Then last Friday, the 10th October, 2014 when I read your email about the Bodhisattva way, I don't know why but I was **so touched** and **moved to tears** that my **tears flowed freely**. I am similarly moved to tears **each time I recite mindfully Pu Hsien Pusa's ten great vows** in Mandarin. After your explanation, I knew they are **tears of gratitude and joy**. **Then on Monday, I received a WhatsApp message reminder, from a very patient Mahayana friend** who has been asking me to 'Siu Pu Ti Xing' (修菩提心). It means **to cultivate** the **Bodhi mind**, to **walk the Bodhisattva way**. So these two reminders came back, meaning **to aspire for the Bodhisattva way** and to cultivate the **Bodhisattva path**.

Somehow this time, I **didn't resist** and I **knelt humbly** before the **Buddha rūpaṃ** and **expressed very sincerely** my **initial aspiration** or **vow** to **cultivate the Bodhisattva way** and **humbly** asked Guan Yin Bodhisattva, the great compassionate Bodhisattva, **to help and guide me along the way**. Then when I sat down to **meditate**, the **Heart Sutra kept playing non-stop** in my mind even when I was sleeping. This lasted for a few days. I really need all the **guidance and help** to *cultivate the Bodhisattva way*. Hope I have the **conditions to cultivate** the Pāramīs needed **to support me along the way**.

The second part is on **delusion** and **dream state**. When I **contemplated** on all the dreams that I had, I realized that when this egoic self was not the **main character** in the dream, I had **complete awareness** of the **dream**, from when it was about to start, right

to the end. When the dream ended, I could even become a critic of the dream, in the dream state itself.

However, when the egoic self or mind was the **main character** in the dream, such **detached awareness** of its arising *was lost* and I was *completely sucked right* into the dream and got 'myself' entangled in the emotions and feelings. This **delusion was extremely strong** and an example was the dream I had yesterday morning. I was climbing up a very tall ladder. When I was about three steps below the peak or summit, I felt *very dizzy* and was about to fall off the ladder. When I looked down, I couldn't see the ground. Then I sensed the **feeling of fear arising**. Then suddenly, a **very strong voice** said, 'you are not dizzy and you are not falling.' **Instantly**, all feelings of dizziness and fear of falling **vanished** without a trace. In the dream, I was **totally amazed** at the sudden and complete change. After that, I was able to climb up and down the ladder without any dizziness or fear of falling down. Brother Teoh, thank you so much for taking the time to read my ramblings. Your **patience** and **compassion** inspire and drive me on to cultivate sincerely. With **mettā** and *respect* always, signed.

So this was the email. We should **all rejoice** with the **wholesomeness** via saying Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

There are many of you, maybe at this point in time *you may not know your past* as yet, because you have **not really connected** and **developed** the ability **to recall your past cultivation**; not really in the sense of *recalling past lives*. Recall here means after you have *connected* then *all the understanding* will come back to you. It's not about reading past lives because this *spiritual nature* is different from the *karmic nature*. I had explained this during our last Thursday class sharing? The transcript is going to be ready soon. You should read that book 'who are you, what are you?' again. How the two natures, the **spiritual nature** and the **karmic nature interact** and how the **form and mind** come about. So who are you, what are you? It's all very clearly explained in that book. Like what I had explained, the moment you are born, karma will come into play because according to the Buddha, - 'you are born of your Karma, heir to it, conditioned and supported by it and you are what you are because of Karma'. And when the Buddha said, 'You are born of your Karma,' He's not referring to your true nature. He's referring to your **form and mind**, the **karmically conditioned form and mind** which are subject to karma. Then, there is **another nature** which is the **spiritual nature**. And this **spiritual nature** is *unlike* your **karmic nature**, just like what I had explained in the talk. It's all in the transcript book. It's very easy to understand and also very clearly explained in there.

Regarding this **spiritual nature**, not until you **connect with your true nature** you **cannot inherit** anything from it. When you **know how to meditate** and **how to silent your mind**, then you *can connect*. The **moment** the **silent mind touches** the **nature**, the **form and mind** will understand a lot of things. That form and mind **will progress** very fast. It will **understand what Sati is**; it will also **understand what that nature** is. Then once you go through '**cessation**', you would have passed by the **enlightenment stage(s)** of the sainthood way. But if you have cultivated these before, it will **move across very fast**, and you will reach back to your **past cultivation** pretty fast.

That's how you inherit. Then if you want to, you can understand many things *via the silent mind*. Once **connected**, you **inherit your nature's past perfections and cultivation**. You will understand the *Dharma very fast and very easily*. You may also come to realize that earlier on you may not understand many of these things, but all of a sudden, you can understand them now. And there are a lot of things you will come to understand; things which you may **not have learnt them this life yet you can understand**. You will also come to know *how they actually arise* and how they *pass away* and how *this is possible*.

Just like what happened to me **since the year 1986**. *Everything just happened* - the **teacher came**, the **book came** and the **guide came**. Then within three years **after I connect**, all these past **understanding came back to me**. Then when I read the Sutra or when I heard truth, I *could just understand* them even though some of these understanding were not written in any books before. There was *no doubt or fear, nothing*, because the **Dharma is Paccattam** - can be realized by the *wise each for themselves* and there is **no doubt** and *everything is very clear*. Because of that, you will also come to understand all these when the time comes. That's why I always said, 'you will never know who you are **until you connect**'. Do you remember Bro. Song? He is the only male Kalyāṇamitta connected thus far. He always talks to me but he never writes me any email. Initially he also had this thought because the **mundane mind could not understand**. He always said he was very '**cha**' (in mandarin) meaning **very slow** and **weak** in his cultivation. But, **the moment he connects**, he **moved so fast**. How is it possible? Things that he **never understood** before, *after he connect*, the moment he reads my *dharma notes, my transcripts, the Dependent Origination or Paṭicca Samuppāda teaching again*, he straight away **understand** despite the fact that **before he connect** he *had tried reading them six times*, yet he **could not** understand. But all of a sudden, *after he connects*, he read the notes again and he could understand. The reason being this teaching **comes from the silent mind** so if you **had not** realized the **silent mind's awakening** you **cannot understand**. Then many things just happened and

he is now **so clear** about the *great difference* between **thought-based meditation** and **awareness-based** meditation.

And he kept on having this joy of **understanding** for two or three months after he had connected. Then he kept **on sharing** with others and me, reporting things that a normal person could not understand. So these are the things that are possible and *your time will also come*. You only need to develop the **faith**, the *three things* I had written on the white board – **i.e. Saddhā** (faith), the **sincerity** and the **diligence** then just *cultivate* and **don't try to know**. *Forget about what the thoughts are telling you, like - 'this way is so difficult, impossible, not for me' etc.* No more such gullible thinking.

We are also very blessed or lucky because when we went to Fa Gu Shan the Monastery of Master Sheng Yen in Taiwan, I saw this book, the **Bodhisattva Path, direction to Buddhahood**. When I flipped through the pages, I saw that it was **very simple** and **very easy to understand** because this is written for people who are **keen to walk the path**. It is **very simple and very basic**. And this is where and how you start. Afterwards, I will read it to you. I hope I have the time. Almost an hour has gone.

Okay. I better finish off all these emails first before it is too late. Now I will read to you my reply to her. I wrote to her and I said – “Mahā Sadhu to you for your **strong faith** and **good past!** I really **rejoice** with your **wholesomeness**. The *Bodhisattva way* is **not difficult** *when you understand* and there is *a lot of joy* too. Just like what the Heart Sutra said, *'True emptiness is wonderful existence.'* Based on what you had shared below, you definitely have good past, condition and affinity to walk this way. So **do not allow the thought** to **deter** you. **Cultivate great affinity** with *Guan Yin* and other *Great Beings* and *Samma Sambuddhas* and make the **appropriate aspirations** and **vows to go this way**. Then everything *will just follow* and *fall into place*. Be **sincere, have faith and persevere** with **strong resolve**. Then all will be well because **their nature will help bless, protect and guide you**. Always remember, **you have to ask** for their **blessings, protection and guidance**. Do you know why you need these three – blessings, protection and guidance? You need to be blessed is easy to understand. Then why must you ask them to protect you? **Your true nature never dies, isn't it?** So why do you need protection? It is to protect this **form and mind** which is *very fragile*. Like I always said, this form and mind is **very fragile, vulnerable** and **very delicate**.

If the supporting conditions cease to be or disappear, then death can occur. This form and mind is just a **vehicle** and **tool** for you to come and develop the cultivation, etc. Every life if you come as a human being, you *may not have much time to cultivate*, to *develop the understanding* because you have to go through the three phases of Life; as

a kid, you don't know anything as yet. Then, you go to school, finish your studies and go out to work. Then with **your worldly duties** you will have no time for your **spiritual** cultivation. So, only those who *have their vows* and **their past perfection or cultivation**, their *karma* will *take them along* and they will know how to do this **cultivation early**.

Then you *have to connect*. After **connecting**, only then can you **continue** with your **cultivation**. So every life you come, you **actually do not** have **much time**. A lot of people don't even have that condition to come *into contact* with the *Buddha dharma*. So if you don't have their protection, **before** you even **connect**, chances are, the **form and mind** is **already gone**. Like this life, I myself can recall. Not less than **three incidents**, this form and mind of mine were supposed **to die** before it even get connected. So it was because of **this nature's affinity** with these *Great Beings, especially Guan Yin Bodhisattva's* nature that had protected this form and mind of mine from **dispersing**. And they don't have to be around because it can **manifest via their vows** and their **understanding** of the **nature's laws** that governs all of life and existence and it will also know **how to connect**. Then life after life, because this nature of mine made these vows, these *aspirations to seek their protection* via the power of merits, wholesomeness and understanding hence this become possible. When **you seek their blessings, protection and guidance**, their nature will *continuously guide you, protect you and bless you*. That's why you are **very well protected**, like *very lucky, very blessed and properly guided*. Then somehow, **everything** will **fall into place**. That's why you must know how to develop and look for **this affinity** and **connection**. I will continue with my reply to the lady's email - I said, 'I will explain further when I meet up with you in person. There are many others too who are **interested** in going this way. Maybe we can gather them together and we can have a separate **private session** on this topic. Bye and with mettā always.'

So that was the main condition that led to **this first private session**. I also promised you all that it would be held after our Emei Shan (峨眉山) *spiritual trip*. I was thinking this year-end break was the best. Initially, a few of the Kalyāṇamittas told me they could not make it. But, I think the turnout for the session *which is today*, is very good. *Most of us can make it* and we should *thank Sister Padmasuri for suggesting the date*. Shall we *rejoice? Sadhu! (3x)*

Then after that, she replied to me. The title was 'Request for **Guidance and Reporting**.' The lady Kalyāṇamitta said – 'Dear Bro Teoh, I was filled with joy reading your email reply. I'm **most thankful** for my **good karma** to have you **guiding me** on this **Bodhisattva way**. It is a **wonderful idea** to have a **private session** with others **who aspire** on the

same path. Sadhu! (3x)' and then she end her email via signing off as 'with heartfelt gratitude and respect.'

And I replied to her by saying – “Do listen to yesterday’s 12th October 2014 Wu Pin Chin Seah’s recording and sharing (<http://broteoh.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Teoh-WPCS-141012-16-Satipatthana.mp3>) because there *were conditions* for some of the *below understanding* to be shared. Please do listen to the later part of the talk and the many ‘*mysterious*’ things that happened on that day too. It was just like the earlier Klang talk on Emptiness. There were **some forces** initially that tried **to disrupt** the talk just like what happened at the earlier Klang talk. It was also because of **power failure** at Wu Pin Chin Seah, starting from 2.30 pm until about 3.30pm. Bye and with mettā always.”

The talk in Klang on Emptiness is the same too. It was interrupted. Initially, we had to start late because the **chanting** ended late. Then after that, the **microphone encountered** problems. But all these, when we allowed *conditions to accord and flow* and when **we didn’t react** to the problems, everything just fell back into place.

At Wu Pin Chin Seah, it was also the same. The power failure actually *started earlier*. Then I remember *Stephanie called me* – ‘Bro Teoh, shall we cancel the class?’ I asked her why? She said ‘power failure at Wu Pin Chin Seah, - without power, it’s dark, hot and stuffy’. Then she also said, ‘nobody turned up yet except Sister Mun Yuen’. Then I said, ‘Never mind. We will continue with the class because we have already promised people so we will have the class.’

From 2.30pm until 3.30pm, there was still no power. *We started meditation first* although normally, we would start with the Sutra first. Then as I was giving some instructions during the meditation, the power suddenly comes back and everything was back to normal. After that, *we had a very good sharing*. Somehow there were conditions on that day. After the power **resumed** and when I started the **sharing** after the **meditation**, *the moment I wanted to share the **Bodhisattva way** and the **cultivation***, all of a sudden, it *rains* and the rain was **very heavy** and it **really pours**. The **thunder** was also **very loud**. It was *pouring heavily outside*. Then all of a sudden, there was a **very loud ‘burst’ of thunder** and the power *tripped again*. That was **because** the **Higher Beings** were **rejoicing**. Again, the power was reconnected. I think Mimi was there with her husband. They came to join us late. So many things just happened. Nature is like that. There is **nothing psychic** about these types of things. It’s just **Nature’s way** because very likely the **Higher Beings** also want to know about these cultivation. So

there **were many conditions** for all these to arise. This can also help many of you to develop the **faith** so do listen to the *sharing on that day attentively*.

Then in between also, the Thursday and Tuesday classes, there were many occasions, when the conditions arose, and I shared. Then after that, I wrote back to the lady – ‘the below is for your **personal sharing** only. I wrote to most kalyāṇamittas, who **might be interested** and have the **conditions**. I said, ‘Do reply to me directly. Let me know if you are **interested to join us** for a **private session** to discuss the below topic. I intend to hold this **private session** to discuss this topic after the Emei Shan **spiritual** trip. I will forward a rather good reply from another Kalyāṇamitta for sharing by all later.’

The other email is this one – ‘As mentioned in my earlier email, this is another email for your **personal** sharing. Hope this can help **strengthen** your **faith** and **resolve** further. Bye and with mettā always.’

Another kalyāṇamitta also wrote – ‘Sukhi Hotu, Bro Teoh. I am **very thankful** for your *compassion* towards kalyāṇamittas in every way, especially your *Dharma sharing*. And although we may be **seen to be quiet** during Q & A, it **may appear** that we **do not understand**, but Bro Teoh, I speak for myself; each time, I attend any of your classes, you *seem to know what my doubts and questions are*. And I leave home with the **joy** and the following day, **filled with clarity** and as mentioned in your below sharing, the mind *abides in Dharma day and night*. The first thing when I wake up in the morning, Dharma is there. *Whenever my mind is free*, Dharma is also there. And even when I wake up at night to go to the toilet, the *Dharma or mantra or chanting*, comes to my **mind first**. It has become like a duty.’ Then I replied – ‘Dear sister, I *rejoice* with your *wholesomeness* and **good understanding**. Sadhu! And do keep up with the **good progress**. Bye and with mettā always.’

Then there is another email which is also very important. This one is also written by another sister. After I sent out this, I wrote to the kalyāṇamittas and I said – ‘*below is the drop box link sharing for all, it is a very good talk. Please do listen to it attentively to understand its deep meaning. This is the talk in Klang on Emptiness. It was spoken on the 3rd of October 2014, about three months back.*’

In her reply she wrote – ‘Dear Bro. Teoh - Sadhu! (3x) and thank you so much for the **rather inspiring** talk. Your talk has taken me a step closer to *understanding Emptiness* even though I must say my *understanding is still very thought-based*. I’m **slowly learning** to *appreciate* the idea of **condition-arising** in all phenomena. I see it **clearly** in my plants **as I enjoy gardening**. The challenge is applying it to *my daily life* and the *daily activities*. I

have to constantly remind myself and reflect on it of course. I have always wanted to understand *what Anattā is* and *what Emptiness is* though I often get confused. But I didn't give up. So far, I managed to listen to the recording of your talk twice and then to listen to it again. Please allow me to clarify. Would you say Buddha and Pusa or Bodhisattvas are also subject to change i.e. *condition-arising*? Some say our Sākyamuni Buddha exist in the Buddha land, please comment. I was also told an Arahant will cease to exist within a week due to the collapse of the five aggregates. I would like to hear your views on this please. Thank you in advance. May you be well and happy always'. This email was written to me by a lady from Singapore.

So, what do you think? The first question - Would you say the Buddha and Bodhisattvas are subject to change - condition-arising? What do you think? She didn't understand the question, right? She didn't know *what the Buddha or Bodhisattva is*. She only heard of the words and the names. So you *can never fathom* all these, **not until** you have cultivated the understanding. She does not really have much cultivation. Earlier on, she asked a lot of questions and I told her, 'forget about the questions. Focus on your cultivation, which is more important because all these questions are from the **thought**'. I will read to you my reply. Then maybe we can discuss it because it can help you.

I forgot to answer her last question. In my reply to her, I said – 'Dear sister, the Buddha and Bodhisattvas are *embodiment of their spiritual perfection* of wisdom and virtue, which has become their *spiritual nature*. The five aggregates of form and mind that they take to come into existence as Buddha and Bodhisattvas are not them. This is the *most important understanding*. Don't be *gullible*. Don't go and think that the form is the Buddha or Bodhisattva'. That's the reason why Sākyamuni Buddha said, 'He who sees me, **didn't see** the Buddha'. Only 'He, who sees the Dharma, sees the Buddha.' A lot of these things, people cannot understand. So I have to explain them.

Then I said to her, 'The five aggregates of form and mind or the **living being** that they take to come into existence, to come as Buddha and Bodhisattvas *are not them* but only the **karmically-conditioned segmented form and mind** life of theirs in that **particular life** and they are **impermanent** because each of these is just a karmically-conditioned form and mind entity. Only that physical form they take to arise is *subject to change or condition-arising*. But their **spiritual nature is different** because it's just the nature borne of their cultivation and perfection. It is not a being. The *form and mind* that **comes** and **cultivates can connect back to their nature to inherit all the understanding of their spiritual nature**. Only then can it transform the form and mind into a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. But their forms are *not their true nature*. Their form is only a *karmically-*

conditioned vehicle and tool for them to arise, used to perform the function of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva while in this world. Hope this helps.'

So, this first part, can you all understand? The true nature of the Buddha or Bodhisattva is the *embodiment* of their *cultivation and perfection*. And that one, **nobody can take away**. It is recorded in their *spiritual nature*. That's why **that nature** is **very different** and **very powerful**. It has **its virtues, perfection and wisdom**. That's why it's *capable of very unique and powerful things* because of their **vows**.

Pass the microphone to Sister Chwee (for the recording). Otherwise, it cannot be recorded. Even though we can hear you but it cannot be recorded. Thanks.

Sister Chwee: Sorry, Bro Teoh. Just to go back again. Their physical Forms are not their *true nature* and they are just karmically conditioned arising forms. Can you elaborate a little bit more on that? I can understand form is not their true nature but karmically-conditioned, seems to me, there is some kind of karmic inheritance somewhere that comes into being and how do they use that karmic-conditioning to walk that path?'

Bro Teoh: I think I understand your question. Thank you Sister Chwee. You see, I have already explained in many parts of my talks and that's the reason why you must **pay attention** now, so that you understand. Can you remember the Thursday class talk? I drew a sketch of Sister Joyce with the skirt, remember? Just like this life, my nature comes with this *form and mind* you called Bro. Teoh; but this form and mind which you call Bro. Teoh is not me, do you understand? This is **karmically conditioned** out through my karmic nature. Without karma, there's no form and mind. You *need a form and mind to come*. This *form and mind* is your **tool** and **vehicle**. A vehicle means a physical body like a car to take you around. It has the **sense bases** that allow you to give **rise to the sense door consciousness** and to allow **your consciousness to stay within**. The form and mind, through the appropriate conditions, can arise because it is **born** of your karma, **heir** to your karma, **conditioned and supported** by your karma and *you are what you are because of your karma*.

This form and mind is **subject to karma** hence **not your true nature**. You will **not know** how to **meditate** or **how to silent** your mind until you **can connect** to your *true nature*. The moment you **connect**, you **can inherit** all of *your cultivation*. But *not everybody* has that cultivation and perfection. Many need to cultivate and perfect it, just like the *karmic nature*. You need to *slowly nurture it*, step by step *perfect it*. Then this *karmic nature* is very important. Those **Great Beings, Bodhisattvas** and **great cultivators**, like the **Samma Sambuddha** have already known the teaching before they took the vows.

They have already understood. That's the reason why they *can become Arahants any time*. But because of their **love and compassion** for the living beings, they **vow life after life to liberate sentient beings** out of **genuine love and compassion** for them. They just do this work and this is their first basic vow. One must uphold the **three sets of pure Bodhisattva precepts** and the **four very important basic vows** to walk this way. The first one is - *you vow to take across the innumerable sentient beings, to liberate them, to free them from all suffering*. So this first basic vow, borne of love and compassion, is very important. This will *create the pure mind* for you to come back, do you understand? Otherwise, if you already have that wisdom and you had realized the Arahantship or beyond; when this form and mind ceases, do you know what will happen? You can realize Nibbāna leading to subsequent Parinibbāna then **you don't die** like *normal beings*. There is **no more rebirth consciousness**. The Arahants just cease.

But because of **your Bodhisattva vows**, you can still come back in another '*form and mind*' to liberate sentient beings. That's the reason why **that vow** has the power to condition the '*form and mind*' to come out. And that '*form and mind*' that comes is **not born of delusion, not born of a rebirth consciousness**. Because of your *compassion and love*, this **pure mind** can come out and **take rebirth** via the vow. Then the *vow will create a 'form and mind'*. That's why *this pure mind with the love and compassion* can become part of that karmically-conditioned form and mind. People *need rebirth consciousness* to come. The *death consciousness*, through *delusion conditions rebirth consciousness*. But the Bodhisattvas *don't have rebirth consciousness*. Only *their pure mind, their vows, their perfection* and their love and compassion can enable rebirth.

That's the reason why when I was very young; *my mind was empty even until the age of five*. I can still recall. There was *nothing inside* there (the brain) until I was transferred to the notorious town Alor Star. At the age of six only, this so-called **mundane mind** started *to interact and learn all the bad habits*. You will know when the time comes. *That mind is so pure, so different*. This karmically-conditioned form and mind is *just a tool and a vehicle* for you to come. But because of karma and you have this **perfection** and **understanding** of the teaching, every life you come, *you will finally know how to avoid all evil, do good and purify the mind*. You must cultivate the *vows and the 3 sets of Pure Precepts*. You must know the *three sets of pure precepts*.

To walk this path, you must start with these three sets of Pure Precepts. The first one is: *you have to undertake the training rule to avoid all evil*. The second one is: *cultivate all virtues*. What is the third one? You will surely think it's the advice of the Buddha, to purify the mind. No! If you do that, you will become an Arahant. You don't just purify your mind because by then, you would have known how to **develop the enlightenment**

already. Instead you have to take the 3rd set of pure precepts: *via undertake the training rules to penetrate all dharma and liberate the limitless living beings from all suffering.*

You do this, just like how you keep your precepts. I undertake the training rule to **penetrate** all dharma and **liberate** all living beings or sentient beings from all suffering. That's the reason why this pure precept can bring about the **special cultivation** leading to the **perfecting** of the **10 perfections**.

Do you think it is easy to avoid all evils? *Every time you come before you connect, before the mundane mind collapses, that **mundane mind still has delusion**. So you will have to cultivate this **constantly**. By **cultivating all virtues**, you are actually perfecting your ten perfections. That's why you have to cultivate until **your nature** is very powerful. And *these understanding* will allow you to have the conditions to walk this path. Then you can combine these understanding with the **four basic vows** and the **three sets of Pure Precepts to perfect your 10 perfections**. This is a very important understanding.*

Is there a difference between a vow and a precept? When one says, 'I undertake the training rule to liberate living beings' – this is a precept. This means every life you come with this form and mind, you can renew your precepts via undertaking those training rules. You continue to do it as long as you are willing to keep the precepts. Vow means you vow to continue to do this work until you become Samma Sambuddha. So there is a slight difference.

What are the **four basic vows of the Bodhisattvas**? I have already told you the first one. Then after that, you have to develop the other three. I will share them with you later. But this first one is very important.

Pass the mic to **Sister Chwee** – 'Bro Teoh, I seem to have a **little bit of misunderstanding** because **I don't seem to see** the Buddha as **telling his disciples** at that time to do all these. Most of them, from the little I know, went on and became Arahants. Is it purely a **Mahayana approach** to do this thing?'

Bro Teoh: Okay. Thank you for your question. You see, this is the question that come from **knowledge**, your **thought** (from what you **have been taught**, what you **have read**, your **conditioned memories**, **views** and **opinions**, etc) do you understand? That's the reason why *when you cultivate and develop further understanding, you will know how to **filter all these** because this comes from the **thought**. The **thought doesn't have the understanding**. That's why you say, 'from the little that I have read', which means the Sutta of the Theravada teaching that tells you. But in the Theravada teaching it was mentioned that *Sākyamuni Buddha became a Samma Sambuddha after he had**

perfected the 10 perfections. But how He did it was **never** mentioned or taught to the disciples. That's why it was mentioned; almost all the disciples developed their cultivation up to either the first stage of Sainthood, second stage of Sainthood, third stage of Sainthood or Arahantship level only. Then you should ask yourself, *if a Samma Sambuddha's close disciples also cannot walk the path of Bodhisattva, then who else can walk?*

There were so many walking the Bodhisattva way at that time but people don't talk about it because at that time, this Theravada teaching was **more important** and **more relevant**. Like what the Buddha said via his 'handful of leaves' analogy because it was to cater for the Sāsana at that time. You need this new *breed of cultivators* who **understands the teaching** to develop *the initial sainthood enlightenment first*. Then only they can have the condition to walk this way. This way is **unique not only to the Mahayana tradition**. The Mahayana was able to come out with all these teachings were because they have all these *Bodhisattvas and Buddha who have walked this way before*. That's how all those teaching came about to **complement** what Sākyamuni Buddha has shared. Sākyamuni's job is to develop **the 4500 to 5000 years of Sāsana first**, so that it can produce these sainthood way beings.

If you look at the Mahayana teaching, they talk about the *Hua Yen San Shen* (华严三圣) and the *Xi Fang San Shen* (西方三圣). The *Xi Fang San Shen* consists of *three Great Beings of the Western Paradise* which are Amitabha Buddha (阿彌陀佛), Da Shi Zhi Pusa (大勢至菩薩) and Guan Shi Yin Pusa (觀世音菩薩) whereas the *Hua Yen San Shen* has Sākyamuni Buddha as the Buddha in the centre. He is supported by two more great beings, if I am not wrong, it's supposed to be Guan Shi Yin and Pu Hsien Pusa (普賢菩薩) or Mañjusrī Bodhisattva (文殊菩薩) and Pu Hsien Pusa (普賢菩薩). But the funny thing is Guan Yin's nature also came. That's why Amitabha Buddha, Guan Yin and Maitreya their natures are also **very strong during this era** and all these have their conditions of arising. So coming back to your question, try to understand that the cultivation comes from **investigation, understanding** what this path is all about. If you *don't develop the faith* and start to **have doubts** and create through the **thoughts** this type of question, it is **not going to help you**.

It's going to make you **less committed without you realizing it**. When you have **faith**, it doesn't mean you believe. When you have **faith**, you will have an **open mind**. Then you find out with a clean slate. You **investigate**, then you see whether it stand up to investigation or not? That's why these people who wrote to me they have the **faith**.

They just **do the cultivation** and when they **connect** they will come to know what these things are all about. Many of them have those understanding already.

Pass the mic to **Sister Chwee** – ‘Very sorry about this. But I was thinking that the Arahant way is already on that way except this one adds a different dimension to the Arahant way. But I only speak for myself. We can’t even get there yet because that path is not easy. And you have to reach a certain level before you can actually take the training rule to liberate all beings’.

Bro. Teoh: So what is your question?

Sister Chwee: My question is; you *have to reach a certain stage* before you *get on to make this vow* and practicing these *three types* of Pure Precepts. Is that right? I just think that I’m so far behind. Where do we go from here? Or, is it a futile thing? We don’t have that past cultivation, we cannot do it, just get on doing the best you can.’

Bro. Teoh: Now I will answer your question. Please *do listen again carefully*. Just now, when I started, what did I say? A lot of people are like you and they also said: ‘I am so far behind’. I have said before you will never know what your past is **until** you determine to do it. *When you connect*, you may get the **shock of your life**. *You won’t know who you are until you try*. You look at Bro. Song and many others. That’s why don’t allow *the thought* to **condition** you to **have such view**. When the *conditions have arisen* and the **heart wants to do**, you *better go and do* because the **heart will know, not the thought**, do you understand? All these, like what I had said, when there is condition, you will know what to do.

I will read to you another part. This will give you a **very important** understanding because this explains the **Great Blessings** of having this **Bodhi Mind** to walk this path. Just give me a minute. Okay. Please listen to this. Who has this book? Turn to page 32. *‘It is said that by receiving the Bodhisattva precepts, one generates a vast amount of merits. This can be understood as follows – ‘When you take the precepts, means this Bodhisattva precept, a seed is planted deep in your consciousness and because this seed has been planted for the benefit of all sentient beings, the natural consequence of its maturation as you nurture it by keeping the precepts is a growth in your compassion and a weakening in your propensity to do harm. With sustained cultivation, there naturally arises in you a tendency towards wholesomeness and perfection of virtues. As you increasingly go through life acting on the basis of compassion, you will come to experience a great sense of security and stability. Why is this possible? Because quite simply, you are no longer living life in an obsessive, self-concerned and a self-centered*

way, always **worrying** about your own **well-being** and **feelings**, *constantly felt threatened* and *insecure* because of your **Sakkāyadiṭṭhi or self-delusion**. But when you take **these precepts**, you *vow to liberate all beings*. That's how you become **selfless**, you can **sacrifice** and you *can do everything to benefit others* and **be a blessing** to all. As your life is *dedicated to others*, you *become less and less concerned* with your **personal benefits**, *gain or loss*, consequently you *no longer live in fear and cease to be agitated or plagued by vexations which are all caused by self-attachment*. You achieve **stability of mind**. These *stability and security* that you *so experience* then *creates an internal field of security* and **stability** around **the people** that are *palpable to other sentient beings* and they will **feel safe around you** because you are of **genuine compassion**, **never intend to harm them** but *only try to be of help*. They also can *feel a sort of joy* while in your presence. Thus in an *immediate and very concrete way*, you, after **receiving the Bodhisattva precepts** are **benefiting** sentient beings, a deed that **generates a vast amount of merits** and it is in this way that we **undertake the practice** of the **third set of Pure Precepts to deliver sentient beings**.'

Do you remember the third set of Pure Precepts to deliver all sentient beings? 'The **observance** of these **precepts** *actualizes our good intention* as put forth in the **four great vows** and *set us decisively on the Bodhisattva way*.' Now I will read to you the **three Pure Precepts** and the **four great vows**. Please listen attentively.

'The **three sets of Pure Precepts**, the *precepts that have been discussed* are common to both **Theravada** and **Mahayana** on which **emphasis** is placed on the **Bodhisattva's** *striving for the benefits of all sentient beings*. The *essential purpose* of the **transmission of the Bodhisattva precepts** is **to arouse** in people's minds an **altruistic spirit of service to others** and a **firm dedication to the pursuit of enlightenment**. Such spirit is called the **Bodhi-mind**. Bodhi is a Sanskrit word derived from the same root as Buddha, and it can be translated to mean **awakening, enlightenment or wisdom**. The *foundation of all Bodhi-mind* is embodied in the **four great vows we take**: *to deliver innumerable sentient beings, to cut off endless vexations, to master limitless approaches to the Dharma, and to attain supreme Buddhahood*.' The *first vow* is *to deliver the innumerable sentient beings*. The *second vow* is *to cut off endless vexations*. This means **to endure** and to actually **persevere** through all suffering, through whatever difficulties that you encounter while undertaking the three Pure Precepts. You have to **vow life after life to come back** with the **understanding** to do this work. You have to endure them all and that's the reason why in the Sabbāsava Sutra, it is mentioned that *there are things you have to endure*, and the **Bodhisattva endures even more** for you **only endure** the very simple things such as the *body getting sick* and all these **minor suffering**. But for this

*Bodhisattva way, you have to even endure all the **abuses**, all the **great difficulties** that come with all the very different types of civilizations and beings you encounter while fulfilling this vows because you manifest under different civilizations with different types of conditions. There are many things you **need to endure and sacrifice** and you have to do it **life after life, eon after eon**. So this second vow to cut off, endure and see through the endless vexations is **very important**. It's not easy but it's also not difficult **when** you have the understanding. When you have the *wisdom, patient, diligent, faith* and *sincerity* you will be able to do it. Then what is the third basic vow? It is to master the *limitless approaches to Dharma*. This means you have to *cultivate all **understanding***. That's why the Wu Liang Yi Jing (无量义经) said, 'You have to penetrate all laws, all of the Dharma, (not only the handful of leaves for enlightenment to become Arahant). This third vow is to *master the limitless approaches to Dharma*. It means all of the penetrative Dharma, and interpenetrating Dharma, you need to cultivate them all; so it is *more or less unending* because this is all on understanding of all the various truths. Then the *last one* is the vow on how to **attain Supreme Buddhahood**, to perfect the ten perfections.*

Of these four **Great Vows**, which is the first one? – *To deliver and liberate all sentient beings*. Then *to cut off all vexations, endure and persevere through whatever suffering and misery* and you have to endure them all. Then you *cultivate all understanding* and **vow to perfect the 10 perfections** to become a **Samma Sambuddha**. These four **Great vows** of the Bodhisattva *will carry you through*.

What you need to do is - **every life** when you come with the form and mind, cultivate the **three sets of Pure Precepts continuously** to avoid all evil and then cultivate virtues. Avoiding all evil is to be done **before** you connect. **After you have connected**, you can then **cultivate** all virtues, do you understand? Then your work towards liberating living beings becomes very easy. So, it's **not** difficult. Every life when the form and mind comes, you **only need** to cultivate these *three sets of Pure Precepts*. Then these *four basic vows* or *four Great Vows* of the Bodhisattva are also very easy. You *vow to liberate all beings, you vow to endure and see through all vexations, and then you vow to cultivate all Dharma, the understanding, so that you can walk this way with **clarity, understanding, love** and **compassion***. Then the last one, *you vow to actually become the Samma Sambuddha, to perfect the ten perfections*. To help us **actualize** these *four basic vows*, we need to **vow** to observe **further certain principles** and **guidelines** that may help us conduct ourselves in an **ethical** and **humane** manner and *purify our minds of the three poisons* or *three evil roots* of **greed, hatred and delusion**. For this purpose, we transmit what are known as the **three sets of Pure Precepts** which contain the

essential principles of all the different systems of *principles of Bodhisattva precepts codified* over the course of Mahayana Buddhism's long, rich history. Functionally, *these three sets of Pure Precepts* lead a practitioner to (1) *renounce evil deeds* by keeping the precepts (means avoiding all evil), (2) *accumulate all merits by performing beneficial deeds and cultivate all virtues* (3) *work for the salvation of all sentient beings*. The **vows** to keep these precepts **embody** the **spirit** of all *Mahayana Buddhist practices*: to stop all evil, to do good, and to *deliver all sentient beings*. In a very real sense these vows can be seen as the **ultimate expression** of **the aspirations** of **all Buddhists** in all eras.

So if this **Bodhi mind** cannot be planted **deep** in your *consciousness*, chances are life after life, when you come, you will be **heedless**, you will suffer, you will have **no chance** of *liberating your mind*. Now that you have the **conditions**, do determine **sincerely and strongly**, with the **faith** and the **diligence** to plant this **Bodhi mind**, to take these *Bodhisattva precepts*, to walk the way. **Forget** about whether you can do it or not, because that's what the thought is trying to tell you not knowing that the **blessings** that come with this **determination** are so *powerful*.

Do you know how *Sākyamuni Buddha* became a Samma Sambuddha? Just because of *one major shipwreck*, he realized *he could only save his mother* and not the many that drowned. It was mentioned in the Chronicles, how he became a Samma Sambuddha after that incident. It was during that time *he vowed* and **determined to liberate living beings, to save all sentient beings** because he realized that in that life, He could only save his mother even though he knew he could become an Arahant. That's the reason why that **resolve**, give rise to the condition for him **to plant that seed of Bodhi**. And from there onwards, he determined to *fulfil his vows to become a Samma Sambuddha*. **So you have to determine strongly to plant that seed of Bodhi too especially so while you are still in the present Sāsana**. That's the reason why I told you, the window is there. If you **miss this window** and *when you come to realize what this is all about in future*, you are going to **regret deeply** for this is the **best window**. To come across such *condition again*, i.e. having the blessed conditions to be *born as a human being* during this *Sāsana* and to have the *condition to cultivate the Buddha Dharma* with this type of **clarity and understanding**, yet you still don't make **this vow** and **this determination**, you are *going to regret it*. This is very important and I'm not trying to **encourage you or convince you**. No, because it's your life. You decide, do you understand? **My duty is to share this understanding** because there are **conditions** and **affinity** for this **nature** to do so.

You may say everything is Anattā but the **Law of Karma do recognizes relationship**. Every life you come, if I am you, *this nature will vow never to come with a form and*

mind that is **deluded** again. No point coming **here to suffer** and to be **afflicted** right? What for? If every life, you are still like that, doing all these **heedless things**, creating and experiencing all the *karmic negativity*, playing, fooling and joking around, *taking life so lightly, not knowing how to seize upon condition to move and to determine to make the vows, then what is the point of coming again?* All these are very important understanding.

So jokes aside, your life, you'd **better decide** *how you want to move and cultivate?* This is for all of you. Don't **under estimate** your potential. You **will never know until you connect**. *Maybe you have planted the Bodhi seed in the past. But because you are never serious this life, that's why there is no condition for you to connect.* But when you have the **faith, sincerity** and **perseverance**, you will see the **transformation** and you will come to understand that a **very naïve, sincere and simple cultivator can connect** and become some **very great and special being** within a very short time.

Does that answer your question? And do you have any more questions? No? It's ok because at this point in time, **you will ask those types of questions**. *It's very good because it can bring about conditions for this nature of mine to share with you all what this nature understands.* Then *the rest is up to you.* Whether you agree or don't agree, has **nothing to do with this nature**. If you **have to come because of karma** then too bad and you don't have the ability to choose to come with such understanding.

Sister Chwee: But Bro Teoh, we all do the best of our ability to *practice* love and compassion.

Bro Teoh: That is the **thought** telling you.

Sister Chwee: No it's not the thought. It's when you see you do. Like when I went this time to Kashmir, they had a huge flood since March last year. They are without homes, they are living in tents, the weather is *minus 8 or 9 degrees C* at night, and when you see how these small children go through life and *you just quietly give whatever you can to support them.* We never knew things were like that.

Bro Teoh: Are you *trying to explain* that what you did there is **love** and **compassion**?

Sister Chwee: No, it's not a question of pity. It's for each individual and the path is different. We walk it differently; we see things differently because of our *karmic past.*'

Bro Teoh: If you don't mind, me intervening. I can tell you **very clearly**, it's still from *the thought*, do you understand? *Forget about the thought.* Otherwise, it **will hinder** you. This type of thinking is a **deviation**. *It's very dangerous.* Like what was stated in the

Sabbāsava Sutra, *‘Things that are **unfit** for attention, you go and **give it attention**. Do you realize, by asking those questions, you are holding on to those **wrong** thoughts and views, you are *creating more thoughts, more problems*. That is what the Sabbāsava sutta is all about. When you attend to things that are **unfit** for attention, the *un arisen Āsava* (like doubt and fear) arise and the *arisen Āsava* becomes more. Then through the **back door**, the thought will tell you, *‘everyone is different.’* It sounds *very logical isn’t it?* But what did I advise you, all these while? *Don’t try to know right?* Just do. Put to test, *investigate and find out*. You *didn’t even* want to find out. From your *views and opinions*, you kept on *expressing* all these things. That is why I say, *it’s from your **thought***, now do you understand? We are not here to **argue** over right and wrong which are **relative truths** that will **not solve** our problem so please Sister I hope you understand. This is **what this nature understands** and would **like to share** and of course you are **entitled to your views and opinion** of things, you can **hold onto your views**, the way you want to for *we respect you for what you are*. This is still the egoic mind. Just *make use of whatever that is **beneficial** to move on*.*

End of the day, it is - *‘Hey no you and hey no me for it’s only the form and mind*. So, don’t *waste* the chance. Just like what I had mentioned earlier, *if you continue* to do this *every life* and **wasted** the **chance to learn** through this type of *thoughts and ideas*, you are going to *miss out on this window*, do you understand? The **key to learning** is just to **have faith, cultivate, investigate and find out** for your own self. Then *make your own choice and decision, not what people tell you, not what your thoughts tell you. Investigate and find out*. When you have **faith**, when you had determined **sincerely**, you **will connect**. *Give it a try and see what happens*. If you *don’t want* to **even give it a try** and **keep holding** onto the **thoughts** to say all these things, then you will **never change**. You will **continue to be what you are** and that is the reason why I want you all to slowly **develop the understanding** yourself. It’s not about right and wrong anymore and I do hope you understand.

Sister Chwee: Thank you Bro Teoh. But I’ve listened to what you said. I asked this question to understand myself, *nothing more than that* and I think from here on, there will be *no more* questions because I will then *reflect and think* for myself and **not bring up any concerns of mine** because it doesn’t help here.

Bro. Teoh: Okay. Fair enough. Thank you Sister Chwee. We will continue. Just now, I haven’t finished regards the email. I was just explaining to the Singapore lady, this *‘form and mind’* is just a **karmically conditioned vehicle and tool**, for the Buddha and Bodhisattvas to come to this conditioned world to **perform their function as a living beings**. So that’s the reason why that *‘form and mind’* is subject to *nature’s law*,

condition arising, causal phenomena, whereas the **true nature is different**. The *Buddha nature* or the *eternal nature* is **completely different** because it is the **unconditioned**. Then her second question was, 'Some say Sākyamuni Buddha exists in Buddha Land, please comment.' So this one is very clear, isn't it? There is no Buddha Land for Sākyamuni because He's not like Amitabha Buddha, do you understand?

She asks in the next email. I will skip that question. The third question is, 'She was told an Arahant will cease to exist within a week due to the collapse of the 5 aggregates' if he didn't renounce. You heard of this before? I think it's in the Theravada teaching. It is said, if you become an Arahant or Anāgāmi, and if you **don't renounce** to become a monk, you **will die within a week**. It's in the Theravada teaching. I heard many people tell me this. So I told them, 'If an Arahant is **so fragile**, then why do you want to become an Arahant?' What do you mean by *renounce*? The Arahant has **no more** delusion or ignorance, right? You mean he must *quickly ordain* and put on a robe? There is no such thing, do you understand? The Arahant will understand because the Arahant is not a permanent unchanging entity. It's the '*form and mind*' that realizes the wisdom and that '*form and mind*' becomes an Arahant. But the Arahant will know that one is **not him**. That's why at Ajahn Chah's monastery at *Wat Pah Pong*, there is a sign that says, '*Don't try to be an Arahant*.' The moment you try, there is *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* because that one, the form and mind is not you, and do you understand? An Arahant is already a being that has developed wisdom hence can't be deluded by the form and mind anymore for it has **understood clearly the 3 universal characteristics of all phenomena**. That's why *that mind is not deluded* anymore. It will *not grasp or hold and upon death* it will *cease* and pass on to realize Nibbāna. It will not condition (through ignorance or delusion) a **rebirth consciousness** because there is no more **ignorance**. So the question asked is from a person who doesn't understand right? You can quote the text. But it doesn't mean it is the truth.

I like the way Master Hsuan Hua answered. Somebody once asked him about Arahantship. The person asked whether it was true or not that an Arahant is **not reborn** anymore but according to Mahayana teaching an Arahant can still go the Bodhisattva way. Master Hsuan Hua then asked the person, 'Are you an Arahant? If you are **not an Arahant**, forget about this question, you are wasting your time.' So when you don't understand the question, you ask *from the thought*, it will be of no benefit, hope you understand? Let us move on.

Then the lady wrote back to me. This email is very interesting. She said, 'Thank you very much Bro Teoh for kindly explaining it to me. It is *very abstract for a thinking mind*.' So she can understand already because the first time she wrote to me, she asked all types

of funny questions. At first I refused to answer her and instead advise her as follows: I said it is better for her to focus on the cultivation. 'Please,' I said. 'All these are *from the thoughts.*' At first, she couldn't understand. She still wanted to ask and the second email came. Then I replied in such a way that *she started to understand*. Then she said, 'Okay. I will have **faith** in what you have shared with me and I will develop the **requisite 5 spiritual faculties** to cultivate *accordingly* then *hopefully*, I will develop *understanding.*'

I *even told her* the moment she understands, *all these questions* would be **self-answered**. The questions would **cease** to be. She was *very happy* that I answered her questions that way. She **showed signs** that she has *started cultivating* and *developing the faith*. What she wrote later was so different from what she had written a year ago.

Then now, she writes this, 'Please allow me to clarify (in a very good disguised way). Besides Buddha and Bodhisattvas, does it apply to anyone else? I equate anyone else to form and mind as mentioned in your second paragraph.' (She had started to understand already.) One can be **earnestly cultivating** for many lives and get *connected* to the **spiritual nature** and *continue to become enlightened* - take for example an Arahant. (You see, the question was phrased very well.) Then, her second question was, 'Going beyond form and mind, after Gautama or Sākyamuni's Parinibbāna, can I say that He is the spiritual nature which is unconditioned?' (There is still a 'He', the spiritual nature which is unconditioned.) 'Will He ever exist in form and mind again?' (That is a very good question, right?) 'I would be most appreciative if you could kindly enlighten me. Then I can move on and continue cultivating with some peace of mind. This question has gone long unanswered and in some ways bothering me.'

Since she is *very sincere* I replied to her. I said, 'At this point of time, don't try to know and ask too many questions because the *more important focus is to cultivate*. Then when you realize or awaken, only then *can you slowly start to develop the understanding of all these*. Regarding your first question, yes, it also applies to anyone *who has earnestly cultivated* over many lifetimes especially those who have already developed some form of stable wisdom before like all those Great Beings (the Bodhisattvas).

Regarding your second question, try not to get involved because it is a very **controversial topic**. According to **most interpretations** of the text based on what the Buddha had said after his enlightenment, the Buddha's first words after his enlightenment was (it's also in our chanting book), '*Seeking but not finding the house builder, I travelled through the rounds of countless births. Oh, how painful is birth over*

*and over again. House builder, you have now been seen. You shall **not build** the house again. Your rafters have been shattered and your ridgepole demolished. My mind has now attained the unformed, the unconditioned, Nibbāna and reached the end of all craving.'*

Many will conclude that it is his last birth *based on their present understanding*. But the **actual understanding** is *very different*, rather *complex* and *demand*s a lot of wisdom to understand. The *Buddha's nature - eternally exists* because it is part of the Triple Gem and its vows have become a part of nature's law. And for *those who know how to connect* and **develop affinity** with it, they will know how **to benefit** from it. That's why Sākyamuni asked you to **take refuge** and **develop affinity** with the Triple Gems. Hope this helps.

But, she is very smart because after that, she wrote another email and she said, 'Thank you very much again, Bro. Teoh. Apologies, I didn't know Question 2 was a *controversial* one. I would infer that the Buddha was referring to not being born, **unenlightened again**. Hence no condition arising *form and mind* via *craving* borne of **delusion** anymore.' She is now wiser because she now understand that the *unconditioned aspect* is **not** eliminated. Hence manifestation in form and mind, **independent** of the *builder* can *still occur*; it means *without craving* and *without delusion*, the *form and mind* can still come. She said, 'I think only, maybe an *unreliable thinking mode* here.' I told her yes, this is correct.

Then she said, 'The Buddha's first words after enlightenment were this, 'seeking but not finding the house builder, I travelled through the countless births.' She repeated Dhammapada Verses 153 and 154. Then she said, 'Yes! I shall *now focus* on my *cultivation from now on and fully understand* when I have the *wisdom* to do so. May I have the *condition* to **seriously** cultivate the five spiritual faculties and clearly see the *house builder* to fully understand the **ultimate truth**.'

In that sense she is very smart because she request for this: 'Please give me *your blessings* Bro. Teoh and Thank you.' Then I replied to her. I said, 'Dear sister, I rejoice with your **new understanding** and **resolve** to *focus on your cultivation* as from now. And surely *my nature will give you the blessings*. What you need to be **successful** are just these three things – **Faith, Sincerity and Diligence or Perseverance**, the same three advices. Bye and with mettā always.'

Then there was another Kalyāṇamitta Sister Ellen who wrote to me earlier, on 19th October 2014. She said, 'Today's **triple celebration** marking a significant *milestone*

relating to you and the Kalyāṇamittas, *is most inspiring.*' (Note: 19th October - was our annual Kalyāṇamittas gathering.) After that, she continued and wrote this, 'When I struck the **grand jackpot** of meeting a **Dharma teacher** like you, I was pleasantly surprised that it came with **a great bonus too**, the **ready-made sincere and rather caring group of Kalyāṇamittas**, all obtained **without any effort** on my part. Thank you **from the bottom** of my **heart**. *Ayu vanno sukhaṃ balaṃ!* And may all your **good and noble wishes** come true. I know you do not have much time to read the attached Sutra before your trip to Anandagiri on the 23rd of October 2014. And after that, you all will be off to Emei Shan spiritual trip on the 2nd of November 2014. There is no urgency and please do take your time. My questions are in the blue box at the end of the attached file, **Sankharaupapatti Sutta, reappearance by aspirations.**'

I haven't shared this Sutta with you all before. It is a very good Sutta that talks about *vows and aspirations*. It is called the **Sankharaupapatti Sutra**. You can vow and make **aspirations to be reborn in any realm** you want to be. The Buddha actually taught the monks how this can be done. I will start this Sutra in the year 2015, next Tuesday onwards. Remind me to share this sutta with you.

Then I replied to her. I said, 'Dear sister, I rejoice with your *sincere gratitude and joy* below. Regarding the Sankharaupapatti Sutta, it's a very good Sutta. And the Buddha did teach the monks at that time as to *how they can make use of their faith, their virtues, their merits, their cultivation and wisdom*, to make **aspirations for whatever birth** that they might want to take or **tend towards liberation of mind** and to **realize Nibbāna** upon the **dissolution of these five aggregates of form and mind**. Just like what I have been teaching you all these while. You can **invoke the power of merits** and the power of wholesomeness borne of your *faith, virtues, merits or your cultivation and wisdom or your understanding*, and then you *make aspirations for causes and conditions* for rebirth in *any realm* you want to and even to become enlightened. It can bring about the aspired results. Your question is quite similar to the lady from Singapore who asked earlier which I had forwarded to you for sharing too. Do read the email again to develop a clearer understanding of the topic.'

Regarding your question about *Bodhisattvas aspiring for Buddhahood* and how they can reappear through vows, aspirations or karma - the answer is Yes they *can reappear* via their respective *five aggregates of form and mind* through their *vows and aspirations* made *after understanding* the **nature's law** that governs **life and existence** especially the *Law of Karma*. A *Bodhisattva aspiring for Buddhahood* can reappear through their **vows and aspirations**, but **not** through **normal karma** via *rebirth consciousness* born of *ignorant* because karma is related to **ignorant** and the *karmic nature*; and as Arahants

they have *no more ignorant* hence *no more rebirth consciousness* to condition their rebirth. But when they are the Bodhisattvas, it means they must have already made those **four Basic vows** of the Bodhisattva *just before* they realize the Arahantship. Then those vows **can arise** the causes and conditions for them to come back with a **pure mind** via 'Love and compassion' borne of the *1st basic vow*, hence no need for a **karmic rebirth**.

Every life they come, they *will connect* unless their form and mind dissolves too early. Even if that is the case it will still know how to cease. Because I can still remember how at the age of 7 or 8, *my consciousness came out* and **before** the consciousness came out, I was aware *how it went through that cessation*. At that time I still didn't know how to meditate. I didn't even know what the Dharma was but **my nature knew** *how to cease* that mind. I could feel the *craving force* binding the consciousness to the body **dissipating** first before the **remnant of consciousness** comes out although nobody taught me about Sati or mindfulness but strangely I knew exactly what was happening inside. The **awareness** was *naturally there* and there was absolutely **no fear**.

Normally, if the mundane mind is there, it's totally like lost because before you as a normal living beings die, you *actually lose your awareness*, then *karma takes over*. That's why they don't know what is happening. Sometimes, they say 'lau huan siong' - in the Hokkien dialect. That is they simply say things and like they are not themselves anymore. They are no longer in their *usual awareness or conscious state* for Karma has taken over. For most of these beings, if they are **heedless**, if they have **delusion** before *death*, then their *karmic subconscious* mind will take over. Then karma will decide what happen next.

So this first question she asked, I've already answered. Then the second question she asked was, '*Can a Buddha after Parinibbāna reappear anywhere via another Nirmanakaya?*' The answer is yes and no, *depending* on the Buddha's nature, the *understanding* and *decision or choice*. The Nirmanakaya is the karmically-conditioned form and mind for that segment of their life or what you call the **functional body** that *performs the function of whatever being that they choose to come with*.

After Parinibbāna, that form and mind of the Buddha will not undergo rebirth immediately unlike a normal Puthujana or being because there is *no more ignorance* or *delusion to condition the next rebirth* consciousness. So the **choice** is upon *their nature*. So it doesn't mean they have to come immediately. That's why in the Mahayana teaching, there is one saying, '**Liǎo liǎo jiàn xìn cháng zhù** (了了见性常住).'

How many of you can understand this mandarin saying? 'jiàn xìn' is to realize your *true nature* and

'Liǎo liǎo jiàn xìn' means you *clearly realize* that *true nature*. 'cháng zhù' means you *can stay there very long*. You can take a rest. Your nature can take a rest. You don't have to come back so early. 'Liǎo liǎo jiàn xìn' (了了见性) means with *clarity you connect and realize the true mind, the true nature*. Then the *silence mind can go into cessation*. Then *when that happens, that form and mind will understand*. When it comes out of it, the form and mind is **no longer** deluded. That is **what Nibbāna** is all about. It will go into cessation. These will complete all the emails sharing.

Do you have any more questions? Okay Exactly 10.15pm. So we are on the dot. Anybody has any other questions? Can you all understand? Sadhu! Because there are a few heads nodding yes. Don't worry, as long as you have these three things (the **faith, sincerity and diligence, no more doubts**), just *cultivate* then make your *own choice* because the **benefits** that come with all these *understanding is immeasurable*. You only need to **plant that seed of Bodhi deep in your consciousness** to walk this way via **very strong determination** with **understanding** now then you are home. Then develop the faith or saddhā, and vīriya to *sincerely cultivate and persevere*. Then if you do it with a very **strong resolve** and **vow** sincerely (like taking an oath) then the **Bodhi seed will definitely take root** and **nurture beautifully** for you to accomplish your vows. In Hokkien it is call 'loh guan'. Anybody else wants to ask any questions? Or, clarify anything? If you don't have any more questions, maybe we can end. Before that, I just want to check with Sister Padmasuri about the *Sankharaupapatti Sutra*. Did I send it to you? If not it means I haven't edited it yet. I almost forgot about this email. Okay, I will go through it again, and maybe tomorrow after I edit, I'll forward it to you and copy it to the lady who sent it to me. Then we'll print it out for sharing. Yes, there are a lot of things to do because the *other transcripts* coming out are also very good. You all should thank sister Padmasuri for she has transcribed the coming book, '*Who you are, what you are?*' and that is a *very good book*. It talks about the **two natures**; *karmic nature and spiritual nature* and **explain clearly** what this *form and mind* is all about. And also, we had this Taiwan trip's pre-trip briefing which is also very good. It *will teach you how to prepare yourself for such spiritual trips* and they are very good. All of you should rejoice.

I have just finished the **final editing** then we can go through the **final check**. After that, we can get it printed. The book should be ready before the end of this month. The other transcript book that we need your help is to do up the **Heart Sutra transcript short notes** covering our **15 months of rather beautiful Heart Sutra classes sharing**. We have **finished compiling** the transcripts of all the **dharma sharing** held and we are now *doing the formatting and final proof reading*. That book is **extremely good**. Once it comes out, it will **revolutionize** the **understanding of the Dharma**. That book is **so beautiful**. While I

was doing the *proof reading*, I was **so surprised** that I spoke *so much* and **in such detail** covering **almost all my main teaching** and they are all there in transcript form. You will *be surprised*, since the day *it started*, it *has never* changed. It still has the *same essence*. Now if you read it again, you will be **amazed**. All these were there, *repeated and repeated and repeated*. But you all **didn't see it** because at that time, you all **could not grasp or catch it**. Now, with your **improved understanding**, when you read this dharma notes again, it will be **like a jewel** and *this is what I want you all to do*.

Before I forget, for the cover page, we must look for a beautiful Guan Yin image for this Heart Sutra book. The title of the book is '**Heart Sutra cum meditation short notes**.' We're going to give it to you all **free** because the *cost will be borne by our Kalyāṇamitta funds*. Our **Kalyāṇamitta funds** still have quite a bit of money. According to Stephanie, her Tuesday class Kalyāṇamitta fund still has more than RM7000.

That means Kalyāṇamittas have been donating and **we should rejoice** because with this we can do *a lot more, leading to more good and wholesome things*. This book is *very useful*. I think it will cost us *RM10 a copy* (with the binding) and this one will be like your '*Buddhist Bible*'. When you go for meditation retreat(s), you do not need any other notes. Just *bring this one book, it is enough*. When you go back, do spend some time *reading it*. Then you *will start to see* what this *teaching is all about* and how it has been *repeated* so often. But the good thing is, every time it is **repeated**; it gives you **more understanding** and *its approach is always from another angle*. Even *until today, nothing* has changed. The **essential Dharma** taught are still the same: i.e. *the 5 mental hindrances, 5 mental faculties, the three evil roots, the four Noble Truths and its three turnings, the four foundations of mindfulness and the Noble 8fold Path*. Even though all these are still the same but the *understanding is so different* and **so beautiful** now. And now, when she listens to all those talks, while doing the transcripts, there is *so much joy* and she like don't need sleep and she can just complete it. That's why the **faith** can make *a big difference* in your cultivation. If you don't have it, the **spiritual faculties cannot** help you. The first spiritual faculty is *Saddhā*, and then *Vīriya*, then *Sati* will come. That's why you just do via *keeping up* with the three things – **faith, sincerity** and **diligence or perseverance**. We better do the **closing puja** and the *sharing of merits, etc now*:

Ākāsaṭṭhā ca bhumaṭṭhā Deva nāga mahiddhikā Puññaṃ taṃ anumoditvā Ciraṃ rakkhantu loka sāsanaṃ

May all beings inhabiting space and earth, Devas and Nagas of mighty power, share this merit and may they long protect the Dispensation.

Ettāvatā ca amhehi, Sambhataṃ puñña sampadaṃ, Sabbe Bhuta anumodantu, Sabba sampatti siddhiya

May all beings share this merit, which we have thus acquired, And may all spirits rejoice, May it contribute greatly to their well-being and happiness.

Idaṃ me ñātināṃ hotu Sukhitā hontu ñātayo (Repeat 3X)

Let this merit accrue to my departed relatives and may they be well and happy. (Repeat 3X)

Devo vassatu kālena, Sassa sampatti hetu ca, Phīto bhavatu loko ca, Raja bhavatu dhammiko

May the rain fall in due season and May there be good harvest and good fortune all round the world,

May the world be prosperous and peaceful, May the government, kings and rulers always be righteous.

Iminā puñña kammaena, Māme bāla samāgamo, Sataṃ samāgamo hotu, Yāva Nibbāna pattiya

By the grace of this merit that we have acquired, may we never follow the foolish; but only the wise, up to the time we attain final liberation (Nibbāna). Sadhu (3X) !

Pay *respects mindfully* to Lord Buddha, Guan Yin Bodhisattva, Pu Hsien Pusa and all the Great Beings and worthy ones. **End.**

B. Walking the Bodhisattva way and the taking of the Vows (2nd sharing)

(Based on a direct transcript from the recorded Dharma talk of Bro. Teoh dated 19.4.2016)

B.1 Introduction / Briefing during pre-class

We are six minutes early. While waiting for the rest, we can **prepare** ourselves for puja. Today there will be **no** Dharma sharing of the **Diamond Sutra class**. Next Tuesday also, there will be no Diamond Sutra class sharing because we have **reserved** these *two Tuesday classes* for our special **sharing** on ‘**understanding** the **cultivation** of the **Bodhisattva way** and the **taking** of their **vows**’. There will be a **special Puja** for the **taking** of the **Bodhisattva vows** next Tuesday. Those who **have already developed** the **understanding** and want to **take** the **vows** and **aspirations**, you **can do it** on that day. You don’t have to worry about *what people say*, like after you have taken the vows, you **cannot** become **an Arahant** and this way is going to *take very long*, etc, - forget about all those gullible things. It’s not what people think.

The truth of the matter is this **Bodhisattva way** *technically* can only be taken by **enlightened** beings. But even **before** you become enlightened, when you **have** the **causes** and **conditions** and the **understanding**, you should **start to develop** the understanding to take it because by doing so, you have **nothing** to lose **but everything** to gain. I will explain all these to you all later because this **way** is **very unique**.

By going this way, you can cultivate **without** the mark of a **self walking** the Bodhisattva way; of **cultivating** and **wanting** to be enlightened, because you **come** for the living beings. You are here to take the four **basic vows** to **save** the **limitless living beings**, to **endure** and **sever** all suffering or vexations, to **cultivate** and **perfect** all Dharma so that you can **penetrate** all Dharma to understand them all. Then when you have **cultivated** the **perfection** of the **first three** basic vows, you would have **developed** a lot of wisdom, a lot of **understanding** of the **nature’s law** that governs life and existence. Then only can you **clearly** understand the **Law of Karma** and all those other **essential dharma**. Then only can you **teach**, **share** and **liberate** living beings because **without** this understanding, you are very **limited** in what *you can do or accomplish*.

Maybe you may think – ‘I **only need** to cultivate to the extent needed **to free** myself, gain **self-enlightenment** then that is enough’. Not to say this attitude is good or bad, because if you have a **thought** that tells you, ‘*I don’t want to go this way because it’s*

too long,' then the **self is there**. The **atta** is there. There is this '**self**' that **wants** to be enlightened this life immediately. When you look at it, it is actually **counter-productive**, hope you understand. You are actually **contradicting** yourself because you think **there** is a **being** who **cultivates**, who can become enlightened. This is **self-delusion**! So all these **will limit** you and you will be **wasting** your time **despite** having struggled so hard.

But during the Buddha's time, it's different because the nature's energy then is different. All the **Great Beings** at that time - they are all with **good roots** due to their **past** cultivation. Hence when they come, they can understand **very fast** and most of them at that time are **already Bodhisattvas**. But, this was **not mentioned** in the *Theravada Sutta*. That's the reason why a lot of these things, you *cannot* understand *until later*. So this is **just a brief** and short **introduction** and **summary** before we start the actual sharing of this topic.

B.2 Puja

We are still early. Maybe, we can get 6 of you to light the candles first. Today, we shall give the honour to all those who **have helped out** in the *recording of all these Kalyāṇamitta sharing* to light the candles. I will get Sis. Padmasuri, Bro. Tune, Swee Aun, Sis. Mee Fong, Hui Rong and Stephanie to come forward and help light the candles and prepare for Puja. The rest of you can **stand** and **gather** to start our **Puja offering**. The offerings in the tray consisting **clear water**, **incense** and the **candles light** are **most meaningful**. Now we shall offer the rest of the puja items. Sadhu! (3x) meaning **Rejoicing**. - End of puja offering.

B.3 Puja Chanting

Ok good. You all can be seated. Sister Eng Bee, you can put the cake back into the fridge. Otherwise, it will melt. Maintain some form of **attention then compose** your mind and **relax both** body and mind. Then develop the **faith** (*saddhā*) and **vīriya**, and we will start the Puja chanting now:

Namo Ben Shi Shi Jia Mo Ni Fo (3x); Namō Kuan si yin Pusa (3x); Namō Ami To Fo (3x)

Namo Mi Le Fo (3x); Namō Pu Hsien Pusa (3x); Namō Fo Pusa (3x)

Arahaṃ sammā-sambuddho bhagavā, Buddhaṃ Bhagavantaṃ abdhivādemī.
Svakkhato bhagavatā dhammo, Dhammaṃ namassāmi.
Supatipanno bhagavato savakasangho, saṅghaṃ namāmi.

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-Sambuddhassa (3x)

Buddhaṃ Saranaṃ Gacchāmi. Dhammaṃ Saranaṃ Gacchāmi. Saṅghaṃ Saranaṃ
Gacchāmi.

Dutiyaṃpi Buddhaṃ Saranaṃ Gacchāmi. Dutiyaṃpi Dhammaṃ Saranaṃ Gacchāmi.

Dutiyaṃpi Saṅghaṃ Saranaṃ Gacchāmi.

Tatiyaṃpi Buddhaṃ Saranaṃ Gacchāmi. Tatiyaṃpi Dhammaṃ Saranaṃ Gacchāmi.

Tatiyaṃpi Saṅghaṃ Saranaṃ Gacchāmi.

Pānātipātā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi.

Adinnādānā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi.

Kāmesu Micchācārā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi.

Musāvādā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi.

Surā Meraya Majja Pamā daṭṭhānā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi

Ghana sārappa dittena Dīpena tama-dhansinā Tiloka dīpaṃ sambuddhaṃ

Pūjayāmi tamo-nudaṃ Gandha sambhāra yuttena Dhūpenāhaṃ sugandhinā Pūjaye
pūjanīyam tam Puja bhājana muttamaṃ

Vanna gandha guṇopetaṃ Etaṃ kusuma santatiṃ Pūjayāmi munindassa Siri pāda
saroruhe

Pujemi Buddhaṃ kusumena nena Puññaena metena ca hotu mokkhaṃ Pupphaṃ
milāyāti yathā idaṃ me Kayo tathā yāti vināsa bhāvaṃ

Adhivāsetu no bhante Pāniyaṃ parikkappaṃ Anukampaṃ upādāya Paṭigaṇhātu
muttamaṃ.

**Making of Puja aspiration basing on our understanding of the significance of all these
puja offerings**

1. Significance of Offering of Light

May this offering of light to the Buddha bring forth the causes and conditions to **illuminate** our minds and help arise the needed **clarity** and **understanding** to dispel all darkness of **Ignorance** therein;

2. Significance of Offering of Water

May this offering of pure, clear, cool water lead us to the **pure, clear** Dharma that **cools** and **douses off** the **fires** of all Defilements within our minds;

3. Significance of Offering of Incense

May our **morality, virtues** and **understanding** shine forth far and wide just like the fragrance of this incense which we are offering to the Blessed One, who is Perfect in **Wisdom** and **Virtues**;

4. Significance of Offering of Fruits

May this **offering of fruits** remind us of the dana pāramī of **generosity** and the **fruits** of our Karma so that we will **diligently** strive on with **Heedfulness** to attain the Paths and Fruitions soonest possible;

5. Significance of Offering of Flowers

May this constant offering of flowers to the Blessed one strengthen our faith and constantly remind us of the impermanence of this body, so that we will diligently and sincerely strive on to cultivate Sīla, Samādhi and Paññā leading to **Ultimate Liberation, the bond-free Nibbāna**;

6. Making of overall Aspiration

By the power of all these merits borne of these offerings, may our **spiritual faculties** of Saddhā, Vīriya, Sati, Samādhi and Panna be further strengthened until they become **Balas/Powers**.

7. Sharing and Transference Of Merits

May these merits be shared and transferred to all beings without exception especially to those who have the **conditions** and **affinity** to receive them.

Sadhu! (3x)

We shall now pay respects to The Triple Gem:

Buddhaṃ Pujemi, Dhammaṃ Pujemi, Saṅghaṃ Pujemi

You can be seated. A very good evening to all, brothers and sisters in the Dharma; tonight, before we start the sharing of the **Bodhisattva way**, let us invite all the **Devas** and **Deities** to come and **partake** in this particular **special sharing**. Now we will chant the *invocation to the Devas*.

I will read to you the English translation. For those who are new, do listen *attentively* via your **silent mind**, with the **faith** and you may **rejoice**.

B.4 Invocation to the Devas and Deities

In this Universe in their entirety let the deities/devas come here; let them hear the good doctrine of the King of Sages, which gives Heaven and Release (Nibbāna). This is the time to listen to the doctrine (3X)

For those who are new, we are at page 6 of the chanting book. Pass the microphone to *Sister Eng Bee* for her to recite the Pāḷi version:

Samantā cakkavālesu

Atrāgacchantu devatā

Saddhammaṃ munirājassa

Suṇantu saggamokkhadaṃ

Dhammassavaṇakālo ayaṃ bhadantā (Repeat 3X)

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma sambuddhassa (Repeat 3X)

Iti pi so Bhagavā Arahaṃ Samma sambuddho

Vijjā caraṇa sampanno, Sugato, Lokavidū

Anuttaro purisa dammasārathī, Satthā devamanussānaṃ

Buddho Bhagavā ti

Svakkhato Bhagavatā Dhammo

Sandiṭṭhiko, Akāliko, Ehipassiko, Opanayiko, Paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi ti

Supaṭipanno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho, Uju paṭipanno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho

Ñaya paṭipanno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho, Sāmīci paṭipanno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho

Yadidaṃ cattāri purisa yugāni, Aṭṭha purisa puggala. Esa Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho,

Āhuneyyo, pāhuneyyo, Dakkhiṇeyyo, añjali karaṇiyo. Anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassā ti.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

We will pay respect to The Triple Gem:

Buddhaṃ Pujemi, Dhammaṃ Pujemi, Saṅghaṃ Pujemi

B.5 Meditation

Thank you. You can be seated. We will switch off the light and we can have about **twenty minutes** of **Silent meditation**. Then I will **ring the bell**. After that, you can **slowly** and **mindfully** come out of the meditation. Then we can start our today's **sharing** of this topic '***understanding the cultivation of Bodhisattva way and the taking of its vows***'. I will switch off the other lights. For those *who already know how to meditate*, please proceed with the meditation. For those who **still need to develop** the **training** of the mind because your **spiritual faculties** are still **not developed**, then *you train yourself accordingly*. If you still need to use the **mind-sweeping** method to **decondition** your **heedless thinking**, then *please go ahead* and combine it with **loving-kindness** or **mettā** to bring about the **tranquillity** and **stillness** of mind leading to **inner peace** followed by the inner **well-being**.

The **mind** that has **inner peace** and **inner well-being** is very **conducive** for meditation. That's the reason why precepts are the **source** of **spiritual joy** and if you **keep your precepts** and **develop your virtues**, it's also the source of **true peacefulness** of mind. That's how you can meditate. That's also the reason why all meditation starts with **Sīla**. The last **benefit** of precepts or virtues is it is the source of **true spiritual wealth**. Through that, you develop a mind that is **conducive** for receiving **spiritual teaching**.

That's the reason why it's the source of **spiritual wealth**. These *are important* understanding. After you **have trained** your mind to be **peaceful, quiet, silent** and **aware within**, you then have to **stabilize** it. The **stabilization** of it *needs proper understanding*. If your **spiritual faculties** are still **not** developed, **not** so stable, then you need to **train** this *heedless* mind. That's the reason why all the **techniques, methods** and **objects of meditation** are introduced or come into play. They are just a **skilful means** to **train** the mind.

You need to **anchor** the mind to *stabilize the awareness*, the Sati. Hence all these objects of meditation are for you to **train** your mind, to **stabilize the Sati**; to anchor your mind, **not** to focus, **not** to concentrate and **not** to develop all those energy fields. It is just to **maintain mindfulness**. That's the reason why Ānāpānasati is about **mindfulness** of the *in and out breath*. The Buddha never at any one time said *you focus* at the *tip of the nostril* or *focus on the feeling*. He just said, '*Breathing in, aware and breathing out, aware*. Then breathing in a short breath, you must also be aware. Breathing in long breath, you must also be aware.' You need to maintain and stabilize the **awareness** of the in and out breath. Then breathing in, experiencing the **inner peace** of the entire breath body and the physical body followed by breathing out, *experiencing Pīti*. **Continue** until the awareness becomes *very stable* and *very clear*. That is the **stability** of *mindfulness* that can allow you to train your mind to **meditate** accordingly.

When you have stabilized all these, you just *relax into it, into every mind state that arises*, so that the Pīti will become even *more refined*. Pīti is a type of **spiritual joy** or **spiritual calmness** or **spiritual rapture** that will arise when you **have trained** your mind to be in **Sati without** thought. Then as you *relax into it*, it will become **more refined**, and then you will experience **Sukha**. Sukha is **blissfulness** of mind, a mind that is much *more refined* than Pīti. Then, you will experience this **blissfulness** of mind which is very blissful, very calm, and very quiet. Then later on, if you *continue to relax* into it, even this *Sukha* will transform and become *Passaddhi*. **Passaddhi** is the **tranquillity** of mind, **stillness** of mind, the **silent mind**, the **meditative** mind. This is the mind **you aim at developing** as you train. For those who already know how to meditate and the awareness or Sati or the *silent mind* is already there, you just have to **relax into it** and **silent everything**. Then this **Passaddhi** or **meditative** mind, which is just **aware** and **silent**, will **stabilize**. After that, you can stay there. Whatever *object of meditation you have*, you just stay there. Then it will become **very subtle** and **still**, until there is **no more movement** and **no more mind** to meditate. Then that **Passaddhi** (**tranquillity** and **stillness** of mind) or the **silent mind** which is also the **meditative mind** will **stabilize** and become **very still** and **very quiet**. That is the **meditative** mind in **sati**. From then on, you just **silent everything**

then the **spacious awareness without** a *centre* can **allow you** to be **mindful** of whatever that **arise within** your **sense bases** or your **six sense bases**. Upon contact, what happens you will know because your **awareness** will pick it up. Then it can be very **sensitive**. Then you just stay at the **heart** area which is the '**seat**' of consciousness.

This **awareness or silent mind** is the **common entity** or denominator that must be there *whenever consciousness arises*. So you stay with the **awareness** and **maintain silence**. Then wherever the consciousness arises, it will be aware. This is what Tuccho Pothila (Venerable Empty scripture) was taught by the novice monk. The **six sense bases** have a *common denominator* which is the **mind** that can **be aware**. You just stay with the **awareness**, stay with the **silent mind**, then *you will understand* how you **function** as a human being, how your mind **arises** and **passes** away following the **Law of Dependent Origination (12 links)** and the essential Dharma etc. You will see them all.

You will also understand, **upon contact**, what **happens**, *not only feeling arises*, many other things also arise. Then you can also see how you *function as a human being*, how your *form and mind* continuously give rise to *consciousness* and how the *content of consciousness* goes in via your **views and opinions** and **your conditioning**. Then from there, how you **stir** your mind due to your **wrong view**; how you **react** to sense experiences and how the *mental hindrances of likes and dislikes, pleasant and unpleasant feelings* (which the Buddha called sensual desires and ill-will respectively) arise. You will **also witness** how the **three evil roots**, the **essential Dharma**, the **five spiritual faculties** and the **five mental hindrances** **arise** and how they **pass away**, how *they condition you into negativity*. Then you will also **experience** later on, as you progress, the **7 Factors of Enlightenment**; the **6 internal sense bases**, the **6 external sense bases**, followed by the **18 sense realms**. You will come to understand all these which will cumulate into **mindfulness** of the **4 Noble Truths**. That's how you can finally **transcend** the form and mind *to realize the enlightenment via awakening to the characteristics of nature, which are impermanence, suffering state and non-self*. So you just relax and silent your mind to develop all these understanding. Okay. I will let you meditate then I will ring the bell in about ten minute's time.

B.6 Cultivating / Walking the Bodhisattva Way

Ting! x3. Okay. You can *now slowly and mindfully* come out of the meditation. For those who still want to continue to meditation, they can go on. For those who had enough, *slowly and mindfully*, come out of the meditation. Always remember, you are here *to*

train the mind so that it has the stable *quality of Sati* or *mindfulness* within you. This **trained** mind is the **meditative** mind that you need **to use** to cultivate the **daily mindfulness**; to be **ever mindful** to cultivate the **Noble 8 Fold Path** (which is the *meditation as taught by the Buddha*). Then you will become **heedful** and *the heedful never die*. If you can do that in *the midst of life*, it means you are *destined for enlightenment*. With this understanding, hopefully, you will *understand why you meditate* and the *purpose of meditation*. When *this is clear*, your cultivation becomes easy. Today's talk/sharing on **understanding** how the **Bodhisattva way** can be **cultivated** is *very important* because this is the cultivation that can **help** you **greatly** while *walking the path of Dharma*. You not only will have the condition to become **enlightened** but you can also **develop** great **wisdom** so that you can be **a blessing to all**, so that you **can teach, share** and **take beings across** or **liberate** them. Without this understanding, it's very difficult to **penetrate** the Dharma especially the three marks, or **3 universal characteristics** of *impermanence, suffering state* and *non-self*.

When you have the wisdom and the Right Understanding you will not be **deluded** by the phenomenal world, then you will *not cling*, you *will not hold* onto this **five aggregates** of *form and mind*. That's the reason why the **Diamond Sutra** said, 'The Bodhisattva will cultivate the **Bodhisattva way** with the **understanding** that there is **no mark** of a *person* or a *self cultivating*; there is **no mark** of living beings, and there is **no mark** of Dharma.' Then everything will be clear. Besides these, this cultivation of the **Bodhisattva vows** and the **Bodhisattva way** following the *Diamond Sutra teaching* will **pave** the way for a lot of **important understanding** to arise. *Without this understanding, it's really difficult* to understand the *true Buddha Dharma*. We are going to base our today's sharing on this book, '*The Bodhisattva Precepts leading to Buddhahood*' by Master Sheng Yen.

Master Sheng Yen is the late **Abbot of Fa Gu Shan**. He's from Taiwan. He's a very good monk. He's an expert in meditation. His forte in the Buddhist tradition is **meditation**; whereas Tzu Chi, their forte is the cultivation of **great compassion in life** - meaning in times of suffering, calamities, major disasters, they are there to relieve suffering. So they **manifest compassion in action**. That's how they train many of their **followers** to become **Bodhisattvas** and they call them the *Bodhisattvas among the living beings (Ren Chen Pusa)*, within society. For 'Fo Guang Shan', their specialty or forte is very different. They are very strong in **Buddhist studies** and **Buddhist education**. That's the reason why they can have very *beautiful temples* and *very good teachers* who can teach you. All these are the **different Buddhist traditions** with *each doing their own special work to help mankind*.

When you combine these three Buddhist traditions and practices, **they become very complete and very good**. First, if you would like **to learn the teaching**, the Buddhist Education, you can go to **Fo Guang Shan**. After that, you will have to develop the *meditation* right? To do that, you can go to **Fa Gu Shan**. Later on, when you *already have the Dharma*, you can develop **compassion in action** via taking the **Bodhisattva vows** to liberate living beings. Then **Tzu Chi** is the place where you can **help out** a lot and have a lot of **opportunities** to do these activities. But then, if you are a **true cultivator** of the way, you will have to develop all these **three** practices within your own cultivation.

As a *true cultivator*, **technically** you don't have to go anywhere because you know your vows. You know how to *cultivate/create* **affinity** with all the *Great Beings*, the *Bodhisattvas* and *the Buddha*. You will come to understand all these and you will also know how to make the **appropriate aspirations** via **invoking** the power of **your merits, virtues** and **cultivation** for causes and conditions for this true Dharma **understanding** to be with you, **life after life** whenever you *have to come or whenever you choose to come*.

All these are possible because if you look at the vows **objectively**, you will come to understand that these vows can provide you with the **appropriate** conditions to develop the **cultivation** and the **understanding**. The **perfection** of the *Bodhisattva* vows will include the **fulfilment** of the **3 sets of pure precepts** which are also the **advice** of all *Samma Sambuddha*. All these are very beautiful, the Right View **leading** to the Right Understanding, then you *will vow with great faith and determination* to have the *following understanding* whenever you arise : - **Right View** with regards to the Law of Karma; how you **function** as a human being and the **Four Noble Truths**. Also, what is this 'Five Aggregates of Form and Mind', who are you and what are you?

You have to **determine** to have this **understanding, life after life** so that you know how to develop the **cultivation** accordingly, so that you will **not** get lost. In order to cut **short** your cultivation and practice, you must have *this determination or aspiration* to have this understanding **life after life**. Otherwise, when you are born in whatever civilization or in any world system, if you **don't** have this **determination** or **affirmation** through power of merits, you will have a lot of **karmic obstruction** and you can never see the light to even have a chance to **connect** to your **true nature**.

This is because when there is **no Buddha Sāsana**, for eons and eons, just like what is stated in the opening verse of the Mahayana Sutra; this Dharma is **very rare** and **very difficult** to find. Even in 500 million eons, you **cannot** find it unless you have the **affinity**

and the **understanding**. So, this is the reason why the **Bodhisattva way** has to be understood.

Now, I will read to you the preliminary general understanding of this Bodhisattva way cultivation followed by its vows. I *compile all these notes* myself. I will give you all a copy each **next Tuesday** when you come for the class.

The Bodhisattva way **cultivation** requires the taking the **Bodhisattva vows** with **understanding, great sincerity** and **determination**. The Bodhisattva vows are vows taken by the Mahayana Buddhists to **realize** complete enlightenment for the **sake of all sentient** beings. One who has taken the vows is normally known as a Bodhisattva. The interpretation of 'Who is **a true Bodhisattva?**' is very important because a lot of people don't understand. They think that if you *aspire to become a Samma Sambuddha*, then you are a Bodhisattva. That is *too general* a term. You must have some **special pre-requisites** and **conditions** behind. First, you must at least have the **understanding** and you must also **determine sincerely** that *this is what you truly want*. This is how it can help you develop the *understanding of the way or the realization of the Dharma leading to enlightenment and liberation*. All these are very important.

Bodhi means **enlightenment**, Satta is a being, so technically *a Bodhisattva is an enlightened being walking the Bodhisattva way to become a Samma Sambuddha*. Of course, there are two types of Bodhisattva. The **first type** is the one who has the condition to become Bodhisattvas because **they know this way is beautiful** and they have the **pre-requisite** qualities. But most of the time, those who have the conditions already have the ability to become enlightened. Or they *have already realized* the enlightenment in **their past existence**. Then they have the condition **to continue** their cultivation to this **present life** because they love this way. But because of eons and eons of births and deaths, they could have forgotten who they were because the **Bodhisattva vows** and the **Bodhisattva way** that they have been cultivating are **not stable yet**. Finally they will come back to it. But it will take a long time if you **don't** have the **proper right guidance** and **understanding**.

The **second type** are the ones who are **still not enlightened** as yet but they have **good teachers** and **guides** who can advise them **on how to take the vows** to **walk** this way. They will advise you and when you have the **condition** to take the **Bodhisattva vows**, **you must do it immediately**. This is because you have to plant the **seed of Bodhi early**; you plant the **enlightened thought** into *your nature*. This '**Bodhi seed**' can only be planted into the nature after you have taken the vows **sincerely**, with **faith** and **understanding**. *Once planted firmly*, it will **manifest whenever you arise** and it will *bring*

forth the way, the causes and conditions for you to connect to your nature because of your refuge, your understanding and firm aspiration/affirmation. With this, the **first stage of Bodhi mind development** has been *initiated*.

All these conditions **will connect** you back to your **Bodhisattva way cultivation**. One who has taken the vows is known as a Bodhisattva whereas the Pātimokkha or **normal precepts** that the monk and nun take cease at death. *But the Bodhisattva vows extend into future lives because you vow life after life to perfect these vows until Samma Sambuddhahood is realized*. There are two traditions of the Buddhist Bodhisattva vows, one originating from Asanga and the other from Nargajuna. Nargajuna is Long Su Pusa. Asanga is also a very great Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva vow is also found at the end of **Avatamsaka Sutra** by **Samantabhadra Bodhisattva** (Pu Hsien Pusa). It is explained that the Bodhisattva vows are to be taken with the following *two famous verses* from that Sutra. The verse is:

*‘Just as all previous Sugatas/Buddhas generated the **Bodhi mind** of enlightenment and accomplish all the stages of Bodhisattva training. So my nature too, for the sake of all living beings generates the **Bodhi mind of enlightenment** and accomplish all the stages of Bodhisattva training’.*

This **affirmation** is **very powerful**. Then after that, the **promise** to *keep the Bodhisattva vows* applies **not only** to this life but its **subsequent** lifetimes *till full enlightenment*. Thus these vows **continue** in our **mind stream** to future lives.

Then in Tibetan Buddhism, there are two lineages of Bodhisattva vows too. The first is associated with Cittamatra, a movement of the *Indian tradition* and is said to have originated from **Bodhisattva Maitreya** and propagated by **Asanga**. The second one is associated with Madhyamaka movement and is said to have originated from **Mañjusrī Bodhisattva** (Wen Shu Pusa), foremost in wisdom, propagated by **Nargajuna (Long Su Pusa)**, later by Shantideva. The main difference between the two lineages of Bodhisattva vows is that the *Cittamatra lineage is more stringent*. The vows **cannot** be taken or received by one who *has not received the monk’s or nun’s precepts*, the Pātimokkha vows.

In taking this vow, you will join the **hundreds or thousands** of Buddhists in the west. In the west, it means the western disciples of the Theravada tradition and some Mahayana tradition where **millions in Asia** have done so. You are not the only few and do not think you are the very few who walk this way because Tzu Chi itself also has had so many.

As is traditional, you may seek out a **Buddhist centre** or **temple** to **take** the Bodhisattva vows in the **presence** of a teacher. If you cannot do that, you **can take it at home**. Create a **sacred place** or space where there are **images** of Bodhisattvas or Buddha who **have gone forth** before you. If you wish to invite friends especially **Dharma friends** to be your witness, sit quietly for a while and **reflect** on the **beauty** and **value** of a life **dedicated** to the **Bodhisattva way** to **benefit** all sentient beings. When you are ready, add any meaningful ritual, like lighting of candles and taking refuge, and then **recite** your vows. Here is *one traditional version* but there are many other versions.

This is a typical **Theravada tradition**. They make it very general because this is normally done by people who are **not very familiar** with the Bodhisattva way. But anyway, it's a good guide. They recite this:

'Suffering beings are numerous or numberless. I vow to liberate them all. Attachment of suffering is inexhaustible. I vow to sever them all. Dharma doors to truth are countless and I vow to master them all and to perfect them all. The way of perfection leading to Supreme Enlightenment is very arduous, I vow to realize it and accomplish it.'

You can modify the language of these vows so that they speak your **deepest dedication**. Then you can repeat them every time you sit in meditation, to **direct** and **dedicate** your practice.

You don't have to do this every time you sit in meditation. Maybe for the first three months, **keep going** through *all these vows*, **familiarize** with them until you **understand** them **deeply** so that **every time you cultivate** or **after your meditation**, you **invoke power of merits** for you to have this understanding *life after life whenever you come*. On the 26th April 2016, I will teach you how to invoke all these and the **notes will be given to you**. You can keep them; refer to them off and on until they become very clear to you. This is how the **cultivation** can bring **forth great benefits**. What I will do is, I will teach you how to **invoke** the **power of merits** for you to develop the causes and conditions so that you will have this type of *Right Dharma Understanding life after life*, whenever you *have to come or choose to come* in the form of a living being or a form and mind.

These are the things you **must determine** to understand; you must have **Right View** with regards to the Law of Karma or Karma Niyāma; Right View with regards to Law of Dependent Origination or Paṭicca Samuppāda or Citta Niyāma then Right View with regards to the **Four Noble Truths**, Dharma Niyāma, as taught by Lord Buddha and all the

Samma Sambuddhas. Also to understand the **two aspects** of the Five Aggregates of Form and Mind **via the direct seeing** to realize that they are all condition-arising entity, causal phenomena, hence **impermanent** leading to **suffering**, not me, non-self and empty. That this so-called living being, the Five Aggregates of Form and Mind is just a **karmically-conditioned** vehicle and tool for us to come to this **existential world** to develop the **cultivation** and **experience** all the **beauty** and **wonders** of life. So **use it** with **wisdom** to arise the Right Thought, Right Speech and Right Action, to be a **blessing** to all and **not** to be **deluded** by it; to **constantly** recite this vows and affirmation with **understanding and** to understand the following *profound dharma* as taught by the Buddha:

Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ, rūpaṃ anattā, vedanā aniccaṃ, vedanā anattā, saññā aniccaṃ, saññā anattā, saṅkhāra aniccaṃ, saṅkhāra anattā and viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ, viññāṇaṃ anattā;

Sabbe saṅkhāra aniccaṃ, sabbe saṅkhāra dukkha and sabbe Dharma anattā.

You can chant it in Pāli or in whatever vibration *to bring forth the understanding*. You must cultivate until it's **very clear** so that the moment you recite 'Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ', you *will understand what these words mean*. 'All of forms, whether physical or external manifested forms, are all **impermanent**.' Whatever you see and reflect on and contemplate, straightaway, you can understand. That is the **ultimate cultivation**. Then from then onwards, you will **never regress**. Life after life, you will **have this understanding**.

When you come, you **will connect very fast** and you will have, initially, all the **glimpses** of all **these cultivation** coming back to you. I was so surprised with the fact that I was already probing for truth at such young age. I was very young then, maybe Form 5. During that time I like to look at nature. Then when I look at the sky, trees, plants and all of nature, my mind was **so quiet** and **still**. Then I saw the '**flow**' and the '**movement**' within nature. At that time, I didn't understand what those things were. What was the **significance** of all these? **How come I could see all these** which other people didn't pay attention and were just **too busy thinking, planning and worrying about life**. But this mind was so different. It was **constantly inquiring, reflecting** and **investigating**. Then it was just **silent most** of the time and it could see all these.

Later on, I came to realize that this was what I had cultivated before, the **daily mindfulness**. That's why **it was so stable**. Even **before** I knew how to meditate, I already

had this ability to be mindful in the midst of life. Then I came to realize that all these were connected with my past cultivation.

This **understanding** has a lot to do with *how one develops one's cultivation. That's why this teaching has been **lost** and now we are trying to **revive** it. Then after that, I can even teach you how to develop this cultivation.*

Having **developed** the **Right View**, then you makes your vows as follows:

‘This nature of mine vows to always keep the **3 sets of pure precepts** via following the **advice** of all Samma Sambuddhas’.

The first is to avoid all evil and to develop the **clear understanding** of what **constitutes evil**; the **three evil roots** of **greed, hatred and delusion**. This **essential Dharma** must be clearly understood otherwise no point chanting, ‘Avoid all evil, do good, purify the mind’ because you are *only parroting?* For you do not know what constitutes evil. You must have *mindfulness to be **aware** of the mental intention that has the evil roots of greed, hatred and delusion.* You must see with **mindfulness** the **5 mental hindrances** when they arise. Then you will understand how the **non-arisen mental hindrance** comes to be. Then how when you **silent** your mind and meditate, you will **understand** how the *arisen mental hindrance* **ceases** to be. Then, after you have **penetrated, realized and awakened**, you will know, how in the future, the **un-arisen mental hindrances** cannot arise anymore. So this is what the **Satipaṭṭhāna practice** is all about and you will understand them.

The **second** pure precept is to **cultivate all virtues and blessings** leading to the **perfection** of them all. This is more than just parroting, ‘To avoid all evil and do good, etc’. Here we are talking about cultivating all **virtues and blessings** leading to the **perfection of them all**. You do a lot more than what normal beings do. Then to cultivate wisdom, which is the **third advice, you need to purify your mind**. You not only purify your mind but also to **cultivate all wisdom** so that you **can liberate** and **take across** all sentient beings. This means you have to *penetrate all Dharma*.

That's the reason why if you don't cultivate all these; it's very difficult to have **real progress**. Of course, the Buddha said the **handful of leaves** which is the **Four Noble Truths** is enough to liberate you. But you have to go **beyond**; you have to **understand** many things because **cultivation** is **not only** about cultivating the *bare minimum* of what is *stated in the teaching* but also to cultivate **extensive understanding** to walk this way **with ease**.

You have gone through Samsara via repeated births for so long and you **don't know** what type of **Karmic obstructions** you have developed. That's the reason why if you **cannot** understand because you don't have the **Right View** and **extensive understanding** then you don't know what to do. That's also the reason why a lot of living beings suffer.

This life, I have *helped many who suffered* to come out of it through **an understanding**; how to ask for *forgiveness, repentance* and *all the rest*, then *how to develop the vows not to repeat* all these *negativities of karma*, then *how to invoke the power of merits after you have repented*; cultivate according to the *advice of the Buddha* and to arise the *causes and conditions needed for all these Karmic obstructions to dissolve* or for the *Karmic repercussion to be neutralized*. Otherwise, it will continuously come and **obstruct** you. Then it will be **very difficult** for you to *find the way*. You have to make aspirations for causes and conditions to *avoid the fools and the heedless*, to *meet up with the wise and the enlightened ones*, so that *Nibbāna can be realized in the here and now*. All these are **very vital**.

We will go through all these when it comes to the actual taking of the Bodhisattva vows next week. We will recite, 'this **nature of mine** further **vows** with **utmost sincerity, faith** and **perseverance** to walk **to perfection** this *Bodhisattva way* via initially taking the **4 basic vows** of a **Bodhisattva**.' This means this 'nature of mine vows to liberate the countless living beings from Samsara and take them all across to the other shore.' And, 'this nature of mine vows to endure and sever all vexations and suffering' followed by, 'this nature of mine **vows** to cultivate and **penetrate** all Dharmas to realize the perfection of all wisdom.' Then finally, 'this nature of mine *vows to perfect the ten pāramitās or perfections* to realize the unsurpassed Samma Sambuddhahood.'

There are **additional vows** to clear all **Karmic obstructions** to bring about the way. The first one is to ask for **forgiveness** from The Triple Gem and this is the **most important**. 'If by action, speech or thoughts, whether knowingly or unknowingly, via ignorance, delusion or heedlessness, this nature of mine has offended or done anything wrong unto the Triple Gem, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, this nature of mine would like to **sincerely** ask for forgiveness.'

You have to do this because the **moment** you ask for forgiveness, it will connect to the Nature's Law because the Triple Gem and all these great beings have already forgiven every living being via their pure wish. You only need to request. Then after that, the second one is: 'Whosoever from the distant past until now, whether knowingly or unknowingly, that this nature of yours or mine has caused any **Karmic negativity**, misery,

and suffering or mislead this nature of mine would like to **sincerely** ask for forgiveness from them all. May my **sincere request** for forgiveness be **accepted** by all so that all these **Karmic obstructions** can be **amicably dissolved** or **watered down** or **lessened** thereby enabling this nature of mine to continue with its cultivation **to realize** the true Dharma with ease. Then this nature of mine also vows **to repent** and from now onwards, vows **never** to repeat any of these **Karmic negativity** borne of **greed, hatred and delusion** by following the advice of the Buddha to **avoid all evil, do good and purify** the mind via striving on with **heedfulness** to keep the 5 precepts and **cultivate** the **Bodhisattva way diligently** so that it will never violate this Law of Karma whenever it arises.'

Then finally, to **invoke** the power of merits: 'By the power of whatever wholesomeness or merits that this nature of mine has cultivated since the **distant past** until now, may it **arise the causes and conditions** for this **nature of mine** to have the ability to overcome all my **Karmic obstructions** or **obstacles amicably** so that this nature of mine will be able to gain back its life, to walk the Path of Dharma to realize and fulfil all its Bodhisattva vows.'

Karmic obstructions are **very powerful**. If you **don't invoke the power of merits** for causes and conditions, chances are, when you come, you **will still be obstructed**. Like many of you have already known; sometimes you **mislead** people for many lives in the past, yet you don't even know then the **karmic fruition** can **trigger off Karmic obstruction** later on. This is how you develop the cultivation. Then there are other **miscellaneous vows** to **enhance the cultivation**. I will go through with you later on. Then the final note is about the cultivation of the **10 perfections**. They are **generosity** or *dana*, **sīla is morality**, renunciation is *nekkhamma*, wisdom or *panna*, **vīriya** or spiritual zeal, patient endurance or *khanti*, truthfulness or *sacca*, **adhiṭṭhāna** or determination or affirmation (aspiration and resolution), loving kindness or *mettā and upekkhā*. These are the **important things** we will do on **26th April 2016**.

Ok, Padmasuri, I will pass to you the **original copy** for you to **help Photostat 80 sets**. Don't distribute until that day. If you want to Photostat additional copies to keep, you can. But please, **don't abuse** it and don't simply pass to people who **don't understand**, because they **may create negativity** of Karma **without** them realizing it. If they **simply comment without** understanding, they are going to get into serious trouble. We didn't do anything. These are **Nature's Laws** so if they **don't have the condition** to receive them or they don't have the **understanding to appreciate** what this is, then please **don't try to 'help'**; if there are no conditions then just forget about it. All these people who have the conditions will appear and they will have their own conditions to come into

contact with this teaching. They will approach us to receive it. Otherwise, *don't try and don't think* that this can help *everybody* and you want to *promote* it. No! It's **not meant for them**. It is for you only because you have conditions and *if you are serious, you will progress very fast. You will benefit tremendously from it.*

Okay. Now we will go into the **book proper**. I will read the forward to you. For those who have the e-copy that I have sent to you, you can refer to it. Turn to the forward page. This book consists of a series of talks on the **Bodhisattva precepts by Master Sheng Yen** given at the **Zen Meditation Centre** in *New York* from **Dec 6th to 8th, 1997**.

This is what is written in the forward: '*We sincerely hope that this commentary on the **Bodhisattva precepts** will provide the reader with **a clear understanding** of their meaning, as well as the **inspiration to integrate** these teachings into their lives*'.

*The reason why you **have to integrate Dharma** into your life is because it is a **living Dharma**, not theory or knowledge; otherwise, it is not the **true Dharma**. It is **understanding** which can only be **cultivated** in the **midst of life** and you can **realize it** because it stands up to investigation.*

'We wish to acknowledge several individuals for their help in producing this booklet'. These are the people whom they have acknowledged; mainly those who are responsible for the translation:

Guo-gu - translation

Simeon Gallu - organization and editorial assistance

The International Affairs Office

Dharma Drum Mountain

January, 2005

This book was printed in the year 2005, about 11 years ago. Okay. Please turn to the next page on Introduction.

'There is a saying in Mahayana Buddhism: **those who have precepts to break are Bodhisattvas**.'

{**Bro. Teoh:** Do you agree? They are *so serious* and that's the reason why *they have precepts to break* because *it's very difficult not to break them when you have these vows*. That's why the Buddha is very wise. He never said, 'Thou shall not.' He said, 'we undertake the *training rule* to **abstain from breaking them**.' It's through an understanding.}

Then they continue, 'those who have *no precepts* to break are **outer-path.**'

{**Bro. Teoh:** Do you know what is **outer-path** or 'Wai tao' in Mandarin? It means **not following** Buddha Dharma. It is an **external path** teaching based on their understanding.}

Then, 'Many Buddhists **know that receiving the *Bodhisattva precepts generates great merits.***'

{**Bro. Teoh:** See, when you receive ***these Bodhisattva vows***, you ***generate great merits.***}

'Yet they believe this *without a real understanding* of the *profound* meaning of the *precepts.*'

{**Bro. Teoh:** That's why you must do it with understanding. You must receive it with understanding.}

'Or what does keeping these precepts entail? They receive the precepts as a matter of course, knowing only that receiving them is a *good thing to do*. To try to remedy this situation, we are conducting the **transmission** of the ***Bodhisattva precepts*** over the *course of three days* so that prior to the **formal transmission ceremony**, I can explain to all participants ***the meaning and significance*** of these precepts within the Mahayana tradition.'

Bro. Teoh: So, you must **understand clearly why** you take all these precepts. This book has a lot of good advice. Master Sheng Yen has developed and come up with it but he ***didn't explain***, how do all these precepts come about? It is from **Right View with regards** to the **Nature's Law of Karma** and it comes from the **advice of all Buddha**. The Buddha's first advice is ***to avoid all evil via keeping our precepts***. Also who are the ones who will ***violate the precepts***? If you check all the precepts, those who **violate these precepts** are **evil people**. They have the **evil roots** of ***greed, hatred and delusion***. That's why to avoid all evil; you must keep the ***minimum basic 5 precepts; for violating them can give rise to very severe offences***. That's why you must **not allow**, your form and mind, whenever it arises, **to violate** these precepts. It must ***not kill or cause any harm*** to fellow living beings. It must ***not steal, cheat or deceive*** or **take things** that do not belong to them. Then **it must not have sexual desires** or ***lust to conduct sexual misconduct***. Then it must ***not have wrong speech***. They ***must not tell lies***, they must ***not backbite***, and they ***must not give rise to harsh, angry and deluded speech***. They must ***not speak frivolously***.

Do inquire. Who kill and who harm? Those who kill and harm are **selfish, deluded or violent people** who are **evil**. Violent means having *emotional negativity, like anger,*

hatred, envy and jealousy. That's why they are **capable of killing** and **causing harm** to fellow living beings. They can also *bring about war* and all these are due to **delusion**. Then you can go on to **check** on the **other** precepts. They are the same. Who steal? They are **Greedy people, selfish people and deluded people**. Then who commit *sexual misconduct*? They are **lustful** people. **Lustfulness is part of greed and delusion**. They are even willing to sacrifice their *family unit's harmony, peace and love*, just for some **short moments of fun** (cheap thrill) due to their **lust**. When you **don't have** this understanding, you become **deluded** and **make a lot of mistakes**. Then the Law of Karma is, 'you reap what you sow' hence in future, you will become the victim. Now you do this to people, in future, you become the victim.

When people do that to you, you complain. You say, 'How can my spouse or my husband do this to me? But in the past, when you did that to others, you never asked this same question of, 'how can I do this to fellow living beings?' That's why *as a Bodhisattva, you can never do this because you come for the living beings*. You keep *your vows*, you keep your precepts, **you hold onto them with understanding**. So likewise, for the other precepts, they are the same. When you partake in intoxicants you make your consciousness very low, then you will fall. That's why it will arise the condition for you to break all the other 4 precepts. These can be very dangerous things. Through delusion, this can happen. That's why **delusion** will lead to **greed, hatred, anger, envy, jealousy, selfishness** and all those things. Then I will read on.

'Each participant, after understanding what keeping these precepts involves, is free to decide for himself or herself whether or not to take them. In this situation, many participants in the past did decide to take the precepts (meaning the **Bodhisattvas precepts**) and were able to *happily commit themselves* to the **Bodhisattva way**. Transmitting the precepts in this way via allowing aspirants to take them in **good conscience** and with **proper understanding** can **help aspirants plant the seeds of Bodhi** for **Buddhahood** with **no feelings of compulsion or guilt** in their minds. The **virtue** in **vowing to observe the Bodhisattva precepts** enables us to *practise or cultivate the Buddha dharma* **diligently** leading to *purification of minds*.

These *codes of behaviour* may also help us *interact with others* in a **more peaceful and harmonious manner**. If we can purify the actions of our body, speech, and mind through *cultivating the three sets of pure precepts, the five precepts* and the **ten meritorious actions**, then, with the *wisdom, such cultivation or practice has given us*, we can **banish or eradicate craving, covetousness, anger** and **all other afflictive emotions**. With a *Bodhisattva's mind of compassion*, we can **accept and cherish all sentient beings**, and by *purifying our own conduct*, we can **help to transform society at large**. Even in the

*midst of suffering, every sentient being can attain the **altruistic bodhi-mind** and also help others arouse this awakened mind of wisdom.*

The *combination* of vows and precepts that we are *transmitting here includes* the **four great vows**. That's why we have the **three sets of pure precepts**, and the **four great vows**. The *three sets of pure precepts*, the *five precepts* and the *ten good deeds* are quite accessible to everyone. There is ample **flexibility in practising** the *three sets of pure precepts*, so long as their **fundamental principle is adhered** to. These precepts can be adapted to the **different situations** that **a practitioner of the Bodhisattva way** may encounter. Such *flexibility makes these precepts relatively easy to cultivate for a wide variety of people*. As these precepts also function as guidelines for wholesome behaviour for Buddhists, the **commitment to cultivate them is a valuable undertaking** for all practitioners. I dare not change the content of the Bodhisattva precepts, nor do I have the *virtues necessary* to invent new ones. I have simply referred to the various **systems of Bodhisattva precepts** in both the Chinese and Tibetan traditions and adapted them *to fit the needs of modern practitioners*. In doing so, my hope is **to promote the actualization of the spirit of the Bodhisattva precepts**, and I **encourage all practitioners to receive and practise them**'.

So this is very important. Always remember *you have nothing to lose*. So don't listen to what people say and what the **thought tells you**, like - 'Are you serious? This is a serious matter. This is not for you.' Nothing to do with all these, do you understand? Just ask yourself, '**what have I got to lose by taking the Bodhisattva vows?**' I have **nothing to lose**, but **everything to gain**, right? And I can develop much understanding from it. The vows **can guide me along** and *give me all the understanding to connect*, to develop **affinity** with all the *Buddha, great Bodhisattvas* and *to connect to their nature* so that they *can always protect, bless and guide me*. Then I can develop **profound gratitude** and **respect** towards them. Then all the **wholesomeness** will arise for you to strengthen **your resolve** to transform the *spiritual faculties* into powers. From then on, you *will progress very fast*. Then you **will determine** to do all these *because you have benefited* from all *these beings* that go this way, do you understand? It is your turn now if you **have the conditions** and the **understanding to go this way**. So that in future, *you can also benefit other living beings* by playing your role. Whenever you do all these, you are **not doing it for living beings** because the *nature's Law of Karma* is, '**you reap what you sow**'. Hence **whatever you do or have perfected is for your own nature**. That's why in future if you come, you will *receive all these wholesomeness* because it is just like what I used to share with you all; when my nature came, how come everything could just come together? And how come this nature of mine *could receive the Buddha dharma* so

fast. Sometimes the teacher, or guide or whoever who spoke the truth **had not** realized or **penetrated** those truths but *this nature of mine just listened and it understood* and **penetrated** the truth. This is because this is *the way this 'nature' has been giving and sharing* for so many lives, eons and eons. That's why when it came, it can receive equally fast. That's the reason why *whatever wholesomeness you do, it will come back to your nature* because 'you reap what you sow; if you plant the **seed of wholesomeness, goodness, virtues, you will receive the fruit of virtues, and wholesomeness**'. In Mandarin, it's even more beautiful. That's why the **Law of Karma is such**, 'You plant the *conditions*, you will receive the results, the fruit of it. You plant the seeds of virtues; you will reap the fruit of virtues. You plant the seed of evil; you will reap the *afflictions of suffering and evil*.' This is the **Law of Karma** and it will just manifest. That's why between the two, which will you choose? Do you want to choose **to plant** the **seed of heedlessness** through your **delusion**? Then your *karmic nature will fall, you will become miserable, life after life when you come*. The **choice is very obvious** isn't it? If you want **to plant** the **seed of wholesomeness and virtues**, then what must you do? You *must train your mind* to be **heedful**, to *understand what constitute evil*. Then you *have to keep your precepts* because this is the **Law of Karma**; 'you reap what you sow, do good begets good, do evil begets evil.'

The reason why you have to do this is because according to the Buddha, this is a **nature's law** and *each and every living being is 'born of our karma, heir to our karma, conditioned and supported by our karma, and we are what we are because of our karma.'* Since **karma plays such a great role in your life**, if you still **don't wake up** to this **Right View** and **determine to follow the advice of the Buddha to avoid all evil and do good** so that **you can take care of your karma**, you are going to have **a lot of suffering and affliction in future**.

Even if you *start cultivating now*, it's going to *take you quite a while to clean up* all these karmic negativities. But these *good conditions can from now onwards, give rise* to more **wholesome karmic fruition** with **little or no more evil karma**. Then only can you have the **causes and conditions** to *plant these goodness over a long period of time* so that in **the future**, whenever you come, you don't have to pay back anymore of those *karmic negativities borne of evil actions*. So whatever negativity of karma left, it will be very mild.

Like recently, when my left leg had problems because the *muscles developed spasms*, it **was meant to be**. The treatment by Bro. Vincent took *one and a half hours* and I had **to endure** the **pain**, which I endured. Bro. Vincent the 'doctor' came twice and I had **a lot of gratitude** towards him and **I thanked** him. But *I would rather take this pain in this*

form on this physical body *via this way* rather than to have it pay back through an **accident** landing up in hospital **which will be a lot worse**. Instead of having **severe bodily injuries**, you just take it through a *different way which is a lot milder*.

This cultivation can bring about this **understanding** for you to avoid some of the karmic negativities. This is possible because you know **how to break your karmic obstruction** first. Then you **vow to repent and not to repeat all these**. **You also know how to invoke the power of merits** for you to go the right way. In future, after that, all your cultivation will be **in accordance** with the **Law of Karma** and **your progress will be all the way up, no more falling back**. Then life after life, you will **accumulate** a lot of **blessings, virtues** and **understanding** until you **can hardly commit any evil**.

This life when I came, I realized I had *very little karmic debt to pay back* and they were relatively minor. Even though minor, they were still there but *comparatively*, I **felt very blessed** because *everything went my way*. It was like I was **very well protected everywhere, every moment, every instant while going through life**. This is possible because I **understand the teaching** and know how to **invoke the power of merits and vows**; develop **affinity** with all the **Great Beings** and **their nature to protect, guide** and **bless** me. All these are very important understanding. I shall read on.

The source of compassion: *Love, kindness, and compassion* are the *very foundations of Buddhism*. From a general perspective, these **virtues** correspond to **similar values** held in many other religious traditions and spiritual practices. However, in Buddhism, **genuine love** and **compassion** arise from *a penetrating insight* into the **true nature of our own existence**, (that's the reason why when we can understand ourselves, we can understand others) and are thereby more **firmly grounded** in a practitioner's experience.

We can understand this from two perspectives. First, from the *perspective of interdependence*, we see that **no phenomenon** in the world, whether *material or mental*, exists **independently** of *other phenomena*. All beings and things are **intimately related** to one another through **cause and effect**. All of the **activities engaged** in by a **seemingly** independent entity are actually **connected to and affected by the activities** of *other entities* in an **intricate, infinite network**. *Everything that exists relies on innumerable, apparently external factors for their existence*. Separation from this vast **system of connections** among all things would **make existence impossible**. This is the **profound reality** of the **nature** of the **world we live in**. That's why **nature's law** is also the **reality of our own individual lives** as we live them. We are **all connected** to each other and to all living things, both sentient and insentient.

On a **human scale**, we can see the **truth of interdependence** in the fact that *no person can live entirely apart from society*. We depend on the assistance of other human beings for everything we have; from the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, and shelter up to the various forms of knowledge and skills that we acquire; and to the sense of **satisfaction and fulfilment** we derive from our work. If we **are fortunate** to live in a **relatively stable society**, we should know that much of the **order and stability** in our **daily lives depends** on the **structure of our society** and on the **work of other people** in all sorts of **public institutions**. Similarly, **global interrelationships** and the **mutual influences** between **different nations** and **cultures** are often demonstrated in fields like **economics, political science, and cultural studies**.

So the way how Master Sheng Yen looked at all these is quite good. But on a bigger picture, it is of course, **nature's law**, which he **didn't mention**. On a larger scale, countless other forms of life, both sentient and insentient, have **either direct or indirect influences** on our well-being. Also, from the viewpoint of the Buddhist belief in **innumerable past lives** and **future rebirths**, each of us must have, in countless previous lives, once lived in **very close, direct connection** to every **other sentient being**. All these "other beings" could have been our mothers, our fathers, our sisters, or our brothers.

Each one, at one time or another, has been the cause of our happiness. With this sort of outlook, **how can we not have sympathy and concern for all beings?** We can only **feel a deep sense of responsibility** and **gratitude** to them. Such **gratitude** in turn **engenders genuine care** and **love** that goes beyond an **individual's love** for his or her family, race, or nation. This sort of love, extended to all beings everywhere, springing from the very knowledge that **we are truly all one big family**.

A better way to explain this is the **Buddha's explanation**. He said, 'Do you know how many **repeated births and deaths** you *have undergone since the beginning less first thought of ignorance?* You have shed more tears than the waters in the four oceans.' Do you know how long that is? Every life, how much tears can you shed? Very likely, it is one gallon or less. And in the four oceans, do you know how many gallons of sea water there are? Let me tell you, it's amazing. That's the reason why we could have been related in some way. But **through karma** and **countless rebirths**, you might have forgotten. That's why when they are born as your children, you think, 'Wah, my children!' Actually, it's your **karmic debtors** that come to ask for their **karmic debt**. That's why in Mandarin they said it is, '**Yen ching chai chu**.' But you still think they are your children and you may say, 'What can I do? He's my son. He's my daughter.' Then his son and his children will say, 'He has to give in because he is our papa.' Last time, you swindled them, made them miserable, but you didn't know. Now they 'swindle' you

back but because of karma, you *will willingly* give in to them thinking that they are your children. Yet, you will become **so miserable** because of what they did to you and you cannot do anything about it because you say, 'they are my children.' That's why they have to be your children so that you will *pay back to them willingly*. So this is what the Law of Karma is all about.

If you are **not trapped** in this *physical form*, you **cannot experience** the suffering. Through **delusion**, *you reap what you sown*. In the past when you cause suffering and misery to people, you don't know because you are **heedless**. So through **nature's Law** of Karma, the **fruition** will come about. And when you **understand nature's law**, you will **never violate** this *Law of Karma* because it's **never worthwhile** to do so. I used to tell you, it's **never worthwhile** to violate **any of these karmic laws**, especially the *five precepts*. You will have to hold onto them **very seriously** because it's **never worthwhile** to **violate** them. *It will show it to you in your cultivation*. The moment you try something funny, it **hits back immediately**. *Karma is so powerful*. Cultivators of the way will determine to have this understanding, life after life, when they come and they will **connect** *very fast*. They will **never violate** any of these **moral laws** because they understand; **it's never worthwhile**. Okay, we will go on.

Secondly, from **the perspective** of **equality of all conditions**, all of these *infinitely varied sorts of interrelations and connections among sentient and insentient beings* give rise to **a multitude of individual traits and distinctions**. However, since these *seemingly unique and distinct entities* are *all contingent* upon one another, not one of them can be said to *exist autonomously and permanently in and of itself*. This is the **nature of emptiness**. As we penetrate the depths of this **conditionality through contemplation** and the **cultivation of genuine compassion**, we can *understand personally and directly* that *all phenomena are empty of any inherent, separate nature of their own*.

This essence, or empty nature, of all things reveals their likeness, their profound similarity. With the **realization** of this **non-dual, equal nature of existence** which is the **experience of wisdom**, an **unbounded desire** to help and *benefit all beings indiscriminately* will then **well up** in our hearts. So, this coming Friday, 22nd, April 2016, I'll be giving a dharma **talk** in Klang with the title, 'the **3 universal characteristics of nature**'. This talk will benefit you a lot more because I will explain all these more clearly in the talk. All these come about through the **very penetrative insight** into the *3 universal characteristics of impermanence, suffering state and non-self or empty nature*. **As real as it can be**, it's only *within the moment* and **how stable is the moment? Split second, it's dead and gone**. And why do you still hold onto it.

Ultimately, it's just a **thought**, nothing else. And what is thought? It *arises and passes away*; arises and passes away. Through **delusion, you cling**. That's why it *has power to afflict you* and *make you so miserable*. That's why people go into **depression, commit suicide**, over what? Over the things they **cannot** let go or they **cannot come to terms with**. When you understand this, it can be **very beautiful**. But when you **don't understand**, it can **torment you, afflict you** and *make you miserable*.

Without Dharma, life is *pretty tough and difficult*. With Dharma, it's **beautiful and wonderful**. In the Mahayana tradition, *all sentient beings are identical in nature to Buddha*. All sentient beings have the **potential** to realize full enlightenment and to manifest Buddhahood. A person walking the path to full Buddhahood **must cultivate deep compassion** for *all beings* as if they were of one body with himself or herself. This is *not wishful thinking*, but rather a **sincere motivation** that *inspires our actions* and *compels us to live humanely* in the world. When **other sentient beings suffer** in the **depths of confusion**, *it is as if we ourselves are suffering too*. **But the lack of wisdom** to help either ourselves or others will **motivate** them to **perfect** themselves further via **walking the Bodhisattva way**. This **genuine concern** and **selfless love** do not come from anyone or anything external, but rather from our **insight** into the *nature of our own existence*. Such **insight is the ethical impulse of an enlightened being**. It is **both the motivation** and the **source of inner strength** of a Bodhisattva.

So this is Master Sheng Yen's point of view based on his present understanding. Ultimately, you can be different when you have the actual understanding because there is **no mark of a self cultivating** or of *living beings*. They are within the **conditioned world and only the form and mind** are subject to all these. But he **didn't explain** all these and that's the reason why *he just used his own understanding to express it*. That's why he said 'when other sentient beings suffer in the depth of confusion (he use these words) it is as if we ourselves are suffering too.' You **won't have** that **delusion** when you **vow to liberate all living beings**. You do not purposely, **with desire and craving vow to help and liberate**. No! - When there is **no condition, nothing will be done**. But **when there are conditions that love that compassion**, that **understanding will extend to all irrespective of who they are** do you understand? Because you know everything is *condition-arising* and 'Hey no you, hey no me'. Hence there is **no reality**. You do not favour anything because relationship is for the '*form and mind*'. The Law of Karma **recognizes relationship** but **not ultimate truth** or **ultimate understanding**. That's why the cultivation is very different. But what he has written is a very **good guide**. We shall continue.

But who is a Bodhisattva? For any Buddhist practitioner, the ultimate purpose of practice is to attain *complete enlightenment* or **Buddhahood**. To achieve this very lofty goal, we work to **cultivate wisdom** and **accumulate merits**. Through this practice, we are able to *benefit both ourselves and others*. This practice is *precisely the task of a follower* of the **Bodhisattva path** as put forth in the **three sets of pure precepts** (which we undertake in the transmission ceremony): *to accrue merits and realize wisdom for the benefit of all sentient beings*.

Through the **diligent cultivation** of **wisdom and merit**, a Bodhisattva practitioner will attain Buddhahood. In other words, *walking the Bodhisattva path* is the *cause of Buddhahood*; **Buddhahood** is the result of having **accomplished the Bodhisattva practice**. In Buddhist circles, we hear the word *Bodhisattva* frequently. Among Chinese educated Buddhists, Bodhisattva is translated as Pusa in Mandarin and is commonly used simply as a title to address a fellow practitioner. It is also often used by monastic as an *honorific* when speaking to a layperson. They used to say, 'everyone is a Pusa'. If you have **love and compassion** to be **a blessing to all**, *literally*, you are a *Bodhisattva*, Pusa. They always say, 'The Heart of a Pusa who has **great love** and **compassion** can **selflessly serve and benefit** other **living beings** when there are conditions. On the other hand, non-Buddhists visiting a Buddhist monastery may think that Bodhisattvas are the statues placed on the altar.

The one that is **within society**, in the **midst of life** are the **living Bodhisattvas**. In short, many people, both Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, do not know the *true significance* of the term **Bodhisattva**? Therefore **clarification** of this term is **essential** for our **understanding** of what the *Bodhisattva practice entails*. Formed by the conjunction of two Sanskrit words meaning "enlightenment" and "sentient being" respectively, the word *Bodhisattva* denotes an *enlightened sentient being*. "Enlightened" refers to the quality of having achieved, to some degree, enlightenment, awakening, understanding, or mindfulness. This concept has a very rich, multifaceted meaning, with many nuances. "Sentient being" refers to a living being who experiences the world through sentience, feelings, sensations, or emotions.

Thus **Bodhisattva** can be understood as having **four levels of meaning**. First, the being described by this word **aspires upwardly** to *attain supreme wisdom or enlightenment*, to become **Samma Sambuddha**. Second, this being aspires to do this in order to bring **genuine benefit** to all other **sentient beings** so that they too will attain enlightenment. Third, *each Bodhisattva seeks to fully awaken* to his or her own **intrinsic nature, or Buddha-nature**. Fourth, while striving for this kind of full awakening, a Bodhisattva strives just as hard to awaken all of the **innumerable sentient beings** to the same

Buddha-nature intrinsic to each and every one. By considering these four levels of meaning together, we come to the following **definition of a Bodhisattva**: *`a person who aspires to Buddhahood while seeking to enlighten all sentient beings on the path.* This is his way of defining a Bodhisattva.

What I had explained just now is more important. When you have the **conditions to have this understanding**, you **must aspire** because it is going to **help you in a great way** so that **life after life**, this *understanding* will **stay with you**. This life, you *must put it into practice, cultivate, investigate and see the beauty of it and realize how it has helped you to understand and transform your life and make you so different.* With this, you will know, even before the true awakening that this is the way and it will bring forth the causes and conditions for you to awaken. That's why you will determine, life after life, because you know it will never go wrong. After you have understood this teaching then you put it into practice. You realize **your life has completely changed**. Your understanding had also changed and you are now so different. The **self-centered, self-delusion** or **sakkāyadiṭṭhi** regarding this **form and mind** is no more.

When you **understand clearly** what this *form and mind* is, i.e. it's **not you**, but only a *karmically- conditioned segmented life* (vehicle and tool) for you to come into existence then you will use it appropriately and not to be deluded by it anymore. That's *why in the vows, I will help you invoke the power of merits for causes and conditions for you to successfully plant within the Bodhi mind this understanding, life after life*, whenever you arise (either choose to come or have to come). This is **very important** because the **conditions started** at the **Cameron Highlands Retreat**. Otherwise, this won't happen. Do you remember, on the second last day before we went back the next day, we actually recited all those things. Then all of a sudden, **Sister Joyce** recited *`Om Mani Padme Hum.'* It was **so powerful**. **Guan Yin's nature** was *so powerful*. Then the **conditions just arose** and *I invoked on behalf of all Kalyāṇamittas this vow, to have this understanding, life after life, whenever you come.* It just happened because there were conditions then.

There was **no intention** to do it because *this nature knows, if there is no condition, it cannot happen.* This *nature of mind cannot just `want to help you do it', do you understand?* It's like the Buddha. He can share the understanding with you but you all have to walk the path yourself. You *have to awaken yourself.* But **when there is condition for things to happen, it's very different.** Because of your Pāramīs, your faith, the group's **collective consciousness** and **those Great Beings' natures and conditions then**; so what happens is, when *the conditions fall into place, things will happen.* It will arise and *this nature just understands and it manifests.* That's why **everything falls into**

place. Then when I came back, I realized it was all meant to be. This was because of the many things that happened. Then I realized this had to happen because at the beginning of last year, 2015, the request for the **Bodhisattva way** cultivation started. On the first or second day of that year, we had our **first gathering to introduce this Bodhisattva way cultivation**. Many Kalyāṇamittas had already written to me during the end of the previous year, **2014, requesting for this sharing. Simultaneously**, during those weeks, there were **so many requests**. Then I replied and I said, 'Ok, I will agree to have the **special session**.' We had a special Puja at that time; we had the **sharing of the Bodhisattva way**. At that time, I didn't open up the session to all the Kalyāṇamittas as yet **because I thought not everybody was ready**. It was **only for the serious ones**. Then after that, over the last one year plus, **so many things happened**.

Like what I had explained in the **Final summary** of the **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (yellow) transcript book, the *conditions for all those things* to happen were there. Please do read through the yellow transcript book. It's explained clearly there, **how all these teachings came about**. The Kalyāṇamittas requested for the **Diamond Sutra** to be shared. They also requested for the **6th Patriarch Platform Sutra** to be shared too. And before that, we already had the **Shurangama Sutra** and the **Heart Sutra with all the short notes taken and shared**. That's why it was **like everything just fell into place**, and it was **meant to be**. That's the reason why all these could happen. So **I hope you understand how blessed you are because of the conditions and do make full use of it so that after this life, everything is taken care of**, - all of **your future lives**, even **if you choose to come or have to come**, this **understanding** will be with you. And **you will not fall**, hope you understand.

This **teaching and cultivation** is **not easy if you don't have the affinity and conditions** and I can tell you, it is *almost impossible* or near to impossible. **Without** the Sāsana, you can forget about it. Only a **handful**, the **Great Bodhisattvas** and **all those cultivators of the way who really** have this **understanding** can **survive**. Apart from that, **hardly anyone can make it**. But because of conditions during this sasana, many will make it. Ok. We will go on with the sharing. How to **overcome difficulties?** I want to skip some of this because there is not much time left.

Without the **experience of enlightenment**, how can **aspirants** in the Mahayana tradition, meaning Bodhisattvas, *rise to the seemingly impossible task of helping all sentient beings to become enlightened?* That's why chances are, when you take this vow this life, you will have the ability to awaken because in the past, you could already have this understanding. That's why the conditions come again and you have the ability to do it. That's why my advice is; **just go ahead and do it. Don't be influenced by the thought.**

Do not doubt. Have faith for you have **nothing to lose**. Then this **will pave the way** for many things to happen. That's why he said, 'without the *experience of enlightenment*, how can *aspirants of Mahayana tradition*, {meaning the Bodhisattvas}, rise to the **seemingly impossible task** of helping all sentient beings to become enlightened?' How can practitioners of the Bodhisattva path **truly help others attain enlightenment** when *they themselves have not done so*? Daunted by such questions, many practitioners place *exclusive emphasis* on **cultivating faith in and devotion to the Buddha**, while others **focus solely on striving to realize emptiness**, wishing to **escape** from the **toil and travail** of life. Such responses are understandable, as we are all only humans.

If we do not know how to swim, how are we going to save others from drowning? And if, at last, we have learned how to swim and managed to get ourselves safely to the shore, *why jump back into the roaring waters and risk our lives to save others*? This **attitude has led some practitioners to strive hurriedly to liberate themselves from suffering**. This is **what I meant by, you have the Theravada thinking, do you understand? Who said all these? It is your thought, right?** 'Alienated from the sentient world, these people **seek only to remove themselves from the ocean of samsara**.' It becomes **extremely difficult** and takes **an incalculably long time for them to generate the Bodhi-mind** because the self is there; do you understand? Not to say impossible but it takes a very long, long time. They **haven't planted** the *seed of Bodhi* which can really take them *along the path to awakening* and to *realize Buddhahood*. Otherwise, **the self is so strong**. Just like their question, 'why jump back?' Who jumps back? *He thinks he exists, he thinks he has already strived so hard* to liberate himself or herself out of the suffering world, out of samsara and reach the shore safely. Why jump back to the roaring waters and risk his or her life to save others? There is no more meaning because the *atta* or self is still there, do you understand? You cannot liberate and you cannot awaken because the **mark of a self** is still very strong.

So, in order to save living beings from drowning, one should not leave the water and seek safety on shore. And if we do not know how to swim, then the only place to learn is in the water, whether we like it or not. Likewise, the **Bodhisattva path must be practiced in the midst of suffering, in the whirlpool of cyclic existence**. However, to keep our head above water, we need strength and skill, as we cannot rely solely on the power of the Buddha, or wait to become completely enlightened. **Discernment, unshakable faith and vows, constant cultivation of love and compassion, and a penetrating insight into the nature of emptiness**, meaning the **three characteristics of impermanence, suffering state and non-self, are four things we can bank on**. Maintaining a balance in these four areas will safeguard and sustain us in times of difficulty. Eventually, it **will**

subdue our vexations and afflictive emotions, leading us to the realization of emptiness, to the understanding of the interrelatedness of all beings and all conditions via penetrating the *three universal characteristics* to have all these understanding. Then you will know the importance of the three sets of Pure Precepts when you avoid all evil and keep your precepts. This is meritorious and when you cultivate the Dharma, all the ten meritorious actions will be performed. Then when you cultivate *all blessings and all merits and virtues and perfect them all*, do you know what will happen? These are the things that will help you through *in times of difficulties, in times of tribulation, in times of need, for you can invoke power of blessings*. That's why they will become useful and handy. If you don't have all these tools, you **cannot survive** within the **ocean of samsara**. You will become miserable. But when you have all these, it becomes so easy. You can even save them by advising them what to do.

Just like what I did, it is so easy. *Ask for forgiveness, repent, follow the advice of the Buddha, then develop wholesomeness and cultivate. Then invoke power of merits. Is it so difficult? It's so easy.* That's **why you must vow, life after life, when you come, you must have this understanding**. This is *how you can break the karmic obstruction*. Otherwise, it's not easy. It's pretty difficult. That's why when it comes to karma, you don't play a fool. It can **really obstruct** you and if you **don't know how to overcome** it, you will *become miserable*. You will **continue to play the game of suffering, life after life**, entangling yourself *through delusion*.

So, to find the path and to tread firmly along it, we **must undertake** and **commit** to the *Bodhisattva vows* and *precepts*. This is **the first step** we *should take to establish and maintain ourselves on a definite course that leads toward Buddhahood*. That's why you have to start from somewhere via **understanding** and **commitment**. *When the conditions are there, just persevere. Faith, sincerity and perseverance will take you along the way*. Then I will teach you *how to establish affinity* with the Great Beings, Buddha, Bodhisattvas and their nature. Then, **invoke power of merits** for their **blessings, protection** and **guidance**. Then thank them **profoundly, profusely** and **sincerely**. **Then have gratitude towards them**. It will build up the **causes** and the **conditions** and the **path** will be **very simple** after that, because you **don't have** to do it all **alone**. You develop *affinity and you connect*. **Then** all these **understanding** will come, *causes and conditions* will arise, your *form and mind* which is **very delicate, fragile and vulnerable** will **survive** no matter what happens.

Okay. The next one is **very important**. On the Vinaya Practice, to help us put our vows into practice and provide ourselves with a clear set of behavioural guidelines, we commit ourselves to a code of discipline set forth in a given system of precepts. The

Sanskrit term for these various codes or systems is Vinaya, which can be translated into English as "discipline" or "restraint." That's why when taking our precepts we always chant, '*we undertake the training rule to abstain, to restrain from violating the precepts*'.

According to the scriptures, Sākyamuni Buddha did not establish a set code of conduct for his disciples during the **first twelve years of his teaching**. {Now you understand. There was no Pātimokkha for the first twelve years because they are **all enlightened beings**. Also because the early practitioners achieved such a high level of spiritual attainment and had such strong, deep, and positive karmic roots that they never engaged in any sort of unwholesome or destructive activity. Then, later on, as a lot of **not so learned** monks came in, the situation warrants rules. It was not until the **occurrence of specific instances of misconduct** that **threatened the integrity of the Sangha** and the **ability of his disciples to practise the liberation path** that the **Buddha began to institute rules** of behaviour for his followers. That's why you have more and more rules added until a total of 227. Thus we should note here that the precepts were **not founded** in a vacuum on **a set of abstract** principles, but in **direct response** to **specific problems** that arose within the **earliest community of practitioners**.}

So the intention behind the establishment of the Vinaya was not to randomly impose a set of **disciplinary strictures on practitioners**, but rather **to give them a set of realistic guidelines** that would **help them persevere** in following the teachings of the Buddha and, **ultimately, attain liberation**. Actually, the precepts are more of a guideline. They are **needed only** when you are **under training**. The Buddha didn't want you to fall. If He didn't introduce the precepts, a lot of people **will take it lightly** and they will fall because they will say, '*The Buddha never said I cannot do this. Who are you to tell me?*' So, at least, when the precepts are there, they have this fear. But **fear is not the intention** of the Buddha. It's a sort of **restraint** while you are going through the cultivation.

That's why the precepts say you cannot sit on high seats. Why? Because if you don't have these rules, all the monks will tell you, they will not only be waiting for dana or offering, they will ask for it. Can you change this? Then the devotees will come, 'Bhante, what else do you want?' Then, they will give them a long list. But because of the Pātimokkha, the chairs and beds also cannot be fanciful. So, all these are **meant for cultivators**. It's to train them. Then the other thing about the Pātimokkha is... - can you remember the **Diamond Sutra** sharing that we went through? What happened during the **first five hundred years** during the Buddha's time? The first five hundred years were so beautiful. There was this very **strong golden age** of **liberation and enlightenment** when all become enlightened very fast. Then the **second five hundred**

years was the *era of Dhyana Samādhi*, **energy field** and **concentration** or the Hindu style of meditation came back. Then the *third five hundred years* was the *era of Sutra*. Then after that, the *fourth five* hundred years, which is the year 1600AD and beyond, all the *divisions, the techniques and methods* of meditation etc appeared, exactly like what the *Buddha had predicted*. All the *divisions via methods and techniques and teachers* are very common nowadays. So when you don't understand, that is the problem. The Buddha told his disciple, Ven. Ananda, 'only the **maintenance** of the Vinaya would *ensure* the **continued existence** of the **Dharma**.' That's why **without** the **Vinaya rules**, the Sangha will *become misguided*. But **when the rules are not understood**, they **also won't serve** the **purpose**. Then people *will understand it through other definition or justification*. He went on to say that what He meant was **the fundamental principles of Vinaya practice** as embodied in the **five major precepts prohibiting killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, verbal misconduct, and using intoxicants**.

So, these five precepts are the **minimum** that, you must keep, even for lay people because this is the **essence of morality**. The others are **minor precepts**; spin off from all these **strong fundamental precepts**. As for the **multitude** of detailed **minor precepts upheld** by the monastics, which had been formulated *in response to particular incidents*, the Buddha gave his **followers permission to dispense with them as needed**, should **changing circumstances** cause such rules to become more of a **hindrance** than a help. He added that in no way should **codified sets of regulations** prevent his followers from performing **beneficial actions** in given situations, and that should they encounter ethical practices which conform to the spirit of the Vinaya and prove to be of benefit, but which he had not specifically mentioned, **they should not hesitate to adopt** them.

The Buddha is so flexible. He is **not rigid**. As for the rest, you can read on by yourself. I will have to skip through the five precepts and the ten meritorious actions. Now turn to page 29. The **three sets of Pure Precepts**. This one is **very important**. The precepts that have been discussed are **common to both Theravada, the vehicle of individual liberation and to all schools of the Mahayana in which emphasis** is placed on the **Bodhisattva practice, striving for the benefit of all sentient beings**. So the **essential purpose of transmitting** the **Bodhisattva precepts** is to **arouse in people's minds** an **altruistic spirit of service to others** and **a firm dedication to the pursuit of enlightenment**. Such spirit is called the **Bodhi-mind**. Bodhi is a Sanskrit word derived from the same root as Buddha, and it can be translated to mean awakening, enlightenment or wisdom. The **foundation** of the **Bodhi-mind is embodied** in the **four great vows** we take: *to deliver innumerable sentient beings, to cut off endless vexations, to master limitless approaches to the Dharma, and to attain supreme Buddha hood*. To

help us actualize these four vows, we need to vow further to observe certain principles and guidelines that may help us **conduct ourselves in an ethical and humane manner** and *purify our minds* of the **three poisons of craving, aversion, and ignorance**.

For this purpose, here we transmit what are known as the **three sets of pure precepts**. This is how they come in, please do listen, they contain the *essential principles* of all the different systems of **Bodhisattva precepts codified** over the course of *Mahayana Buddhism's long, rich history*. **Functionally**, these *three sets of Pure Precepts* lead a practitioner **to renounce evil deeds** by keeping the precepts, but they **never** emphasize **on what constitute evil**. That's why **you must understand what constitute evil?** I have **modified this** and made it a lot better. On the 26th April when you take these precepts, you will understand. Just now, I read through it already. Then, **accumulate merits by performing beneficial deeds**. Again, **it's not enough**. You *have to cultivate all virtues and blessings until you reach the perfection of them all*. And **work for the salvation of all sentient beings**. To do this, you need to **cultivate wisdom** so that you **can liberate and take them all across**. Then, **the vows to keep these precepts embody the spirit of all Mahayana Buddhist practices**, means **following the advice of the Buddha, to stop all evil, do good, and to deliver all sentient beings**. In a **very real sense** *these vows* can be seen as the **ultimate expression** of the *aspirations of all Buddhists in all eras*. This is very important.

We now turn to page 32. 'It is said that by **receiving** the *Bodhisattva precepts*, one **generates a vast amount of merits**'. That's why; **you must bear this in mind**.

This can be **understood** as follows:

'When you take the **Bodhisattva precepts**, a *seed is planted deep in your consciousness*. Because this *seed has been planted* for the **benefit** of all **sentient beings**, the **natural consequence** of its **maturation**, as you **nurture it** by **keeping the precepts**, is a **growth** in your **compassion** and a **weakening** in your **propensity to do harm**. With **sustained practice**, there **naturally arises** in you, a **tendency** towards **wholesome actions**. As you go through life *acting on the basis of love and compassion*, you will come to *experience a sense of security and stability*. Why is this so? Because, quite simply, you are no longer living your life in an **obsessively self-concerned, self-centered way**, *always worrying about your own well-being and feeling constantly threatened and insecure*'.

Now you understand why the *Theravada way* has **problems**. As your life is **dedicated to others**, you become **less and less concerned** with your **personal benefit, gain or loss**; consequently, you **no longer live in fear and cease to be agitated or plagued by**

suffering and vexations, **which are all caused by self-attachment** because you come for the living beings, no more about you. The **delusion is severed** and this is **very important**. You **achieve stability of mind**. The **stability and security** you *so experience then create, in turn, an atmosphere of stability and security around you as a person that is palpable* to other sentient beings. **They feel safe around you.**

That's why *when you are with me, you feel good, you feel safe and confident and you can trust me*. Then you **can grow in your cultivation and wisdom**. *So, you will have this ability when you go this way*. Then **people can feel you**. **They feel safe around you** because you, **out of genuine compassion and love, never intend to harm** them but only **try to be of help, they also feel a sort of joy in your presence**. They feel safe with you. They **can trust you**. They have **faith** in you.

Thus in an *immediate and very concrete way, after receiving the Bodhisattva precepts, you are benefiting sentient beings, a deed that generates a vast amount of merit*. And it is in this way that we **undertake the practice of the third set of pure precepts to deliver all sentient beings**. The **observance of this precept actualizes our intention as put forth in the four great vows, and sets us decisively and firmly on the Bodhisattva path**. By now, I hope you understand because this is **most important**; please make a note of it.

Then we will continue on page 35; on **violation of precepts**. The three sets of pure precepts and the four great vows, **once received by a practitioner, are maintained across however many lifetimes it may take for the recipient to attain complete enlightenment**. Once the **seed of compassion and wisdom**, also known as the 'essence of precepts', has been **sown in the mind of a practitioner** through the **transmission of the Bodhisattva precepts, it will remain in the recipient's 'storehouse consciousness' or alaya consciousness, in your deep nature, and can only be cast off through the recipient's express declaration of his or her intention to abandon the Bodhi-mind**. That's why you can still do that if you want to in the future. A *recipient of the Bodhisattva precepts cannot lose or negate the essence of precepts simply by breaking one of them*. Do not fear. After that, you will **still break** but you **will learn from it**. And later you will **understand it is never worthwhile to break them** until finally there is **no way you can break them**. Then, the rest, you can read them on your own.

We have to rush a bit because it's already 10.30pm. Oh, no more, that's good. The rest is not important because I didn't mark it yellow. Sadhu! (3x); we still have 1 minute left, do you have any question? Next Tuesday, make sure you come. Then we shall do it with understanding. Today's sharing is **very useful, very unique and very important**. Hope

the ***Bodhisattva way will flourish*** and ***Kalyāṇamittas will become very different***. Earlier on, it (the progress) was happening *year by year*, but now it's happening *day by day*, then later on, maybe *moment by moment* because the ***Kalyāṇamitta force*** has become ***so strong***; also, because of the ***Kalyāṇamitta funds*** and the way ***we share*** and the ***causes and conditions*** that ***we bring forth*** and of course ***the retreat*** etc. And also because over these last few years, the ***transcript books*** that came out, from 2014, 2015 and 2016 were ***very beautiful*** and ***very important***. The *moment living beings understand this teaching*; their ***cultivation*** will become ***very different***. And they will know how to ***overcome*** all their ***life problems*** with this ***understanding***. *They will know how to invoke power of merits to turn all their karmic obstacles around then their cultivation will become very simple*. Then the ***consciousness*** can become beautiful. That's why *from now onwards, a lot of things can happen to our world consciousness* and ***a lot of beings who understand will be rejoicing***. These events are ***very rare*** and yet ***they have the conditions to manifest***. That's why in the year 2008, the ***request came*** from *one of the great beings*. So, all these have come about because of ***causes and conditions***. Okay, do you have any more questions?

Question: Bro. Teoh, when you were doing the briefing, there was one section that you said 'it's good ***to retake the vow*** for a period of about three months'. Did I hear it right?

Bro. Teoh: Not to say retake the vow. You have to ***go through those Bodhisattva vows notes*** that I have given to you because ***they*** are the ***vows*** that you ***take*** so you have to ***familiarise yourself with it*** so as to enable you to develop the ***strong commitment, faith*** and ***sincerity to walk this way***. And as ***you reflect and contemplate***, you can develop ***deeper understanding***. Then *your nature will suddenly shine forth when you see the beauty and the benefits of going this way for the sake of living beings*. It is very different. At that time, I could still remember, when I was with my second last teacher, she talked about all these, and it connected through. Then ***deep inside my nature, it just arose the understanding***. Then later on, she also wrote to me and told me, I ***would continue from where I stopped*** (this way of the ***Bodhisattva***) and she also knew a lot of things about my nature. That's why it was ***very different***. That time, *my nature* already understood all these. The moment ***she mentioned all these, all the understanding just came back***. That's why I can now do it ***differently*** for all of you based on ***my nature's present understanding***.

And the ***way I evolve*** it is ***very different*** because I am ***an expert*** in one of the ***perfections*** called ***aspiration, vows or determination or affirmation***, which my nature has more or less perfected. Because of that, my nature knows how to use this perfection of Aditthana. That's why it can ***bring forth*** a lot of understanding, ***speed up***

the cultivation in a *very great way*, and it **can bring forth the understanding very fast** because **technically, you don't have to do anything**. You only need to do this *via invoking the power of merits and blessings*. Through the **nature's law**, it will pave the way for you to move.

I used to tell those Kalyāṇamittas who are close to me, **technically**, this life, **I didn't do anything**. When the *form and mind* came it already has all the causes and conditions, **all planted from the past**. That's why everything is **so direct and smooth and like so perfect**. It just happened by itself. How is this possible? It is possible because of the **understanding from the past**. The reason being this nature **has set the vows and aspirations** to be *so straight and so clear*. That's why **every life it comes, it will have this understanding** and everything is already taken care of. I don't have to depend on anybody or anything. Everything is **self-sufficient** and I just **accord and flow and share; if no condition, nothing will happen**. *If you have the affinity and the condition*, you will come. How do I create affinity with living beings? Can you remember?

I had this one **very unique additional vow**, - *'whomsoever who arises as food for this nature of mine to take, I vow to liberate them all.'* That's why you can become food for this nature to eat, and you will benefit. That's why all those fishes that I eat, they will have affinity. *But then how many can I eat? Of course in one life, not that many right? But over the eons and eons, it can be many*. That's why a lot of you could have been fishes or any of these meat that I had taken before. But *most of you might have affinity with my nature in other ways*. Just like this life's affinity. Initially, maybe as fish, as animal, or chicken or satay, but later on, **when you understand**, you develop **different understanding**. Then we **become Kalyāṇamittas like this life**. Then we can have such **unique** affinity.

Do you think this affinity come about by chance? It's not by chance and I can say maybe in future, you will understand. That's why we went to Putuoshan, and do you remember **Guan Yin's nature**? Then we went to Emei Shan, Jiu Hua Shan and Wutai Shan; do you remember what some of the Kalyāṇamittas said? They said, *'Wah! How nice* if I can have **affinity with all these Great Beings!**' For you never know, just like this life, you **may never know** what this **nature of mine is**; then let's say one day, you come to know what this nature is and its nature happened to be like one of these Great Beings, then **you will be in tears**. Then you can be like **what Mimi said**, *'you are with the living one, and yet you don't know* and you think *it's just an ordinary cultivator'*. Then in future, when this one becomes like one of these Great Beings with the statue, then you come back as a living being during the **next sāsaṇa**, then you go there on a **spiritual trip**, then you ask, *'How come tears flow from my eyes for no apparent reason? How come I can*

feel like there is a **very deep connection** with this being?' Do you know why? This is because you have met **this being** before but you **didn't know** who *this Being* was then. That's why when you go to all these **spiritual trips**, the tears can just flow. There's something happening and only *your nature* knows but *your thoughts* don't know because your **thought** which is this life's memory **can never know**. That's why **do not be deluded anymore. Don't 'sleep' anymore. Wake up**, okay? We had better end now. Okay. We will do the *sharing of merits and transfer of merits* then we can end.

**Ākāsaṭṭhā ca bhummatthā Deva nāga mahiddhikā Puññaṃ taṃ anumoditvā
Ciraṃ rakkhantu loka sāsanaṃ**

May all beings inhabiting space and earth, Devas and Nagas of mighty power, share this merit and may they long protect the Dispensation.

**Ettāvatā ca amhehi Sambhataṃ puñña sampadaṃ Sabbe deva ānumodantu
Sabba sampatti siddhiyā**

May all beings share this merit, which we have thus acquired And may all Devas rejoice, May it contribute greatly to their well-being and happiness.

Idaṃ me ñātinaṃ hotu Sukhitā hontu ñātayo (x3)

Let this merit accrue to our departed relatives and may they be happy.(x3)

**Devo vassatu kalena Sassa sampatti hetu ca Phito bhavatu loko ca Raja bhavatu
dhammiko**

May the rain fall in due season and (may there be) the right conditions for all good fortune, May the world be prosperous and peaceful, May the government, rulers and kings always be righteous.

**Iminā puñña kammaena Māme bāla samāgamo Sataṃ samāgamo hotu Yāva
Nibbāna pattiyā**

By the grace of this merit that I have acquired, may I never follow the foolish; but only the wise, up to the time I attain final liberation, Nibbāna. Sadhu! (3x)

C. Bodhisattva Way Special Puja dated 26.4.2016 (3rd sharing)

C.1 Introduction

A very good evening to all, brothers and sisters in the Dharma; tonight (26th April 2016) is a **very auspicious** night because we are going to hold a **special puja** to **commemorate** our **2.1.2015 commencement date** of our Bodhisattva **aspirations** and **vows** so that all those who have the **conditions** to be here can also **benefit** from it. As long as you have the **faith** and **sincerity** and you are **committed** to **improve** your selves and your **cultivation** to develop this **proper Dharma understanding** then you have the conditions to be here and there will be no problem. Don't **worries** about what people say or what your **thoughts** tell you; forget about them. This particular **aspiration** and **vows** will help you develop your **cultivation** and help you **plant** the **seed** of **Bodhi**, the **Bodhi mind** deep within your **nature** so that **in future** when you have to come or choose to come, this **Bodhi mind** will **manifest** even during era when the **Buddha dispensation** or **Sāsana** is *no more*. It will still manifest.

It will **remind** you of your **aspirations** and **vows** and the **cultivation**. As these vows and aspirations are very **powerful** and **magnificent** that's the reason why we make these **aspirations/vows** so that we can have **these right understanding** life after life whenever we arise. Hence this particular ceremony of taking the **3 sets of pure Bodhisattva precepts** together with the right **aspirations** and the **four basic vows** of the **Bodhisattva** will be very **beneficial** to **cultivators** especially those who have the **sincerity** and the **faith**. You only need to have the **faith** and the **sincerity** to **aspire** to go this way. Like what was stated in the WhatsApp message I sent out earlier; there are **5 stages** of Bodhi mind development to **cultivate** the **Bodhisattva way** and all these involve the **Bodhi mind**. After you have **planted** the **seed** of Bodhi, the **first stage** of **Bodhi mind development** or **step** which is to develop the **aspiration** to walk this way, to **commit yourself** to take these **precepts** and **vows** with **understanding** *has been established*.

I will explain the *understanding part* later. Because these **4 basic vows** will help you develop a lot of **wisdom** and **understanding**, **love** and **compassion** leading to the perfection of **renunciation**, **wisdom** etc. to enable you *to complete* this Bodhisattva hood **cultivation** to realize Samma Sambuddha hood. What you need are **just faith**, **sincerity** and **perseverance**. You **don't have** to be smart; you **don't need** to have good past etc. What is more important is, this life, if you have the **conditions** to make these **aspirations**, **vows** and **commit yourself** to **plant** this **seed of Bodhi** so that this **Bodhi mind** planted, can be **nurtured**, **grow**, **mature** and bring forth the **causes** and **conditions**

for you to have *this understanding* **life after life** to continue the cultivation. This is the **most important**. So, please *don't listen* to what people tell you or say.

Last week (Tuesday) I had already read out to you what **Master Sheng Yen** said, 'you have got **nothing** to lose but **everything** to gain by going this way because this way is **so beautiful**'. They can help you to do away with the **mark** of a **self**, an **egoic** mind, the **self-centeredness** of an **individual** walking this way and **striving** to realize enlightenment. When the Buddha said, '**Strive** on with **Heedfulness**;' He is not asking you to have the **craving** to become enlightened. Strive on with **Heedfulness** means to **work hard** to **train** your mind to develop the **Heedfulness**. After you have the Heedfulness, enlightenment in the here and now is guaranteed because the Buddha said under *Dhammapada verse 21*, 'the **heedful never dies**'. So, this is the meaning. It doesn't mean *you have to strive* when *you meditate*. No! You strive on with **faith**, **sincerity** and **diligence** to *train your mind* to have **Heedfulness**. The moment you are **Heedful**, you are **ever mindful** and then you can **understand** many things. And the **cultivation** will come to **fruition**. The **Noble 8-fold Path** will be understood. Then you can fulfill the **four basic vows** with **understanding**. Later on, I will explain more on all these.

Special Puja

We shall now prepare ourselves for the **special puja**. Compose your mind to develop the faith (Saddhā) leading to the Vīriya. Then we will start the Puja **offerings**. Now you all can stand **mindfully** and **form a line**. You can face each other if there are too many of you. We are on time, one more minute before the commencement of Puja at 8.10 am. Miss Lee, do you have anything to offer? ... Come, form a line. Compose your minds, develop the **saddhā**, **vīriya** and the **joy within**, and then we will commence the puja offerings. We will start off with the offering of the tray of **clear water**, **incense** and **candle light**. Sadhu! Sadhu! (Rejoicing with the puja offerings mindfully)..... **End of puja offering**.

C.2 Puja Chanting

You can be seated. **Compose** your mind to develop the **spiritual faculties** of faith (saddhā) and spiritual zeal (vīriya) then we shall **mindfully** commence the **Puja chanting**:

Nā Mó Běn Shī Shì Jiā Móu Ní Fó (南无本师释迦牟尼佛) (3x)

Nā Mó Guān Shì Yīn Pú Sà (南无观世音菩萨) (3x)

Nā Mó A Mi To Fó	(南无阿弥陀佛)	(3x)
Nā Mó Mi Le Fó	(南无弥勒佛)	(3x)
Nā Mó Pu Hsien Pú Sà	(南无普贤菩萨)	(3x)
Nā Mó Fó Pú Sà	(南无佛菩萨)	(3x)

Now we will chant the Theravada salutation to the Triple Gem:

Arahaṃ sammā-saṃbuddho bhagavā Buddhaṃ Bhagavantaṃ abdhivādemī. (Bow)

The Lord, the Perfectly Enlightened and Blessed one

I render homage to the Buddha, the Blessed One. (Bow)

Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo Dhammaṃ namassāmi. (Bow)

The Dharma is well-expounded by the Blessed One

I pay homage to the Dharma. (Bow)

Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho Saṅghaṃ namāmi. (Bow)

The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced well.

I pay homage to the Sangha. (Bow)

Turn to page 1 of the chanting book and we will start our Pāḷi chanting.

Vandanā

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-Sambuddhassa (3x)

Buddhaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.

Dhammaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.

Saṅghaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.

Dutiyampi Buddhaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.

Dutiyampi Dhammaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.

Dutiyampi Saṅghaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.

Tatīyampi Buddhaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.

Tatīyampi Dhammaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.

Tatīyampi Saṅghaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.

Pañca Sīla

Pānātipātā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi.
Adinnādānā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi.
Kāmesu Micchācārā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi.
Musāvādā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi.
Surā Meraya Majja Pamā daṭṭhānā Veramaṇī Sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi

Padīpa Puja

Ghana sārappa dittena Dīpena tama-dhansinā
Tiloka-dīpaṃ sambuddhaṃ Pūjayāmi tamo-nudaṃ
Gandha sambhāra yuttana Dhūpenāhaṃ sugandhinā
Pūjaye pūjanīyam taṃ Pūjā bhājana muttamaṃ

Vaṇṇa-gandha-guṇopetaṃ etaṃ kusuma santatiṃ
Pūjayāmi munindassa Siri pāda-saroruhe
Pujemi Buddhaṃ kusumena nena Puññaena metena ca hotu mokkhaṃ
Pupphaṃ milāyāti yathā idaṃ me Kayo tathā yāti vināsa bhāvaṃ

Adhivāsetu no bhante Pāniyaṃ parikappitaṃ
Anukampaṃ upādāya Paṭigaṇhātu muttamaṃ

Adhivāsetu no bhante Phale parikappitaṃ
Anukampaṃ upādāya Paṭigaṇhātu muttamaṃ

Adhivāsetu no bhante Bhojanā parikappitaṃ
Anukampaṃ upādāya Paṭigaṇhātu muttamaṃ

Making of **aspiration** based on our **understanding** of the **significance** of these puja offerings:

1.0 Significance of offering of lights

May this offering of lights to the Buddha bring forth the causes and conditions to illuminate our minds and help arise the needed clarity and understanding to dispel all darkness of ignorance therein.

2.0 Significance of offering water

May this offering of pure clear cool water lead us to the pure clear Dhamma that cools and douses off the fire of all defilements within our minds.

3.0 Significance of offering incense

May our morality, virtues and understanding shine forth far and wide just like the fragrance of this incense which we are offering to the Blessed One who is perfect in wisdom and virtue.

4.0 Significance of offering fruits

May this offering of fruits remind us of the dana, pāramī of generosity and the fruits of our karma so that we will diligently strive on with **heedfulness** to attain the path and fruition as soon as possible.

5.0 Significance of offering of flowers

May this **constant** offering of flowers to the Blessed One strengthen our **faith** and constantly **remind** us of the **impermanence** of this body so that we can **diligently** and **sincerely** strive on to cultivate Sīla, Samādhi and Panna leading to ultimate liberation, the bond-free Nibbāna

6.0 Making of overall aspirations

By the **power** of all these merits borne of these offerings, may our **spiritual faculties** of Saddhā, Vīriya, Sati, Samādhi and Panna be **further** strengthened until they become **Balas** or **Powers**.

(Note: These **5 spiritual faculties** are very important for **cultivation** and I will **elaborate** on it in more detail later today so that you all can have the **understanding** and **ability** to walk the **path** of Bodhisattva hood **with greater ease**. Once your **5 spiritual** faculties are **established**, your **meditation** and **cultivation** will become like **automatic** and **very easy**. After that, you don't have to worry anymore because you will progress all the way. Then together with your today's **understanding** and **sincere determination** or **affirmation**, **aspirations** and **vows**, it will plant the great **seed of Bodhi** for the **Bodhi mind** to take **root firmly within your nature** so that this **Bodhi mind** will **manifest itself whenever** you have *to come or choose* to come. Even though it is just the **beginning** journey of **walking** this *Bodhisattva way* for **most of you** but you all need **not worry** because the way is **not that** difficult **when** you **understand**. You just have **to aspire** with **deep faith** and

sincerity to walk this way **diligently** and the **first stage** for establishing that **Bodhi mind** will be **firmly** established and that by **itself** is very **important** and very **powerful**. The reason being **without** this *Bodhi mind being planted*, this way is as good as **non-existent**. You just **cannot walk** it because **without** the *Bodhi mind* you **cannot even** develop the **understanding** of the way. So, that *Bodhi mind* - that **enlightened** thought *to walk this way is very important*. That's the reason why we have to develop this understanding because the *Bodhi mind* **not only nurtures** your **spiritual nature** but it also *brings forth* the **causes and condition** for you **to walk** this way with **understanding**.

Then later on, you will **understand** how all these **vows** can help you to **develop great wisdom, understanding** and help in the **perfection** of all virtues to finally develop the **wisdom** needed to **sever** all vexations and develop the **sincere love** and **compassion** to **take living beings across**. All these you will come to **understand**, then you will make very **strong** aspiration so that life after life when you have to come or choose to come, you will **always have** this *true Dharma understanding*.

After that, you will **commit** yourself to understand these **rather important right views** so that life after life (whenever you arise) you will **not go** the **wrong** way. You will **not make** any more mistakes. Then after that, you will understand the **significance** of these **four basic** vows which you have taken on day one as you walk this path. Following the notes I send out, there are **5 stages** involved in the **Bodhi mind** development leading to the **perfection** of Samma Sambuddha hood. You don't have to worry about them, because the **first stage** is just **to aspire** to walk this way. This alone is going to bring forth **tremendous benefits**. After that when you have the **faith, sincerity** and **perseverance** to start to develop the **actual cultivation** with **understanding**, then **second stage** will come about. Stage 2 is **quite** easy. When you are able to **sever** and **endure all suffering and affliction/vexation** it means you have developed the **requisite wisdom**. Then you can develop the **perfection** of **renunciation** because all of suffering comes from **attachment, grasping** and **ones clinging** to the **5 aggregates** of form and mind. If you can **sever** all **suffering** and **vexation** it means you are able to **develop** the wisdom not to be **deluded** by this **phenomenal world** so that you will **not** grasp, cling or hold on to them. That's the reason why you will have the ability **to renounce** all these **worldly things** but yet you can **still live** in this *phenomena world* with **understanding**. You can use them when there are conditions for them to arise. All these are **great understanding** leading to **great perfection**. Then after that, you can cultivate the **third stage** via **realizing** your **true/Bodhi mind**, the **Buddha Nature**. All these will follow as you **cultivate** the **four basic vows** because when you **vow** to **penetrate** and **understand**

all Dharma in whatever manner - the **limitless way** to truth and you vow to **cultivate** them all; to **realize** them all; as you do this you will **realize** the enlightenment and your **nature** will **shine forth** and become **very different**. Then after that, you can **liberate** your mind to **relinquish/renounce Samsara** and you will **not attach** any more. Then you will walk this way **with ease** to cultivate the **fourth stage** to develop the **perfection**, the **ten perfections** to become Samma Sambuddha. Then the **fifth stage** is of course, the **consummation** or the **final realization** of all **wisdom** and **virtue**, the **perfection** of all the **ten perfections** leading to Samma Sambuddha hood. All these can happen because of the **first seed** of **Bodhi** planted today. If you **don't plant** this seed of Bodhi to **arise** the *Bodhi mind* (or *Bodhi Citta in the Tibetan tradition*), or the *enlightenment thought* to go this way to **perfect** the **Bodhisattva way** to become the Samma Sambuddha then it is **impossible** to walk this way.

This is the **seed** that **will mature** in you so that in future when you come (even **without** the *Buddha Sāsana*) you can still have the **understanding** to walk this way. That's the reason why earlier on, I said **don't miss** this **window** - meaning to **plant** this **Bodhi seed** so that **in future** when you have to come or you choose to come even **without** the Buddha Sāsana, that **seed of Bodhi** that has been planted **will manifest** and your **nature** will **know** and you **will connect** and you **will recall** and you **will be reminded** of **these vows** because **these vows** are like your **precepts**. Out of **love** and **compassion** for you, the Buddha introduced the **precepts** so that your **karmic nature** will not fall. So that you will know how to **avoid all evil**, do **good** and **purify** the mind to develop the wisdom. But the **four basic vows** go beyond that. They will help **do away** with your **self-centeredness**, the **egoic mind** that wants to be enlightened and that **strong ego** or **sakkāyadiṭṭhi** which is very **difficult** to root out. The **pitfall** that can **hinder** one from going this way is your **conditioned thoughts** or **thinking** which will tell you **many things**; that this way is so long, are you sure you can do it? Then what happens? **Fear** arises and that's the reason why you can get into trouble. Wherever there is **fear**, there is **delusion**. The *thought* is **not you**. When you **understand** that these **5 aggregates** of *form and mind* are just a **vehicle** and a **tool** for you to come, to do your **work**, to **perfect** your **cultivation**, to *develop* your **karmic nature** and your **spiritual** nature, then you will **understand** according to the **Diamond Sutra's teaching**. Then you will be able to cultivate **without** the **mark** of a self, etc.

That's how the ego can be 'watered' down and finally **eradicated/rooted out** through these **4 great vows** cultivation because you come for the living beings; it's **not** about *yourself anymore*. You vow to save the **limitless** living beings and **take them** all across.

Then you **vow to endure** and **sever** all **suffering**, all **vexations**, so that you will have the **wisdom** to cultivate **renunciation** so that you will **not hold** on to anything, no matter how **precious** or how **dear** they are because they are all **conditioned arising** phenomena hence **not real** and **not** what you think.

Then you will **vow to perfect** all **wisdom** so that you can have the **ability** to help all living beings and take them all across via doing the work of a Bodhisattva. That is how you can become very **different**. You will **understand** many things. Then you can **teach**, you can **share** because you are **no longer self-centered** and *egoic*. That's the reason why the **Bodhisattva way** is very **unique**, very different and **very beautiful**. Then, the last stage is of course, the consummate **perfection** of the ten perfections.

By the time you finish the first **three of the 4 basic vows**, you would have developed a lot of the perfections. The **first vow** will develop **love** and **compassion**, the **second vow** will develop **renunciation** and **wisdom** then the **third vow** is **perfection of wisdom**. When you perfect your wisdom, you will know how to make **aspiration, adhiṭṭhāna** and all those **affirmations**. Then your **Dana** or **generosity pāramī** is always there because you only give. There is **no self** involved, hence technically you never want anything, and you *never take anything* because you *understand everything* is just **condition-arising, causal phenomena**. And all these will become **very clear** to you as you go through this cultivation. That's the reason why it's all about **love, compassion, wisdom** and **renunciation**. Then regarding all the *other perfections* of **Vīriya, Generosity** and even **Sacca** or **Truth**, you will *automatically know how to perfect them* because you will know it's **never worthwhile to lie, to cheat, to deceive or go against all these nature's spiritual laws that govern life and existence**. All these **understanding** are **very beautiful**. Now we will continue with the **seventh puja** aspiration *on sharing of merits and transference of merits to all beings.*)

7.0 Sharing and Transference of Merits

May these merits be shared and transferred to all beings without exception especially to those who have the conditions and affinity to receive them. **Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!**

End of Puja

C.3 Invocation To The Devas

Now we will do the **invocation to the Devas**. I will recite the *English translation*:

'In this Universe in its entirety, let the deities/devas come here.

Let them hear the good doctrine of the King of Sages, which gives Heaven and Release (Nibbāna). This is the time to listen to the teaching (3x).'

Chanting of the pāḷi version as led by **Sister Eng Bee**:

*Samantā cakkavālesu
Atrāgacchantu devatā
Saddhammaṃ munirājassa
Suṇantu saggamokkhadaṃ
Dhammassavaṇakālo ayaṃ bhadantā (Repeat 3X)*

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsaṃbuddhassa (3x)

Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṃ Sammāsaṃbuddha
Vijjā caraṇa sampanno sugato
Lokavidū, Anuttaro purisa dammasārathī
Sathā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā-ti

Svākkhāto bhagavatā Dhammo Sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko
Opanayiko paccattaṃ Veditabbo viññūhi ti

Supatipanno bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho Uju paṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho
Ñaya paṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho Sāmīci paṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka
saṅgho
Yadidam cattāri purisa yugāni aṭṭha purisa puggalā Esa bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho
Āhuneyyo, pāhuneyyo, dakkhiṇeyyo Anjali karaṇīyo, Anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ
Lokassā ti
Sadhu (3x)

Now let us **pay respects** to the **Triple Gems** to **end the invocation** to the devas:

Buddhaṃ Pujemi, Dhammaṃ Pujemi and Saṅghaṃ Pujemi.

We will now chant the **Great Compassion Mantra** followed by the **Heart Sutra**. Maybe we chant them *one time each* because we don't have that much time to spare. Okay, you all can get ready to start. I will **ring the bell** then you can commence the chanting. (The chanting lasted about 9minutes)

C.4 Briefing prior to taking of the Bodhisattva vows

Now I will do the briefing **before** we **take** the *Bodhisattva Vows, Precepts or Aspirations* and the *4 basic vows*. I will guide you along.

This book '**The Method of no Method**' came last Sunday when Sister Yoon Chun had an appointment with me. She was **so kind** as to take me and my wife, for **dinner**. After that, she told me she went to Taiwan ... she followed the **tour organized** by the **Tzu Chi English** section group. But this time, she went to visit **Master Sheng Yen's** Fa Gu San again. Then she brought back two books. One of the books is this book with the title '**The Method of No Method**' and She said, 'Just like Brother Teoh's teaching on **Method never defines the meditation**'. For those who **don't** understand '**what is meditation?**' they will believe that the **meditation method** do **defines** the meditation.

That's the reason why he never used the word meditation. He said the '**Method of no Method**'. When you meditate with a method, it means you **don't understand** what meditation is. **Method** is just a **skillful mean** with some instructions to **train** your mind.

She asked me, 'Brother Teoh, do you want to read this book?' The title is **so interesting** and she passed it to me and initially *I thought it was about meditation*. But it turned out to be a **retreat conducted** by him in 1990s at their Fa Gu San, branch in *New York, U.S.A.* This book *became a bestseller* and it is *indeed a very beautiful book*. He taught '**Silent Illumination**' which was the **meditation** that *he learnt all those years*. His 'Silent Illumination' teaching is in fact quite **similar to what I teach** except that I used another **name/word** to describe it. I call it the **silent mind in pure awareness**.

I always said, '**meditate** with the **silent mind** with **clear awareness** within'. He also knew that silent **without illumination** is **Samatha meditation**; later I will read to you, then you will understand. **Illumination** is **awareness**. You must have the ability to be **silent (with a free mind)** with **full awareness** in the midst of your **daily life**. And that type of **Samādhi** is the **real one**, not the one that **sits** like a **statue** and has **no** illumination.

Illumination **doesn't** mean see light. It means **clarity** and **awareness** within. It can **live** life, it can **understand** things, and it can **awaken** to the truth, **not in absorption, not in one-pointedness concentration**. Then there's another part which he talked about - the **Bodhi mind** which was what I wanted you all **to develop** the **understanding**. But I **didn't expect** this topic to come **so fast**. At first, I thought I will teach you all **stage by stage**, initially *maybe just to let you understand* the **importance** of **planting** the **seed of Bodhi**, to develop the **Bodhi resolve to walk this way**. Then only I will **slowly teach** you all the other things. But then, **this book came in the nick of time**. When I read it last night, I was **full of joy** because the part on the **Bodhi mind** is *very beautiful*. Then I decided to Photostat the book for some of you. But before I send it for Photostatting, I used my handphone to WhatsApp the three **important pages** for you all to read first. The **five stages** of **Bodhi mind** development *to realize Samma Sambuddha hood* is clearly listed in those pages (39-41) of his book.

When you take the Bodhisattva vows, the **first stage** of Bodhi mind development is to **aspire sincerely** to walk this way so that the **seed** of Bodhi is **planted deep** in your consciousness. Is this **first step** *very difficult? Is there any danger? There is none isn't it?* So forget about what these people tell you. Those who **don't understand**, they put **fear** into people. They say, "Don't 'play, play'. Taking the Bodhisattva vows is a **serious** matter because it involved eons and eons of cultivation." Meaning the **ego** is there, **delusion** is there. And the **fear** that **arises** is from **delusion** and these people who say all these things are *not much different* from those 'rigid' Theravada Buddhists, who **doesn't** believe in the *Mahayana teaching*, and they go around telling people that the **Mahayana** teaching is **not the real** teaching. If **you do this** and **put fear** into all these **potential aspirants** who wants to **walk** the Bodhisattva way, to plant the **seed of Bodhi**, *then do you know what will happen to you?* You will be **obstructed** (karmic obstruction) from receiving this **Mahayana teaching** for many, many lives to come. That's the reason why recently, there were at least two or three kalyāṇamittas who came and talked to me on this matter, *because of what they had heard and read from other source*. They said, *'going this way is very dangerous, because a lot of things you cannot realize or do and there are a lot of restrictions too.'* Some even quoted the Sutta.

Then a lady said, 'I am not ready. I don't have this type of quality.' Then I replied, 'Please do understand that all these are the **thoughts** telling you. This is **not** wisdom. What have you **got to lose** by **making all these aspirations** and the **taking of the four basic vows**? Does it causes you **any problem** or **harm** or it **only benefits** you? All these are **very simple** inquiries. And the four basic vows didn't even say you cannot do this or

you cannot do that. It's **no different** from just taking the **precepts** except now you **vow** through **an understanding** which is **even more beautiful**. So I will give this book to those who have the **understanding, condition** and **affinity** to **receive** it. Yoon Chun you have the original book isn't it? So you don't need a copy.

Sister Yoon Chun: 'I don't know where I misplace it?'

Bro. Teoh: Anybody saw the **original** book of Sister Yoon Chun? Wah! Yoon Chun. Fantastic, isn't it? Dharma book also can 'let go'.

With this I will commence the **actual sharing**.

C.5 Cultivating the Bodhisattva Way

Those who can see their WhatsApp can refer to it while I read out the part on the **5 stages** of **Bodhi mind** development. This book is based on a **meditation retreat** conducted by Master Sheng Yen in the year 1990. There were two parts to this retreat. The first part was conducted by Master **Sheng Yen** himself. And the second part, he based it on *a very famous Zen master or Dharma master Hong Zhi's* teaching. It seems *Hong Zhi* is the **second generation** disciple of Master **Hui Neng**, the **sixth Patriarch**. *These are very beautiful teachings.*

This Master Hong Zhi taught the '**silent illumination**' meditation. I think **Master Sheng Yen** must have **learnt from him**. Both are very beautiful sharing and teaching. I like this part - 'The Fifth Day sharing' when he spoke on the topic '**arousing** the **Bodhi mind**'. Now I will read it to you.

"To have the **Bodhi** mind or **Bodhicitta** is very important. In the Tibetan tradition, you always hear them talk about **Bodhicitta**, - to arouse the **Bodhi mind**. Bodhi means enlightenment. Just like Bodhi tree means the tree of Enlightenment."

Do you all remember? - When we were at Taiwan, about two or three years back; I think a lot of Kalyāṇamittas went with us. Even Bro. Swee Aun's mum was also with us. We went to the temple, **Zhong Tai Chan Shi**... What did the Abbot who was over 90 years old told us in the booklet he wrote? He said he built this **way** place **not** to become **famous**, *not to be a monument* for **tourists** to come and visit. Do you know what his **main intention** was? He said, 'Millions will come and visit this place every year especially those who have the **affinity**.' He only need to have **at least** one of them, after

they come and visit, they can feel, recall their past and **renew** their **seed** of Bodhi or **plant** the seed of Bodhi to walk this way. Or those who have the affinity can develop the **faith** when they are here, and they somehow got the condition **to decide to plant** the **seed** of **Bodhi**. He said that **single wholesome thought of Bodhi is very important** and if **even only one living being among the many that go that way finally realizes** Samma Sambuddha hood, then all the money and expenses and the hard work they do is already worth it. This is how **cultivators** of the **way** will **understand** all these. That's the reason why they will do a lot of these **wholesome things**. We were there at their temple, and it was **so beautiful**. We were **so fortunate**. They even invited us all to go up to the **very top** level of the pagoda, which was about seven or nine storey high and that *special Buddha rūpaṃ* which was house inside it, I think is the **medicine Buddha** ... and we have the chance to go to the **uppermost floor** to see it and they even took us to all the rooms to see all the other beautiful Buddha rūpaṃ and relics; the energy there was **so soothing** and **so good**. When you are there **your faith** will be **enhanced** and this is what he meant by having the conditions to **'plant the seed of Bodhi with faith to walk the Bodhisattva way'**.

To have **Bodhi** mind is to arouse the **altruistic** mind of enlightenment. Do you know *what the meaning of altruistic is?* Altruistic means doing something **without** expecting anything in return and if you can do that it means you are **very beautiful** in your **understanding**. You just **want** to help **without** any expectation in return which means you do it for others, **'Service above Self.'** So, an **altruistic mind of enlightenment** is *really beautiful* because you just *want to help people develop the understanding* and the wisdom **leading** to their **awakening** and do things for the **good** of the many; devote your service for the **welfare** of the many.

Then he said **without** the **Bodhi** mind, one can **at best** liberate oneself or practice **worldly** samādhi. This is **very true**. That's the reason why if you **don't plant** the **seed** of Bodhi and walk this way, at best you can only **'liberate oneself'** or practice **worldly** Samādhi, - the samādhi in which one still has attachment. Do you know the meaning? This is what he means by **thought-based** meditation because the **self** is very strong, the **sakkāyadiṭṭhi** (self-delusion), the self striving, meditating, doing all these things. So, he said if you do this **without** the **Bodhi mind** - meaning the **enlightenment thought** which is your **true mind**, if you don't **meditate** with your **true mind**, if you use your **mundane mind** or **thoughts** to **meditate**, then what happens?

One can **at best liberate oneself** - *meaning you think there is a person to liberate or practice worldly samādhi*. So when you *base it on thought-based dharma knowledge*, do

you know what type of samādhi you will have? You may think you have got the dharma, and you may also think you have the samādhi but the fact is *you still have attachment*. That's the reason why he said **'you practice worldly samādhi'** - the samādhi in which one still has attachment. Therefore the **Bodhi mind** is the **foundation** and the **primary focus** of all **Mahayana practitioners** who *walk* the Bodhisattva way. **Renunciation** means **disavowing** attachment, **fame**, **self benefit** and **worldly attachment** or **clinging**. As our **interest** in *worldly phenomena* **diminishes** our **self-centeredness** also **diminishes**. You cultivate **without** the *mark of a self because you come for the living beings*. That's the reason why all these attachments, they will go. Then **what is renunciation?** Renunciation is **to renounce** *all those things that are not real* so that you don't deludedly **attach, cling** and **hold on to them** and *he didn't explain* this part because to him, he assumes others should understand.

But the deep meaning is the **final summary** of the first Noble Truth of Suffering that the Buddha *expounded or proclaimed*. What is the final summary? What did the Buddha say? *In short, it is due to your self-delusion that conditions you to cling, grasp and hold onto the five aggregates of form and mind, the Upādāna khandha (5 grasping aggregates), that is the cause of suffering*. That's the reason why **craving** is the **cause** of suffering because when you **grasp, cling** and **hold**, you have **craving**, you **want things** your way. You believe all these **are real**, your **fame**, your **reputation**, your **form and mind**, your **physical body**, your attachments; you **cling** to your **possessions, your wealth, your loved ones**, all these you hold; including the **phenomenal world**, your *property, your wealth, your business, everything else*. Do you think you can own anything? - Your *prized possession, or antique, etc., even your own beautiful wife, cars, spouse and all these things*. When you understand **attachment** is the **cause** of suffering, then you will understand why you must cultivate the **opposite** of attachment which is **renunciation**. You **renounce** the world, the *phenomenal world*; you renounce **all that which is unreal, condition-arising, and dependent-originating**. So, that's the reason why when we took the **vow** *to sever all vexations and all suffering*, we are **cultivating renunciation**.

When you can cultivate until you can **endure** and **sever** all suffering, it means you have **no more** suffering, **no more** attachment, **no more** clinging, **no more** grasping etc.; that's how **renunciation can be perfected** and *renunciation is also one of the ten perfections* to be a Samma Sambuddha. But the Theravada tradition only **teaches one particular type** of *renunciation*. What is that? - *Going forth to become a monk*. You **renounce** the world by shaving your hair and taking the monk's precepts and that is *only one part*,

Kāyaviveka or self or physical-renunciation. *Physical renunciation means you renounce all of your possessions, your loved ones, all physical things but your mind, your thoughts, your ideas, your views, your opinions, etc. you are still holding on to them because your clinging and your grasping, they are so strong. That's why the true renunciation is when there is no more delusion, no more suffering. The reason why you vow to endure and sever all vexations and suffering is to develop this type of wisdom. It's not non attachment, its wisdom that leads to renunciation, of everything that is unreal.*

That is the **real renunciation** and you have to **perfect** that, that's how all these vows can lead to all these perfections. The *second basic vow*, **to endure** and **sever** all vexation or suffering is **not** to ask you to **just endure** suffering. No! **Endure with wisdom** and then **sever** them all so that in **future**, they have **no power** over you. That's the reason why you *cannot hold, cannot cling, cannot grasp, hence no need to let go.* Who let go? **Only those who cling and grasp need** to let go. *Without these vows, you cannot develop this wisdom and perfection.*

Then you vow to liberate and take across all living beings. How are you going to do that **without love and compassion?** That's why you must have **love** and **compassion** for living beings because *you come for the living beings out of love and compassion.* And this is **the mind** that you **need** to **enable** you to come for rebirth. You **no longer** have **delusion** because as a Bodhisattva who *had cultivated long enough, most of them are already enlightened.* Since they have the ability and their minds had already **realized Bodhi**, so **technically** they don't have to go through **rebirth anymore** because there is no more **avijjā or ignorance**, at the **point of death** or Parinibbāna. If they cannot take **normal rebirth** then how do they come to this world?

They come through **love** and **compassion**. They 'pull' out this **pure mind** through their **vows**. That's the reason why you have to **take** the Bodhisattva vows ... This vow will trigger off the **pure** mind of **love** and **compassion** to take **rebirth** via *a form and mind* through their **karmic nature** which is still there. That's how they can come. Without this, they cannot come. The **first** vow is to cultivate **love** and **compassion**. This is **pure** virtue; **pure** mind states **without greed, hatred and delusion** hence **no delusion**. Yet it **can still come** because it **needs** a mind to come. Ultimately via the cultivation, you will know that there is **no self, no mark** of a **living being**, etc. so is there any living being to say all these? But the **conditioned** world's Law of Karma **recognizes** living beings. That's the **reason why there is suffering within the conditioned world**. There is this Noble 8-Fold Path. There is old age, sickness and death, birth and enlightenment etc. But as stated in

the Heart Sutra, 'in true emptiness, all these do not exist'. That's the reason why the **Bodhisattva's wisdom** is different, their understanding is different, and their cultivation is also very different. After you **have love and compassion**, you develop **wisdom** via the **2nd basic vow** to **endure** and **sever all vexations and affliction** through **renunciation**; then **no more** attachments or delusion to **cling** and to **grasp**. Then the **third basic vow** is to **perfect** and **penetrate** all dharmas - meaning *cultivation of the perfection of wisdom*; Prajna pāramitā. **That's how** from there **you can develop** the **wisdom** to **perfect** the **10th perfection** which is the **last basic vow** of a Bodhisattva to realize Samma Sambuddha hood. *Then each and every one of us who walk this way, our nature* will be different. Then, you can add in your **other vows** that are **unique** to you just like **what most Bodhisattvas have done**. Those vows are under **miscellaneous** vows. Later I will explain in *more detail* these *miscellaneous vows* to you.

We will have to move on a bit faster. The analogy here as given by Master Sheng Yen is quite good. Master Sheng Yen said, 'If a boat is filled with rocks and if more and more rocks are piled on to it, the boat will **eventually sink**. Similarly, when our **self-importance** and **self-centeredness, attachments** are **extremely heavy**, the **burden** of our suffering or vexation can **sink** the boat and we will be **unable to sail into the ocean** of wisdom with ease'. *Why is it called the ocean of wisdom?* - Because **Life itself** is your **greatest teacher**. If you don't have **affliction** because you have **clarity** of mind, you have **virtues, love, compassion, wisdom** and **renunciation**, then you can **sail freely** into the **ocean of wisdom** which is **Samsara or life** itself.

If through **renunciation**, our vexations are lightened or severed, the boat **can sail** smoothly. It will become Prajna, the **boat of wisdom** carrying us to the other shore. So all these is what the **cultivation** is all about. To have **compassion** means *sacrificing* 'oneself' for the **benefits** of others while **simultaneously** lessening your own **self-attachments** and **delusion**. Some **serious** practitioners tend to have more and more of the **mind** of **renunciation** and **less of compassion**. This is also **one-sided** according to Master Sheng Yen. They like to practice **alone** and prefer **not** to have **responsibilities**. This is a kind of **escapism**. That's the reason why a lot of cultivators enter the forests and end up becoming hermits. If they cultivate in the forests then later come out into **life** to **perfect or test** themselves then *it is beautiful*.

They live alone and then they develop their own cultivation. The **real** meditation is **life itself** so you **cannot** run away from life. It's as if every time the cultivators have problems, what do they do? They go for retreats, right? We have seen a lot of these people. They will say, 'I think I must go for retreat because the **world is crazy**. I cannot

survive. I cannot live.’ If the Buddha is also like that, then he is **not** the Buddha. He is the Buddha because he is always **at peace** *whether in the world and out of the world*. That’s the reason why if you cultivate until you **cannot tolerate** *society*, you **cannot** tolerate the *daily life’s problems*, you **cannot tolerate so many things**, and you become **so sensitive** and **so miserable** then you better **check** your *cultivation* because *definitely* that is the **wrong** practice - **not** the Buddha Dharma. So you have to be **careful** like what Master Sheng Yen said, this is a **type of escapism**. The same attitude occurs when that person wants to enjoy the **good things** in marriage but **not willing** to take responsibility. They want to have the **nice moments, honeymoon**, etc. but after that, - the **responsibility to raise the child** and all those other things, they **don’t want**. So, this is Master Sheng Yen’s analogy. Then he said on the one hand he **seeks happiness** and on the other hand, he **avoids responsibility**. Do you remember the qualities of the **Noble Sangha** of the Buddha? They are of **wise conduct**, of **good** and **responsible/dutiful** conduct etc.? That’s why *they hold onto their responsibilities*, their **duties** with *regards* to the **Law of Karma** and **other nature’s law that governs life and existence**. That’s the reason why they never **neglect** their duties.

Of **good conduct**, of **upright conduct**, of **wise** conduct and of **dutiful** or **responsible** conduct is the order of the **noble disciples** of the Buddha and these are the **marks** and **virtues** of **enlightened beings**. If you *don’t have these qualities* then you have to check your cultivation.

Apart from **sincerity** and **trust** a good marriage must also have both components of **happiness** and **responsibility**. The same apply to **Bodhi** mind, it is necessary to have **compassion** as well as **renunciation**. Renunciation is **wisdom, ability not** to cling, not to hold, can renounce anything, no problem. *Even this very moment, the breath can stop, also no problem. ... Because this form and mind is just a condition-arising entity and it is not what you think. That’s why it’s impermanent. If you grasp, cling, hold, it leads to suffering. And because it is impermanent, it’s not a permanent unchanging entity, it’s not you. That’s the reason why it’s non-self, empty, not what you think.* So this is the **important understanding** one has to develop when one **cultivates** the **Bodhisattva way**. Then Master Sheng Yen says **wisdom** is **not** attained by **wishing** but by **decreasing** the **self- delusion, self-attachment** and your **suffering or vexations**, so you **cannot** wish for *wisdom*.

‘I wish I will be wise one day; I wish I will be enlightened one day.’ Who is wishing? The **thought wish**, but the **thought cannot realize**. That’s why Master Sheng Yen said, you have to **cultivate** to reduce **Sakkāyadiṭṭhi (self-delusion)**, your **suffering** and your

vexations. You have to cultivate **virtues** and **wisdom**. To this end, we **generate** the *Bodhi mind* through **renunciation** and **compassion**. If we have renunciation **without** compassion, we will **reject** the world and develop **negativity**. If we have compassion **without** renunciation, we will be **attached** to the world with a **seeking** mind. So **compassion** and **renunciation** are **inseparable** in the *Bodhi mind*. You must have **love**, **compassion**, **renunciation** or **wisdom**. When you renounce, it means you are not attached; if you **don't cling** it means you have **wisdom**. That's the reason why the **perfection** of **renunciation** is the cultivation of **wisdom**. So *compassion* and *renunciation* are inseparable in the *Bodhi mind*. Together they are called the Bodhi mind. The **four great basic vows** of the *Bodhisattva* are very important. When the **Bodhi mind** is founded on *renunciation and compassion*, the **practice** and **cultivation** of the *Bodhi mind* **rests** on these **four great vows**. That's the reason why *we chant every day*, '**I vow to deliver the innumerable sentient beings. I vow to endure and cut off the endless vexations or suffering.**' You should change the word to '**this nature of mine**' vows instead of '**I**' vow to master the **limitless approach to Dharmas** and finally '**this nature of mine**' vow to *attain Supreme Buddha hood* through the **perfection** of the **ten perfections** to be a Samma Sambuddha.

To **fulfill** the **first vow** of delivering sentient beings, we also need the **second vow** which is to **eliminate** our own **vexations** or suffering while helping others to be free of theirs. Because if you **can't overcome** your own **vexations** or **suffering**, how can you **liberate** living beings? You can't even solve your own problems. That's why they come together as a pair. You must develop the **wisdom** to **endure** and **sever** all **vexations**. You must learn **different ways** to help living beings and that is the reason why **we vow to study** and **master** the **different** approaches to Dharma so that you can be **effective**. Otherwise, you **cannot teach**. ... Then how come this nature of mine, this life, can teach? Everyone is **so different**, so do you think it's **easy** to teach? If you don't have that **kind of** understanding, you **cannot teach** because everyone is **so different**, **so unique**, and their **karmic background**, etc., and **everything else** are so different. This is the **third basic vow**. As this task is being fulfilled, we will also cultivate to become a Samma SamBuddha which is the **fourth basic vow**. We begin by dedicating ourselves for the **benefit** of **sentient beings** and only at the last vow, do we **aspire** to **realize** Buddha hood.

Therefore while the **spirit** of *Bodhi mind* is **renunciation** and **compassion**, (Pg 40 of the book) the **body** of *Bodhi mind* is **fulfilling** the **four great** vows. In fact, the *four great vows* **embody** *renunciation and compassion* and *renunciation* is actually *wisdom*. For

example, the vow to deliver sentient beings is **love** and **compassion**. But we can **only** accomplish this by **renouncing sakkāyadiṭṭhi** or **self-centeredness** and **self-delusion** before we can **renounce** our own *vexations*, **endure** and **sever** them all. But it's only with **Love** and **compassion** that we can truly **help liberates** living beings and **relieves** them from their own suffering. Thus the **four great vows** are actually **expedient ways** to accomplish these three **great qualities** of **Bodhi mind** which is **love, compassion** and **wisdom** or **renunciation**. Some will wonder how they can fulfill even the first of these 4 basic vows. They will say, it is **hard enough** just to practice for our **own** Enlightenment; - this is the thought saying! However one should see the vow as statement of **intention** not **promises** to **achieve** something by a certain day or time. The **vows** are **not** necessary meant to be accomplished **in one lifetime** rather the vows give us a **long term direction** and a **sense of dedication**. Step by step, we **gradually fulfill** the vows. What you need (this is not mentioned in his book) is **your faith, your sincerity, perseverance** and **endurance**.

Unless we generate the **four basic** great vows, we should **not** consider ourselves **Mahayana** practitioners or **cultivators** of the way who walk the path of Dharma to become Samma Sambuddha. The Zen practice is basically **dharma cultivation**. When we cultivate in the **spirit** of the *Bodhi mind* to **fulfill** the *four great vows* via Zen meditation it is **no different** from normal Dharma practice where we also establish a goal and a direction. *We walk towards this goal* according to our **own pace** and we walk on this path **toward** our destiny. Guided on the path by **renunciation** and **wisdom**, we will have the **wisdom** to help others. We have talked about the **Four Noble Truth**, the **Three Marks** of Existence, the **Bodhi mind** and the **Four Great Vows** and we have learned how to sit in **Silent Illumination**. The purpose of all these is to **terminate** affliction (meaning suffering), self-importance (or sakkāyadiṭṭhi), grasping and clinging. We do all these so that we will be in a **better position** to help others.

We use the above **essential dharmas cultivation** and **wisdom** to cut off vexations in ourselves and help others do the same. In so doing, we realize **renunciation** and **compassion** which is none other than the **Bodhi mind**. That's the reason why when you are **no longer** deluded, you **don't cling**, you **don't attach**, because you have **wisdom** and that's also the reason why you can **renounce** all *the illusion*. In the *Avatamsaka Sutra* or *Flower Ornament Sutra* or *Huayan Jing*... there is this phase, when the **Bodhicitta** or **Bodhi mind** is **generated**, one *ultimately attains Buddha hood*. That's why you **need to plant** that seed, so that it can arise the conditions for you to be **reminded** of these **cultivation, vows** and **understanding** life after life. This is a **teaching of awakened mind**

entering the **path** of Buddha hood **arousing Bodhi mind**, may be much or it may be little, but it is **an accomplishment**. You *may not fulfill this path completely* but you have at least **gained a strong foothold**. And you are certain to attain Buddha hood in the future. In that sense, one attains Buddha hood when **Bodhicitta is generated**. Someone who gives rise to *Bodhicitta* and **also vows to benefit all living beings** is a **Bodhisattva**.

Then we come to the **stages of Bodhi mind** development. This is the one I want to share with you all tonight. **Arousing Bodhi mind establishes one on the path to Buddha hood** but it is still **an embryonic Buddha hood**. According to the Mahā Prajna pāramitā Sutra, the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, complete Buddha hood is realized after you have **fulfilled all the five stages of Bodhi mind** development.

What is the **first stage** of Bodhi mind development? It is the Bodhi mind that **first aspires** to become a Buddha via making that **resolve/aspiration sincerely**, with **faith** and you are willing to **persevere** to realize it. So the **first stage** of Bodhi mind cultivation is **very simple** and everyone who has the **condition, sincerity and faith**, you should determine to make this **aspiration and affirmation** to plant the **first seed** of Bodhi to *walk this way for you have got nothing* to lose. Then you can go on to **develop wisdom** through your cultivation and **4 basic vows**. Then when *you have developed the wisdom*, what will happen? The **Bodhi mind** that **subdues affliction** will arise which means you are able to **subdue all affliction** meaning **no more suffering**, meaning you are **already wise**. Hence you are **no longer** deluded by the **phenomenal world**, the **conditioned world**. That is the **second stage** of Bodhi mind development. Then the **third stage** is the **Bodhi mind** that **illuminates Buddha nature as enlightenment** - means you not only awaken but you manage to **illuminate that nature within**, your **true nature** until it becomes **so clear** which means *you connect* to the **gateway**. You are able to **transform and illuminate that nature within**. That's the reason why the **third stage** will make you a **true Bodhisattva**. The **gateway cultivation via Trust**, you will **do later** on in the cultivation **unless** you have your *past cultivation* and the *conditions to support you*. And this **third stage** is **very powerful**. After this, you will **never regress**. Then after that you move on to **cultivate** via the **Bodhi mind** that **renounces samsara** to attain Buddha hood. This means you already know - *Samsara is just form and mind*, **not me** and **no reality**. That's the reason why *you will renounce Samsara*, you won't be afraid of it anymore. You won't worry about it anymore **even when the thought** tells you, "the way may takes eons and eons of cultivation, so how to 'take it', how to walk this way, it's crazy!" That is just the **thought** telling you. That's the reason why the **deluded ones dare not** do all these because they **don't understand**. But at the **fourth stage**, this

delusion is **no more**. That's the reason why it can **renounce Samsara**. For Samsara is just a phenomenal **world of consciousness** - condition arising/causal phenomena. You must know how to come. That's the reason why one of my teachers told me, '**if you know how to come, you will know how to return.**' You can *return to the Source*. If you **don't know how to come**, then what happens? ... All these are due to your **delusion** because you don't know who you are and how you come. Who takes you here? The Law of Karma which is your '**good friend**' takes you here.

And every life you come, you also don't know what is going on because of your **self-delusion** (sakkāyadiṭṭhi); you **only complain**, have **worry, fear, anxiety, sorrow, lamentation, etc. to pay back your Karma**, then every time, **blame**: why am I like that? Why am I so unlucky? Why is God so unfair? But in the past when you do that to people earlier on, you don't question yourself the same way. But **when Karma hits back** at you via 'you reap what you sow', you **complain** and you **cannot understand** why you are so miserable. Why is everything not right? You make other people **miserable** and **fearful** because you don't have any **right thought or sympathy** towards them through your **delusion**. You **heedlessly** continue to do all these karmic evil. And life after life, when you come, you have to pay back all these **karmic debts**.

So these **five stages of Bodhi mind** development are **very beautiful**. The last stage is the **Bodhi mind** of the **consummate** which means you reach the **pinnacle** of wisdom and compassion or complete Buddha hood meaning you had completed the cultivation of the **10 perfections**. Master Sheng Yen asked, '*where do we stand in the five stages of Bodhisattva or Bodhi mind development?*'

If you are **very confident**, you should say at least, **stage one**. Stage one is **very simple**, because you just have to **aspire**. ... So, you don't have to worry for you have **got nothing to lose** but everything to gain.

Or have we **not yet generated** the Bodhi mind? Which means - *First stage also don't have, Bodhi mind also not generated or not planted as yet?* Which means - you are **not sincere** because you **don't have** the **faith** and the **determination** to go **this way** as yet. That's the reason why you **must aspire** with **utmost sincerity, faith** and **determination** to **plant the seed of Bodhi** and this **aspiration** is very **important**. This is the Dharma I need to have. This is the **Right View** I need to **understand**. I'm going all out to **plant** this **seed of Bodhi**, so as **not to miss this window** of *opportunity* so that *every life* when this *nature comes* (whether choose to come or has to come), it *will have this understanding*.

After you have this Bodhi mind **planted**, the *seed of Bodhi* will **nurture** and **grow** and it can be **nourished** through **wisdom** and **compassion**. Then the next thing for you to do is **every day** you need to **read** through your *Bodhisattva vow's notes* via your **sincere mind** to **renew** the **Four Great basic Vows** and all your other **aspirations/affirmations** so as to *remember them firmly until you can recite them without* having to refer to the notes anymore. This may take **3 months**.

Therefore I ask you all to **arouse** this **attitude** of **Bodhi** mind within yourself. This is **very important** to start on the **Bodhisattva way** to realize Buddha hood. Your **main task** is to **fulfill** the **four basic vows**, to **accomplish wisdom, compassion** and **ultimate Buddha hood**. How do you **generate Bodhi** mind? For one, you can generate Bodhi mind when you **bow** to your **meditation** cushion. (This is *Master Sheng Yen's* style.) The meditation cushion is where he sits. So to him, this is the **Bodhimandala**. That's why he pays respects to his meditation cushion before sitting. This is the *Bodhimandala*, the site of your *enlightenment, the lotus flower of wisdom and compassion*. It's where you **begin to fulfill your vows**. So a lot of Mahayana practitioners **take on this type of practice** because they *respect the cushion they sit*. That is the **Bodhimandala**, the **way place** where they **become enlightened**. We **cannot fulfill wisdom** if we **lack compassion**. But to be **compassionate**, there must also be **wisdom or renunciation**. If one **lacks both, compassion** and **renunciation**, then **self-centeredness** will **flourish** and **suffering, vexations** will increase. **Without love, compassion and wisdom**, the *egoic mind/self-centredness and suffering will increase*. So, you **must understand** and grasp those **two principles of love and compassion, leading to wisdom**. Otherwise, sitting on a cushion is no better than sticking a pole in the ground, solid, motionless and erect, very straight, stagnant and useless. That is doing *samatha meditation* - still, but they call that *Samādhi*. That's the reason why if you **do thought-based** or **samatha** meditation, **without** any clarity of mind, **without** any awareness within, your mind will **not be free** and you will **get trapped**. To be free from this state, you have to be spiritually **alive, potent** and **luminous**. **Alive** means **free** mind, **luminous** means **clarity**, **potent** means a lot of **wisdom**. How do we become **spiritually potent** and **bright**? By cultivating **stillness**, you will **experience** the **dynamic** workings of **compassion, renunciation** and **Bodhi** mind. Within this **potency**, the mind becomes **illuminated** - meaning there is **awareness**. **Silence is stillness; silent mind** or **tranquility of mind** or **stillness** of mind is the **meditative** mind. So from now on, every time you sit, please do **generate the Bodhi mind**; please **arouse** the **altruistic mind**. *Bodhi mind* is just the **mind of renunciation** and the **mind of compassion**. The *mind of renunciation* consists of **severing all suffering** and **vexations**. That's how you develop **wisdom** because **vexation and suffering** comes

from the **5 grasping aggregates**. When you grasp and cling via self-delusion, suffering will arise. So, when you **cultivate** renunciation, you are cultivating *patience* **endurance** and **severing** suffering or vexations. The mind of **compassion** is delivering all sentient beings.

How do you sever all vexations and deliver all sentient beings? You have **to cultivate** and **penetrate** the **limitless approaches** to Dharma that you have learnt and will further learn. That's the reason why that **3rd basic vow** can help you do this work. You are also cultivating **Silent Illumination**. Now *use the cultivation to gain an entry*.

Now he explained to you the **cultivation of Silent Illumination**. Since it's more natural for most people to understand cultivation as occurring in stages, he has described **Silent Illumination** as occurring in **stages**. It is possible to **contemplate emptiness** and **selflessness** at **any stage** in Silent Illumination; it is also possible to **experience** enlightenment at **any stage** of this practice. It is **not necessary** to progress stage by stage. **Stage one** is **just sitting** and **being aware** of the total **bodily** sensation (i.e. **kāyānupassanā** leading to **vedanānupassanā**). The stage is entered by **completely relaxing mind** and **body**. The key criteria is **relax** and **maintain awareness**, either through **breathing contemplation** or **directly** beginning to **sit with total body awareness**. For people who understand they will know the importance of these 2 steps of **relax and aware**, which are also the first two of the **four supports** that I wrote on the white board; then the next step is to **stabilize** it. The **second stage** is experiencing the **environment as one with oneself** – you are the environment and the environment is you. Meaning **spacious awareness** without a **centre**; your nature and all natures has become one.

The **third stage** of Silent Illumination is the experience of **boundless spaciousness**. We cannot experience the **mind as infinite** if it is **swamped** with **discursive thinking** (meaning your **false thoughts** borne of your *delusion* and your *heedless thinking*.) We also **cannot experience** the environment as **infinite** if we **constantly discriminate** among sense objects. What is discrimination? They are the **dualities** of likes and dislikes, **pleasant** and **unpleasant reaction** of mind. These are your **sensual desires** and **ill-will**. When your mind is **so preoccupied** with this **reaction** of mind and **thinking**, how can you **be aware** and **be one with nature**. That's the reason why you **cannot be sensitive**, you **cannot** be aware because you are **preoccupied** with the **sense experiences** and the **stirring** of your mind. That's how you **discriminate** among sense objects for there's **no equanimity**, resulting in **narrow** point of view.

So what is that? You **create** the thought. You go and **focus, perceive** and **input** the **content** of **consciousness** hence from a **spacious** awareness **without** a centre; you focus into a **very narrow** thought space. Then you get yourself **lost in thoughts, preoccupied** with your **thinking, views** and opinion, **stirring** and **reaction** of mind. That's how you become **heedless**. That's the reason why you **cannot** meditate **with** the **thought**. The *moment you do that you are dead*. That's the reason why he said 'resulting in a narrow point of view'. But when our **thoughts totally subside**, what will happen? We perceive the mind as **infinitely vast**, and **when** all our **discriminations stop**, we perceive the **environment** as **infinitely vast**. That's how the **spacious awareness without** a centre, which is your **true mind** or your **true nature**, can be *realized*.

But he didn't describe it so clearly to you in his book. But for those who understand, they will know what he meant. If you can **totally relax** and **maintain** your **awareness** of just sitting, the body-sense will disappear. When this happens a lot of people have this *egoic thought*, 'I am in the **formless** realm, experiencing the **Arupa Jhāna** for I **cannot feel** my body anymore.' That **manifestation** of mind state has got **not much** meaning because it's just a phenomenon, a **conditioned state**. If you **cannot** develop **wisdom out of it** then **no point**. He said, in this state, the *environment may also disappear*. If this happens, it means *you have entered a shallow Samādhi* state. When in such state a lot of cultivators would think they had done well. But **not** so for those who cultivate **Silent Illumination** because they would still be **vividly** aware of the environment.

Why must you go into the **formless realm**? That is still a **conditioned mind state** hence that mind is still **not a free mind** and you **cannot be aware** of what is **happening within** the **moment** because you are in a deep state of **Appaṇā Samādhi**. That's the reason why I always *advise practitioners not to go beyond Upacāra Samādhi*. This can also happen at the stage when you feel like one with the environment. If the environment **disappears**, you are again entering a light Samādhi state. This **mind state** is stated in the **Shurangama Sutra** and it is a **deviant** Samādhi that can trap you.

Sometimes you can **see lights** and **fantastic** manifestations of mind states; this is **not** practicing **Silent Illumination**. In Silent Illumination, your mind would be **clear** and **aware of everything** and is **utterly still**. It is possible to enter this **illumination stage** from any of the **earlier** stages. That's the reason why when your **spiritual faculties** have become **Balas** or powers, the **moment** you sit you **will enter stillness, silence**, just **aware, no movement, no need** to be in **concentration** and there is **no need** for any **meditation object** to anchor the mind too. It is **by itself still** and **silent** because it is **no longer deluded**. It **can just stay aware** and **silent** because it is **no longer** gullible.

It can **just stay aware** because the mind is **already** trained (in Sati) and it **has stabilized**. That's the reason why **such a mind** is very **different**. As a result of your **own cultivation**, your mind becomes **clear** and **bright** and there is **no clinging** to self or non-self. This is **true meditation** or **Silent Illumination**. He then said, 'I repeat and emphasize that you **should not** take these stages of **Silent Illumination** as a **spiritual** ladder to be ascended stage by stage. It is **not about** the **experience**, the **conditioned** state; it's about how you use it to develop **wisdom**. Each stage is complete and a possible entry point for **genuine** Silent Illumination.' That's the reason why you have **to train** yourself in the **formal meditation** to have this **stability** of **silent mind** in **pure awareness**. Then, you bring this state into the **daily life** to develop **daily mindfulness**. That is the **real cultivation**. That's the reason why it says here: 'please do not **anticipate** a presumably **better stage** than where you are now. I talk about the **internal** infinite and the **external** infinite is because some of you may have experienced **either** or **both**. However if we experience the **internal** infinite **without** the **external** infinite, that would be *samādhi*, **not** Silent Illumination. Therefore, you need to know the difference. In *samādhi*, although the internal can be vast, open and clear, one is **oblivious** of the environment. One **should also** experience the **environment** as vast and open, leaving **behind discrimination** yet knowing the **outside** very clearly. In **true** Silent Illumination, the environment **exist**, but we are **not influenced, defiled, or conditioned** by it in any way whatsoever; we are **no longer** swayed by discriminating thoughts. I emphasize this; people may experience **infinite spaciousness** in their sitting but on returning to their **daily life** become **distracted** by the *external world*. They **may cultivate** an **escapist attitude** of wanting to practice in that **blissful** Samādhi and remove themselves from others. This is definitely **not** the Mahayana or Chan teaching. The **3rd level** is infinitely vast with regard to the **internal mind** as well as **to the world**. Having this correct view, one will **engage** the world **without being vexed or obstructed**.' The rest, if you are interested, you should get hold of the book and read it yourself.

C.6 Taking Of Bodhisattva Vows

We had finished discussing the first page of the notes on the **general description** of the **Bodhisattva way** last Tuesday so you can go back and read them on your own as this part is for your information only.

Now, I will lead you to take the vows.

Taking of the **Bodhisattva vows**: Now we shall prepare ourselves. Develop the **faith (saddhā)** and the **vīriya**, and then **mindfully** we will do this together. I will first read to you the preparatory part first:

1. 'As is traditional, you may seek out a **Buddhist center** or **temple** or a **shrine** and take the **Bodhisattva vows** in the **presence** of a **teacher**. Or, if you cannot do so, you can take them **at home in front** of your **sacred shrine**.'

Then you must do this:

2. 'One must make **strong aspiration** to take these **Bodhisattva vows** with great **determined faith, understanding** and **sincerely** in front of the **Buddha** or any great **Mahā Bodhisattvas** who **have gone forth** before you.'

Tonight, we have all the **Great Being's nature** here; Sākyamuni Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, Maitreya Buddha, Guanyin Bodhisattva, Pu Hsien Pusa, Ti Chang Wang Pusa and all other Mahā Bodhisattvas and Buddha of all the ten directions. Together, in front of them, we shall make this strong **resolve** and **aspiration** to take these **vows**. Okay, are you all ready?

Be in the **kneeling posture** to develop the **great resolve** and the **making** of this **special aspiration** to **walk** the **Bodhisattva way sincerely** and with **great determination** and **understanding**. This is just to make the *aspiration to walk this way*, **not** the taking of the vows as yet, but you must **determine** strongly because later on, I will explain to you how to develop the **actual vows** after you have made this **special aspiration** to walk this *Bodhisattva way*. Without this **Right View** and **Right Understanding**, you **cannot walk** this way **successfully**. That's the reason why **you must make this aspiration** for you **to have** this *understanding life after life*. Now I will teach you **how to invoke** this *aspiration*. You all can recite after me following the notes.

3. Making of **special aspirations** to **walk** the *Bodhisattva way*:

"By the power of **whatever blessings** and **wholesomeness** that this 'nature of mine' has **cultivated**, from the **distant past** till now, may it **arise** the causes and conditions for this nature of mine **to have** the following **right Dharma understanding**, life after life, whenever it **choose** to come **or have to come** in the form of a Form and Mind:

3.1 Right views with regards to:

- (a) The Law of Karma (Karma Niyāma);
- (b) The Law of Dependent Origination or 12 links (Citta Niyāma) and

(c) The Four Noble Truths (Dharma Niyāma);

(**Note:** These right views, we have already learnt, so you have to go back and reflect, contemplate and develop the **second turning** wisdom on your own. We have gone through the **Law of Karma** many times. How from there, the **essential Dharma** of the Buddha comes about and how the Buddha actually developed his teaching to advise you, **to avoid all evil, do good** and **purify** the mind; then how He advised you to **renew** your **precepts**, take **refuge** etc. All these come from these Right Views. Then you can develop the **meditation to understand** how **you function** as a human being via Citta Niyāma. Then finally from the **Four Noble Truths** which is the **essence** of the **Buddha's teaching**, all the other **essential** Dharma are spin off from there. Then after that, we **reaffirm** to understand the below 2nd **Right Views** clearly.)

3.2 To **understand** the **2 aspects** of the *5 aggregates of Form and Mind* clearly via the **direct seeing** to realize that they are **all condition arising entities, causal phenomena** hence **impermanent**, leading to **suffering**; **not me, non-self** and **empty**. This so called **living being** (*5 aggregates of Form and Mind*) is just a **karmically conditioned 'vehicle and tool'** for us to come to this **existential world** to develop the **cultivation** and **experience** all of the **beauty** and **wonders** of life. So need to *use it with wisdom* to arise the **appropriate right thoughts**, **right speech** and **right action** so as to be a **blessing** to all and **not** to be **deluded** by it. To **constantly recite** with **understanding** the following **profound** dharma:

Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ, rūpaṃ anattā;

Vedanā aniccaṃ, vedanā anattā;

Saññā aniccaṃ, saññā anattā;

Saṅkhāra aniccaṃ, saṅkhāra anattā;

Viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ, viññāṇaṃ anattā.

Sabbe saṅkhāra aniccaṃ; Sabbe saṅkhāra dukkhaṃ and Sabbe dhamma anatta

3.3 Having developed the above right views, this nature of 'mine' vows **to always keep** the following **3 sets** of **pure precepts** via following the **advice** of all Samma Sambuddhas:

(a) To **avoid all evil** and to **understand** clearly **what constitutes evil** (*the 3 evil roots of Greed, Hatred and Delusion are the root of all evil*);

(**Note:** Then you all have to go back and expand on it. What is Greed? Not only your **greediness**, all your **craving, covetousness, deceitfulness, desire, lust** etc. including whatever you want **to take advantage** of, all these are part of the **evil root of Greed**. Then the **second evil** root of **Hatred** is **not only** your anger and hatred, it include your *envy, jealousy and everything* else including all your *other negative unpleasant mental states, like dislike, unhappiness, etc.*, they are all part of this *evil root*. Then, **delusion** is **ignorance**, - self-delusion leading **to fear, worry, anxiety, sorrow** and **lamentation**. All these are the **third evil root** of **self-delusion or Sakkāyadiṭṭhi.**)

(b) To **cultivate all virtues** and **blessings** leading to the **perfection** of them all;

(**Note:** Do you understand the difference between this and the advice of the Buddha that you normally hear off? This one **makes it even clearer**. Most people only recite, 'avoid all evil...' And sometimes, they never include the word 'all'. They just say, 'Avoid evil' (Written on the gate wall of SJBA). The **actual advice** of the Buddha is, '**all evil is to be avoided**'. Then what did we add? 'To avoid all evil and **to understand clearly** what **constitutes** evil.' That is more important. If you don't even know **what constitutes evil**, then how are you going to avoid all evil? That's the reason why, you vow: - life after life, **to have** this **understanding** so that when you come, when you hear this advice again, you can **connect** straightaway. It will manifest through your **vows** and **aspirations**. Then you will also know how **to cultivate** all **virtues** and **blessings** leading to **perfection** of them all. The normal cultivation is just to do good or cultivate wholesomeness whenever there is condition. But this *pure precept* is to **cultivate all virtues** and **blessings** leading to **perfection** of them all. This understanding is very important because for the **Bodhisattva way**, we need to **go a lot deeper** than the *normal cultivation.*) Then the last pure precept is:

(c) To **cultivate wisdom** to help **liberate** and take across **all sentient beings**;

(Note: These are the **aspirations** that you make so that **life after life** when you come, you will have **these Right Understanding** and **true Dharma understanding**. Then only can **you cultivate**, with the **right understanding** because these are **very important** right views. That's the reason why I **constantly reminded** you all to **make sure** that you all get this right and make use of this Sāsana's *great 'window' of opportunity* **to plant the seed of Bodhi** so that **in the future**, all these *understanding can manifest* and come back to you. Then, also at our recent **March 2016 Cameron Highlands Retreat**, there were **conditions** for **all these** to arise too because of **Guan Yin's nature** that arise on the **8th day** - including all the other **appropriate conditions** that also fall into place. That's the

reason why through my **nature's understanding**, I have already **granted** all those who were there, the **pure wish** to have these **understanding**. But that pure wish **cannot** take place or **manifest** into a **reality** if on your part, you **don't cultivate** the **appropriate causes and conditions** to connect to all these great beings.

So today's taking of the vows is the **next stage** after the Cameron Highlands retreat for you all to have the **right condition** to walk this **Bodhisattva way**. If you do all these, it means you **have successfully** planted the **seed of Bodhi** and you are **set for** all of your **future coming**. Then you will **connect** and **not long** after that, the **vows will take you along**. That's why all these are **very beautiful understanding** because the **conditions** just came during this **Sāsana's 'window' of opportunity**. A lot of things just happen; the **book came** and **everything else** also came. Initially I **didn't intend** to teach you so fast about the **five stages of Bodhi mind development** and the **cultivation** because that is a **very difficult** and **long** topic. But **because this book** came in the **nick of time** and it has the **requisite conditions** for me to **explain** to you and **summarize** for you the *understanding* so that in future, when we do all these sharing, you all can understand.)

4. Actual taking of the Bodhisattva vows

This is now the **moment of truth** and we will **do it** with **understanding** so that these vows can become **very firmly** established. We shall **plant** the **seed of Bodhi** by taking these vows. Then the **3 sets of pure precepts** are actually the **advice** of the Buddha but we **have modified** it a bit to **suited** our **Bodhisattva way** cultivation. These **3 sets of pure precepts** actually cover the cultivation of **all precepts** because when you **avoid all evil** via **understanding** what **constitutes evil**, then you will be **cultivating all virtues** and **blessings** leading to the **perfection** of them all. That means you are **incapable of evil** hence **cultivating all precepts**. Then after that, the last set of pure precept is to **cultivate** and **perfect all wisdom** so that you can **help liberate living beings** and take them all across, thereby **fulfilling** the first of the 4 **basic vows** of a **Bodhisattva**. So these **three sets of pure precepts will tie** in with the **four basic vow's practices**. That's the reason why they can become very **powerful** and **beautiful** and it will make a **big difference** to your cultivation. Now, we will recite the vows via following the **Avatamsaka Sutra format**:

'A Bodhisattva's vows can be found at the end of the Avatamsaka Sutra as given by **Samantabhadra** Bodhisattva or **Pu Hsien Pusa**. He had advised that the **Bodhisattva vows** are to be taken with the following **two famous verses** from the Sutra.'

Now **compose** your mind, **determine** with **faith, sincerity** and **understanding**, then **together** we shall recite them.

4.1 Taking of the four basic vows of a Bodhisattva

'Just as all the **previous Sugatas**, the **Buddha** generated the **Bodhi mind** of **enlightenment** and **accomplished** all the **stages** of the **Bodhisattva training**. So too will this **nature of 'mine'**, for the **sake of all beings**, generate the **Bodhi mind** of **enlightenment** and **resolve to accomplish** all the **stages** of the **Bodhisattva training** so that the **seed of 'Bodhi'** can be **strongly planted** within our **nature**.'

'This nature of mine further vows with **utmost sincerity, faith** and **perseverance** to walk to **perfection** this **Bodhisattva** way via taking the following **initial 4 basic vows** of a **Bodhisattva**:

- i) This **nature of mine** vows to **liberate the countless living beings from samsara** and **take them all across to the other shore**;
- ii) This nature of mine **vows to endure and sever all vexation/suffering**;
- iii) This nature of mine **vows to cultivate and penetrate all dharma to realize the perfection of all wisdom**;
- iv) This nature of mine **vows to perfect the 10 pāramitās** (or perfections) to **realize** the unsurpassed **Samma Sambuddha hood**.'

(**Note**: We will then take the **additional vows** so that it can help you **break** all your **karmic obstructions** to bring about **the way** so that you can **cultivate more** easily. *Karmic obstructions* can be **very powerful** and a lot of cultivators **get trapped** because of **Karmic obstructions** and they **cannot immediately move**; even in this life when the Sāsana is still around. For ten to fifteen years, you may be *hindered or trapped* because of past lives karmic obstruction; you may have **misled** people, causing them **to lose** the way. That's the reason why this **karmic obstructions** can come back *to obstruct* you; if you don't ask for **forgiveness** and do your **repentance**, you **cannot** break it.

This is a **very powerful way** which my nature had developed through its own understanding from its past cultivation. Now I will share this with you. This **can also be applied** to many other situations - so you have **to adjust it accordingly to suite your particular condition and need**. But basically, it **covers most situations**. Then you **can use**

it to help people just like in this life, I *have helped many depressed cases and living beings* with problems born of their *karmic obstructions*.)

4.2 Additional vows to break all karmic obstructions to bring about the way:

- i) If by **actions, speech or thought**, whether knowingly or unknowingly via **ignorance, delusion and heedlessness**, this nature of 'mine' has **offended or done anything wrong** unto the **Triple Gems** (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), this nature of 'mine' would like to **sincerely** ask for **forgiveness**. (Note: This one is very important. If you have committed *karmic offences* against The Triple Gem or cause schism to the Sangha, **such karmic offence** can be **very severe** and your **karmic obstruction** will *come and obstruct/disturb* you. But the *beauty about The Triple Gem* is, *the moment you ask for forgiveness sincerely*, it will **neutralize** the **Karmic** obstruction immediately because The Triple Gem has *already taken the vow* to forgive all beings, the vow of all **enlightened ones**. Now we will continue with the next few additional vows.)
- ii) Whomsoever **from the distant past until now**, whether **knowingly or unknowingly** that this nature of 'mine' has **caused any karmic negativity, misery, suffering or mislead**, this nature of 'mine' would like to **sincerely** ask for **forgiveness** from them all. May my this **sincere request** for **forgiveness** be **accepted by all** so that all these **karmic obstructions** can be **amicably resolved** or **watered down** or **lessened** thereby enabling *this nature* of 'mine' to **continue** with its **cultivation** to **realize** the **true dharma** with ease.
- iii) This nature of 'mine' also **vows to repent** and **from now onwards vow never** to **repeat any** of these **karmic negativities** (borne of **Greed, Hatred and Delusion**) via *following the advice* of the Buddha to **avoid all evil, do good, purify** my **mind** and **striving on with heedfulness** to keep the **5 precepts** and **cultivate** the **Buddha dharma diligently** so that it will **never violate** this Law of Karma **again whenever it arises**.
- iv) By the **power** of whatever **wholesomeness** or **merits** that this nature of 'mine' has **cultivated** since the distant past until now **may it arise the causes and conditions** for this nature of 'mine' to have the **ability to overcome** all other **karmic obstructions** or **obstacles amicably** so that this nature of 'mine' will **be able to gain back its life, to walk the path of dharma** life after life, **to fulfill** and **realize** all its **Bodhisattva vows**.

(Note: This **fourth** additional vow is **very important** because you **invoke** your own power of merits. This is the **turnaround** to **help** you **move again**. Without this **invocation** of **power of merits**, this **turnaround** cannot happen. The karmic obstruction can be **very deviant** and can be **very powerful** too. So **when you invoke power of merits** for causes and conditions, then it will **dissolve itself**, then you **can connect back**. Initially, you have to do this until your way is beyond the **third stage** of **Bodhi mind development**. At the **third stage** of the Bodhi mind development, you will develop this **very unique** third phase cultivation to **illuminate** your **Buddha nature**. This means you not only **realize** your **true mind** but you also **connect** to your **gateway to your nature**. Then you will have the **ability** to develop the cultivation until you can **illuminate** this **true nature within** until it becomes so different. Then you will know from then onward, you will **never regress** anymore. By then all these **karmic obstructions** will be gone. Otherwise, you **cannot realize** that type of enlightenment. So the **initial phase** before you hit the **third stage** of *Bodhi mind development*, **you still have to ask** for forgiveness to break your *karmic obstruction*. Then the last type of vows is the additional **miscellaneous vows** to help **enhance** the cultivation.

4.3 Additional miscellaneous vows to enhance the cultivation

This nature of 'mine' vows:

- i) To be **successful** in **fulfilling** all my above vows soonest possible;
- ii) To cultivate **strong affinity** with *all Buddha* and *Bodhisattvas* and *to request their nature's constant blessing, protection and guidance* always;
- iii) To strengthen my **5 spiritual faculties** of *saddhā, vīriya, sati, samādhi* and *panna* until they become **balas or powers, life after life** so that all the **above vows** can be **successfully fulfilled with ease**;

(Note: Do you know why you have to do these? It is because most **spiritual cultivators** never **perfect** their **spiritual faculties** until they become **unshakable**. That's the reason why *every life when they come, they have to train, they have to do all these training all over again*. But this live I realize that this nature of mine **is different** because when it comes, the *moment I cultivate*, the **spiritual faculties** are already there. That's the **reason why** I can **just sit, silent the mind and just meditates**, and I **just know what to do**. *All these must have come from the vows*. Otherwise, this nature **cannot** be what it is today, like **very lucky, everything goes its way** and it can **just understand**. It can **never touch** *psychic* and *all those energy field* things. I never learn all these in this life then

how can it happen? Very likely it is because of *all these Right Views, the perfection, the aspirations and vows*. This teaching is **either forgotten or lost** and you have to understand that **every Bodhisattva can evolve their own understanding and come out with better and better ones**. Just like this live, *this is what my nature understands hence it's able to share all these with you all*. This is the **third additional vow**.)

And the **fourth additional miscellaneous vow** is:

- iv) To cultivate **extensively all virtues, blessings and merits** to help **support my cultivation** so that they will **shine forth to aid this nature** of 'mine' when **needed in times of trials, difficulties and tribulations** while walking the Bodhisattva way.

(**Note:** This **additional vow** is very important because *my nature realize, without these virtues, blessings and merits, it is very difficult to walk this way*. That's the reason why *my nature* came to realize that a lot of **Zen masters**, when they come, they **suffer a lot** and they **have to go through a lot of difficulties** because **their focus is too much centered on cultivation alone**. **Virtues** are *equally important; love, compassion, merits, and blessings* are also very important. That's the reason why *Sākyamuni's way* is very good. He set up the *Sangha and the laity*. That's the reason why he said you must **keep the precepts**; then follow that type of *practice and cultivation*. For according to the Buddha, '**Virtue is the source of true happiness and joy. Virtue is the source of true peacefulness of mind.**' But the **last one is the best - virtue is the source of true spiritual wealth**. You will gain **spiritual wealth** when you make **offerings** to the **worthy ones**. In **return**, they will **share** with you the **dharma** and they will send **blessings** to you. That's the reason why you **must make the vows, the aspiration** via reciting, '*Iminā puñña kammaena... etc.*', - meaning **invoking the power** of merits via reciting: '*By the power of whatever merits that you have cultivated, may it arise the causes and conditions for you to always avoid the foolish and the heedless, meet up with the wise and enlightened ones so that nibbana can be realized soonest possible.*'

But you must understand **who the heedless are and who the enlightened ones** are. If you **don't cultivate** and have this **Right View and Right Understanding**, you **cannot identify them**. You may have the vows, but of **no use** because you **don't even know** who are the **heedless** and what **constitute evil** hence you are **still gullible** and still can become their *good friends* even though you *make that vow to avoid them*. It is because you **vow without** understanding, like I used to tell you all; you **vow to meet up** with *Maitreya Buddha* when he arises. And because of that when he arises, very likely you

are born, you may meet him, but you **cannot recognize** him so not much use right? This is because you do not know what the qualities of a Buddha are if you **do not cultivate** the **understanding** and **affinity**. You **just vow** to **meet** but you **don't recognize**, then you cannot follow, hence doubts arise. The worse is when you meet him; you **abuse him** because you **cannot recognize** him. When that happens, *nobody can help you*. If you abuse the Samma Sambuddha, no amount of **repentance** can help you because that is really **heavy karma**.)

Okay, we can end our today's session *with the understanding* of what **constitute** the **ten perfections** leading to Buddha hood.

First perfection is **generosity**. That's why you come for the living beings. You have a lot of **kindness**, a lot of **love** and **compassion** and **generosity**. You **serve** people with an **altruistic mind**, you **don't think** for **yourself** anymore. That's the reason why **dana or generosity** pāramī is *very powerful*. The *gift of truth*, the *gift of service*, helping out and doing whatever you can to **relieve suffering** of *living beings* is all part of the **generosity** pāramī. When you **have** the **means** to help and you are **very generous** then you can **cultivate generosity** pāramī very easily. You can bring about the **causes** and **conditions** for many **beautiful things** to **unfold**. Just like this life, *all our Kalyāṇamittas had done* so many **wholesome things** via our *Kalyāṇamitta fund's* dana pāramī and these can help kalyāṇamittas **generate** a lot of *very wholesome merits* and **virtue**. **Generosity** is the function of our **generous heart**. When you *radiate mettā, love and compassion* and you come for the living beings – all these are *very wholesome* dana pāramī. When you develop **great compassion** and **love** for living beings, you also have **great pāramī**.

Then you develop **moral values** via keeping your **precepts** or **sīla**; meaning you determine not to **violate** the nature's **law of karma** because you have **Right View** with regards to the *Law of Karma*, and you maintain **wholesomeness of virtues** to *avoid all evil* via *following the advice of the Buddha*. Then **renunciation** is **Nekkhamma** in pāḷi. You *cultivate* via developing **wisdom** to **sever all attachments**. That's the reason why the final summary of the 1st noble truth, the *cause of suffering* (not explained by Master Sheng Yen) according to the Buddha is: - all of suffering comes from **self-delusion** that **conditions** you to **grasp** on to the **five aggregates of form and mind as the 'I' and the 'Me'**. So all of these *grasping, clinging* is the **cause** of suffering. So when you have the wisdom **not to be deluded**, you **won't** attach, you **won't** cling, you can **endure** and **sever** all suffering, vexation, and **renounce** the **conditioned** world and the **entire phenomenal** world. That's how **renunciation** can be perfected.

If you come with the **clear understanding** that this **form and mind** is **not you** but only a **vehicle** and a **tool** for you to come to this world to **live** and **experience** life and to **develop** the **cultivation** then there is no more **delusion** or **problem**. As the **user** of thought, you will then **know how to use** the mind to **arise** the **right thoughts** so as to be a **blessing** to all. You will understand all these. Otherwise you will have problem. Then for the **perfection of wisdom**, you have the ability to realize it via your **vow to cultivate** and **penetrate** all dharma to perfection. Then regarding the **spiritual zeal**, when you **take** the **refuge** and **vow**, the **faith or saddhā** will be there and that's the reason why this **vīriya** will be there too *because of the saddhā*. Then regarding **patience** or **khanti**, it means you are **not in a hurry to fulfill all these vows**. You can take your time to **fulfill** all these vows and **cultivate to perfection** all these pāramitās so that you can develop all the **requisite wisdom and virtues needed** to do this work. You will get to **cultivate** all the **understanding** and get to **experience** all the **wonders** and **beauties of life** so that you can **come back to continuously perfect** your **karmic nature** and **your spiritual nature**. All these can be **very beautiful** and **meaningful**.

After you have perfected the **understanding** and **wisdom**, you *will never lie again*. Then **Truthfulness** or **Sacca** is **very easy** to **perfect** because you have **no more self**. You have **no more** selfishness. You will be **very sincere** and **truthful** in the way you go about doing things. Then all these cultivation will become like very easy.

The **number 8 perfection (Adhiṭṭhāna)** is very easy because this one is my **specialty**. My nature had more or less perfected it; hence I can understand it very well. That's the reason why **I know** how to **use** the **power** of merits for making **aspiration, do repentance via asking for forgiveness** etc. to **help** you in your **cultivation** and also how to **invoke** the **power of merits** to help you overcome your **karmic** obstruction. These are **not** stated in the teaching. The **repentance** they do is somewhat **different**, even for the case of Master Sheng Yen, as evident by his explanation. If there are conditions, I will share more with you. It's stated in his book; you can read through it to understand why his **repentance teaching** is **different**.

Different cultivators come with **different** understanding. He has his way. To me, this is the *complete way*. His is *one aspect* of it. Then the **next perfection** is **loving kindness** or **mettā**. **Without** love and compassion, you **cannot save** the living beings. So compassion is also under this **number 9 perfection**. Then the **number 10 perfection** is **equanimity** or the **upekkhā, enlightenment factor**, born of **wisdom**. Again all these can be perfected. If you look at the ten perfections, it's like very easy **after** you have **developed** the **four basic vows**. With this we shall end our today's sharing. Shall we **rejoice? Sadhu! (3x)**

Note: The **10 perfections** leading to Buddha hood are:

1. **Generosity (Dana)**
2. **Moral or virtue (Sīla)**
3. **Renunciation (Nekkhamma)**
4. **Wisdom (Panna)**
5. **Spiritual zeal (Vīriya)**
6. **Patience (Khanti)**
7. **Truthfulness (Sacca)**
8. **Determination or Resolution or affirmation (Adhiṭṭhāna)**
9. **Loving Kindness (Metta)**
10. **Equanimity (Upekkhā)**

C.7 Miscellaneous announcement

Sis. Padmasuri:

Dear brother and sisters in the dharma, **congratulations** to everybody, **newborn** and *happy birthday*. We shall call upon Bro. Song to present a garland to our beloved teacher, Bro Teoh, to **express** our **gratitude** and **respect**.

Bro. Teoh:

She is right in the sense that you are newborn, **embryonic Bodhisattva**; the **first stage** of *Bodhi mind development* - **aspire** to be a *Bodhisattva to walk this way* with **faith** and **sincerity** then you are already qualified. Sadhu! (3x)

There is **one more thing** that I need to **remind** you all regarding these **Bodhisattva vows** and **aspirations** that you all **have taken**. You all have **only planted** the **seed of Bodhi** today and to **enable** it to **take root** and **become firmly established** you all must **nurture** it via **renewing** these **vows** and **aspirations** with **great sincerity** and **faith** on a **daily basis** for the **next** 3 to 6 months. You must read through the notes, if possible **every day**, to **remind** yourself via **determining deeply** that these are the **important Right Views** and **Right Aspirations** that you want to **have life after life** whenever you **arise**.

This life itself, you must **determine** **sincerely** and make it **very clear** until it is **strongly established**; until later on, **even without those notes**, you will be able to **recite** them all, **recall** them, **until** they **become a part** of you. If this life also you **cannot** recall these *vows and aspirations*, then **do you think** it will **happen in future**? Not likely, unless you

have these vows and aspirations **firmly established** to give rise to the **causes and conditions** for you to recall them the moment you **come into contact** with the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the future chances are it will not **manifest** or take root.

But **before** you can encounter all these, you must develop the **strong vows** and **aspirations** with **great faith** and **understanding, life after life** for it to have the **conditions** to arise or **happen**. Like my this life, when I come, **my nature** straight away understands because **since young**, it already started to **search**, then it only **needed to encounter** the **real dharma** in **whatever** form or manner; either in a book form or via somebody's words or speech. Just like the 6th Patriarch (Master Hui Neng), the moment he heard the **Diamond Sutra's verse** on '**the mind must have no dwelling**', his nature arose and straightaway he **connect, understood** and **awakened**; for these are the **understanding** that he **had** earlier on **vowed to have**, life after life **whenever** he arise. So when you do the same, **your nature will also move** because your **karmic nature** and your **spiritual nature** will **take you along** and similar conditions can also manifest.

Then when the time comes, the **teacher will come**, the **guide will come** and **all these books will also come**. Later on, living beings that have **affinity with your nature** they will also come. You can ask around. Apart from my **university mates** and **my wife**, I don't know the rest of you. How did all of you come? It's through **your affinity** and your **other conditions**. As you go into the cultivation, you will develop these understanding.

Initially, **don't worry**; be patient and **take your time to learn** all these. But you must have **faith, sincerity** and **perseverance**, then *all these will fall into place*. You **don't need** to be a **very special being** to have all these. Every Bodhisattva also started from somewhere in the distant past. My **spiritual nature** also started **from basic**, like **most of you** who **don't have** anything. It started from the **first Bodhi mind** that **planted** the **seed of Bodhi** to **aspire to walk this way sincerely** with the **faith**. Then, after that, the **cultivation just fell** into place **because** of the **vows** and the **aspirations**. All these will become **easier** when you **know** how to **develop** the **aspirations** and the **vows** to break all the **karmic obstructions**, to bring about **causes and conditions** for all the **Great Beings'** nature to help you, to **protect you**, to **bless you**, to **help you arise the causes and conditions** to avoid the **foolish**, the **heedless** and **meet up** with the **wise**. Then you **must cultivate** on your part to **understand** who the **heedless** are so that you **can avoid them**, recognize who the **wise ones** are so that you know how to **benefit** from them and **develop affinity** with them. Then likewise, when you cultivate, you must **understand** what **constitute evil**, then **only** you can **avoid all evil**. Then you **must train** your mind to be **heedful**, to be **ever mindful** so that **this cultivation** can flow easily.

With this, I will end my sharing for today and we better do the sharing of merits, transfer of merits etc. before we end.

C.8 Sharing of merits

1. Sharing of merits with the devas:

Ākāsaṭṭhā ca bhummaṭṭhā Deva nāga mahiddhikā Puññaṃ taṃ anumoditvā Ciraṃ rakkhantu loka sāsanaṃ

(May all beings inhabiting space and earth, Devas and Nagas of mighty power, share this merit and may they long protect the Dispensation.)

Ettāvatā ca amhehi Sambhataṃ puñña sampadaṃ Sabbe deva anumodantu Sabba sampatti siddhiya

(May all beings share this merit, which we have thus acquired And may all Devas rejoice, May it contribute greatly to their well-being and happiness.)

2. Transfer of merits to departed ones:

Idaṃ me ñātinaṃ hotu Sukhitā hontu ñātayo (3x)

[Let these merits accrue to our departed relatives and those who can receive them And may they too be well and happy always. (3x)]

3. Let us make our aspiration:

Iminā puñña kammaena Māme bāla samāgamo Sataṃ samāgamo hotu Yāva Nibbāna pattiya

[By the grace of this merit that I have acquired, may I never follow the foolish; but only the wise, up to the time I attain final liberation, Nibbāna.] **Sadhu! (x3)**

Let us **pay respect mindfully** to **Lord Buddha** and all the **worthy ones** then we end.

D. Walking the Bodhisattva way and the taking of the Vows (4th sharing)

(Based on a direct transcript from the recorded Dharma talk of Bro. Teoh dated 28-09-16)

D.1 Introduction (Initial Briefing)

A very good evening to all, brothers and sisters in the dharma; today is the **28th September 2016** and it is an **auspicious** day for some of *our kalyāṇamittas* who have **requested** for **new** opportunity for them to take this **Bodhisattva vows**. This occasion can also be an **opportunity** for those who **have taken their vows before** to **reaffirm their vows**. These vows can be of **great benefit** to you when you **understand** their **great significance** and when you take it with **understanding** your **faith** will also become **very different**. It can *bring forth* the **transformation** in you because these are *very unique* **vows**. When I go through them with you afterwards you will **understand** their **great significance**. They are taken based on an **in depth, clear understanding** of the *Buddha Dharma* and these are the important **right views** that you must have **every time** when you **come** to this **universe**; regardless of whether you **have to come** or you **choose to come**, *either way* you must have this **understanding** otherwise you will be **afflicted** because of your **delusion**.

That's the reason why we have to make this firm **determination** or **affirmation** with **understanding**, with very strong **faith (saddhā)** leading to the **vīriya** and **mindfulness**. After you have taken it, you should **continuously reflect** on it, **contemplate** on it and **develop** the **clear understanding** of all these affirmation. Then *on your own while at home* (**initially** on a **daily basis**), you should **reflect, contemplate** and **determine** in *front of your own altar* to **reaffirm** all these **vows** for **3 months at least**. After that **if you can**, every week, or **at least once a week**, you should **reaffirm** them until it become **very stable**. After that you can skip doing it for a while. Then, every 3 months you can go back and look at the **vows** again and **reaffirm** them to **strengthen** your **faith** and **understanding** then when **you can** do it **without** having to **refer** to those sheets of papers or notes to guide you; meaning it has become a part of **your understanding** then you will become **very different** and your **cultivation** will become **very different too**. Afterward when I go through all these with you all, you all will **understand better**.

D.2 Special Puja Offerings & Chanting

Special Puja Offerings & Chanting followed by the chanting of the Heart Sutra, Great compassionate mantra and the Mahā Karuṇā Dharani Sutra as before (The chanting lasted 40 minutes.)

D.3 Taking of the Bodhisattva vows

Okay, since we have finished the chanting we can now **commence** our **official** taking of the **Bodhisattva** vow **ceremony**. Today is very **auspicious** because some kalyāṇamittas have requested for this **special Bodhisattva vow** ceremony *to be held one more time*. At first I told them you can do it *at home in front of your altar* but they **prefer to do** it with me and had requested that *I lead them* to do it.

As before, we would like to invite all the **great beings** (*Buddha and Bodhisattvas*) and *devas* who are here, to **bear witness** while we all **take/reaffirm** our *Bodhisattva vows*. These Bodhisattva vows that we are going to take are very **unique** – so because of that *very likely most of you must have* **very good pāramī** from the **past** for you *to have the conditions* to be here to **partake** in this ceremony. These **vows** are also closely **related** to **Dharma cultivation** and they will **help** you in **many ways** while *walking this Bodhisattva way* to **perfect** all the **Dharma practices** and also to **fulfil** whatever *perfections* needed to **realize** Sammasam Buddha hood that you have aspired for. As you walk this way, you are actually cultivating the **perfection** of **wisdom/understanding** following the Buddha's way and it has a lot to do with his **Diamond Sutra's teaching** of *no mark; no mark* of a 'self' cultivating, **no mark** of 'living beings' and **no mark** of any **Dharma** or **life**. All these understanding will **shine** forth, then what we **need to include** into this Bodhisattva vows are some of the **essential right views** that **Sākyamuni Buddha** had taught us and I will read through them so that it can help you develop the **faith**. After that we will **officially** take the **Bodhisattva vows together**. I will lead you but for now I will just read through it so that you can have a **better** understanding of what these vows are. You will be given a **set** of the **printed notes** for your **safe keeping** and **future reference**. I will read to you the notes so that later on when we take the **actual vows** you can follow them more easily. Anybody doesn't have a copy of these notes? Okay good, then please turn to the first page which is a *general introduction* to this Bodhisattva vows.

'The **Bodhisattva vows** are the vows taken by Mahayana Buddhist to attain **complete enlightenment** for the **sake** of all sentient beings. One who has taken the vow is nominally known as a *Bodhisattva*. The **Prātimokha** or the **monk's precepts**, they *cease at death*, whereas the **Bodhisattva vows** *extends into future lives*. There are basically *two traditions* of the *Bodhisattva vows*, one originating from **Asanga** and the other from **Nagarjuna** (Loong Su Pusa). A Bodhisattva vow is found at the end of the **Avatamsaka Sutra** by **Samantabhadra Bodhisattva** and it explains that these vows are to be taken with the *2 famous verses* from that Sutra.'

(**Note: Samantabhadra Bodhisattva** is Pu Hsien Pusa. About two years ago I lead a group of our kalyāṇamittas on a very **special** spiritual trip to **Er Mei Mountain** - the **way place** of Pu Hsien Pusa. That trip was indeed very **meaningful, memorable** and most **beautiful** because everything went on very **smoothly** and it was as if **it is meant to be**. When the **faith** develops, **wholesomeness, joy** and **understanding** will **keep on** unfolding. Quite a number of our kalyāṇamittas who went also have a **lot of affinity** with **Pu Hsien Bodhisattva's Nature** and because of that they have a lot of *very good encounters* and **experiences** while there. About 4 or 5 kalyāṇamittas who have very good **affinity** with Pu Hsien Pusa, they really **progress very fast** after that **spiritual trip**. That is the reason why, while on all *these spiritual trips organized* by me, - if you have the **faith** and **understanding**, a lot of things **can happen** and **manifest on its own**. That's also the reason why not long after that, I think, you all know what happened to **Bro. Song** right? He was up there too, - remember? The **tear** just flow from his face and he was **sobbing** and **crying** out very loudly. Mr Er, our local guide who took us there, he **didn't understand** what happened so he came and talk to me. He said, "Bro Teoh, don't you think Bro. Song got some serious problem? Why is he crying and sobbing like that?" I said, "Don't worry. This one has something to do with his **past affinity** with Pu Hsien Pusa and also his **past encounters** and **practices**". That's why after that a lot of things happen to Bro. Song and then later on he actually develops the **understanding** and he **progress** very fast. Okay, now we will continue will the taking of the vows.)

The two **famous verses** from this **Avatamsaka Sutra** are:-

'Just as all the previous Sugatas, the Buddhas generated the **Bodhi mind** of enlightenment and accomplished all the stages of the Bodhisattva training. So will I, for the sake of all beings, **generate** the **Bodhi mind** of enlightenment and *accomplish all the stages of Bodhisattva training*.'

Generating the Bodhi mind is **very important** because *in order to walk* this way, you have to *sincerely generate* the **Bodhi mind**. The meaning in Mandarin is very good and clearer. You develop the **Bodhisattva vows** and the **Bodhisattva resolve** to arise this **Bodhi** mind or ‘**Pu Ti Xin**’ in mandarin. Bodhi or ‘Pu Ti’ is enlightenment and satta is a being. That’s the reason why a Bodhisattva is an **enlightened** being who **vow or determine to walk** the **path** to **Buddha hood**. So, *generating this Bodhi mind* with very **strong faith** is **very important**. That’s the reason why this **resolve** to **plant** this **seed of Bodhi** within your **nature** (**not** at your thought level), with the **vow** and the **faith** is very important.

The **Bodhi mind** is the mind that can **understand** the **Buddha Dharma** needed to develop the **awakening**, the **enlightenment** and the **perfections** etc. So this **resolve** to arise the **Bodhi** mind or the ‘**Pu Ti Xin**’ is *extremely important*. That’s the reason why to be a *Bodhisattva or a Pusa*, you must have the ‘Pu Ti Xin’ or Bodhi mind because this is the **seed** of **Bodhi** that can bring about the **Enlightenment** and from this seed it can **generate** the **causes and conditions** for you to **walk** this **path** until all the **stages of Bodhi mind development and Bodhisattva way cultivation** are completed or perfected. That’s the reason why the next paragraph reads:

‘The **promise** to keep Bodhisattva vows **applies** not **only** to this life, but to **each subsequent** lifetime **until full** enlightenment. Thus, these vows continue on our “**mind-stream**” into our **nature** and into **future** lives.’

So, this is something **very** different. This one **can drive you**, can allow you to continue to **develop** this **Bodhi** mind so that **life after life** when you come, you **will have** this *understanding*. You will have this **resolve** that will **drive** you to develop the **perfections**. Then not only that, this *Bodhisattva vows* can also **bring forth** a lot of **understanding** and **benefit too** and through these vows you can perfect your **10 perfections** relatively **easier** because these vows actually **does the work** for you. You will also **come** to understand what **aspirations** or **Adhiṭṭhāna** is; it is also **one** of the **ten** perfections. When you have this **understanding** you will know how to **continuously use it**. You will know how to **make use of your power** of merits, wholesomeness or whatever goodness that you have developed. You can **invoke the power** of merits for **causes and conditions** for **whatever** you aspire for to **unfold**, to **perfect your vows**, your **cultivation** and all those **other essential** things. This one when you **invoke** through the **nature’s law** via **understanding**, it can become **very powerful**. And that’s the reason why the **Bodhisattva vows** can be *very powerful*, and

when you understand these vows you will have a lot of **gratitude** towards the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. You will have a lot of **respect** towards Him, then you will develop the **unshakeable** faith in Him because He is **so wise** and He can **actually guide** not only human beings, He *can guide all beings* including the Devas, the Gods and others. That's why He is *a teacher* of man and God. He is *a guide incomparable*; nobody can be better than Him. He's **an incomparable guide** as far as **training** living beings to **become enlighten** is concerned because this ability is part of the **Buddha's nine great virtue** or qualities.

Now we shall read on. The next paragraph is just for your information:-

'In Tibetan Buddhism there are two lineages of the Bodhisattva vows. The first is associated with the Cittamatra movement of Indian Buddhism, and is said to have originated with the **Bodhisattva Maitreya**, and to have been propagated by **Asanga**. The second is associated with Madhyamaka movement, and is said to have originated with the **Bodhisattva Mañjusrī** (Wen Shu Pusa) and to have been propagated by Nagarjuna (Loong Su Pusa), and later by Shantideva. The main difference between these two lineages is that in the Cittamatra lineage the **vows cannot** be received by one who **has not previously** received the Pratimokha vows. - Which means you have to be a monk first but for the other one, there is *no such requirement*.'

In taking these vows you will join with the **hundreds of thousands** of Buddhist in the west and millions in Asia. So, you are **not alone** in this journey. The world **has changed** and **transformed** so much that even within the **western world** where the people are predominantly **Christian**; they also have a lot of Bodhisattva - in the hundreds of thousands as stated. Then in Asia of course there are millions who have done so.

We will now continue:

'As is traditional, you might seek out a **Buddhist centre** or **temple** and take the Bodhisattva vows in the **presence of a teacher**, which is what you all are doing now. Or, if you cannot do so, you can take them at **home**. Create a **sacred space** and place there the **images** of **Bodhisattvas** or **Buddha** who have gone forth before you. If you wish to invite a friend or friends to be your witness, you can. Just sit **quietly** for a while and **reflect** on the **beauty** and **value** of a **life dedicated** to the **benefits** of all **living beings**. When you are ready, add **any meaningful ritual**, like the lighting of candles and the taking of refuge etc. Then recite your vows.

(**Note:** Just now we have done a complete **pre-puja** which is **very meaningful** then we have also done the **invocation** to all the Devas to bear **witness** and to **rejoice** with us on this **auspicious** day of taking of the Bodhisattva vows ceremony.)

This version below is a **simplified** version. They just chant the **four basic vows** as follow:

'Suffering beings are numberless; I vow to liberate them all.

Attachment/suffering is inexhaustible; I vow to sever them all.

Dharma doors to truth are numberless; I vow to master them all.

The way to perfection leading to supreme enlightenment is very arduous, I vow to realize it.'

You can modify the language of these vows so that they speak your **deepest dedication**. That's the reason why your **faith** has to be **very strong**; your **resolve** also has to be **very strong**. Then you can repeat them every time you **sit in meditation**, to **direct** and **dedicate** your practice. Alternatively you don't have to really do that but instead you can maybe on a **daily** basis then **later** once a week **reflect on it, contemplate on it** and **go deep** into it to understand it. Then develop the **understanding** until it becomes a part of you, so that even **without** the notes you can more or less know that these are the things you need to **cultivate**, you need to **develop** the **understanding** and these are *your vows*. And when it *has become a part of your nature*, then when you come to this world (whether you have to come or choose to come) even when there is **no more Buddha Sāsana** within the world, **this understanding** that you **have developed** through these vows **can still enable** you to walk the **path of Dharma to cultivate** and you will **still develop** the **understanding** and you will **not be heedless** or **get lost** like **normal** living being. **Without** the **Buddha Sāsana**, most living beings when they come they **really suffer** because they will become **heedless** and **without** the *Buddha Dharma* it's **very difficult** to awaken or to even have the **understanding of life**.

Okay, now we shall turn to the next page on the **Taking of the Bodhisattva vows**. This is the one that *you have to develop the understanding*. Since I still have some time, I will *first go through* them with you all before you take the vows.

Taking of the Bodhisattva vows:

1. As is traditional, you may seek out a Buddhist centre or temple or a shrine and take the Bodhisattva vows in the presence of a teacher. Or, if you cannot do so, you can take them at home in front of your sacred shrine. (This is for your *own understanding*. So, what you are doing is the *first one* which is **very meaningful** because if you **can have** someone who has the **understanding to guide you** it's **very different**. Otherwise, when you take it on your own you **may not** develop the **actual understanding** and your **faith** may **not** be strong.)
2. One must make **strong aspiration** to take these Bodhisattva **vows** with **determined faith** and **understanding, sincerely** in front of the Buddha or great Mahā Bodhisattva who had gone forth before you.

[So, today we are going to do it in front of all the **Buddha and Bodhisattvas** and we shall start by paying respect to them via chanting their 'Fo Hau', as follows:

Nā Mó Běn Shī Shì Jiā Móu Ní Fó (南无本师释迦牟尼佛) x3,

Nā Mó Guān Shì Yīn Pú Sà (南无观世音菩萨) x3,

Nā Mó A Mi To Fó (南无阿弥陀佛) x3,

Nā Mó Mi Le Fó (南无弥勒佛) x3,

Nā Mó Pu Hsien Pú Sà (南无普贤菩萨) x3,

Nā Mó Fó Pú Sà (南无佛菩萨) x3.

These are the **great Buddha and Bodhisattvas** that **we have to cultivate** a lot of **affinity with** because we need **their support** to walk this **path successfully**. Like I always said, we need **to seek** their nature's **blessing, protection** and **guidance**. And through this **sincere affinity** we will know how to develop the request for their **sincere protection, guidance** and **blessing**. The **protection** is for **our form and mind only** and this understanding is **very important** because when we come to this world we have a **physical body** and a **mind** or the consciousness **trapped inside it**, so combining them, together this is the **5 aggregates** of *form and mind*. This *form and mind* (the so call **segmented life** or **living being**) in this life, is a **human being**. This **form and mind** or this **human being** or **living being** is **very fragile**. It can easily be **destroyed** and when this 'vehicle' is gone you **cannot** cultivate, you **cannot** perfect yourself and you **cannot do**

what you **want to do** anymore. So, that's the reason why you need to seek their **protection** (from all these great beings' nature). They are all clearly stated inside this **Bodhisattva vows'** notes. Later on we will go through them. Okay?]

3. Making of special aspiration to walk the Bodhisattva way.

This is **very important** and what we are **aspiring** here is also **very unique**, we said, 'By the power of whatever **blessings** and **wholesomeness** that this nature of 'mine' had **cultivated** from the distant past till now, **may it arise the causes and conditions** for this *nature of mine* to have the following **right Dharma understanding, life after life** whenever *it choose to come or have to come* in the form of a *Form and Mind*:

- i) **Right view** with regards to (a) the **law of karma** (karma niyāma); (b) the **law of Dependent origination** or **12 links** (Citta niyāma) and (c) the **Four Noble Truths** (Dharma niyāma);
- ii) To understand the **2 aspects** of the **5 aggregates of Form and Mind** clearly via the **direct seeing** to **realize** that they are all **condition arising** entities, **causal phenomena** hence **impermanent; leading to suffering; not me, non-self** and **empty**. That is, this so called **living being** (*5 aggregates of Form and Mind*) is just a **karmically conditioned 'vehicle and tool'** for us to come to this **existential** world *to develop* the **cultivation** and **experience** all of the **beauty** and **wonders** of life. So use it **with wisdom** to arise the **right thoughts, right speeches** and **right actions** to be a **blessing to all** and **not** to be **deluded** by it. To **constantly recite** with **understanding** the following dharma profoundly:

Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ, rūpaṃ anattā;

Vedanā aniccaṃ, vedanā anattā;

Saññā aniccaṃ, saññā anattā;

Saṅkhāra aniccaṃ, saṅkhāra anattā;

Viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ, viññāṇaṃ anattā.

Sabba saṅkhāra aniccaṃ, Sabba saṅkhāra dukkha and Sabba dhamma anattā.

(**Note:** *Form and mind* here refers to your karmically **conditioned form and mind**. This is your this **segmented life's vehicle**. Every life you come, you will have that *form and mind* which is for **that segment** of your life. Like **this segment** of my life, my **form and mind** is 'this one' which you all call **Bro. Teoh**; but this is **not me**, do you understand? This one is karmically **conditioned** out - that's why it's **conditioned arising, depend originating** and it is **impermanent**. It's never a **permanent unchanging entity** where I can hold on to, cling on to and say 'this is me, this is I and therefore all these can be mine'. There is **no such** thing. That's why later on in the vows, I had actually incorporated all these understanding for you all. That's the reason why it's very important that **life after life** you must come **with this understanding** then you will become **beautiful**. You will not have any more problem; then whether got sāsana or no sāsana you are **still beautiful**. You **can still understand** and **walk the path of Dharma** because **this nature of mine** had done so and it has gone through **long periods of cultivation and perfection**. That's the reason why, this life when I look back, - '**no wonder** it is so **wonderful**. No wonder this **form and mind** can understand so many things'. Like I used to tell you all, a lot of **my understanding** that I had shared with you all - I **didn't learn** them **this life**. Then where did it come from? It must have come from my past cultivation. Also how come the moment I was born into this world I **don't have** to go through **suffering to seek Truth**, the Buddha Dharma? When **condition arises** this *form and mind* **just seek automatically**. Then when it starts to seek, it will know how to filter. It will also know *how to wait* for **appropriate causes** and **condition** and the **right** timing to do thing.

That's the reason why, I remembered, all of a sudden in 1971, the year when I was in form 5, it started to seek. The following year, the moment I came across the **Four Noble Truths**, that's it and **no more** searching or seeking. This **nature** recognized the **truth** straight away, *no more doubt. No need to search anymore*. This is the **real one** for nobody can do it unless he is the real Samma Sambuddha. Two thousand six hundred over years ago after His enlightenment, **no one in this universe** can summarize all of His understanding into just **Four Noble Truths** which is **so beautiful, so simple and so concise**. This nature must **had contemplated** for **very long** period of time (maybe for countless eons and eons of lives) - that's why it is possible to have this **understanding** the **moment** it **sees** this type of **truth**. It **knew straight away**. Nobody in this universe can actually **summarize all** of His **understanding** in this way. This **nature even tell itself**, even if I **had developed** that **type of enlightenment**, if **without** the Buddha's teaching or the Sāsana, I still *cannot summarize* it into just **Four Noble Truths** and **share it** with

the world. That's why whoever He is; He has to be the **real one**. This nature **recognizes it straight away** because of all those vows that this nature had cultivated.

This is a **very auspicious** and **rare** occasions where you can **encounter** and **develop** all these understanding. That's the reason why you all **must have** the **faith** and **very strong resolve** to make sure **these understanding** goes with you all *life after life*.

Okay, now I'll go through it quickly so that we can take the vow after this.

First one is to have:

- i) **Right view** with regards to (a) the **law of karma** (Karma niyāma); (b) the **law of Dependent origination** or **12 links**, the **paṭicca samuppāda** which is part of (Citta niyāma) and (c) **right view** with regards to the **Four Noble Truths** as taught by the Buddha (Dharma niyāma); and the Four Noble Truth are like the **secret of life**. All of life, **mundane** and **supra mundane**, they are all **summarized** there. That's the reason why I said, 'nobody in this universe can do it unless He's the real one, the Samma Sambuddha.'

Then the next part is;

- ii) To understand the **2 aspects** of the **5 aggregates of Form and Mind** clearly via the **direct seeing** to realize that they are all **condition arising entities** and **casual phenomena** hence they are all **Impermanent**, leading to **suffering, not me, non-self** and **empty**. That is, this so called **living being**, the **5 aggregates of form and mind**, is just a **karmically** conditioned 'vehicle and tool' for us to come to this **existential world** to develop the **cultivation** and **experience** all of the **beauty** and **wonders** of life. So **use it** with **wisdom** to arise the **right thoughts, right speeches** and **right actions** to be a **blessing** to all and not to be **deluded** by it.

To constantly recite with **understanding** the following profound **essential dharma**:

Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ, rūpaṃ anattā; Etc. All these we will chant later to develop the **understanding** that all the **5 aggregates of form and mind**, - rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra and viññāṇa, they are all **impermanent; non self** and **empty**. In pāḷi it is: '**sabba saṅkhāra anicca, sabba saṅkhāra dukkha and sabba dharma anattā.**'

When you **have cultivated** and **developed** the **deep penetrative understanding** then every of this chanting will be so **meaningful** and so **penetrating**. You have to develop the **cultivation** until that level **then only** you can **carry it with you** life after life. That's the reason why I always tell you all, **this life presents** the best 'window' of **opportunity** because the Buddha **Sāsana** is still here and you can develop a lot of wholesomeness, a lot of **pāramī** and a lot of virtue from it. When you have a lot of **merits, virtue** and **pāramī**, you can **invoke the power** of merits for **causes and conditions** for these **understanding** to arise. That's the reason why these **vows** are **very important** and **very powerful**.

Okay, now you can turn to the next page.

- iii) Having developed the above right view this nature of 'mine' **vow** to always keep the following **3 sets of pure precepts** following the advice of all Samma Sambuddha:

(**Note:** These 3 sets of pure precepts are very important. They are basically the **advice** of all Buddha but the **3rd advice** is presented in a slightly **modified** way.)

The **first set** of pure precept is you undertake the training rule;

- (a) To **avoid all evil** and to **understand clearly** what **constitute evil** (that is the **3 evil roots** of **Greed, Hatred** and **Delusion** are the **roots** of all evil);

(**Note:** That's the reason why you **have to reflect** and **contemplate** on them **until you understand** them **clearly otherwise** you **cannot** cultivate. **How to avoid evil** when you don't even know what **constitute evil**? That's why the teaching is such. You have to understand *what constitute evil*. Don't *just mumble or verbalize*, "Greed, Hatred and Delusion" when you don't understand them. That's why you have **to reflect, contemplate** and **go deep into it** and **look into life** because there are **a lot of subtle greed, subtle delusion** that comes through the back door via the **mundane mind** to deceive you.)

Then the **2nd set** of pure precept is you undertake the training rule:

- (b) To cultivate all **virtues** and **blessings** leading to the **perfection** of them all;

The last or **3rd one** is you undertake the training rule:

- (c) To cultivate **all wisdom** to help **liberate** and **take across** all **sentient beings**.

So, the **modified part** is the 2nd part which is **to liberate** all sentient beings because the Buddha's advice is just – 'to avoid all evil, do good and purify the mind.' You have **to cultivate wisdom** first but you do it **because** of the **vow** to help **liberate** and **take across** all sentient beings. That will **drive** you on **to walk** the **Bodhisattva way** via taking those vows. Then for the actual taking of the **4 basic vows** of the Bodhisattva, I have phrased it for you in a **very nicely arranged** way. This one maybe afterwards we will go through it.

The first part which is just to **plant the seed of Bodhi** via reciting:

'This nature of mine further vows with **utmost sincerity**, etc..... - that's why you have to be very **sincere** and have very **strong faith** and **perseverance** to walk to **perfection** this **Bodhisattva way** via taking the following **initial 4 basic vows** of a **Bodhisattva**.

These 4 basic vows, I have **modified** them for you. I use **this 'nature of mine'** and didn't use 'I' and 'me'. Do you know why? This nature of 'yours' or 'mine' means **all of the form and mind**, form and mind, etc - The **summation** of them all, developing into this nature of mine. That's how you can have your **karmic nature** and your **spiritual nature**.

So we use;

This nature of mine further vow with **utmost sincerity**, **faith** and **perseverance** to walk to **perfection** this **Bodhisattva way** via taking the following **initial 4 basic vows** of a Bodhisattva:

(**Note:** These are the 4 **initial** basis vows then **later on** when you had become **more skilful** you can *expand on it*. That's how **Pu Hsien Bodhisattva** finally got the **10 great vows** and **Amitabha Buddha** got his **48 great** vows. Then all the *various Bodhisattvas* they have their own **additional** and **miscellaneous** vows too. They are actually **beyond** the **4 basic vows** because after perfecting themselves they have their own **unique way to add on those other vows.**)

The initial **4 basic vows** are:

- i) This nature of mine vows **to liberate the countless living beings from samsara** and take them all **across** to the **other shore**; (Meaning you cultivate great **compassion** and **loving kindness** to liberate living beings.)
- ii) This nature of mine vows **to endure** and **severe all vexation** and **suffering**; (So that your mind can be **free** from suffering, **under all circumstances.**)

iii) This nature of **mine vows** to **cultivate** and **penetrate all dharma** to **realize the perfection** of all **wisdom**;

iv) This nature of mine vows **to perfect the 10 pāramitās (or perfection) to realize the unsurpassed Samma Sambuddha hood.**

Then we have the **additional vows**. Okay, we will not go through the additional vows. These additional vows afterwards (when we take the vows) we will go through them. Now you turn to the second page, which is page 1. We will **commence** the *official taking of the Bodhisattva vows* now. We will start from number 1 and we will follow the first option.

1. As is traditional, you may seek out a Buddhist centre, which is a way place or temple or a shrine and take the Bodhisattva vows in the **presence** of a **teacher**. Now we are doing it together, you can **recite after me**. Before we start, we will **make prostration** to all the *Buddha and Bodhisattvas*.

Compose your mind; develop the **saddhā** and the **vīriya** then, we shall pay our **respect mindfully** and we will *recite* the following:

Na Mo Ben Shi Shi Jia Mou Ni Fo - (3x)

Na Mo Guan Shi Yin Pu Sa - (3x)

Na Mo Fo Pu Sa - (3x)

Okay, after this we shall develop the **strong aspiration** to take this **Bodhisattva vows** with **determined faith** and **understanding sincerely** in front of all the Buddha and great (Mahā) Bodhisattvas who have gone forth before us. Then we will commence from where we stop which is no 3.

3. Making of special aspiration to walk the Bodhisattva way.

(This is to prepare ourselves *before* the *actual vow*. We'll recite together.)

Making of Special Aspiration:

'By the power of whatever **blessings** and **wholesomeness** that this nature of 'mine' had cultivated from the distant past till now, may it arise the causes and conditions for

this nature of mine to have the following **right Dharma understanding** life after life whenever it chooses to come or have to come in the form of a *Form and Mind*.'

Recite after me, 'we must have:

- i) **Right view** with regards to (a) the **law of karma** (Karma niyāma); (b) the **law of Dependent origination** or **12 Links** (Citta niyāma) and (c) the **Four Noble Truths** (Dharma niyāma); (These 3 right views are very important.)
- ii) To understand the **2 aspects of the 5 Aggregates of Form and Mind** clearly via the **direct seeing** to **realize** that they are **all conditioned arising entities, causal phenomena** hence **impermanent**; leading to **suffering**; **not me, non-self** and **empty**. That is this so called **living being** (5 aggregates of Form and Mind) is just a **karmically conditioned** 'vehicle and tool' for us to come to this **existential world** to develop the **cultivation** and to **experience** all of the **beauty** and **wonders** of life, so **use it with wisdom** to arise the **right thought, right speech and right action**, to be a **blessing to all** and **not to be deluded** by it and to **constantly recite** with **understanding** the following profound dharma:

Okay, we'll recite together;

Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ, rūpaṃ anattā; Vedanā anicca, vedanā anattā;

Saññā anicca, saññā anattā; Saṅkhāra aniccaṃ, saṅkhāra anattā;

Viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ, viññāṇaṃ anattā;

Sabbe saṅkhāra aniccaṃ, Sabbe saṅkhāra dukkha, Sabbe dhamma anattā.'

Turn to the next page and we will recite together;

- iii) Having developed the above right views this nature of 'mine' *further vow to always keep* the following **3 sets of pure precepts** via following the advice of all Samma Sambuddha :
 - (a) **To avoid all evil** and to **understand clearly** what **constitute evil** (the **3 evil roots of Greed, Hatred and Delusion are roots of all evil**)
 - (b) **To cultivate all virtues** and **blessings** leading to the **perfection** of them all;

(c) To **cultivate wisdom** to **help liberate** and **take across** all sentient beings.

We will now **commence** the actual taking of the **Bodhisattva vows**. Compose your mind, and then we will start by taking the **4 basic vows** of a **Bodhisattva**. I will read the first paragraph to strengthen your faith.

‘Just as all the previous Sugatas, the Buddha **generated** the **Bodhi mind** of enlightenment and **accomplished** all the **stages** of the **Bodhisattva training**. So too will this nature of ‘mine’, for the sake of all beings, **generate** the **Bodhi mind** of **enlightenment** and **accomplish** all the stages of the Bodhisattva training so that the **seed of ‘Bodhi’** can be **strongly planted** within our nature.’

Okay, we all can **read together** the **vows now**:

‘Just as all the previous Sugatas, the Buddhas **generated** the **Bodhi mind** of enlightenment and **accomplished** all the **stages** of the **Bodhisattva training**. So too will this nature of ‘mine’, for the sake of all beings, **generate** the **Bodhi mind** of **enlightenment** and **accomplish** all the stages of the Bodhisattva training so that the **seed of ‘Bodhi’** can be **strongly planted** within our nature.’

Now, we will commence the taking of **the 4 basic vows** and you all repeat after me;

‘This nature of mine **further vow** with **utmost sincerity, faith** and **perseverance** to walk to **perfection** this **Bodhisattva way** via taking the following **initial 4 basic vows** of a Bodhisattva:

- i) This **nature of mine vows** to **liberate the countless living beings** from samsara and **take them** all across to the other shore;
- ii) This **nature of mine vows** to **endure** and **severe all vexation/suffering**;
- iii) This **nature of mine vows** to **cultivate and penetrate all dharmas** to realize the **perfection** of all wisdom;
- iv) This **nature of mine vows** to **perfect the 10 pāramitās** (or perfection) **to realize** the unsurpassed Samma Sambuddhahood.’

Okay, from 4.2 onwards these are the **additional vows** needed to **break all karmic obstructions** to bring about the way. These are **very important** additional vows which I had shared with you all before but now **I have put them in words** so it’s easier for

you all to understand. Now we will determine strongly and recite these vows together.

4.2 Additional vows to break all karmic obstructions to bring about the way.

Okay, we will recite them together:

- i) If by action, speech or thought, whether knowingly or unknowingly via ignorant, delusion and heedlessness, this nature of 'mine' **had offended or done anything wrong** unto the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) this nature of 'mine' would like **to sincerely** vow to ask for **forgiveness**. (**Note:** This first vow is very important; ask for **forgiveness from Triple Gem** because if this karmic offence is there it is **very difficult** for the living being to actually break it. But the moment you ask for forgiveness from the Triple Gem, it will be like **resolve immediately** because all enlighten beings, they **would have forgiven** all those beings who have whether knowingly or unknowingly **caused any offence or karmic negativity** towards them.)
- ii) Whomsoever from the distant past until now, whether knowingly or unknowingly that this nature of 'mine' had cause any **karmic negativity, misery, suffering, or mislead**, this *nature of 'mine'* would like **to sincerely ask for forgiveness** from them all. May *my sincere request* for **forgiveness** be **accepted by all** so that all these **karmic obstructions** can be **amicably resolve, or lessen**, thereby **enabling** this *nature of 'mine'* to continue with its **cultivation** to realize the **true dharma with ease**.
- iii) This nature of 'mine' also vow **to repent** and from **now onwards** vow **never to repeat** any of these karmic negativities (borne of Greed, Hatred and Delusion) by following the **advice** of the Buddha **to avoid all evil, do good and purify my mind** via **striving** on with **heedfulness** to keep the **5 precepts** and **cultivate** the **Buddha dharma diligently** so that it will **never violate** this law of karma again whenever it arise.
- iv) By the power of whatever **wholesomeness or merits** that this nature of 'mine' had **cultivated** since *the distant past until now* may it arise the **causes and conditions** for this *nature of 'mine'* to have the **ability to overcome** all **other karmic obstructions or obstacles amicably** so that this *nature of 'mine'* will be able **to gain back its life, to walk the path of dharma** life after life **to fulfill and realize** all its Bodhisattva vows.

4.3 Additional miscellaneous vows to enhance the cultivation

We shall chant together. This *nature of 'mine' vows*:

- i) To be successful in fulfilling all my above vows soonest possible;
- ii) To cultivate strong affinity with all Buddha and Bodhisattvas and to request their nature's **blessing, protection** and **guidance** always;
- iii) To strengthen my **5 spiritual faculties** of Saddhā, Vīriya, Sati, Samādhi & Panna until they become **balas** or **powers**, life after life so that all the above vows can be **successfully fulfilled** with ease;
- iv) To **cultivate extensively** all **virtues, blessings** and **merits to help support** my cultivation so that they will **shine forth to aid this nature of 'mine' when needed in time** of **trials, difficulties** and **tribulations** while walking the Bodhisattva way.

Okay, now we will do the **closing puja**. Let us **rejoice** first. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

You can be seated. Good, now it's about 9:40pm only so we still got 20 minutes. Just to **elaborate** a little bit more on the **additional** and **miscellaneous vows** needed to **enhance** your cultivation.

Take for example the **first vow** on, 'this nature of 'mine' **vow to be successful** in fulfilling all my above vows soonest possible'. If you vow that way, it will bring about **causes and conditions** for you to fulfil them.

Then after that, the **second vow** is also very important - like I had always advice you all. You have to **cultivate strong affinity** with *all Buddha and Bodhisattvas* and to request their nature's **blessings, protection** and **guidance**. You know what are blessings, isn't it? When you come they **will bless you** because of your **affinity** with them and your request. It is just like the monks - after you make offering or perform whatever wholesomeness towards them they will chant for **your protection**, your **blessing, etc**. Sometimes, they will deliver a **Dharma talk**. That's why their **blessing, protection**, and **guidance** are very useful. Guidance is via the **dharma talk** or the **dharma sharing** or **their nature will guide you** on how **to walk the way**, how to **fulfil your vows** and how to bring about **understanding** of all those things. So, this one is **very important** because this *nature of mine* came **to realize** that this is **very important** and **very powerful**. If you don't have all these, the *Buddha and Bodhisattvas* affinities, etc it's **very difficult** to walk this path because this *form and mind* can be **destroyed**

easily and **without their protection** and **blessings** it's very difficult *to sustain* it to walk the path successfully. Then of course their guidance too, so that you won't **deviate**, so that you **won't make mistake**, so that you will **not waste time**.

Then the **third additional vow** - of course we all know, is 'to strengthen **our 5 spiritual faculties** of saddhā, vīriya, sati, samādhi and panna until they become *balas* or powers'. *The moment you have them as powers, technically your meditation is automatic.* You **will be mindful** the **moment you sit** and aware **throughout** the day, **in the midst of life while doing your worldly duties** or **fulfilling your worldly chores** for *Life itself is the meditation*. Then you can have the **ability** to be **mindful** and **heedful throughout** the day. That's why after that your **daily mindfulness** is like automatic. That's the reason why these **spiritual faculties** are *very important and powerful*. The moment these spiritual faculties have been **perfected** until they become **balas or powers (unshakeable)** the **mental hindrances will cease** to be. That's why it's **very easy** to **cultivate** after that. Then when you vow to have these *spiritual faculties strengthened* until they become **balas (life after life)** then all the above vows can be **successfully fulfilled** with **ease**. With the spiritual faculties all **these vows** becomes no more problem and very easy to fulfil.

Then the fourth one is also very important, - 'to **cultivate extensively all virtues, blessings** and **merits** to **help support** our **cultivation** so that they will **shine forth** to **aid this nature** of 'mine' when **needed in time of trials, difficulties** and **tribulations** while walking the Bodhisattva way'. Do you know why? *Why must we cultivate all virtue, blessings and merits extensively?* Because you **need to develop the perfection**, right? You have to go all out then this merit when you know how to use them through the **perfection of Adhiṭṭhāna** or what they call **determination or affirmation**; it can bring forth the **causes and conditions** for a lot of things to happen and to be fulfilled. When you have **problems and difficulties** like sickness or whatever, or sometimes you **have to overcome** like certain **karmic obstructions** that are **very severe** you can **invoke the power of merits** to **overcome them**. That's why we always **ask for forgiveness**, and then **seek repentance**. Then after that, **vow not to repeat all these** because we know it's wrong, so that it **will express our sincerity**.

Then the third additional vow is 'we vow to follow the advice of the Buddha, to avoid all evil, cultivate wholesomeness then develop wisdom.' Then through this cultivation via following the advice of the Buddha **we develop merits**. That's how we **can cultivate extensively all virtue, blessings** and **merits**, so that we can **invoke the**

power of these **merits** like the vow earlier on; 'by the power of whatever wholesomeness merits, blessings and wisdom that this nature of ours **has cultivated since the distance past until now**, may it arise the **causes and conditions** for whatever you want to do or whatever that is **allowable** by the law of nature to arise or take effect. So, sometimes when you met up with certain type of very **severe karmic obstruction** or negativity or whatever, then when you **invoke the power of merits sincerely** for **causes and conditions**, if there is **any slightest** causes and conditions from the distance past, it will **connect** through, then it can actually bring about the **condition for it to be resolved or dissolved** then sometimes it's **like a miracle has taken place**. People call it miracle but it's not really miracle because it's just *power of merits, power of faith, power of truth, power of determination*. The Buddha knows how to use all these because of his **perfection of Adhiṭṭhāna**. Like in the **Jayamangala Sutta**, the sutta on *blessings*; the Buddha always **invokes** the power of truth and he always chant, 'by the **power of all these truth** may **joyous victory** be ours. So, all these are the **various skilful means** that one can make use of.

The **10 perfection** leading to Buddha hood are as stated in the notes too, and you need to understand them all. First one is **generosity** or **dana pāramī**, then **sīla**. These **dana** and **sīla pāramīs**, we have already covered and done a lot during our earlier sharing of the cultivation stages. The 3 types of giving/gifts are: giving of **materialistic wealth**, then the **gift of life** or the **gift of fearlessness**, then of course the **last one** is the **gift of truth**. Then when you have the **heedfulness** and **mindfulness** to **avoid all evil** by nature you will be good and your **sīla** or morality will be **automatically** taken care off. Your **sīla pāramī** will be perfected. So, **sīla** is very useful - when you can avoid all evil you have **sīla**. This is what you do because **life after life** you will **renew your precepts** and you will **keep to this precepts** so that you are **incapable** of **negativity**, so that you **cannot violate** all these then you can start to **perfect** them. Then after that the third one is **renunciation** or **nekkhamma**. As you cultivate the **perfection** of **no mark** you can **renounce** many things; *materialistic wealth, your own body, your other possessions, your reputation or whatever*. You will **not cling**, you will **not hold**. Then this **renunciation pāramī** is very **powerful**. When you **can renounce the world** it means you have **wisdom**, you have **panna**. You can see their **unreality** and their **impermanence universal characteristics** leading to **suffering**. That's how you can **renounce** them all. It's like **they don't really belong to you** because you know you **don't exist**. **Hey no you, hey no me**. How can there be a **self**? How can there be a **living being**? How can the **aggregates of form and mind**; *rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* be what you are? As you **reflect, contemplate** and **cultivate**

you will understand all these. The power of **renunciation** can be cultivated to manifest in 3 levels. First level is **kaya viveka** – which is **physical renunciation** of all *physical things* and *possessions*. Then we have **citta viveka** which is **mental seclusion** or **renunciation**. The mind goes into **peaceful abiding** and **secludes** itself. Then of course lastly we have **upadi viveka** which is **renunciation with wisdom** with regards to all your other attachments.

Also the **perfection of wisdom** is our **3rd basic vow**, where you vow, ‘this nature of mine vows to **cultivate** and **penetrate** all **dharma to realize the perfection** of all **wisdom.**’ So, when you vow that way, **life after life** when you come you will **cultivate** and **penetrate** all dharma and you will **perfect** them all. Then you will reach the **understanding** as taught in the Diamond Sutra – the teaching of **no mark**. All these cultivation can be very easy to perfect when you understand.

Then the next perfection is **vīriya** (**spiritual zeal** or **tenacity** to go this way) which can arise because of your **saddhā** or your **faith** in the Buddha and his teaching developed via **clear understanding** of who is the **Buddha** is and how **special** and **unique** his teaching is. This **virīya** or **resolve** will **drives** you to take the **Bodhisattva vows** with **understanding** and this will make you very **determined** to go **this way** because you see the **importance** of **such cultivation** and your **faith** which is **very strong** will **cause** your **vīriya** to arise.

Then the next perfection is **khanti** which is patience; **patience** borne of **wisdom** that **enables** one to **endure** all **suffering and vexations**. It’s **not suppression** or **control**. You will have a lot of patience. That’s why **equanimity** is the **final outcome** of the **cultivation** of **patience**. You develop equanimity and it comes about because of your **wisdom** that’s why it **has patience** towards all things. You can **accord and flow**. It’s **not deluded** by anything else, the **phenomena world** of **consciousness** and all other things within the **conditioned** world.

The next perfection is **truthfulness** or **sacca**. You will develop it too because you will come to understand that it’s **not worthwhile** to lie. No more meaning. Then after you had perfected this perfection, you *can use it to invoke* the **power** of truth. The Buddha actually *invokes the power of truth* in many of his sutta. We use to chant them, ‘*Etena sacca vajjena, etc*’ and I have it here on Page 13 of our puja book: ‘*Etena sacca vajjena, Hotu te jaya mangalam,*’ its meaning is ‘by the firm **determination** of this **truth**, **May peaceful victory be yours**’. Long time didn't chant already because we seldom chant this **Karaṇīya Metta Sutta** unless we're at the

retreat *when the non-human requested for it to be chanted*, then we will get our Sister Eng Bee to help us chant it because she is very good at pāli chanting.

These power of truth recitation are stated on the last paragraph of page 13 and the first part is, '**Etena sacca vajjena, Sotthī te hotu sabbadā**' - meaning by the **firm affirmation** of this **truth** may you **ever be well**. Then the next one is '**Etena sacca vajjena, Sabba rogo vinassatu**', meaning 'by the **firm affirmation** of this **truth**, may **all illnesses** be destroyed'. You always hear this, right? 'By the **firm affirmation of this truth**, may all illness be destroyed. Then the last one is by the firm affirmation of this truth, may **peaceful victory** be yours. See, the victory must come **peacefully**. So these are all **very useful** and **very powerful understanding**. Then as you cultivate the **2nd basic vow**, - 'this nature of mine vows to **endure** and **severe** all **vexation/suffering**'; this one is the cultivation of **renunciation** and also **patience endurance** because you **can endure** and **severe all suffering** and **vexation with understanding** so this one is very powerful. Then **love** and **compassion** is via the **1st basic vow**.

Then the next one is the no.8 perfection which is **determination** or **resolution** meaning **adhiṭṭhāna** in pāli. This perfection of **adhiṭṭhāna**, **aspiration** or **determination** or **resolve**, if you can perfect this perfection it can help you a lot in your cultivation because this *nature of mine* has more or less perfected this one and that's the reason why *it knows how to use it* via **invoking the power of merits** and **truth**, etc to arise the **causes and conditions following nature's law** to help realize our other **pure wishes/things**. And all these I **never learnt them** this life and **nobody taught** me *yet my nature knows how to use it*.

Then the 9th perfection is **loving kindness (mettā)**. For you to cultivate the **1st basic vow** to liberate all beings you must have **love** and **compassion** because you vow to take across all living beings. Then of course the **last** perfection is **equanimity** which is born of the **perfection of wisdom**. Then you will have this ability to have the **equanimous** mind. These **10 perfections** they are all **related** and **linked** to your cultivation.

Okay, we have **completed** the **taking of the vows** and the explanation. So do you all have any question? Anybody got any question? Ah Yes, pass the microphone to Sis. Yoon Chun. For the recording otherwise they cannot hear you. Thanks Sis. Yoon Chun.

Sis. Yoon Chun: "Bro Teoh you saluted Na Mo Fo Pusa. Who is Na Mo Fo Pusa?"

Bro. Teoh: Oh No! – Na Mo Fo Pusa means homage to *all the Buddha and Bodhisattvas*. Fo Pusa is not another Pusa. When you are **not mandarin educated** you may have this problem but it's okay. It's indeed a **good question** because other kalyāṇamittas **may also not** understand. So, luckily you asked. In the Buddhist teaching or the Buddhist language, especially mandarin, 'Fo' is Buddha and 'Pusa' is Bodhisattva so when they chant 'Fo Pusa' it means they are *referring to all Buddha and Bodhisattvas*. When we say 'Na Mo' it means *homage to thee, all Buddha and Bodhisattvas* because we want to create **as wide** an affinity **as possible**. Then, do you know how **to cultivate affinity** with all the great beings, all Buddha and Bodhisattvas? Can you all tell me how? Yes, one way is to chant their 'Fo Hau' or Buddha's name. Then *develop your vows to match with theirs* (in mandarin it is pronounce as 'siang-yin' meaning your vows match with their vows - that's how you can have the affinity.)

Then the other way is learn how to **recognize** virtuous people. Otherwise, you may have a situation because some Bodhisattva like **Mañjusrī**, they like to come in a **beggar form**. So, if you spike them and look down upon them then that can be big trouble for you. Which means when Fo Pusa is in front of you also you **don't know**. Ah yes, pass the microphone to Hui Ling's brother. "Brother Teoh, sorry, what the *difference* between a Bodhisattva and a Fo?"

Bro. Teoh: Very good question, - what is the difference between a Bodhisattva and a Buddha? A Bodhisattva is **still cultivating** the Buddhahood way. They are still walking the Bodhisattva way to become Samma Sambuddha. The Samma Sambuddha is the Bodhisattva that **had perfected all the 10 perfections**; fulfil all their **vows** then he *becomes a sammā Sambuddha*. Those who are walking the path they are still *Bodhisattvas* but all these great Bodhisattvas which they call Mahasattvas, like Guan Yin Bodhisattva, Pu Hsien, Wen Shu and Ti Chang Wang Pusa, etc they are very advanced Mahā Bodhisattvas. They actually can become Buddha but they *withhold their Buddhahood* and *choose to come back as Bodhisattva* to *continue to save the world* and to do all these work because they **purposely take the vow to obstruct** their Buddhahood. Like the earth store Bodhisattva, do you know, one of the vows that he had is: *'not until he had help empty the hell of hell beings he vow not to realize the sammā sambuddhahood'*. *If you put in such a vow then how are you going to fulfil it? How can the hell be empty of hell beings?* Definitely there are world systems that still have hell beings but then do you think they are **not that smart** to know that? They purposely put in such vow so that they **can stay in the world with their nature** to **continue** this work because they have **perfected themselves** and they

know what these things are. To them there is no difference. It's just like the Dato', Tun and Tan Sri titles. Do you want the title? You are already what you are and these titles are given by people. If you know you already have the **quality**, the **understanding** and the **perfection** why do you still worry about the titles? So some of these Bodhisattvas **they understand** and **choose to stay** in the world for very long period of time, just like Guan Yin Bodhisattva; he's very compassionate and he vows to continuously help and liberate living beings. There are a lot of other Bodhisattvas with *different understanding*, doing this. I hope I had answered your question.

The other thing about **affinity** is, I said you must learn **how** to **recognize** virtuous **living beings** or **cultivators** of the way. Don't spike all the poor people or the beggars. You have to **observe** them, do you understand? Sometimes they appear as simple beings hence the reason why I always teach you all **to understand causes and conditions**. All cultivators, as you progress you will **understand this very well**. Just like what the Buddha said, "*Whatever that arise there are causes and conditions behind their arising. Nothing is by chance. Nothing is by accident.*" So there are a lot of things one need to understand; from **nature the signs will come** and **my nature will understand** because I have the **capability to observe these signs** and I **can feel** them then I will know **for sure** why **certain things** cannot be like that. There must be something behind. That's how I will know. Then because of that I will just go and attend to these people, talk to them and then help them or do whatever that is **appropriate** and you will know but you will not be like the worldly people.

The worldly people, do you know what they normally do? They have **selfish intention** and **motive behind**. 'Wah, that guy is rich – so they want to **rub** shoulder with him, they want to go near him'. Do you understand? The **simple one** or **less well dress** one they don't give attention - they totally don't even want to see them. But actually the **gem** is there, in the **simple** one and they may be the real one. The well dressed up one they **may not** be the real one. *Most of them are not the real one*. They don't have the **sincerity**. That's why when you talk to people you will know. Sometimes they are **very simple** people, like they **don't wear** anything **expensive**, just like when you **observe me I don't even wear a watch**. I don't have all the **expensive** and **branded** clothing and things because **my nature** is like that. But please don't think that there are **no great beings** who like to wear all those **branded things**. There are also great beings who like all those things. You will never know. That's why you **cannot perceive people** with **negativity**. You must have the **wisdom** to feel them; to **understand** the **causes and conditions** behind then you'll know why this cannot be the case. Like my **last**

guide, actually (at that time) **I don't need** to meet up with anybody else because I already had the **understanding** and the **wisdom**. **I don't need** any teacher or **any guide** but then the **signs** keep on coming then **I knew** - even though I don't know who he is but **my nature** knew that I have to see him, that's it. That's the reason why I went and meet up with him after the signs keep on arising on 6 occasions. Then **the moment** I met him, I **understand** that it is **meant to be**, because of my **special vow**.

He is just a **lay person, very simple**. And he is **not even** a Buddhist. He can talk to you on everything, - Christianity or whatever and he don't even have any proper **structured dharma** but **his energy** is **very good** and **unique**. According to him, he is from a **different world system, dimension** and **civilization** that have **perfected** the **pure energy** understanding and that is the reason why they are **very advance** in the field of **consciousness** and **pure energy**. And the **reason why I need to see him** is because of my vow. I got one very **peculiar vow** which has been with my nature for very long. Ah, this is one of the **additional vows** that this nature makes. That's why this nature breaks away **from traditional** vow. It never vow, just to meet with Samma Sambuddha only because that **vow is part and parcel of the cultivation** but it **doesn't restrict** itself to Buddhism only, do you understand? That's why it vow, '**whenever this nature arise** it vow to have the **causes and condition** to develop the **highest wisdom realizable** during that era, irrespective of sectarian.'

That's the reason why I can understand **J. Krishnamurthy, Eckhart Tolle** and all those **others teaching** because I *never restrict* or - this nature of mine **never restrict** or **limits** its understanding to only Dharma or Buddhism. Wherever there is **truth** that can bring about **understanding** and **wisdom**, it vows to **realize the highest wisdom** at any one time when this nature arises. That's the reason why I have to meet up with my **last teacher/guide**. Then he explained to me and shows me where the '**gateway**' to my nature is. He just asks me, "**Do you trust me?**" I said, "Yes, I trust him". He then said, "Ok, now sit down." Then, his hand was about **two inches** away from my **heart area** in **front** of the '**gateway**'; he just say, "**Relax** and **silent**, or just **aware**". I had already cultivated these **first two supports** for meditation. Even the **third support**, 24 hour, I already can do that. That's why **immediately** after he put his hand there (about 1 or 2 inches towards the left of my heart) within a few seconds **my nature** straightway **detected** the '**gateway**' then after that it just **silent itself completely** and **become so still** that all of my '**ying**' and '**yang**' **energies** just melt inside there, then the **pure energy** went in and I was **so still** (completely **without** thought) the **whole of that night**. Then when **I came out of it**, there were **total** and **complete stillness** - **no thought**,

nothing and just like that. That **perfect nature** was **so beautiful** and **amazing**. And because of that it **cut short** my cultivation for **at least** 10 to 15 years.

This nature knew, if I were to locate it on my own, it will take me **at least** 10 to 15 years to locate it and because of that you all are very lucky. That's why you all can meet me so early, otherwise **this nature** may **not come out so early** but I don't know why? It is like *very funny you know*, because after this nature had the understanding since 1989 **it also didn't do anything for 15 years** until **2004** when **Yoon Chun** have the conditions to meet up with me and asked me to come out **to share** my **understanding**. Maybe **it's meant** to be; if I have not met him 15 years ago I would have located it myself also. Then also maybe at the same time come out and share. That's why it is very strange. Then like Hui Neng's case, after he left the 5th Patriarch he had all the understanding already isn't it? But he was **with the hunters for 16 years**, remember? The reason being - he has to **wait** for **causes and conditions** and the **timing**. All those that **have affinity** with *his nature* haven't come yet hence **condition not** there as yet. If this nature comes out **too early** a lot of you may not meet me. If it comes out **too late** a lot of you may also miss, but the timing is such it has to be that way. That's why **things are just the way it is, meant to be will be! Okay?**

So, **affinity** can be cultivated in many ways but you must **develop wisdom, understanding** of **cause** and **effect** and you must learn **how to see signs** then **accord and flow**. That's why **when this nature** has **this understanding** whatever it does is **not rigid**. That's why I always said **whenever there's rigidity** there's **no Buddha Dharma**. That's the reason why even when I go on **spiritual trip** we may have in our programme **agreed** on certain things but when the *condition changes* **I will make different** decision. Sometimes **nature's forces** are fighting up there, the **dark force** and the **virtuous one**, they are actually having *constant war* up there because each is trying to out beat the other but when **you have this understanding** and when you just **accord and flow** (because you understand **no mark**) then they will find it **very difficult to predict** your behaviour. Of course you *can predict what I like to eat*, I always order those few things but you'll be surprise sometimes *when the conditions are not there* then I won't order them because *I don't need them*, do you understand? Then we'll order some other things. Then sometimes we're supposed to go to that restaurant but because of certain conditions, we will not go there, just like what happen during so many of our **spiritual trips**. We make decisions in between. Sometimes we just **cancel it** because no need to go. Then we straight away go to **Wutai Shan**. That's what happened during that spiritual trip at that time. The condition will arise and show it to

you. So when you encounter all these great beings, the Bodhisattvas, the Buddha, you will have to have **this understanding** to really have **affinity** with them then you will know how to make contact. Then you will know how **to develop** the **fellowship, friendship** and other related things.

Just like this life **if you have** the **conditions** and the **understanding** then this type of **affinity** with this *nature of mine* will be very strong. That could be the reason why, in the past some of you could have had **this affinity** with *my nature before but as I always said, everyone comes differently*. Most of you *come through your affinity with Guan Yin Bodhisattva's nature*. I realized that those who have affinity with Guan Yin Bodhisattva, **will also have affinity** with *this nature of mine too*; because Guan Yin's nature will know where to send people to and all those other conditions like our **affinity with Anandagiri Hermitage** is the same. It is because of Guan Yin's nature. That's how we get to do the **consecration** of the **3 great beings' platform**. Remember, first it is to *consecrate Maitreya Bodhisattva*? Then after that *Guan Yin Bodhisattva* and finally the last one is *Sākyamuni's rūpa*.

For a Theravada monk, like Ajahn Achalo to suggest in a **Theravada way place**, to have a *Maitreya Bodhisattva's rūpa*, is already **very weird**. Then after that when he decided to add in a *Guan Yin Bodhisattva's rūpa*, it has become even **weirder**. Then he came to realize that since the way place is in Thailand, **a Theravada way place** so how can there be **no Sākyamuni Buddha's rūpa**? So finally he decided to put in the **Sākyamuni Buddha's rūpa** in the middle. That's how we got to **consecrate the 3 great beings platform** and **I knew why all 3 have to be there** – it is because this is the **sāsana** of *Sākyamuni Buddha* supported by *Guan Yin Bodhisattva* and *Maitreya Bodhisattva*. That's how we get to do the **consecration** for these **3 great beings platform**. Then we also get **to sponsor** the images and all those other things and now to do **the extension** of the **platform**, **also** we (all kalyāṇamittas) get to do it. How can we have **such favourable conditions**? All these come about because of our **pāramī, conditions** and our **affinity** with all these **3 great beings** and it's mainly because of our **affinity** with **Guan Yin Bodhisattva** and of course also with **Maitreya** and **Sākyamuni**.

In this life **two of these 3 great beings' nature** came to me. Guan Yin's nature came first, in **1986** with the **Triple Gems and the message - to move fast**. He said, '*Not much time left, you have to move fast.*' Then after that in **2008**, **Maitreya Bodhisattva** came and makes that *special request*. He said (in mandarin), 'Qing Ni Ba Zhen Fa Chuan Xia Qu' (meaning please **help transmit the True Dharma**). This message was repeated

five times in golden words coming out of Mitreya's *animated* lively face, flowing out in **beautifully written** *calligraphic golden words form* with his rather **unique laughter** of Ha! Ha! Ha!, (so loud) in the **background**. That **whole statue** was **animated into a life being** with *very beautiful golden yellow colour*. All these **you cannot** explain how it can happen because when it comes it just comes.

Okay, I was reminded by my wife to stop at 10.00 pm. Now it is 10.10pm already so shall **we end**; so that we can have our *fellowship*? Anyway, this *nature of mine* really **rejoices** with all your **wholesomeness, affinity** and **great conditions**. You look at Sister *Alicia* despite **her sickly condition** she is still here. But don't worry; all these will come to past and she **will recover**. Okay, now we will do the *closing puja*: **sharing of merits, transfer of merits**, then **we make our aspiration** and we **End**.