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The Metta Sutta

This is what should be done
by those who are skilled in goodness,
and who know the path of peace:

Let them be able and upright,
humble and not conceited,
contented and easily satisfied,
unburdened with duties
and frugal in their ways.

Peaceful and calm,
and wise and skillful,
not proud and demanding in nature.
Let them not do the slightest thing
that the wise would later reprove.

Wishing: in gladness and in safety,
may all beings be at their ease.
Whatever living beings there may be,
whether they are weak or strong,
omitting none,
the great or the mighty,
medium, short or small,
the seen and the unseen,
those living near and far away,
those born and to-be-born –
May all beings be at ease!

Let none deceive another,
or despise any being in any state.
Let none through anger or ill-will
wish harm upon another.

Even as a mother protects with her life
her child, her only child,
so with a boundless heart
should one cherish all living beings;

radiating kindness over the entire world,
spreading upwards to the skies,
and downwards to the depths,
outward and unbounded,
freed from hatred and ill-will.

Whether standing or walking,
seated or lying down,
free from drowsiness,
one should sustain this recollection.
This is said to be the sublime abiding.

By not holding to fixed views,
the pure-hearted one,
having clarity of vision,
being freed from all sense desires,
is not born again into this world.

The Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in forgiving that we are forgiven,
and it is in dying to self
that we are born to eternal life.

Sonnet 116, by William Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

The Epistle on Love, First Corinthians, chapter 13

Though I may speak in the tongues of men and of angels, if I have not love, I am but a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And though I may have prophetic power, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I may have all faith, so as to move mountains, if I have not love, I am nothing.

And though I may give away all that I have, and deliver my body to be burned, if I have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, and is kind; love is not jealous, or boastful; it is not arrogant, or rude.

Love does not insist on having its own way; it is not irritable, or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.

Love bears all things, believes in all things, maintains hope through all things, and endures all things. Love never ends.

As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away, for our knowledge is imperfect, and our prophecy is imperfect, but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, and I reasoned like a child, but when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

For we see as in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face; we know in part, then understand fully.

In this life, faith, hope, and love abide, these three, and the greatest of these is love.

Morning Reflections

This day is a jewel, and I offer it
for the happiness of all

My days here will not last forever,
and their number is uncertain.
I must realize this...
I must realize this...

And, it is this way for all of us,
and so I hold this day,
and all I share it with,
with such care

This life is most precious
because of what can be done with it –
everywhere, all good people agree –
that offering joy, and compassionately helping others in need,
by nature, these are the greatest things,
most worthy of praise in all the world

and so, in the character and activity
of all the Friends, helpers, teachers, and healers of the world,
past and present,
I rejoice

I celebrate all you have done for us,
and all that you are at work doing now

You are all
oceans of excellent qualities,
and I bow to you in gratitude and admiration

I offer to you all, my thanks and praise!

This opportunity that I now have
to become a more capable person,

able to offer more calm, peace,
and well being to others,
that which can ease their suffering and bring them fresh life,
now, and for the future,
and to have a path that actually accomplishes this –
How amazing! How wonderful!, and how rare!
I am truly the fortunate of the fortunate

Most don't see the value of their human life,
and so they waste it
And, even among those who do see our time here as being of great worth,
only a very few have the way open for them

And so I pray to the Great Compassionate Teachers of the World,
for my own sake, inseparable at all times from all those I love,
for all my family, for all those that I share this life with,

So that the calls of this world can be responded to in a greater measure
in a way that satisfies them,
in a way that meets their needs,
in a way that relieves their sorrow and brings them joy,

O Great Compassionate Ones,
I pray that you will help me
to make the most of this day
and this night

I pray for your blessings,
for your light, inspiration and strength,

To bring about what you would accomplish here,

For all the needs that love and compassion see
existing in the world,
I pray, lead me to the fullness of the realized life

I live in this world
of joy, and sorrow

of comfort and ease,
and of struggle, and pain

of friendship, and community
and of loneliness and isolation

I live in this world of riches and poverty
of abundance and of hunger

I live in this world where there is health
and there is illness

Where some people can only try to care for themselves,
while others are at the point where, more and more, they have thinking about and
caring for others as the aim and activities of their life

Bless them all
Bless them all
O, Bless them all

There are people serving others in this world -
there are people taking joy in that
and again and again I celebrate all those good actions
May they blessed

I live in this world
where many are in need of a protector,
where many are in need of an advocate

where many people do not have even a basic education...

Today, in this world, there are many who are kept back from doing good things
because of some illness of body or mind

Today there are many who are broken-hearted
Today there are many who have been hurt in relationships

May there be an abundance of heart medicine,
an abundance of earth and sky medicine today
for all of those who need it
as much as is ever necessary

Today, there are many who have had their families broken
Today, there are many who are grieving

Today there are many who have experienced an unexpected death
in the family
May they all be comforted

Every day in this world
there are people who are facing illness, and who are experiencing pain:
children, teenagers, adults, the middle-aged, the elderly;
those who are alone, and those with problems of the mind

I live in this world where there are people who are disturbed to some extent,
or who suffer from depression

This is the truth

I live in this world where some people don't love themselves,
they don't cherish their lives,
where people even hate themselves,
and where they despair,
even to the point of wanting to take their own lives...

I live in this world where there are so many people who are in need
of some form of human contact,

I live in this world where there are so many people who are experiencing
the absence of love
and we can do something truly beautiful, truly substantial,
truly meaningful for each other,
every single one of us

May it be this way for me now –
may I offer something truly meaningful

I live in this world where many sensitive people are overwhelmed
 and use drugs, or drink, or food, or sex,
 tv, computers, shopping,
 or gambling
 to the point of becoming addicted -
 They do this to self-medicate, to escape,
 but it leads to even more dullness and obscurity,
 and to more, and even worse problems
 May they all be completely healed

I live in this world where many are without peace,
 without control, without any freedom of mind

The root of all these sufferings, we should all know,
 is the untrained mind,
 self-grasping ignorance
 and the afflictive emotions

And what we all need to experience
 is the fruit of a practice that leads to the disbanding of stress,
 to the knowledge of freedom,
 and genuine happiness,
 enlightenment as to our own true nature
 the single liberating essence of Great Compassion

Ah...

Right now, there are people who are trapped by their addictions,
 overwhelmed by their delusions, lost

I live in this world where some people are in danger of falling,
 where some are in danger of slipping - and the result can be severe for them...

There are many people right now
 who are in need of forgiveness, absolution,
 inclusion,
 their being welcomed back into the community;
 who are in need of purification,

who are in need of the nectar of ethics in their lives,
 the medicine of ethics,
 the food of ethics,
 their vows restored,
 the attainment of coolness,
 strength, self control
 light, and peace,
 wisdom, purity,
 transformation, and release

I live in this world where we have all done wrong,
 some worse than others
 Some are in prisons of their own making,
 Some have done terrible things
 out of ignorance, affliction,
 or fear, desperation, despair;
 out of weakness and limitation -
 not seeing any other way
 not being able to reach any other way

I live in this world where some people suffer because of
 their own past actions, and regret, and shame
 They identify with their delusions and wrong actions,
 and believe themselves to be wrong, lacking, innately sinful,
 when nothing could be further from the truth –
 They are all innately whole, perfect, and pure

I live in this world where many people feel unworthy of love

I live in this world where there are many people who are obscured,
 lonely,
 or numb,
 self-absorbed,
 superficial,
 greedy,
 distracted,
 afraid, or sad,
 where there are those who are feeling ugly,
 or feeling hopeless
 or who are caught in self-pity

They are all capable of awakening to perfection, but they don't yet know it
 They are all capable of liberation,
 They are all capable of freedom from suffering,
 and they are all capable of happiness, but they don't yet know it

I live in this world where the sense of self arises again and again for people, and
 feels fragmented, and isolated – even though this is not true, not even for a moment

This is a great loss to us all –
 it is to all our detriment

May we all know,
 be supported by,
 and celebrate our connection
 to each other!

I live in this world where many people are experiencing stress
 and need comfort, love, light,
 and the peaceful joy that is nourishing

May people receive such peace
 everywhere it is needed
 East, West, North, and South,
 May it be so
 and may I be the cause of that

This is the truth
 and it's better that I realize it -
 I live in this world where most people
 are without any sense at all of the sacred dimension in life

I live in this world where the deluded the band together
 and increase ignorance and suffering

I live in this world where, even though there are those with the motivation to learn,
 many people are misled by false teachers,

themselves ignorant

In these times, especially, it seems,
 wrong views are supported, in hundreds of ways,
 and wisdom is not;
 greed is encouraged, and non-attachment and generosity is not;
 war and aggression are supported,
 and the values of peace,
 sanity, respect, kindness, and helping one another
 are not supported nearly enough

I live in this world where many people's
 experience is only that of a lower-realm being-
 the realm of hell beings,
 the realm of hungry ghosts,
 and the realm of animals

I live in this world where there are people
 who don't experience even a moment of peace;
 where there are those who feel they don't have any space, light
 or joy in their lives at all,
 tormented, they feel they don't have any happiness, not even a little bit

For as long as this is true
I say, for as long as this is true
 may I respond to it
 in a way that eases their sufferings
 and may they all have every happiness
may they have every happiness
oceans of happiness
skies of happiness

Every day in this world there are people with no perspective on their life, coarse,
 dissatisfied, lacking in gratitude, indulgent

I live in this world where people don't think about death
 or haven't fully integrated that truth, of impermanence

Every day, all around, there are people wasting precious time,
 not seeing what they have,
 not taking advantage

of the great opportunities they have
for all of our sake
while they still can

I live in this world where the vast majority of people are completely without any
Dharma

Dharma:
deep Buddhist teaching, or contemplative teaching;
the result of deep Buddhist practice or contemplative practice;
the experience of freedom,
light, and wisdom –
that can alleviate and can bring about
the complete cessation of suffering
for one and all,
true medicine for the ills of the world

East, West, North and South,
in the ten directions,
May people receive the Dharma,
And, without grasping or clinging to anything at all,
may I be the cause of that

I live in this world where few people have received instructions in meditation, and,
of these few, most are still unclear about the essential points
that:

whatever meditation we do
we should aim our minds
in the direction of clarity
and the calm continuity of mindfulness,
and continually generate positive energies

I live in this world where few people know the value and necessity of samadhi—
the stillness and silence of the mind,
the peace that restores and strengthens the mind,

making it capable
of connecting with virtues
and being nourished by them,

of deep and clear understanding,
transformation and healing,
and freedom

I live in this world, where, though we may do some good,
though we may improve our lives,
those who *have* listened to essential teachings, *and understood*,
many times don't practice
and, of those who do practice, often they are not able
to overcome the obstacles to meditation,
and practice in a way that they progress...

Oh, what a loss! - There's no way to measure it, really...

I live in this world where even those people who have received, and practiced, and
accomplished a great deal of Dharma still suffer
they still fall into experiences that are like the lower realms

and I live in this world where some of the people who have become stable in
realization don't share the Dharma as much as they could

I live in this world where though we *can* help ourselves and others
much too often we don't

where though *can* remove our own and others suffering,
to some extent at least
and produce happiness, to some extent at least
far too often we don't

I live in this world
where people don't live in the present
Where people don't know their own worth, or the worth of others,
where people don't know their own potential...

Taking and Giving prayer

May I have the actual knowledge
of the sufferings and needs that exist
in other beings' lives everywhere
and may that knowledge
completely destroy
whatever deluded self preoccupation
I have
and may it never arise again

May I then have a compassionate mind,
and respond to them in a way that frees all of them
from all of their suffering forever,
May they have every happiness
and the cause of happiness,
and may that happiness last forever

{think of the Great Aim: bodhicitta is the aim to become a Buddha, in order to bring the greatest benefit to all sentient beings}

Vow

From this point forward,
I dedicate myself to removing the suffering of all living beings,
and to bringing them happiness

I dedicate myself fully to their healing and awakening;
to their all having comfort,
strength of body, mind, and spirit,
most excellent nourishment, health, longevity
every level of protection,
shelter, food, clothing, medicine, education,
joy and wisdom

In order to accomplish the needs of living beings
in the most effective way,
I will develop my wisdom and compassion
just as my teachers have done
I aim to become free of all faults, and complete in all qualities
and, day by day, hour by hour
always offer as much help as I can

In this way, I will make a gift of my life
In this way, my own life will be fulfilled

I dedicate myself fully, leaving nothing out,
to the complete healing, fulfillment and enlightenment
of all living beings

No matter how long it takes
no matter how difficult it may be
no matter what it costs

With all my heart and with all my strength,

I vow to always serve all living beings
in every way that is necessary for them
and in every way that will bring each and every one of them
true and lasting health and happiness

Two verses

May I always cherish all beings,
with the determination to accomplish for them
the greatest good,
that is more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel

May the Supreme Jewel, bodhicitta,
arise where it has not yet arisen;
where it has arisen, may it not diminish;
may it ever grow and flourish

For the sake of all who struggle and suffer,
 all those who have not reached the highest state of freedom and peace,
 to relieve their suffering and bring them happiness,

I take refuge in the Buddha,
 the Great Compassionate Teacher,
 I take refuge in the Dharma,
 in all the Liberating Teachings,
 and I take refuge in the Sangha,
 the Spiritual Community

By this practice,
 just as my teachers before me have done,
 with Wisdom,
 May I realize the state of Peace,
 Perfect Freedom, and happiness,
 and Great Love, ~ the Mind of Enlightenment,
 and share that with all
 May all benefit

{The concerns of all others are my concerns,
 is that not so?

For their sake, then}

May I accomplish this Path,

and,

May all temporal and ultimate aims be fulfilled

Living by Vow, by Uchiyama Roshi, from 'Opening the Hand of Thought'

Live by vow and root it deeply.

When I think of vow, I always remember the section on Bodhidharma in the chapter called Gyoji ('Protecting and Maintaining Practice') of Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo.

Gyoji describes the purest and most concrete form of vow.

I recommended to one of my disciples, who was going to America to practice, that it would be a good idea to chant the section on Bodhidharma in Gyoji every day.

The First Ancestor in China came from the West under Hannyadara's decree. It took him three years to come to China by sea.

He surely experienced innumerable hardships, wind and snow, and faced great danger sailing on the wide ocean. In spite of those difficulties, he arrived in an unknown country.

Ordinary people, who hold their lives dear, can't even imagine doing such a thing.

This gyoji ('protecting and maintaining practice') must have stemmed from his great compassion and vow to transmit the dharma and save deluded living beings.

He was able to do it because he himself was the 'dharma-self-of-transmission' and for him the whole universe was 'the world of transmitting dharma.'

He did it because he understood that the whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but the Self and that the whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but the whole-ten-direction-world.

Wherever you are living is a palace; and there is no palace that is not an appropriate place to practice the Way.

This is why Bodhidharma came from the West the way he did. He had neither doubt nor fear, because he was living in 'the world of saving deluded living beings' (the world of vow).

I became a monk in 1941 and started to practice at Antaiji in 1949. Creating the next generation has been my vow since I was a middle-school student, and becoming a Buddhist monk was one step in actualizing that vow.

After I became a monk, the flame of my life blazed even brighter, despite the monastery buildings being terribly dilapidated and my life being very meager.

When times were hard, I was encouraged and given strength most by that section in Gyoji in the Shobogenzo, describing Bodhidharma's life.

In those days my life was so wretched I felt as if I were being trampled on. I was trampled over and over again the way we stamp on weeds, and I was never able to put forth even the tiniest bud.

When things were tough, I chose to stick with my vow and bury it deeply in the earth to take root there. If I hadn't, that vow would have died, because I was always being trampled down. But because the flame of that vow burned within me, the more I was trampled, the deeper I rooted my vow to create the next generation.

I think it was the same for Bodhidharma. He took the great trouble to travel all the way from India to China, where he met Emperor Wu of Liang. But the Emperor couldn't understand the Indian monk, so Bodhidharma went to Mount Shaolin. In short, that was it; he was trampled on. Still, he had vowed to transmit the dharma and save living beings. Because of that vow, he was able to live out his life. And while he was practicing zazen quietly at Mount Shaolin, he rooted the vow deeply in the ground.

Then came his disciple Eka (Huiko). He, too, was trampled down his whole life, even after he had become a disciple of Bodhidharma and practiced zazen.

Through the times of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth patriarchs, they all had a hard time. But they rooted themselves in their vows.

By the time of the Sixth Patriarch, spring finally came and Zen started to bud. Today it is even said that Zen is the foundation of all East Asian culture.

The same thing happened in my life. When I was practicing in my younger days, I was totally trampled on. But now spring has gradually arrived; quite a few people

have gathered to follow in my footsteps either as lay practitioners or as direct disciples.

Suppose that each of my disciples has his own disciples and that this were to continue for several centuries: it would be like a nuclear explosion! They can't help but create the new age of the buddha-dharma.

This is not my selfish ambition, but my vow as buddha-dharma: the vow to transmit the dharma and save deluded living beings, to live out life wherever, whenever, whatever happens.

The Self-of-the-whole-ten-directions-world grows by the vow: However innumerable sentient beings may be, I vow to save them all.

This is why Dogen Zenji wrote, "He did this because he understood that this whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but the true Way, that this whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but Self."

You have to expect to be trampled on by difficult circumstances, maybe even for years, but don't lose your life force under all that trampling. And unless you have that vow, you will lose it.

Only when you live by vow does everything you meet- wherever, whenever, whatever happens- reinforce your life as buddha-dharma.

As long as you have that vow to live out your life wherever you are, sooner or later spring will come. And when it does, you will have the strength to grow.

This is the life force. You have to thoroughly understand that this is completely different from selfish ambition.

I believe that vow is very important, so important that after Sawaki Roshi died, I made it a rule to chant only the Four Bodhisattva Vows before and after my talks.

There's no need to argue difficult philosophical matters. Just these four Bodhisattva vows... they're essential.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings

The Five Mindfulness Trainings represent the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. They are a concrete expression of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eight-fold Path, the Path of Right Understanding and True Love leading to healing, transformation, and happiness for ourselves and for the world.

To practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to cultivate the insight of interbeing, or Right View, which can remove all discrimination, intolerance, anger, fear, and despair. If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we are already on the Path of a Bodhisattva. Knowing we are on that Path, we are not lost in confusion about our life in the present, or in fears about the future.

The First Mindfulness Training – Reverence for Life

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing, and compassion, and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals.

I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life.

Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views, in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself, and in the world.

The Second Mindfulness Training - True Happiness

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity, in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal, and not to possess anything that should belong to others, and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need.

I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering, that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion, and that running after wealth, fame, power, and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair.

I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude, and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy.

I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood, so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on earth, and reverse the process of global warming.

The Third Mindfulness Training – True Love

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility, and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society.

Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a deep, long-term commitment, made known to my family and friends.

I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse, and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.

Seeing that the body and mind are one, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy, and cultivating loving kindness, compassion, joy, and inclusiveness, the four basic elements of true love, for my greater happiness, and the greater happiness of others.

Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.

The Fourth Mindfulness Training – Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech, and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech, and compassionate listening,

in order to relieve suffering, and to promote reconciliation and peace, in myself, and among other people, ethnic and religions groups, and nations.

Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully, using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope.

When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions, and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself, and the other person.

I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person transform suffering, and see the way out of difficult situations.

I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain, and not to utter words that can cause division or discord.

I will practice Right Diligence, to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear, that lie deep in my consciousness.

The Fifth Mindfulness Training – Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society, by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming.

I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the four kinds of nutriments – namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness.

I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products that contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, tv programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations.

I will practice coming back to the present moment, to be in touch with the refreshing, healing, and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past, nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment.

I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing, and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society, and the earth.

The Foundation of All Good Qualities, by Tsong Khapa

The foundation of all good qualities is the kind and venerable guru. Correctly devoting to him is the root of the path. By clearly seeing this and applying great effort, May I rely upon him with great respect.

By understanding that the precious freedom of this rebirth is found only once, is greatly meaningful and difficult to find again, May I generate the mind that unceasingly, day and night, takes hold of its essence.

This life is as impermanent as a water bubble - how quickly it decays and death comes! And after death, just like a shadow follows the body, the results of black and white karma follow.

Finding firm and definite conviction in this, May I always be careful to abandon even the slightest negativities and accomplish all virtuous deeds.

Seeking samsaric pleasures is the door to all suffering. They are uncertain and cannot be relied on. Recognizing these shortcomings, May I generate the strong wish for the bliss of liberation.

Led by this pure thought, mindfulness, alertness and great caution arise. The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha (individual liberation) vows. May I accomplish this essential practice.

Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara, so too have all mother migratory beings. May I see this, train in supreme bodhicitta, and bear the responsibility of freeing migratory beings.

By clearly recognizing that developing bodhicitta, without practicing the three types of morality, I will not achieve enlightenment, May I practice the bodhisattva vows with great energy.

By pacifying distractions to wrong objects, and correctly analyzing the meaning of reality, May I generate quickly within my mindstream the unified path of calm abiding and special insight.

Having become a pure vessel by training in the general path, May I enter the holy gateway of the fortunate ones, the supreme vajra vehicle.

At that time, the basis of accomplishing the two attainments is keeping pure vows and samaya. Having become firmly convinced of this, May I protect these vows and pledges like my life.

Then, having realized the importance of the two stages, which are the essence of the vajrayana, by practicing with great energy, never giving up the four sessions, May I realize the teachings of the holy guru.

Like that, may the virtuous gurus who show the noble path, and the spiritual friends who practice it have long lives. May I pacify completely all outer and inner hindrances.

In all my rebirths, never separated from perfect gurus, May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma. By completing the qualities of the stages and paths, May I quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.

The Karma Kagyud Lineage Prayer

Great Vajradhara, Tilopa, Naropa,
 Marpa, Milarepa, and Lord of the Dharma, Gampopa
 Knower of the three times, omniscient Karmapa
 Lineage holders of the four great and eight lesser schools
 Drikung, Taklung, Tsalpa, glorious Drukpa and others,
 You who have thoroughly mastered the profound path of Mahamudra
 Unrivaled protectors of beings, the Dakpo Kagyü
 I pray to you, the Kagyü lamas
 Grant your blessing that we may follow your tradition and example.

Detachment is the foot of meditation, it is taught.
 Attachment to food and wealth disappears
 To the meditator who gives up ties to this life,
 Grant your blessing that attachment to ownership and honor cease.

Devotion is the head of meditation, it is taught.
 The lama opens the door to the profound oral teachings
 To the meditator who always turns to him,
 Grant your blessing that uncontrived devotion be born within.

Unwavering attention is the body of meditation, it is taught.
 Whatever arises, is the fresh nature of thought.
 To the meditator who rests there in naturalness,
 Grant your blessings that meditation is free from intellectualization.

The essence of thought is dharmakaya, it is taught.
 They are nothing whatsoever, and yet they arise in the mind.
 To the meditator who reflects upon the unobstructed play of the mind,
 Grant your blessing that the inseparability of samsara and nirvana be realized.

Through all my births, may I not be separated from the perfect Lama
 and so enjoy the glory of the dharma.
 May I completely accomplish the qualities of the path and stages
 And quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.

A Short Song of the Six Similes to Satisfy The Heartfelt Yearning of Devoted Disciples

By Bokar Rinpoche

Fortunate men and women, who have karmic affinity with the Teachings,
You gained a free and fully endowed precious life,
Met an authentic noble spiritual master,
And received vast and deep teachings for spiritual maturity and liberation.
Now exert yourselves in cultivating meditative experience,
I beseech you.

Your spiritual master is like the sun in space--
When your doubts or wrong views do not cloud him,
His compassionate light shines continuously:
In yearning faith and devotion, pray.

Your pure vision is like an eye--
When your pride or critical thoughts do not blind it,
All beings are mines of noble qualities:
Train in universal pure vision, I beseech you.

Your development of the mind of awakening is like a potent seed--
When plans for your own good do not spoil it,
It grows into perfect awakening:
Always meditate on the two aspects of the mind of awakening.

Your self-clinging is like an unseen enemy--
When you lose hold of the antidote of mindfulness,
You will never escape the den of suffering:
Therefore, please subdue your own mind.

Your mind's nature is like an endless ocean--
When waves of clinging to appearances do not disturb it,
It has a single flavor, the essence of reality:
Dwell without acceptance or rejection, affirmation or denial,
I beseech you.

Your mind is like a wish-fulfilling jewel--
 When delusion's impurities do not taint it,
 It produces all you need and desire:
 Always meditate on Great Seal.

At all times--in this life, the next, and in between--
 The spiritual master's enlightened mind and your mind
 Are not separate in your intrinsic awareness.
 In natural repose, without distraction or clinging,
 Make manifest the primordial body of ultimate enlightenment.

I, Karma Ngedon Chokyi Lodro, who holds the title of Bokar Tulku, composed this Short Song of the Six Similes to Satisfy the Heartfelt Yearning of Devoted Disciples according to the wishes of the residents of France's Niga Ling Retreat Center.

~

From Timeless Rapture: Inspired Verse of the Shangpa Masters, compiled by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated and introduced by Ngawang Zangpo (Ithaca, N. Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2003)

The Aspiration Prayer for the Attainment of Mahamudra (my own version)

Composed by the Third Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje

Namo Guru

1. Gurus and yidams, deities of the mandala,
Buddhas of the three times in the ten directions and your sons and daughters,
Please consider us with kindness and understanding,
and grant your blessing that these aspirations may be accomplished
exactly as we ask.

2. Sprung from the snow mountain of pure intentions and actions
Of myself and all sentient beings without limit,
May the river of accumulated virtue of the threefold purity
Flow into the ocean of the four bodies of the Victorious Ones.

3. So long as this is not accomplished,
Through all my lifetimes, birth upon birth,
May not even the words "evil deeds" and "suffering" be heard
And may we enjoy the splendour and goodness of oceans of happiness and virtue.

4. Having obtained the supreme freedoms and conjunctions
of the precious human existence, endowed with faith, energy, and intelligence,
Having attended on a worthy spiritual friend, and received the pith of the holy
instructions,
May we practice these properly, just as we have received them,
without obstacle or interruption.
In all our lives, may we practice and enjoy the holy dharma.

5. Learning the teachings frees one
from the obscuration of not knowing;
contemplating the oral instructions overcomes the darkness of doubt;
the light arising from meditation
makes clear the nature of mind,
just as it is.
May the brightness of these three wisdoms increase.

6. By understanding the meaning of the ground,
 which is the two truths, free from the extremes of eternalism and nihilism,
 and by practicing the supreme path of the two accumulations,
 free from the extremes of exaggeration and denial,
 is attained the fruit of well-being for oneself and others,
 free from the extremes of samsara and nirvana.
 May all beings meet the dharma which neither errs nor misleads.

7. The ground of purification is the mind itself,
 indivisible clarity of knowing and emptiness.
 That which purifies is the great vajra yoga of mahamudra.
 What is to be purified are the temporary, adventitious stains of confusion,
 May the fruit of purification, the stainless dharmakaya, be manifest.

8. Resolving all doubts about the ground
 brings confidence in the view.
 Maintaining this without distraction
 is the main point of meditation.
 Applying this in everything we do
 is the supreme action.
 May we have confidence in the view, meditation, and action.

9. All experience is the display of the mind.
 As for the mind, it is empty of any entity that can be called 'mind'.
 Although empty, experiences arise unceasingly.
 May we examine this fully,
 and resolve any doubts about the ground.

10. Appearances to our mind, which never existed in themselves,
 are mistaken for objects.
 Self-existing awareness, out of ignorance, is mistaken for a self.
 Through the power of this dualistic fixation, we wander in the realms of samsara.
 May ignorance, the root of confusion,
 be discovered and cut.

11. It is not non-existent – even the Victorious Ones do not see it.
 It is not non-existent – it is the basis of all samsara and nirvana.
 This is not a contradiction, but the middle path of unity.
 May we realize the true nature of mind, which is free from extremes.

12. If one says 'This is it', there is nothing to show.
 If one says, 'This is not it', there is nothing to deny.
 The true nature of mind transcends conceptual understanding,
 and is unconditioned.
 May conviction be gained in the ultimate, perfect truth.

13. Not realizing this, we circle in samsara.
 If it is realized, enlightenment is not anything other.
 Nothing is affirmed or negated at all.
 May we realize the essential nature of the dharmata,
 the ground of everything.

14. Appearance is mind and emptiness is mind.
 Realisation is mind and confusion is mind.
 Arising is mind and cessation is mind. May all doubts about mind be resolved.

15. Not adulterating meditation with conceptual striving,
 or mentally created meditation,
 unmoved by the winds of everyday busyness,
 knowing how to rest in unfabricated, natural spontaneity,
 May the practice of resting in mind's true nature be skillfully sustained.

16. The waves of gross and subtle thoughts calm down by themselves,
 and the waters of unmoving mind
 rest naturally,
 free from dullness, torpor, and murkiness.
 May the ocean of shamatha be unmoving and stable.

17. Looking again and again at the mind that cannot be looked at,
 one sees clearly, just as it is, the truth of not seeing any thing.
 Thus resolving any doubts about how it is, or is not,
 May we recognize our own nature, free of confusion, by ourselves.

18. Looking at objects,
 the mind devoid of objects is seen;
 looking at mind, *its* empty nature, devoid of mind is seen;
 looking at both of these, dualistic clinging is self-liberated.
 May the clear light nature of mind be realized.

19. Free from mental fabrications,
 it is called the Great Seal, Mahamudra.
 Free from extremes, it is called the Great Middle Way, Madhyamika.
 Because everything is complete here,
 it is also called the Great Perfection,
 Dzogchen.
 May I gain the confidence that,
 by understanding one,
 the essential meaning of all is realized.

20. Great bliss, free from attachment, is unceasing.
 Luminosity, free from clinging to concepts,
 is unobscured.
 Non-thought, beyond conceptual mind,
 is spontaneous presence.
 May the effortless enjoyment of these experiences be continuous.

21. Longing for, and attachment to good experiences are self-liberated.
 Negative thoughts and confusion purify naturally in the dharmadhatu.
 In ordinary mind, there is no rejecting and accepting,
 loss and gain.
 May the truth of the ultimate nature,
 complete simplicity,
 be realized.

22. While the nature of all beings has always been full enlightenment,
 not knowing this,
 they all wander in endless samsara.
 For the boundless suffering of sentient beings,
 may unbearable compassion arise in our being.

23. When such compassion is awakened,
 in the moment of compassion,
 its empty essence nakedly dawns.
 This unity is the supreme, unerring path.
 May we be inseparable from it,
 day and night.

24. By the power of meditation,
 one gains the eyes,

and higher perceptions,
ripens sentient beings,
perfectly purifies buddha fields,
and fulfills all of ones aspirations
to attain the qualities of a Buddha.
Through bringing these three to the utmost fruition –
the fulfilling, ripening, and purifying,
may utmost buddhahood be manifest.

25. By the power of the compassion of the Victorious Ones of the ten directions
and their sons and daughters,
And by the power of all the pure virtue that exists,
May the pure aspirations of myself and all sentient beings
Be accomplished exactly as we wish.

The Ganges: Essential Instructions on Mahāmudra
(translated by Ari Kiev)

Sanskrit: Mahāmudra Upadesha ~
Tibetan: Chaggya Chenpö Menngag

Homage to glorious coemergence!

Intelligent Nāropa, forbearing of suffering, you have endured hardships and are devoted to the guru. Thus, though mahāmudra cannot be shown, take this to heart, you fortunate one!

O! Look well at worldly phenomena! Dream-like and illusory, they cannot last! [But] they are not dreams or illusions in actuality. Therefore, when giving rise to disenchantment, you have insight into worldly activities. Completely severing the connections of attachment and aversion – the domain of samsara – meditate alone in mountain and forest hermitages!

When, through remaining in an ongoing state of non-meditation, non-attainment is attained, mahāmudra is attained. These worldly affairs are the useless causes of suffering. Look at the ultimate essential meaning [that realizes] the futility of deliberate action!

The truth that transcends the intellect will not be seen by means of the intellect. The point of non-action will not be reached by means of deliberate action. If you want to achieve the point of non-action transcending thought, sever the root of mind itself and rest in naked awareness!

Leave the polluted water of conceptual thoughts in its [natural] clarity. Without affirming or denying appearances, leave them as they are. When there is neither acceptance nor rejection, [mind] is liberated into mahāmudra.

For example, [if] the root of a tree with flourishing branches and foliage is cut, its ten thousand branches and hundred thousand leaves wither.

For example, even the accumulated darkness of a thousand aeons is cleared away by a single lamp flame. Similarly, an instant of the luminosity of mind itself dispels aeons of accumulated negativity and obscuration without exception.

If people of inferior intelligence [can] not abide in the ultimate meaning, they [should] hold the vital point of wind energies and give up exerting [themselves] in awareness.

Until you abide in the ongoing state of awareness by means of myriad gazes and [modes of] focused attention, make effort!

For example, if you examine the center of space, the one who fixates on the boundary and center ceases to be. Likewise, when you investigate the mind with the mind, the multitude of thoughts ceases and you see the nature of mind.

For example, [when] vapors from the earth or clouds disperse into space, they have gone nowhere and yet do not remain anywhere. So it is with the multitude of thoughts that arise from the mind: by seeing the mind itself, the waves of thoughts dissipate.

For example, space transcends color and form. It is immutable and without a tinge of black or white. Similarly, the mind itself, beyond color and form, is untainted by the white and black phenomena of virtue and evil.

For example, the clear and pure orb of the sun is not eclipsed by the darkness of a thousand aeons. Likewise, aeons in cyclic existence cannot obscure the luminous essence of mind itself.

For example, although space is labeled ‘empty,’ space itself is indescribable by such [terms]. Similarly, though the mind itself is described as ‘clear light,’ there is no basis for designating it as such through verbal expressions.

For example, in space, what is supported by what? Like [space], the mahāmudra that is mind itself has no supporting ground. Rest at ease in the uncontrived, innate continuity. When the bonds are loosened, there is no doubt of release.

In that way, the nature of mind is like space. There is no phenomenon not included in that.

Completely give up physical activity and remain at ease. Without much speech, [sound] is like an echo. Without thinking, look at decisively-resolved reality.

The body is insubstantial, like the hollow stalk of a reed; and the mind, like the center of space, transcends the realm of thought. Rest at ease in that state, without releasing or placing.

When the mind is without a focal point, that is mahāmudra.

By habituating yourself to that, unsurpassable awakening is attained.

When there is no object of focus, the mind is naturally clear. When there is no path, the path of the buddhas is entered. By habituating non-meditation, unsurpassable awakening is attained.

Transcendence of all subject and object [duality] is the king of views. When there is no distraction, that is the king of meditations. When there is no deliberate effort, that is the king of conduct. When there is neither expectation nor doubt, the fruition is made manifest.

The uncreated ground of all is clear of the obscuring veil of propensities. Do not engage meditation and post-meditation, [but] rest in the uncreated essence. [Thus, outer] appearances, [inner] perceptions and intellectual faculties are exhausted.

The complete release of limits is the supreme king of views. Boundlessness, deep and vast, is the supreme king of meditations. Freedom from action, abiding in its own state, is the supreme king of conduct. Freedom from expectation, abiding in its own state, is the supreme king of fruitions.

To a beginner, [mind] is like a waterfall. In the middle, it flows gently, [like] the River Ganges. At the end, it is like the confluence of a stream [with the ocean] – like the meeting of mother and child.

The luminosity that is mahāmudra will not be seen through expounding the [secret] mantra and parāmita [vehicles], the scripture collections including the vinaya, or even through individual philosophical scriptures and tenet systems.

When you fabricate nothing in the mind and are devoid of any wish, [thoughts] are like self-arising, self-subsiding ripples in water. When a wish arises, luminosity is obscured and not perceived.

Preserving the vows conceptually, you violate the samaya on the level of ultimate meaning. If [mind] does not stray from the non-abiding, unobjectified ultimate meaning, the unimpaired samaya is a lamp in the darkness.

When, devoid of any wish, you are not confined to a position, all the teachings of the scripture collections without exception will be realized. If you exert yourself in this truth, you will be freed from the prison of samsara.

If you [cultivate] even meditation upon this truth, all unawareness, negativities and obscurations will be burnt away. [Thus], it is known as the lamp of the teachings.

Those foolish people who are disinterested in this truth are continually carried off and wasted by the great river of cyclic existence. How sad that they [endure] the unbearable suffering of evil rebirths!

If you want release from suffering, follow a masterful guru! Becoming infused with [the guru's] blessing, your mind will be liberated!

If you rely on the action mudra, the wisdom of bliss and emptiness will arise. [Thus], unite the blessings of method and wisdom!

The [seed essence] should slowly descend, stop, reverse and spread. It should be brought to its innate abode and pervade the body.

When there is no fixation to that, the wisdom of empty bliss arises and, flourishing like the waxing moon, one [attains] longevity without greying hair. One becomes lustrous and radiant, with power like that of a lion. The common attainments will be swiftly accomplished, leading to the supreme [attainment].

May fortunate wayfaring beings take to heart this essential advice on mahāmudra.

On the banks of the River Ganges, this was taught to Nāropa by Lord Tilopa. May it be virtuous!

Translation by Ari Kiev. Copyright © The Gar Chöding Trust, 2005.

The Essentials of Mahamudra Practice, as given by The Venerable Lama Kong Ka,
From "The Teachings of Tibetan Yoga", translated by Garma C. C. Chang

Lama Kong Ka said:

"To practice this Mahamudra meditation one should first be initiated by a qualified Guru. The purpose of Mahamudra initiation is to make the disciple recognize the illuminating-void awareness of his Self-mind. Only after recognizing this intrinsic "awareness without content" can the disciple practice Mahamudra correctly. Until he has done so, he will find it difficult to escape from the subject-object entanglement and to elevate his mind to the state of non-distinction and non-attachment. To deepen this illuminating-void Awareness, he should practice often the essential instructions given below.

"He who can rest his mind in pure Self-awareness without distraction will be able to do anything. To practice Mahamudra he should stop discriminating, abandon habitual thoughts of "accept this" and "reject that", and strive to reach a state where Samadhi and activities become one. Until he has done so, he should stress quiet meditation first, and then as a subsidiary exercise apply his Mahamudra-awareness to his daily activities."

* * *

"There are three essentials in the Mahamudra practice: equilibrium, relaxation, and naturalness.

" 'Equilibrium' means to balance body, mouth, and mind.
The Mahamudra way of balancing the body is to loosen it,
of balancing the mouth is to slow down the breathing,
and of balancing the mind is not to cling to and rely on anything.

"This is the supreme way to tame the body, breath [prana],
and mind.

" 'Relaxation' means to loosen the mind, to let everything go, to strip off all ideas and thoughts. When one's whole body and mind become loose, one can, without effort, remain in the natural state, which is intrinsically non-dis- criminative and yet without distractions.

" 'Naturalness' means not 'taking' or 'leaving' anything: in other words the yogi

does not make the slightest effort of any kind. He lets the senses and mind stop or flow by themselves without assisting or restricting them. To practice naturalness is to make no effort and be spontaneous.

"The above can be summarized thus:

The essence of equilibrium is not to cling.

The essence of relaxation is not to hold.

The essence of naturalness is to make no effort."

The Five Similes of Mahamudra Experience

"There are five similes which describe the correct experience of Mahamudra:

A sphere which is like infinite space.

Awareness omnipresent like the great earth.

A mind steady as a mountain.

Self-realizing Awareness clear and bright like
a lamp.

Pure consciousness, crystal clear and empty of
discriminating thoughts.

"Mahamudra experience can also be described thus:

Like a cloudless sky, the sphere is broad
and free from obstruction.

Like a waveless ocean, the mind is steady
without discriminating thoughts.

Like a bright lamp on a windless night, the
consciousness is clear, bright, and stable."

* * *

"To practice Mahamudra, keep both mind and body loose and gentle without straining to do so; stop doubting and worrying, and remain balanced.

"In practicing Mahamudra, identify all that you encounter with the 'unborn Void' and remain natural and relaxed."

* * *

"To keep the body loose and gentle does not imply completely abandoning all activities, but that these activities should be carried out in a smooth, relaxed, and spontaneous way.

"To keep the mind loose and gentle does not imply making it dumb or insensible, but that one should try to further its bright awareness.

"To identify everything with the Unborn Void means that he who has realized Self-awareness and is able to sustain it, should then try to let everything he meets and experiences liberate itself into the Voidness."

Five Ways of Straying from Mahamudra

"(1) One is liable to misconstrue Voidness as an annulment of both virtues and vices if he does not know that existence and Voidness are, in essence, identical, and this includes all moral truths and laws. This misunderstanding is straying from the View of Mahamudra. On the other hand, if one only has some sort of understanding of this truth, but cannot experience it intimately, he is said to have strayed from the realization of Mahamudra.

"(2) If one does not know that Mahamudra practice [the Path] is, in essence, not different from Mahamudra accomplishment [the Fruit] and that all the wondrous merits are contained in the practice itself, he is liable to think that practice comes first and Realization follows, so that Enlightenment is a product of the practice. This is perhaps true on the everyday level, but as far as the View is concerned, he is said to have gone astray.

"(3) If one can make a genuine effort in Mahamudra practice but does not have immutable faith in the teaching itself, he is liable to cherish a 'hidden' hope that some day he may attain a teaching that is superior even to Mahamudra. This is

also a sign of straying from Mahamudra.

"(4) He who knows not that the cure and the cured are, in essence, the same, is liable to cling to the idea that the Dharma-practice [the cure] and the desire-passions [the cured, or that which is to be cured] are two absolutely different things. This is also straying from the View of Mahamudra.

"(5) In Mahamudra practice, there is always a tendency on the yogi's part to make too many corrections, He who finds himself always trying to correct faults is most likely to have strayed from the Path."

The Three Major Experiences of Mahamudra

"In the course of meditation practice, three major experiences will be encountered. They are: Blissfulness, Illumination, and Non-distinction.

"(1) In the experience of Blissfulness some people feel that a great rapture envelops the whole body and does not decrease even in adverse circumstances, such as in extremely cold or hot weather. Some may feel that both body and mind disappear, that they are extremely joyful - and they often burst into laughter. Some may feel full of inspiration and enthusiasm, or extremely peaceful, contented, and happy. The ecstasy may become so great that they become unconscious of day and night.

"(2) In the experience of Non-distinction, some may feel that all things become empty, or may see the void nature of the world; others experience all things as devoid of self-entity, or that both body and mind are non-existent; while yet others really understand the truth of Voidness [Sunyata]."

"None of the above experiences should be treated as perfect and complete, and one should never cling to any of them. Among them, that of Non-distinction is most important and unerring. Some of the Illumination and Blissfulness experienced could be very misleading and even harmful."

* * *

"The profoundest of all the verbal instructions on Mahamudra is this:

Cast aside all clinging and the essence will at once emerge.

"The core of Mahamudra practice consists of two things, non-effort and non-correction. One should know, however, what this non-correction means. The Jetsun Milarepa explained this point very clearly: 'Concerning the practice of non-correction, one should understand three things: If wandering thoughts and desire passions are not corrected, one will fall into the lower realms. If the Blissfulness, Illumination, and Non-distinction are not corrected, one will fall into the Three Realms of Samsara. Only the immanent Self-mind needs no correction.'"

* * *

"At all times in the day, during or after meditation, one should try not to lose the 'essence'. In other words, one should try to bring the meditation experience into his daily activities.

"It is quite understandable that one may be distracted during his daily work, thus forgetting the 'essence,' but he should try always to bring back the Awareness, and if he succeeds, the 'essence' will at once emerge again.

"One should try not to lose Self-awareness by day or night. To practice Mahamudra during sleep and in dreams is also extremely important. He who cannot do so properly should shun all activities and practice Mahamudra meditation uninterruptedly for five or six days, then he should rest for one day before continuing. One should not be discouraged if he cannot keep the Awareness alive for a whole day. To make continuous and persistent effort is essential. He who can do so will certainly broaden his Awareness and Realization."

How to Cultivate Mahamudra Through Adverse Conditions

"After one has realized the 'essence,' he should then proceed to practice the so-called 'utilizing exercises.' That is to say one should utilize some particular conditions to further Realization.

"(1) To utilize distraction and discriminating thoughts to further Realization:

"This does not mean observing the nature of discriminating thoughts, nor meditating on Voidness, nor being 'mindful' of the distraction, but implies keeping 'bright Awareness'- the essence of discriminating thoughts- vividly alive. This

Awareness in its natural state is Mahamudra. If at first one has great difficulties he should try to overcome them and merge the distracting thoughts into the Path.

"(2) To utilize desire-passions to further realization:

"Sometimes you should purposely stir up desire-passions such as lust, hatred, jealousy, etc.- and then observe them in depth. You should neither follow, relinquish, or correct them but clearly and 'awaringly' remain in a loose and natural state. When in deep sleep you should try to merge Awareness with the unconscious without strain. This is the best way to transform the unconscious into 'light'.

"(3) To utilize apparitions and devils to further Realization:

"Whenever any fearful apparition appears, you should employ the Mahamudra meditation on the fears. Do not try to dispel the fear but dwell on it clearly and loosely. In doing so, if the apparition vanishes, you should try once more to conjure up even more frightful apparitions and again apply Mahamudra to them.

"(4) To utilize compassion and grief to further Realization:

"Since in the final analysis, life and Samsara imply suffering, a Buddhist should have great compassion for all sentient beings. When contemplating men's sufferings, a great compassion will arise; right at the very moment when that compassion arises, one should practice the Mahahudra meditation on it. When one does so, both Wisdom and Compassion will grow.

"(5) To utilize sickness to further Realization:

"Whenever you are ill, you should practice the Mahamudra meditation on the sickness. You should also observe penetratingly the essence of both the patient and of the sickness, thus eliminating the dualism of subject and object.

"(6) To utilize death to further Realization:

"He who can practice Mahamudra as instructed will not be perplexed or frightened when death occurs. He will then be able to identify, without fear, all the visions and experiences that take place in the process of dying. Free from attachment and expectations he can then unify the Light of the Mother and Son into one great whole."

The Errors in Mahamudra Practice

"(1) If one's Mahamudra practice is confined solely to the effort of stabilizing the mind, the activities of all one's six consciousnesses will be halted, or dimmed. This is called a 'frozen ice' type of practice, and is a very harmful tendency in Mahamudra meditation which must be avoided.

"(2) He who neglects the clear 'Awareness' but abides solely in Non-distinction will see or hear nothing when confronted with sights, sounds, smells, and touches. . . This is an error due to having become sluggish.

"(3) When the last thought has gone, and the next one has not come, this immediate, present moment is a very wonderful thing if one can abide therein; but, if he does so without clear awareness, he still falls into the error of sluggishness.

"(4) he who can hold the bright Awareness but thinks there is nothing more to Mahamudra also falls into error.

"(5) If one only cultivates 'Blissfulness,' 'Illumination,' and 'Non-distinction' without practicing 'penetrating-observation-into-the-mind,' it still cannot be considered as the correct Mahamudra practice.

"(6) He who develops a dislike to manifestation is most likely to have gone astray.

"(7) He who concentrates on his Awareness and cultivates the illuminating-void Self-mind is said to practice Mahamudra correctly. However, this 'concentration-effort' has a tendency to hinder that spontaneity and freedom of spirit, without which it is difficult to unfold the vast and liberating Mind. One should therefore never forget to practice the 'looseness,' 'vastness,' and 'spontaneity.'"

* * *

"What, then, is the correct Mahamudra practice?

"[Answer:] The ordinary mind [Tib.: Thal.Ma.Ces.Pa] is itself the correct practice. That is to say, to let the ordinary mind remain in its own natural state. If to this mind one adds or subtracts anything, it is then not the ordinary mind but the so-called 'mind-object' [Tib.: Yul.]. To make not the slightest intention and effort to practice, and yet to not be distracted for a single moment, is to practice the natural

mind correctly. Therefore, as long as you can keep your Self-awareness, no matter what you do, you are still practicing Mahamudra.

The King of Prayers

O lions amongst men,
 Buddhas past, present, and future,
 To as many of you as exist in the ten directions
 I bow down with my body, speech, and mind.

On waves of strength of this king
 Of prayers for exalted sublime ways,
 With bodies as numerous as atoms of the world
 I bow down to the buddhas pervading space.

On every atom is found a buddha
 Sitting amongst countless buddha sons,
 I look with eyes of faith to the victorious ones
 Thus filling the entire dharmadhatu.

Of these with endless oceans of excellence
 Endowed with an ocean of wondrous speech
 I sing praises of the greatness of all buddhas,
 A eulogy to those gone to bliss.

Garlands of flowers I offer them,
 And beautiful sounds, supreme perfumes,
 Butter lamps and sacred incense,
 I offer to all the victorious ones.

Excellent food, supreme fragrances,
 And a mound of mystic substances high as Mount Meru
 I arrange in a special formation
 And offer to those who have conquered themselves.

And all peerless offerings I hold up
 In admiration of those gone to bliss;
 With the strength of faith in sublime ways
 I prostrate and make offerings to the conquerors.

Long overpowered by attachment, aversion, and ignorance
 Countless evils I have committed
 With acts of body, speech, and mind.

Each and every one of these I now confess.

In the perfections of the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
The arhats, training and beyond,
And in the latent goodness of every living being,
I lift up my heart and rejoice.

O lights into the ten directions,
Buddhas who have found the passionless stage of enlightenment,
To all of you I direct this request:
Turn the incomparable wheel of Dharma.

O masters wishing to show parinirvana,
Stay with us and teach, I pray,
For as many eons as there are specks of dust,
In order to bring goodness and joy to all beings.

May any small merits that I may have amassed
By thus prostrating, making offerings, confessing, rejoicing,
And asking the buddhas to remain and teach the Dharma,
Be dedicated now to supreme and perfect enlightenment.

May my offerings be received by all past buddhas
And by all those now abiding in the ten directions,
And may all the buddhas who have not yet come
Quickly perfect their minds and reach buddhahood, the state of supreme full
awakening.

May all the buddha-realms of the ten directions
Remain forever vast and completely pure,
May the world be completely filled with buddhas who have attained illumination
under sacred trees,
And may they all be surrounded by bodhisattvas.

May all living beings in the ten directions
Always abide in health and joy.
May they live in accord with the way of Dharma
And may their every wish become fulfilled.

By my living in the ways of enlightenment

May I remember my past lives in all my reincarnations,
 And in all cycles of death, migration, and rebirth
 May a sensitivity for truth be ever strong in me.

By my following in the footsteps of the buddhas
 May I utterly perfect the sublime ways of the bodhisattvas,
 And may I practice the faultless, undegenerating, stainless,
 And pure ways of self-control.

May I master all languages that exist, including those of
 The gods, yakshas, spirits, and varieties of men,
 As well as all forms of communication of living beings,
 That I may be able to show the Dharma in every way.

Striving thus and in the transcending perfections
 May I never forget the bodhi mind,
 And may I totally cleanse from within my mindstream
 All negativities and mental veils.

May I gain freedom from karma, delusion, and karmic maras
 To be able to live in the world unaffected by its stains
 Like an unstained lotus grows in the mud,
 And like the sun and moon shine without obstruction in the sky.

For as long as there are buddha-fields and directions
 May I strive to quell the misery of the lower realms,
 May I place all beings only in happiness
 And bring them all only happiness and joy.

May I strive to complete the ways of enlightenment
 And to abide in ways harmonious with the world;
 May I expose to others the ways most sublime
 And myself abide in them throughout all future eons.

May my ways and the ways of a bodhisattva
 Always go together hand in hand.
 In body, speech, and mind
 May I attune to their sublime ways.

May I never be separated from the good friends

Who reveal the path of the sublime ways
 And who wish only to benefit me;
 May I never disappoint them for even a moment.

May I constantly envision the perfect buddhas,
 The protectors who are surrounded by bodhisattvas,
 And in the future may I never weary
 Of devoting myself to them with all my strength.

May I forever uphold the holy Dharma of the buddhas
 And illumine the sublime way of enlightenment;
 May I practice throughout all future ages
 The ways of deeds of the sublime path.

Circling in the various realms of existence
 May I amass inexhaustible goodness and wisdom,
 And may I become an unending treasure of qualities
 Such as methods, wisdom, samadhi, and the experience of a bodhisattva.

In every atom are buddha-fields numberless as atoms,
 Each field is filled with buddhas beyond conception,
 And each buddha is surrounded by myriad bodhisattvas:
 To all these dwellers in sublime ways I turn my attention.

Thus, in all atoms within the directions
 Abide within the space of a single hair
 An ocean of buddhas within an ocean of buddha-fields
 Performing enlightened activities for an ocean of eons.

Each buddha with his perfect speech releases
 An ocean of sounds with every word he says
 To satisfy the infinitely diverse tendencies of beings:
 Thus does the speech of a buddha constantly flow.

All these conquerors past, present, and future
 Continually turn the methods of Dharma wheels;
 With all the powers of my mind I listen
 For the inexhaustible sound of their words.

All future eons that could possibly be,

Manifest within me in a single instant;
 And I myself in a fraction of a moment
 Enter into all these eons of the three times.

All past, present, and future lions among men
 I envision with the instantaneous wisdom
 And by the power of the bodhisattvas' examples
 I focus upon the objects of their experience.

I manifest buddha-fields past, present, and future
 Upon one single atom of existence,
 And then I transform every single atom
 Of existence into a buddha-field.

By this, when the future lights of the worlds
 Eventually gain bodhi, turn the Dharma wheels,
 And reveal the passing to nirvana's supreme peace,
 May I take rebirth in their very presence.

Then may I attain the ten powers:
 The power of instant magical emanation,
 The power which is a vehicle with every door,
 The power of excellent activity,
 The power of all-pervading love,
 The power of constantly positive energy,
 The power of passionless wisdom,
 The powers of knowledge, method, and samadhi,
 And the power of enlightenment itself.

May I purify the power of karma,
 May I crush the powers of delusion,
 May I render powerless the powerful maras,
 And may I perfect the powers of sublime ways.

May I purify an ocean of realms,
 May I liberate an ocean of sentient beings,
 May I see an ocean of truths,
 And may I realize an ocean of wisdom.

May I perform an ocean of perfect deeds,

May I perfect an ocean of prayers,
 May I revere an ocean of buddhas,
 And may I practice untiringly for an ocean of eons.

Through my practice of the sublime bodhisattva ways
 May I gain the enlightenment of buddhahood
 And then fulfill the enlightened and sublime aspiration
 Of the buddhas past, present, and future.

In order to match the ways of the sage
 Called Samantabhadra, the always-sublime one,
 Chief amongst the awakened ones' sons,
 I now dedicate all virtues that I possess.

Just as the sublime sage Samantabhadra
 Dedicated all pure practices of body, speech, and mind
 To the attainment of a pure state and pure realms,
 So do I now dedicate the fruit of all my efforts.

In order to engage in all sublime virtues
 I offer the prayer of Manjushri;
 In the future may I never become faint
 In striving to perfect the exalted bodhisattvas' way.

May my deeds never reach a limit,
 May my qualities of excellence become boundless,
 And by abiding in immeasurable activity
 May I find buddhahood, the state of limitless manifestation.

Limitless is the extent of space,
 Limitless is the number of sentient beings,
 And limitless is the karma and delusions of beings
 Such are the limits of my aspirations.

One may offer supreme ornaments of the buddha-fields
 Of the ten directions to the conquerors,
 And also offer the highest joys of men and gods
 For eons numerous as atoms of the world.

But to read or hear the King of Prayers

With eyes looking toward supreme illumination
 And faith shining in one's heart for even an instant
 Gives birth to a far more superior merit.

Should anyone recite this aspiration of sublime ways
 They will pass beyond all states of sorrow,
 Rise above all inferior beings, and gain
 A vision of Amitabha, Buddha of Infinite Light.

Even in this very lifetime
 All sublime joys will be theirs;
 The experiences of the all-sublime Samantabhadra,
 Without obstructions, will quickly be theirs.

Merely by giving voice to these aspirations
 Of the sublime ways of a bodhisattva,
 The effects can only be known by an omniscient buddha.
 Therefore, doubt not that it leads to enlightenment.

In order to follow the excellent examples set
 By the wisdom of the bodhisattva Manjushri
 And the always-sublime Samantabhadra,
 All virtues I dedicate to their peerless ideals.

All conquerors passed into the three times
 Have praised as supreme this peerless dedication.
 Therefore, I also surrender all roots of my activities
 To the sublime goals of a bodhisattva.

When the moment of my death arrives,
 May I remain free from the spiritual obscurations;
 May I perceive the face of Amitabha
 And transmigrate to Sukhavati, the pure land of joy.

Having arrived there, may I fulfill
 All aims of this prayer of aspirations
 And benefit the countless living beings
 Residing throughout the ten directions.

In the joyous mandala of Amitabha Buddha

May I be reborn from a beautiful lotus,
And may I there have the pleasure of gaining
A pure prophecy from Amitabha himself.

Having won this word of prophecy,
By the power of mind may I fill all directions
With many millions of mystical emanations
And bring limitless benefits to the world.

If by reciting this prayer of the sublime ways
I have amassed a tiny fragment of goodness,
May it work immediately to fulfill
All Dharmic hopes of living beings.

Colophon: This is the complete Great King of Prayers, The Prayer of Ways
Sublime.

Translated by Glenn H. Mullin with Thepo Tulku.

In Praise of Tara

Holy Tara, Protector of living beings,
May your blessings flow throughout all of our lives
and by Your Compassionate Activity,
may all the needs of all beings
be completely fulfilled now

Tara
Your beauty tames the minds of living beings.
You draw all beings to yourself.
Your virtue calms their fears and brings them all fresh happiness.

You are the one who makes what seems to be the impossible
entirely possible
You conquer disbelief, and dispel doubt
without leaving even a trace
You are miraculous activity, beyond comprehension.

You are 'swift to regard', quick to respond,
the remover of obstacles.

You are our protector
You are grace and blessings,
the relative and ultimate liberator of beings

Your beauty inspires uprightness of moral character
You pacify habit energy
We shed our skins, lose our old ways,
like leaves falling off of trees

You bring new birth, and give new strength
You purify the mind - like the stream-clearing jewel
You uplift and brighten the mind

For those with positive aims,
You are their Great Benefactress

You set all things right
You bring about reconciliation without impediment
without anything blocking it
You bring harmony to every surrounding circumstance

You help us to gather all positive conditions
You bring out the best that is in us all
You make all practices effective
It has always been this way
It is this way now
It will always be this way

You are the spring-like feeling of 'yes',
the sum of all optimism,
joyful positive energy,
the feeling of 'I can'

Tara,
May your blessings completely illuminate all of our lives
and may all the needs of all beings
be completely fulfilled now

O, Bright Virtue!
You are light
You are grace in my life
and subtle nourishment
The blessing of all the women who have ever wished me well

You are instinctive love,
all-accommodating
naturally inclusive
comprehensive
You are embodied enlightened intelligence,
intuitive awareness, the heart awake,
and the flourishing of joy

You are playful, youthful, joyful, quick, charming, elegant, inspiring, wise, warm,
strengthening, encouraging, healing,
calming, stabilizing;

How can I call you? Tara - hope, positive energy, joyful, pure,
wholesome energy

With your rivers
nurture my limbs, these fields
With your warmth, your light
bring about the total flowering of goodness...

Tara,
May your blessings be established in all of our lives

Because this is Divine Feminine energy, quick to respond
with magical activity,
the equivalent of the patron saint of lost causes,
grace,
spiritual beauty bringing light, giving hope,
removing obstacles,
calming fear, pacifying suffering,
and protecting
bringing harmony to every surrounding circumstance,
bringing life, health, happiness, good fortune, and stability

and, being the Spring-like sum of all optimism, inspiring,
positive energy,
enabling all the good things we would do to become effective,
to become fulfilled,
to become complete,
this is called Green Tara

May all share in these blessings...

Tara, Giver of Joy and Peace

Tara

Mothers pray to you
and children pray to you

Merchants pray to you
and travelers pray to you

Doctors, and lawyers and judges pray to you
the innocent pray to you
and the guilty pray to you

Students and scholars pray to you

Artists pray to you

the dull and the brilliant pray to you,
the humble and the proud

married people pray to you
and single people pray to you

those who are sick
and those who are healthy pray to you

healers pray to you
and those with a loved one in need
pray to you

kings and street sweepers pray to you
the living and the dying pray to you

the wealthy and the destitute pray to you
the young and the old,
the high and the low

all reach out their hands to you

all turn to you,
as their closest protector, guide and refuge,
as their benefactress in times of need,
and they turn to you in gratitude
as their patroness in times of success

All these prayers you hear
and you respond in visible and in invisible ways -
ways beyond the scope of ordinary conception

Although you are the most exalted one,
we run to you in total trust and confidence
like a child to a parent

going with total trust,
like a favored one
into the presence of an enlightened ruler

we go to you,
and rest
we are sheltered by you
cared for
and protected

And though your name can be said simply
and your divine qualities can be so easily known,
the depth of your wisdom, compassion, and activity,
is such
that lifetimes of study and practice,
until we ourselves become more like you,
are just a beginning, in truth

and so our everyday appeals
are for more simple things

we ask:

O Tara, Joy of the World,
let your presence be more fully known by us

clear away whatever obstacles there may be
and let the light, comfort and inspiration that you are
be known ever more fully by us now

pacify suffering conditions
and help us to live well
encourage us to outdo
what we thought was possible before

stabilize whatever we have now
of health, virtue,
wisdom and good fortune,
and increase, to meet our needs,
whatever we may lack

O Glorious Tara,
hope of the world,
to you we all pray,

May your blessings be upon us all,
so that we can, each one of us, achieve our aims,
and peace,
and fulfillment

Universal love, the ground and culmination of our practice

When we first hear the ideal of universal love for all beings, our reaction might be one of disbelief, or doubt that we could ever approach such a state. We have a hard enough time even liking, let alone loving ourselves, and getting along with just our friends, family and co-workers is a challenge too. Universal love? Come on! We could also have the response of holding this as an ideal and then going no further with it. It can stay just as a concept, and become an ego trip.

In the Metta Sutta, the Buddha taught

*'just as a mother loves and cherishes her child, her only child,
just so we should cultivate boundless love to offer to all...*

and,

'our love will know no obstacles...

All religions teach this in some form, and what the Buddhist tradition contributes is the method to gradually develop such love. This is something that doesn't happen by itself, or by just wishing it to be so, or without a cause, and that cause is the meditation that brings real love more and more into our relationships.

Surprisingly, there is something of universal love in us right from the beginning of practice. This is the ground of our common humanity, our divine nature, also called our Buddha Nature. We may not believe in it, and may doubt that we can love even ourselves, let alone another person, or all, but that potential exists in all of us, waiting to be known and revealed.

Right from the beginning, it's this potential that we tap into when we start anywhere to have metta for self and others. As metta increases in our lives, directing pure well wishing to family, friends, and the strangers we see, it gets easier in all ways. This is because this love is one.

Love reveals our true identity, and our real family. As we practice this kind of meditation more and more, our sense of identity shifts from the surface, history, form, and culture, to the more universal ground, to what is fundamental to us all.

We find we share a common heritage with those in this, and in other places and times.

I remember one teaching where Thich Nhat Hanh was saying how a Frenchman, standing on French soil, could also see himself as standing on the continent of Europe, or on the one earth we all share, and if he was able to do so, his feeling of who he was would grow by that much. So it is with metta. We don't suddenly lose our relative identity, but we can find that it is held within a greater truth, and that is what we more truly are. This is the source we draw from all along the way in our practice.

How can we tell if we're really progressing towards an all-embracing, universal love? I think the signs are that we gradually become more respectful, patient, encouraging, and supportive of ourselves and others. We can sense a greater consistency in our responses to our own problems, and to what we meet in other people. We're not as up and down, sometimes accepting and at other times negligent or aversive.

What's more, we can see the quality of how we are with our own inner state and with others improve gradually. There's more joy, and forgiveness, and generosity flows more readily, and in greater abundance. This is bound to be inspiring to see and think about. It leads us to wonder what more we are capable of. The ideal of universal love, at last, can start to seem conceivable.

Love would have us go carefully, not hurry, and not leave out any steps. Though the ideal is so appealing, and so much what we need in our lives and in the world, there's the danger that we may gloss over the inner work that needs to be done to arrive at a real love for all.

The line, '*our love will know no obstacles*' is significant here because it points to something we have all had experience with, of becoming more able to love, and it is onward leading. Where there was once some keeping back, a change took place, even slightly, and we were able to take the next step, and the next in loving. If we go gradually, and continue in the practice, like a river, metta will find its way to the ocean. We will arrive at all embracing, universal love.

That universal love is both the ground and the goal of spiritual practice for us all is really something to honor and celebrate.

Hafiz says:

*a divine seed,
the crown of destiny,
is hidden and sown
on an ancient fertile plain
you hold the title to...*

and Rumi adds:

*you are the secret treasure bearer,
and always have been...*

*If you knew yourself for even one moment,
if you could just glimpse
your most beautiful face,
maybe you wouldn't slumber so deeply
in that house of clay.*

*Why not move
into your house of joy...*

Culture, religion, class, gender, age, history, political party, accepting this, rejecting that – so many ways we build walls. Metta instead builds bridges, until we arrive at the joy of knowing how we are made for each other.

May we all realize this love as our true home

May we awaken and learn to be practical and inclusive, so that, in the words of the Metta Sutta,

*Whatever living beings there may be;
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,
The great or the mighty, medium, short or small,
The seen and the unseen,
Those living near and far away,
Those born and to-be-born—
May all beings be at their ease!*

Homage to Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom

Homage to my guru and protector, Manjushri,

Who holds to his heart a scriptural text symbolic of his seeing all things as they are,

Whose intelligence shines forth like the sun, unclouded by the two obscurations,

Who teaches in sixty ways, with the loving compassion of a parent for his only child, all creatures caught in the prison of samsara, confused in the darkness of their ignorance, overwhelmed by their suffering.

You, whose dragon-thunder-like proclamation of Dharma arouses us from the stupor of our afflictions and frees us from the iron chains of our karma;

Who wields the sword of wisdom hewing down suffering wherever its sprouts appear, clearing away the darkness of ignorance;

You, whose princely body is adorned with the one hundred and twelve marks of a Buddha,

Who has completed the stages achieving the highest perfection of a bodhisattva,

Who has been pure from the beginning,

I bow down to you, O Manjushri;

With the brilliance of your wisdom, O compassionate one,

Illuminate the darkness enclosing my mind,

Enlighten my intelligence and wisdom

So that I may gain insight into the Buddha's words and the texts that explain them.

The Heart Sutra

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, when practicing deeply the prajnaparamita, perceived that all five skandas, of own being are empty and was saved from all suffering

O Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form; that which is form is emptiness, that which is emptiness, form; the same is true of feelings, perceptions, mental formations, consciousness

O Shariputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness, they neither appear nor disappear, are not tainted or pure, do not increase or decrease

Therefore in emptiness, no (*self existent or separately existent*) form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness; no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; no color, sound, smell, taste, touch, object of mind; no realm of eyes until no realm of eye-consciousness; no ignorance and also no extinction of it until no old age and death and also no extinction of it; no suffering, origination, stopping, path, cognition, also no attainment

With nothing to attain the bodhisattvas depend on prajnaparamita and the mind is no hindrance; without any hindrance, no fears exist; far apart from every perverted view, one dwells in nirvana

In the three worlds all Buddhas depend on prajnaparamita and attain unsurpassed, complete, perfect enlightenment; Therefore know the prajnaparamita mantra is the great transcendent mantra, is the great bright mantra, is the utmost mantra, is the supreme mantra, which is able to relieve all suffering, and is true, not false; so proclaim the prajnaparamita mantra, proclaim the mantra that says

Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi, svaha!

The Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore

Avalokiteshvara while practicing deeply with the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore, suddenly discovered that all of the five Skandhas are equally empty, and with this realisation he overcame all ill-being.

“Listen Sariputra, this Body itself is Emptiness and Emptiness itself is this Body. This Body is not other than Emptiness and Emptiness is not other than this Body. The same is true of Feelings, Perceptions, Mental Formations, and Consciousness.

“Listen Sariputra, all phenomena bear the mark of Emptiness;
their true nature is the nature of no Birth no Death,
no Being no Non-being,
no Defilement no Purity,
no Increasing no Decreasing.

“That is why in Emptiness, Body, Feelings, Perceptions,
Mental Formations and Consciousness are not separate self entities.

The Eighteen Realms of Phenomena
which are the six Sense Organs, the six Sense Objects,
and the six Consciousnesses
are also not separate self entities.

The Twelve Links of Interdependent Arising and their Extinction
are also not separate self entities.
Ill-being, the Causes of Ill-being, the End of Ill-being, the Path,
insight and attainment,
are also not separate self entities.

Whoever can see this no longer needs anything to attain.

Bodhisattvas who practice the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
see no more obstacles in their mind,
and because there are no more obstacles in their mind,
they can overcome all fear,
destroy all wrong perceptions
and realize Perfect Nirvana.

“All Buddhas in the past, present and future
by practicing the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
are all capable of attaining Authentic and Perfect Enlightenment.

“Therefore Sariputra,
it should be known that the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
is a Great Mantra,
the most illuminating mantra,
the highest mantra,
a mantra beyond compare,
the True Wisdom that has the power to put an end to all kinds of suffering.
Therefore let us proclaim a mantra to praise
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore.

Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!

A prayer dispelling hindrances, that may be recited following the Heart Sutra

We take refuge in the Buddha,
Dharma,
and Sangha

Homage to Prajnaparamita

Just as in the past, when the deva king, Indra, by the power of contemplating
the profound meaning of Prajnaparamita, and by reciting its words,
was able to dispel maras,
so too in the very same way, may we accomplish this now.

By this meditation and recitation,
May all inner and outer hindrances be overcome.

May they become non-existent! (clap)

May they be pacified! (clap)

May they be completely pacified! (clap)

Everything that arises interdependently
Is unceasing and unborn,
Neither non-existent nor everlasting, (no being, no non-being)
Neither coming nor going,
Neither several in meaning nor with a single meaning,
All concepts and duality are pacified.

To this teaching,
the words of the fully enlightened Buddha,
We pay homage!

By this realization,
May all negative forces be completely removed.

May we obtain all circumstances conducive to the Dharma,
and may there be auspiciousness, happiness, and well-being here, right now!

The Diamond Sutra

1

This is what I heard one time when the Buddha was staying in the monastery in Anathapindika's park in the Jeta Grove near Sravasti with a community of 1,250 bhiksus, fully ordained monks.

That day, when it was time to make the round for alms, the Buddha put on his sanghati robe and, holding his bowl, went into the city of Sravasti to seek alms food, going from house to house. When the alms round was completed, he returned to the monastery to eat the midday meal. Then he put away his sanghati robe and his bowl, washed his feet, arranged his cushion, and sat down.

2

At that time, the Venerable Subhuti stood up, bared his right shoulder, put his knee on the ground, and, folding his palms respectfully, said to the Buddha,

"World-Honored One, it is rare to find such a person as you. You always support and show special confidence in the bodhisattvas. World-Honored One, if sons and daughters of good families want to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, what should they rely on and what should they do to master their thinking?"

The Buddha replied, "Well said, Subhuti! What you have said is absolutely correct. The Tathagata always supports and shows special confidence in the bodhisattvas. Please listen with all of your attention and the Tathagata will respond to your question. If daughters and sons of good families want to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, they should rely on the following way."

The Venerable Subhuti said, "Lord, we are so happy to hear your teachings."

3

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "This is how the bodhisattva mahasattvas master their thinking. 'However many species of living beings there are--whether born from eggs, from the womb, from moisture, or spontaneously; whether they have form or do not have form; whether they have perceptions or do not have perceptions; or

whether it cannot be said of them that they have perceptions or that they do not have perceptions, we must lead all these beings to the ultimate nirvana so that they can be liberated. And when this innumerable, immeasurable, infinite number of beings has become liberated, we do not, in truth, think that a single being has been liberated.'

"Why is this so? If, Subhuti, a bodhisattva holds on to the idea that a self, a person, a living being, or a life span exists, that person is not an authentic bodhisattva."

4

"Moreover, Subhuti, when a bodhisattva practices generosity, he does not rely on any object--that is to say he does not rely on any form, sound, smell, taste, tactile object, or dharma--to practice generosity. That, Subhuti, is the spirit in which a bodhisattva should practice generosity, not relying on signs. Why? If a bodhisattva practices generosity without relying on signs, the happiness that results cannot be conceived of or measured. Subhuti, do you think that the space in the Eastern Quarter can be measured?"

"No, World-Honored One."

"Subhuti, can space in the Western, Southern, and Northern Quarters, above and below be measured?"

"No, World-Honored One."

"Subhuti, if a bodhisattva does not rely on any concept when practicing generosity, then the happiness that results from that virtuous act is as great as space. It cannot be measured. Subhuti, the bodhisattvas should let their minds dwell in the teachings I have just given."

5

"What do you think, Subhuti? Is it possible to grasp the Tathagata by means of bodily signs?"

"No, World-Honored One. When the Tathagata speaks of bodily signs, there are no signs being talked about."

The Buddha said to Subhuti: "In a place where there is something that can be distinguished by signs, in that place there is deception. If you can see the signless nature of signs, then you can see the Tathagata."

6

The Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha, "In times to come, will there be people who, when they hear these teachings, have real faith and confidence in them?"

The Buddha replied, "Do not speak that way, Subhuti. Five hundred years after the Tathagata has passed away, there will still be people who enjoy the happiness that comes from observing the precepts. When such people hear these words, they will have faith and confidence that here is the truth. We should know that such people have sown seeds not only during the lifetime of one Buddha, or even two, three, four, or five Buddhas, but have, in truth, planted wholesome seeds during the lifetimes of tens of thousands of Buddhas. Anyone who, for only a second, gives rise to a pure and clear confidence upon hearing these words of the Tathagata, the Tathagata sees and knows that person, and he or she will attain immeasurable happiness because of this understanding. Why?

"Because that kind of person is not caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. They are not caught up in the idea of a dharma or the idea of a non-dharma. They are not caught up in the notion that this is a sign and that is not a sign. Why? If you are caught up in the idea of a dharma, you are also caught up in the ideas of a self, a person, a living being, and a life span. If you are caught up in the idea that there is no dharma, you are still caught up in the ideas of a self, a person, a living being, and a life span. That is why we should not get caught up in dharmas or in the idea that dharmas do not exist. This is the hidden meaning when the Tathagata says, 'Bhiksus, you should know that all of the teachings I give to you are a raft.' All teachings must be abandoned, not to mention non-teachings."

7

"What do you think, Subhuti, has the Tathagata arrived at the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind? Does the Tathagata give any teaching?"

The Venerable Subhuti replied, "As far as I have understood the Lord Buddha's teachings, there is no independently existing object of mind called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, nor is there any independently existing teaching that the Tathagata gives. Why? The teachings that the Tathagata has realized and

spoken of cannot be conceived of as separate, independent existences and therefore cannot be described. The Tathagata's teaching is not self-existent nor is it non-self-existent. Why? Because the noble teachers are only distinguished from others in terms of the unconditioned."

8

"What do you think, Subhuti? If someone were to fill the 3,000 chiliocosms with the seven precious treasures as an act of generosity, would that person bring much happiness by this virtuous act?"

The Venerable Subhuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One. It is because the very natures of virtue and happiness are not virtue and happiness that the Tathagata is able to speak about virtue and happiness."

The Buddha said, "On the other hand, if there is someone who accepts these teachings and puts them into practice, even if only a gatha of four lines, and explains them to someone else, the happiness brought about by this virtuous act far exceeds the happiness brought about by giving the seven precious treasures. Why? Because, Subhuti, all Buddhas and the dharma of the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind of all Buddhas arise from these teachings. Subhuti, what is called Buddhadharma is everything that is not Buddhadharma."

9

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does a Stream-Enterer think, 'I have attained the fruit of stream-entry.'?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. Why? Stream-Enterer means to enter the stream, but in fact there is no stream to enter. One does not enter a stream that is form, nor a stream that is sound, smell, taste, touch, or object of mind. That is what we mean when we say entering a stream."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does a Once-Returner think, 'I have attained the fruit of Once-Returning.'?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. Why? Once-Returner means to go and return once more, but in truth there is no going just as there is no returning. That is what we mean when we say Once-Returner."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does a Non-Returner think like this, 'I have attained the fruit of No-Return.'?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. Why? No-Return means not to return to this world, but in fact there cannot be any Non-Returning. That is what we mean when we say Non-Returner."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does an Arhat think like this, 'I have attained the fruit of Arhatship'?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. Why? There is no separately existing thing that can be called Arhat. If an Arhat gives rise to the thought that he has attained the fruit of Arhatship, then he is still caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, and a life span. World-Honored One, you have often said that I have attained the concentration of peaceful abiding and that in the community, I am the Arhat who has most transformed need and desire. World-Honored One, if I were to think that I had attained the fruit of Arhatship, you certainly would not have said that I love to dwell in the concentration of peaceful abiding."

10

The Buddha asked Subhuti, "In ancient times when the Tathagata practiced under Buddha Dipankara, did he attain anything?"

Subhuti answered, "No, World-Honored One. In ancient times when the Tathagata was practicing under Buddha Dipankara, he did not attain anything."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does a bodhisattva create a serene and beautiful Buddha field?"

"No, World-Honored One. Why? To create a serene and beautiful Buddha field is not in fact creating a serene and beautiful Buddha field. That is why it is called creating a serene and beautiful Buddha field."

The Buddha said, "So, Subhuti, all the bodhisattva mahasattvas should give rise to a pure and clear intention in this spirit. When they give rise to this intention, they should not rely on forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, or objects of mind. They should give rise to an intention with their minds not dwelling anywhere."

"Subhuti, if there were someone with a body as big as Mount Sumeru, would you say that his was a large body?"

Subhuti answered, "Yes, World-Honored One, very large. Why? What the Tathagata says is not a large body, that is known as a large body."

11

"Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges Rivers as the number of grains of sand in the Ganges, would you say that the number of grains of sand in all those Ganges Rivers is very many?"

Subhuti answered, "Very many indeed, World-Honored One. If the number of Ganges Rivers were huge, how much more so the number of grains of sand in all those Ganges Rivers."

"Subhuti, now I want to ask you this: if a daughter or son of good family were to fill the 3,000 chiliocosms with as many precious jewels as the number of grains of sand in all the Ganges Rivers as an act of generosity, would that person bring much happiness by her virtuous act?"

Subhuti replied, "Very much, World-Honored One."

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "If a daughter or son of a good family knows how to accept, practice, and explain this sutra to others, even if it is a gatha of four lines, the happiness that results from this virtuous act would be far greater."

12

"Furthermore, Subhuti, any plot of land on which this sutra is proclaimed, even if only one gatha of four lines, will be a land where gods, men, and asuras will come to make offerings just as they make offerings to a stupa of the Buddha. If the plot of land is regarded as that sacred, how much more so the person who practices and recites this sutra. Subhuti, you should know that that person attains something rare and profound. Wherever this sutra is kept is a sacred site enshrining the presence of the Buddha or one of the Buddha's great disciples."

13

After that, Subhuti asked the Buddha, "What should this sutra be called and how should we act regarding its teachings?"

The Buddha replied, "This sutra should be called The Diamond that Cuts through Illusion because it has the capacity to cut through allusions and afflictions and bring us to the shore of liberation. Please use this title and practice according to its deepest meaning. Why? What the Tathagata has called the highest, transcendent understanding is not, in fact, the highest, transcendent understanding. That is why it is truly the highest, transcendent understanding."

The Buddha asked, "What do you think, Subhuti? Is there any dharma that the Tathagata teaches?"

Subhuti replied, "The Tathagata has nothing to teach, World-Honored One."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Are there many particles of dust in the 3,000 chiliocosms?"

"Very many, World-Honored One."

"Subhuti, the Tathagata says that these particles of dust are not particles of dust, That is why they are truly particles of dust. And what the Tathagata calls chiliocosms are not in fact chiliocosms. That is why they are called chiliocosms!"

"What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be recognized by the possession of the thirty-two marks?"

The Venerable Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. Why? Because what the Tathagata calls the thirty-two marks are not essentially marks and that is why the Tathagata calls them the thirty-two marks."

"Subhuti, if as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges a son or daughter of a good family gives up his or her life as an act of generosity and if another daughter or son of a good family knows how to accept, practice, and explain this sutra to others, even if only a gatha of four lines, the happiness resulting from explaining this sutra is far greater."

When he had heard this much and penetrated deeply into its significance, the Venerable Subhuti was moved to tears. He said, "World-Honored One, you are truly rare in this world. Since the day I attained the eyes of understanding, thanks to the guidance of the Buddha, I have never before heard teachings so deep and wonderful as these. World-Honored One, if someone hears this sutra, has pure and clear confidence in it, and arrives at insight into the truth, that person will realize the rarest kind of virtue. World-Honored One, that insight into the truth is essentially not insight. That is what the Tathagata calls insight into the truth.

"World-Honored One, today it is not difficult for me to hear this wonderful sutra, have confidence in it, understand it, accept it, and put it into practice. But in the future, in 500 years, if there is someone who can hear this sutra, have confidence in it, understand it, accept it, and put it into practice, then certainly the existence of someone like that will be great and rare. Why? That person will not be dominated by the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. Why? The idea of a self is not an idea, and the ideas of a person, a living being, and a life span are not ideas either. Why? Buddhas are called Buddhas because they are free of ideas."

"The Buddha said to Subhuti, "That is quite right. If someone hears this sutra and is not terrified or afraid, he or she is rare. Why? Subhuti, what the Tathagata calls parama-paramita, the highest transcendence, is not essentially the highest transcendence, and that is why it is called the highest transcendence.

"Subhuti, the Tathagata has said that what is called transcendent endurance is not transcendent endurance. That is why it is called transcendent endurance. Why? Subhuti, thousands of lifetimes ago when my body was cut into pieces by King Kalinga, I was not caught in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. If, at that time, I had been caught up in any of those ideas, I would have felt anger and ill-will against the king.

"I also remember in ancient times, for 500 lifetimes, I practiced transcendent endurance by not being caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. So, Subhuti, when a bodhisattva gives rise to the unequalled mind of awakening, he has to give up all ideas. He cannot not rely on forms when he gives rise to that mind, nor on sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, or objects of mind. He can only give rise to that mind that is not caught up in anything.

"The Tathagata has said that all notions are not notions and that all living beings are not living beings. Subhuti, the Tathagata is one who speaks of things as they are, speaks what is true, and speaks in accord with reality. He does not speak deceptively or to please people. Subhuti, if we say that the Tathagata has realized a teaching, that teaching is neither graspable nor deceptive.

"Subhuti, a bodhisattva who still depends on notions to practice generosity is like someone walking in the dark. He will not see anything. But when a bodhisattva does not depend on notions to practice generosity, he is like someone with good eyesight walking under the bright light of the sun. He can see all shapes and colors.

"Subhuti, if in the future there is any daughter or son of good family who has the capacity to accept, read, and put into practice this sutra, the Tathagata will see that person with his eyes of understanding. The Tathagata will know that person, and that person will realize the measureless, limitless fruit of her or his virtuous act."

15

"Subhuti, if on the one hand, a daughter or son of a good family gives up her or his life in the morning as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges as an act of generosity, and gives as many again in the afternoon and as many again in the evening, and continues doing so for countless ages; and if, on the other hand, another person listens to this sutra with complete confidence and without contention, that person's happiness will be far greater. But the happiness of one who writes this sutra down, receives, recites, and explains it to others cannot be compared.

"In summary, Subhuti, this sutra brings about boundless virtue and happiness that cannot be conceived or measured. If there is someone capable of receiving, practicing, reciting, and sharing this sutra with others, the Tathagata will see and know that person, and he or she will have inconceivable, indescribable, and incomparable virtue. Such a person will be able to shoulder the highest, most fulfilled, awakened career of the Tathagata. Why? Subhuti, if one is content with the small teachings, if he or she is still caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span, he or she will not be able to listen, receive, recite, and explain this sutra to others. Subhuti, any place this sutra is found is a place where gods, men, and asuras will come to make offerings. Such a place is a shrine and should be venerated with formal ceremonies, circumambulations, and offerings of flowers and incense."

16

"Furthermore, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family, while reciting and practicing this sutra, is disdained or slandered, his or her misdeeds committed in past lives, including those that could bring about an evil destiny, will be eradicated, and he or she will attain the fruit of the most fulfilled, awakened mind. Subhuti, in ancient times before I met Buddha Dipankara, I had made offerings to and had been attendant of all 84,000 multi-millions of buddhas. If someone is able to receive, recite, study, and practice this sutra in the last epoch, the happiness brought about by this virtuous act is hundreds of thousands times greater than that which I brought about in ancient times. In fact, such happiness cannot be conceived or compared with anything, even mathematically. Such happiness is immeasurable.

"Subhuti, the happiness resulting from the virtuous act of a son or daughter of good family who receives, recites, studies, and practices this sutra in the last epoch will be so great that if I were to explain it now in detail, some people would become suspicious and disbelieving, and their minds might become disoriented. Subhuti, you should know that the meaning of this sutra is beyond conception and discussion. Likewise, the fruit resulting from receiving and practicing this sutra is beyond conception and discussion."

17

At that time, the Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, may I ask you again that if daughters or sons of good family want to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, what should they rely on and what should they do to master their thinking?"

The Buddha replied, "Subhuti, a good son or daughter who wants to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind should do it in this way: 'We must lead all beings to the shore of awakening, but, after these beings have become liberated, we do not, in truth, think that a single being has been liberated.' Why is this so? Subhuti, if a bodhisattva is still caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a living being or a life span, that person is not an authentic bodhisattva. Why is that?

"Subhuti, in fact, there is no independently existing object of mind called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind. What do you think, Subhuti? In ancient times, when the Tathagata was living with Buddha Dipankara, did he attain anything called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind?"

"No, World-Honored One. According to what I understand from the teachings of the Buddha, there is no attaining of anything called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind."

The Buddha said, "Right you are, Subhuti. In fact, there does not exist the so-called highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind that the Tathagata attains. Because if there had been any such thing, Buddha Dipankara would not have predicted of me, 'In the future, you will come to be a Buddha called Shakyamuni.' This prediction was made because there is, in fact, nothing that can be attained that is called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind. Why? Tathagata means the suchness of all things (dharma). Someone would be mistaken to say that the Tathagata has attained the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind since there is not any highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind to be attained. Subhuti, the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind that the Tathagata has attained is neither graspable nor elusive. This is why the Tathagata has said, 'All dharmas are Buddhadharma.' What are called all dharmas are, in fact, not all dharmas. That is why they are called all dharmas."

"Subhuti, a comparison can be made with the idea of a great human body."

Subhuti said, "What the Tathagata calls a great human body is, in fact, not a great human body."

"Subhuti, it is the same concerning bodhisattvas. If a bodhisattva thinks that she has to liberate all living beings, then she is not yet a bodhisattva. Why? Subhuti, there is no independently existing object of mind called bodhisattva. Therefore, the Buddha has said that all dharmas are without a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. Subhuti, if a bodhisattva thinks, 'I have to create a serene and beautiful Buddha field', that person is not yet a bodhisattva. Why? What the Tathagata calls a serene and beautiful Buddha field is not in fact a serene and beautiful Buddha field. And that is why it is called a serene and beautiful Buddha field. Subhuti, any bodhisattva who thoroughly understands the principle of non-self and non-dharma is called by the Tathagata an authentic bodhisattva."

18

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the human eye?"

Subhuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata does have the human eye."

The Buddha asked, "Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the divine eye?"

Subhuti said, "Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata does have the divine eye."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the eye of insight?"

Subhuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata does have the eye of insight."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the eye of transcendent wisdom?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata does have the eye of transcendent wisdom."

The Buddha asked, "Does the Tathagata have the Buddha eye?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata does have the Buddha eye."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Buddha see the sand in the Ganges as sand?"

Subhuti said, "World-Honored One, the Tathagata also calls it sand."

"Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges Rivers as the number of grains of sand of the Ganges and there was a Buddha land for each grain of sand in all those Ganges Rivers, would those Buddha lands be many?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, very many."

The Buddha said, "Subhuti, however many living beings there are in all these Buddha lands, though they each have a different mentality, the Tathagata understands them all. Why is that? Subhuti, what the Tathagata calls different mentalities are not in fact different mentalities. That is why they are called different mentalities."

"Why? Subhuti, the past mind cannot be grasped, neither can the present mind or the future mind."

19

"What do you think, Subhuti? If someone were to fill the 3,000 chiliocosms with precious treasures as an act of generosity, would that person bring great happiness by his virtuous act?" "Yes, very much, World-Honored One."

"Subhuti, if such happiness were conceived as an entity separate from everything else, the Tathagata would not have said it to be great, but because it is ungraspable, the Tathagata has said that the virtuous act of that person brought about great happiness."

20

"Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be perceived by his perfectly formed body?"

"No, World-Honored One. What the Tathagata calls a perfectly formed body is not in fact a perfectly formed body. That is why it is called a perfectly formed body."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be perceived by his perfectly formed physiognomy?"

"No, World-Honored One. It is impossible to perceive the Tathagata by any perfectly formed physiognomy. Why? Because what the Tathagata calls perfectly formed physiognomy is not in fact perfectly formed physiognomy. That is why it is called perfectly formed physiognomy."

21

"Subhuti, do not say that the Tathagata conceives the idea 'I will give a teaching'. Do not think that way. Why? If anyone says that the Tathagata has something to teach, that person slanders the Buddha because he does not understand what I say. Subhuti, giving a Dharma talk in fact means that no talk is given. This is truly a Dharma talk."

Then, Insight-Life Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, in the future, will there be living beings who will feel complete confidence when they hear these words?"

The Buddha said, "Subhuti, those living beings are neither living beings nor non-living beings. Why is that? Subhuti, what the Tathagata calls non-living beings are truly living beings."

22

Subhuti asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, is the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind that the Buddha attained the unattainable?"

The Buddha said, "That is right, Subhuti. Regarding the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, I have not attained anything. That is why it is called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind."

23

"Furthermore, Subhuti, that mind is everywhere equally. Because it is neither high nor low, it is called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind. The fruit of the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind is realized through the practice of all wholesome actions in the spirit of non-self, nonperson, non-living being, and non-life span. Subhuti, what are called wholesome actions are in fact not wholesome actions. That is why they are called wholesome actions."

24

"Subhuti, if someone were to fill the 3,000 chiliocosms with piles of the seven precious treasures as high as Mount Sumeru as an act of generosity, the happiness resulting from this is much less than that of another person who knows how to accept, practice, and explain the Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra to others. The happiness resulting from the virtue of a person who practices this sutra, even if it is only a gatha of four lines, cannot be described by using examples or mathematics."

25

"Subhuti, do not say that the Tathagata has the idea, 'I will bring living beings to the shore of liberation.' Do not think that way, Subhuti. Why? In truth there is not one single being for the Tathagata to bring to the other shore. If the Tathagata were to think there was, he would be caught in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. Subhuti, what the Tathagata calls a self essentially has no self in the way that ordinary persons think there is a self. Subhuti, the

Tathagata does not regard anyone as an ordinary person. That is why he can call them ordinary persons."

26

"What do you think, Subhuti? Can someone meditate on the Tathagata by means of the thirty-two marks?"

Subhuti said, "Yes, World-Honored One. We should use the thirty-two marks to meditate on the Tathagata."

The Buddha said, "If you say that you can use the thirty-two marks to see the Tathagata, then the Cakravartin is also a Tathagata?"

Subhuti said, "World-Honored One, I understand your teaching. One should not use the thirty-two marks to meditate on the Tathagata."
Then the World-Honored One spoke this verse:

"Someone who looks for me in form or seeks me in sound
is on a mistaken path and cannot see the Tathagata."

27

"Subhuti, if you think that the Tathagata realizes the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind and does not need to have all the marks, you are wrong. Subhuti, do not think in that way. Do not think that when one gives rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, one needs to see all objects of mind as nonexistent, cut off from life. Please do not think in that way. One who gives rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind does not contend that all objects of mind are nonexistent and cut off from life."

28

"Subhuti, if a bodhisattva were to fill the 3,000 chiliocosms with the seven precious treasures, as many as the number of sand grains in the Ganges as an act of generosity, the happiness brought about by his or her virtue is less than that brought about by someone who has understood and wholeheartedly accepted the truth that all dharmas are of selfless nature and is able to live and bear fully this truth. Why is that, Subhuti? Because a bodhisattva does not need to build up virtue and happiness."

Subhuti asked the Buddha, "What do you mean, World-Honored One, when you say that a bodhisattva does not need to build up virtue and happiness?"

"Subhuti, a bodhisattva gives rise to virtue but is not caught in the idea of virtue and happiness. That is why the Tathagata has said that a bodhisattva does not need to build up virtue and happiness."

29

"Subhuti, if someone says that the World-Honored One comes, goes, sits, and lies down, that person has not understood what I have said. Why? The meaning of Tathagata is 'does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere'. That is why he is called a Tathagata."

30

"Subhuti, if a daughter or son of a good family were to grind the 3,000 chiliocosms to particles of dust, do you think there would be many particles?"

Subhuti replied, "World-Honored One, there would be many indeed. Why? If particles of dust had a real self-existence, the Buddha would not have called them particles of dust. What the Buddha calls particles of dust are not, in essence, particles of dust. That is why they can be called particles of dust. World-Honored One, what the Tathagata calls the 3,000 chiliocosms are not chiliocosms. That is why they are called chiliocosms. Why? If chiliocosms are real, they are a compound of particles under the conditions of being assembled into an object. That which the Tathagata calls a compound is not essentially a compound. That is why it is called a compound."

"Subhuti, what is called a compound is just a conventional way of speaking. It has no real basis. Only ordinary people are caught up in conventional terms."

31

"Subhuti, if anyone says that the Buddha has spoken of a self view, a person view, a living-being view, or a life span view, has that person understood my meaning?"

"No, World-Honored One. Such a person has not understood the Tathagata. Why? What the Tathagata calls a self view, a person view, a living-being view, or a life span view are not in essence a self view, a person view, a living-being view, or a

life span view. That is why they are called a self view, a person view, a living-being view, or a life span view."

"Subhuti, someone who gives rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind should know that this is true of all dharmas, should see that all dharmas are like this, should have confidence in the understanding of all dharmas without any conceptions about dharmas. Subhuti, what is called a conception of dharmas, the Tathagata has said, is not a conception of dharmas. That is why it is called a conception of dharmas."

32

"Subhuti, if someone were to offer an immeasurable quantity of the seven treasures to fill the worlds as infinite as space as an act of generosity, the happiness resulting from that virtuous act would not equal the happiness resulting from a son or daughter of a good family who gives rise to the awakened mind and reads, recites, accepts, and puts into practice this sutra, and explains it to others, even if only a gatha of four lines. In what spirit is this explanation given? Without being caught up in signs, just according to things as they are, without agitation. Why is this?

"All composed things are like a dream,
a phantom, a drop of dew, a flash of lightning.
That is how to meditate on them,
that is how to observe them."

After they heard the Lord Buddha deliver this sutra, the Venerable Subhuti, the bhiksus and bhiksunis, laymen and laywomen, and gods and asuras, filled with joy and confidence, undertook to put these teachings into practice.

Now let us chant the verses of sharing and aspiration.

Through the goodness that arises from my practice,
 May my spiritual teachers and guides of great virtue,
 My mother, my father, and my relatives,
 The Sun and the Moon, and all virtuous leaders of the world,
 May the highest gods and evil forces,
 Celestial beings, guardian spirits of the Earth, and the Lord of Death,
 May those who are friendly, indifferent, or hostile,
 May all beings receive the blessings of my life.
 May they soon attain the threefold bliss and realize the Deathless.
 Through the goodness that arises from my practice,
 And through this act of sharing,
 May all desires and attachments quickly cease
 And all harmful states of mind.
 Until I realize Nibbana,
 In every kind of birth, may I have an upright mind,
 With mindfulness and wisdom, austerity and vigor.
 May the forces of delusion not take hold nor weaken my resolve.
 The Buddha is my excellent refuge,
 Unsurpassed is the protection of the Dhamma,
 The Solitary Buddha is my noble Lord,
 The Sangha is my supreme support.
 Through the supreme power of all these,
 May darkness and delusion be dispelled.

May every living being,
our minds as one and radiant with light,
share the fruits of peace,
with hearts of goodness, luminous and bright.

If people hear and see,
how hands and hearts can find in giving, unity,
may their minds awaken to Great Compassion,
wisdom, and to joy.

May kindness find reward,
May all who sorrow leave their grief and pain;
May this boundless light,
break the darkness of their endless night.

Because our hearts are one,
this world of pain turns into Paradise
May all become compassionate and wise,
May all become compassionate and wise.

- Venerable Heng Sure

A Dedication Prayer, by Shantideva

May all beings everywhere,
Plagued by sufferings of body and mind,
Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy
By virtue of these merits.

May no living creature suffer,
Commit evil or ever fall ill.
May no one be afraid or belittled,
With a mind weighed down by depression.

May the blind see forms,
And the deaf hear sounds.
May those whose bodies are worn with toil
Be restored on finding repose.
May the naked find clothing,
The hungry find food.
May the thirsty find water
And delicious drinks.

May the poor find wealth,
Those weak with sorrow find joy.
May the forlorn find hope,
Constant happiness and prosperity

May there be timely rains
And bountiful harvests.
May all medicines be effective
And wholesome prayers bear fruit.

May all who are sick and ill
Quickly be freed from their ailments.
Whatever diseases there are in the world,
May they never occur again.
May the frightened cease to be afraid
And those bound be freed.
May the powerless find power
And may people think of benefiting each other.

For as long as space remains,
and for as long as sentient beings remain,
until then, may I too remain,
to dispel the suffering of the world